

THE OVERTURE TO THE SYMPHONY OF REVOLUTION IS THE IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE.

The other evening I attended a Zoom meeting on the topic of Utopian Socialism. The introduction was informative and competent. The discussion that followed was not. Amongst the issues raised was why the proletarian revolution differs from all the previous revolutions which were pre-born in the womb of the preceding society. This of course is a pivotal and history challenging issue.

Animals cannot theorize about the world, only humans can. Animals mimic, humans learn. But this does not prevent humans from returning to the animal world when they fail to act on their theory, when they dismiss it even knowing such a dismissal will result in a destructive outcome. Smoking is the classic example. There is not one smoker who is unaware of the dangers involved in smoking, but they seldom act on this knowledge, ensuring a harmful end.

The same can be said of politics. More and more workers are becoming aware that capitalism is bad for their health. Few as yet are willing to act on it. Like smokers they believe the effort of breaking with capitalism is beyond their capacity. Worse they have been led to reject change due to the absence of a motivating alternative.

Of course politics is much more complex and consequential than smoking. With smoking, it's black or white, smoking kills, whereas stopping smoking extends life. But in the case of capitalism the outcome is not so clear cut. There are arguments that the alternatives to capitalism are worse; better the devil you know than the one you don't.

Being a worker in a capitalist society is a way of life. It is a conditioning therefore a habitual event making change a wrench. Being determines consciousness and conduct which is reinforced by the media, education, and cultural institutions all in the employ of the ruling class. This life is all there is, workers are told, know your lot. This is what all oppressive and alienating societies hold to be true. Workers see themselves locked in a room built by the capitalist class with all the doors and exits hidden away.

If we are to have a chance of changing the outlook of workers we need to provide that door, because such exits do not miraculously appear. But alas, there is no emergent, irrefutable, and pre-existing evidence for an alternative to capitalism as in the case of smoking. Instead we are charged with providing a sound theoretical framework for such an alternative.

And here we need to distinguish the proletarian revolution from the bourgeoisie revolution. In the case of the capitalist revolution, capitalism was pre-born in the womb of feudalism. The mother and child harboured the same DNA - private property. They were both compatible and yet incompatible. Capitalist social relations developed amidst feudal social relations. Becoming, and then being a capitalist was a material development, an actual process via the growth of the market, via the accumulation of capital, all of which shaped their consciousness as newly established commodity owners.

Their consciousness did not have to arise from without because it came from within, the product of them becoming functioning capitalists. That capitalism was superior and more dynamic than feudalism was self-evident to them. And with this consciousness grew the awareness that feudalism was acting as a parasitical fetter, sucking at profits while inhibiting progress. Feudalism needed to be cast asunder though the means to do so was undeveloped at first.

The same cannot be said of the proletarian revolution and its goal of ending the epoch of private property whose highest expression is capitalist commodity production. Unlike the capitalist mode of production which grew in the womb of the feudal mode of production, the communist mode of production cannot grow in the womb of capitalist production for this mode requires the complete negation of private property and the abolition of commodity production. Even if this development was possible, it would not be allowed by the ruling class and their state built on the solid foundations of private property.

But what capitalism does give rise to is the raw material for revolution. Firstly, in advanced capitalist countries, society has been transformed largely into workers who now number >80% of the population. Secondly, the capitalist system is becoming increasingly dysfunctional as its progress now relies on unevenly impoverishing the class of workers. Together, demographics and living standards comprise the explosive mixture of revolution requiring a detonator, revolutionary theory.

Nationalisation.

The issue of the social power of private property and that of the political power of the state has not stopped the ersatz socialists from proclaiming it is possible to nurture a socialist mode of production within the womb on capitalist production via the nationalizing of sections of capital. But nationalization, even when it leads to a so-called mixed economy, is still caught in the headlights of commodity production. It is not a separate mode of production, nor less one which is palpably more dynamic than private capital, therefore likely to replace it.

In these nationalized industries workers still work for an employer, in this case the state. They still have to pay off the debts incurred via nationalization, they are barred from engaging in self-management, they are prohibited from deciding what will be produced, they do not decide their own wage, and the pace of work is set by competition. Above all the state they work for is no friend to the worker but friend to the capitalist, and if this state tolerates nationalization, it does so, not to further the interests of the worker, but to protect the existing interest of the capitalist by propping up the national market. For the capitalists' nationalization is a response to an economic emergency, that and that alone.

Nationalisation is at the heart of the parliamentary road to socialism, the copy book for left reformism. It reads that by winning a majority in parliament, then using enabling acts, little by little the commanding heights and not so commanding heights of the economy can be taken into public ownership. Or so we are told. Of course the left reformists deliberately confuse public ownership with state ownership as though the state is a public body, not an instrument of class rule. It's like mis-identifying a mugger as someone collecting for charity. This only ends up disarming workers and increasing their vulnerability.

