

# MASS LINE AND SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM

NOTE TO OUR READERS: We use the term "scientific socialism" the same way as many comrades use the term "Marxism-Leninism-Mao tse Tung Thought" because we wish to emphasize the contributions to revolutionary science by such comrades as Ho, Che, Cabral, George Jackson and many others. This is the accepted practice by many African Liberation movements. However, for the purpose of clarity we wish to state that we take Stalin over Trotsky and Mao over Khrushchev and detente.

## MASS LINE AND SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM

Malcolm X was the father of modern Black revolutionary nationalism. He developed positions on many subjects, such as capitalism, imperialism, racism, armed struggle and revolution. His analysis laid the basis for the revolutionary struggle of the past ten years. The pre-'71 Black Panther Party, SNCC, DRUM, African Liberation Support Committee, the Congress of African Peoples and many other Black organizations are the ideological heirs of Malcolm X. Over the past several years we have deeply refined and extended the ideology of revolutionary nationalism.

Black revolutionaries have become familiar with the works of DuBois, George Jackson, Fanon, Nkrumah, Toure and the great Amilcar Cabral. Through these writers we have become familiar with Uncle Ho, Chairman Mao, Che, Lenin and Marx. We are learning the theory of Scientific Socialism from these great revolutionary teachers, and we are attempting to apply the concepts of contradiction and dialectical/historical materialism to our practice. Revolutionaries have successfully applied the theory of scientific socialism to liberation struggles throughout the world. During the past two years, the majority of the Black Liberation Movement has adopted Scientific Socialism as its ideology.

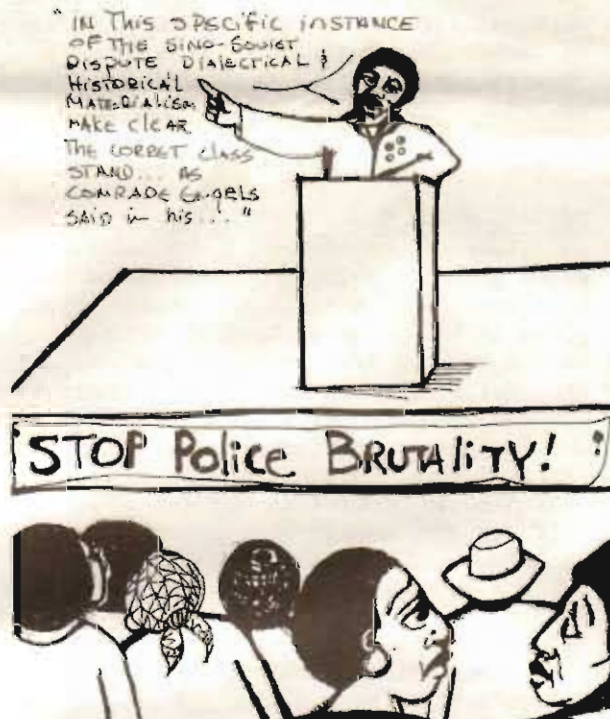
Many Black and Third World organizations, collectives and individuals have recently made the leap from cultural nationalism (the belief that one's traditional culture will be the fundamental factor in liberation), to revolutionary nationalism (the recognition that a complete overturning of the social, political and economic structures is necessary for liberation of an oppressed nation) and scientific socialism (the application of the theories of contradiction and dialectical/historical materialism to one's struggle combined with the recognition that socialism must be the goal). The ideological maturing of Black and other Third World revolutionaries within the United States is a very good sign. As Amilcar Cabral stated, "we would recall that every practice produces a theory, and that if it is true that revolution can fail even though it be based on perfectly conceived theories, nobody has yet made a successful revolution without a revolutionary theory."

However, whenever we move to a new level, new problems occur. We have observed that many of our brothers and sisters who have recently embraced scientific socialism are applying it in an uncreative way and are losing their ties with the masses. These two problems (dogmatism or uncreativity and poor mass line or losing touch with the masses) express themselves in two ways. One way is that the sisters and brothers have a poor style of work. Secondly, sisters and brothers begin to lose their grasp of the essential issues concerning their people.

A poor style of work usually comes from and leads to isolation from the people. One example of a poor style of work is that, when revolutionaries 'discover' scientific socialism, they become wrapped up in the language of Marx, Mao, Lenin, etc. The language of scientific socialism is scientific and can be very difficult to understand. Often when we use this language to talk to the masses of people, we end up confusing them and not getting our message across. Like many intellectuals, we mystify them by using complicated language to explain the basically simple ideas of revolution. The genius of Malcolm X was that he could take concepts relating to Black people's oppression and revolution and translate them into the language of the Black masses. He dealt with subjects such as the struggle between Russia and China, the penetration of U.S. capitalism into the USSR and the relation-

ship of the national liberation struggles of the Third World to the lives of Black people in language we could understand. Now, many revolutionaries talk about, "contradiction and detente between the two super powers" and "the Sino-Soviet dispute." We must always remember who are our audience is and prepare our message in a suitable form. As Mao says, we must "shoot the arrow at the target."

Another example of bad style of work and misunderstanding of mass line is that newly socialist cadre put such an emphasis on study and internal development that they become isolated from the community and its struggles. An example of extreme isolation is provided by one Black organization which several years ago had an excellent base among Black workers and the community. They have grown progressively more isolated from the people. They have forgotten the nationalist spirit of the people (they are now half white) and are doing very little work in Black community struggles. They sent white cadre to address a forum in Watts they held on Black Liberation. Needless to say, the cadre could not handle the questions put to him by the audience. Many in the audience felt insulted and became turned off to "Black socialist" organizations. This group's newspaper is basically unreadable in both style and content. Now they are splitting up into many small pieces. A milder example of the same problem is provided by groups which schedule meetings with the masses on weekend nights. The great majority of Black workers are not interested in forums, study groups, etc. on Saturday night. Revolutionaries must go ever deeper into the masses of people and become one with them. This is even true on the weekend. A better alternative, which has worked successfully in many Third World communities is to provide a cultural alternative on the weekends which includes both political content and partying.



Not understanding which issues are most important to the people is an equally critical problem. Some brothers and sisters have told us that anytime you talk to the people you must raise the issue of "social imperialism and revisions" and that police brutality struggles are not important to work in because they are not working class. This is an extremely dogmatic and inflexible attitude toward working with the people. Doing work among the masses involves taking their ideas, organizing and concentrating them and then taking them back to the people for evaluation and action. On one hand, any revolutionary in a Third World community with good ties with the people knows that the issue of police brutality is one of the two or three most important concerns of oppressed peoples. On the other hand, we have often been told by progressive workers and community members that they do not see the direct relation of the Sino-Soviet dispute to many of our struggles. The masses are concerned with concrete issues such as health, housing, jobs, racism and police brutality. It is extraordinarily narrow-minded to say that we must always talk about social imperialism while not recognizing the importance of anti-brutality community struggles. We must shoot our arrows at the target!

Another example of not grasping what is essential is that many revolutionaries when attempting to bring revolutionary science to mass struggles often rely on long passages from Marx, Stalin and others. These passages, which are often out of context, usually confuse more than they clarify. Furthermore, we must realize that the masses, due to brainwashing of the bourgeoisie and opportunists, are often openly hostile to the teachings of 'communists'. We think that, when working in struggles involving middle and backward as well as advanced elements, it is better to use the people's heroes to make the same points. The teachings of Malcolm X, George Jackson, Frederick Douglass, Amilcar Cabral and many others are rich in revolutionary content and applicability to our liberation struggle. In fact, practice has shown that progressive brothers and sisters are introduced to scientific socialism from the standpoint of revolutionary nationalism. When introduced correctly, progressive brothers and sisters embrace wholeheartedly the work of revolutionaries from throughout the world. If forced on them, they will be hostile to studying scientific socialism for some time to come.



Finally we must try to figure out why these problems are so common. First we must realize that many revolutionaries who have recently begun studying scientific socialism come from a student background. These brothers and sisters bring with them many of the bad habits that are typical of intellectuals and those from middle class (petty bourgeois) backgrounds. These bad traits include not using the language of the people, alienation from the people and tendencies toward elitism. Brother Cabral describes the problems of intellectuals, students and the petty bourgeoisie in his book, Return to the Source. We have often found that it is useful for the sisters and brothers to work among the masses for a long period of time so that they can relearn the ways and attitudes of the people. Where possible in these depression times it is useful for these comrades to attempt to find and hold jobs that do not rely on their petty bourgeois skills. These have been effective ways of fighting the isolation of the intellectuals and petty bourgeois classes.

Another common error which leads to problems we have been discussing is viewing scientific socialism as a miracle-working device that can automatically solve all our problems. We are all familiar with 'revolutionaries' who can quote other revolutionaries as eloquently as any Black preacher quoting the bible on Sunday morning. Yet these comrades do not seem able to solve problems or do work. This is called "book worship". No book, be it the bible or Marx can provide easy answers. Scientific socialism is a guide to action, a method of viewing the work and solving problems. It is the summation of over a hundred years of world revolution distilled into universal principles. Every revolutionary leader has emphasized that these principles must be creatively applied to the concrete conditions of any given liberation struggle. The concrete analysis of concrete conditions has always been at the heart of the scientific socialist method of work.

Mao sums up the role of cadre, correct style of work and mass line, "Twenty-four years of experience tell us that the right task, policy and style of work invariably conform with the demands of the masses at a given time and place and invariably strengthen our ties with the masses, and the wrong task, policy and style of work invariably disagree with the demands of the masses at a given time and place and invariably alienate us from the masses. The reason why such evils as dogmatism, empiricism, commandism, tailism, sectarianism, bureaucracy and an arrogant attitude in work are definitely harmful and intolerable, and why anyone suffering from these maladies must overcome them, is that they alienate us from the masses."

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Seize the Time