Here we draw a sharp distinction between nationalization as a **strategy leading to socialism** and as a response to episodic calls for nationalization. For example, today *Thames Water*, the largest privatized water company in Britain hydrating a quarter of the population is teetering on the verge of bankruptcy having failed to meet its debt obligations. The stink of this asset stripping and debt lading company is found on every river and stream, on every sea and beach. And yet the Labour Party has just embraced Thatcherism, the architect of these privatized fiascos, which always cost taxpayers dear. These opportunists, like every other opportunist, never have a sense of timing. First, they scrapped their green pledge on the day the *Copernicus Institute* declared the hottest month of the year, then they embraced Thatcherism when privatization is literally turning into shit everywhere.

In the case of *Thames Water*, and in order to intervene in what is going to be a political hot potato, our demand would be to nationalize *Thames Water* without compensation. Similarly with the *NHS*. The British *National Health Service* was once the universal model for effective health delivery. Now that it has been largely privatized it is a shambles, more of a medical dealer than a medical healer. In this case we do not hesitate to call for its renationalization and for it to be run by its medical staff and not accountants.

And of course if nationalizations do occur with the permission of the capitalist class out of necessity we would still call upon workers to take control of these industries by booting out the imposed management and by ensuring that no financial flight takes place. Were this to happen then the nationalized industries could indeed be the nursery for workers emancipating themselves, provided that on day one we urgently warn workers that the state would not tolerate this and retaliate; the police would be summoned to reimpose the original management, the worker managers would be driven from that sacred and hallowed space - the executive floor - and arrested, unless we are able to prevent this. Therefore alongside the fight for control there would need to be the organizing of a workers' militia. And this means weaning workers off the fantasy that parliament will come to their aid, that a mere enabling act will transform their lives, that such an act could be a substitute for workers' power.

The USSR.

At this point it is useful to dwell on the advent of *Utopian Socialism* in the first quarter of the 19th century. Exactly 200 years ago many prominent intellectuals dreamed of a better future. They described and designed their ideal societies. These utopias matured at the height of the industrial revolution when for the first time the productive potential of society could be seen in action. Without the industrial revolution it is unlikely these dreamers would have emerged, imagining how better to harness steam power.

And yet today, the opposite is the case. The productive potential of humanity has evolved in ways the dreamers could not have contemplated. And yet few dream about a better future. This is primarily due to the experience of the USSR. Look to the Soviet Union say the capitalists, there is your dream, it is sour. Of course, their role in the emergence of Stalin through provoking a vicious and deadly counter-revolution and then crushing the German Revolution, never gets a mention. They pretend to be mere bystanders.

Thus before anything can be done workers must be convinced there is an alternative to capitalism, and above all, that it is rewarding. Like all things alternative, but which have yet to come into existence, it must be grounded on solid theory. And this is where we part company with the Utopians and their wishful thinking of a world free of the horrors of capitalist society.

And this theory can only be made solid, living, by critiquing the political economy of the Soviet Union. This is unavoidable, and for those who think it is avoidable, by for example focusing on the shortcomings of capitalism, I have news for them, forget it. All the capitalists have to say is that despite all the shortcomings of capitalism workers in the East chose capitalism above the oppressive system they lived under.

This is why I have spent so much time on this website patiently providing such a critique. The central contradiction in the USSR was that between socialized production negated by exploitation. The reason

the system failed was not because of a suffocating bureaucracy although that did not help, it failed because once an economic system is socialized (not socialist) the exploitation of labour is incompatible with collective property and combined production.

What the USSR proved is something the capitalist does not want the worker to understand, and it is this, without a market, without exchange, without money, exploitation no longer propels an economy via the profit motive, instead it trips it up. In short, there cannot be a higher mode of production based on exploitation than capitalism. Capitalism is and will always be the highest expression of exploitation, its fullest realisation, and therefore when it ends so too must exploitation.

In order to impose exploitation on the Soviet worker the link between price and cost had to be broken in order to establish the space for a tax and then a profit margin. But if prices became meaningless then the glue holding the economy together, as well as the metronome regulating its rhythm, was shattered. Firstly, fictitious prices meant the incentive for workers to work productively and efficiently was ruptured because the umbilical cord connecting effort to reward was severed, and secondly, fictitious prices made planning impossible. Planning depends on accurate cost accounting.

I do not wish to dwell too much on the USSR because I believe it has been dealt with adequately on this site especially in my [pamphlet](#). Suffice to say that when the labour of the individual becomes part of the labour of society directly, but is immediately alienated, it gives rise, **predictably**, to all the perverse structural forms found in the USSR, notably, replication rather than innovation, cost adding rather than cost cutting, labour maximizing rather than minimizing.

There is only one test to measure the progress of any mode of production and that is its propensity to economize on labour time. Capitalism excels at this driven by profit, which is why it stands today while the USSR is fallen.

The theory of what is to come.

Marx wrote a critique of political economy which came to be known as *Das Kapital*. What is less appreciated is that it is also a profound primer for the lower stage of communism. It is only by achieving a comprehensive understanding of capitalist production itself that we can begin to describe the physiognomy of a future and higher mode of production born of the contradictions within capitalism itself. Only by understanding capitalism in motion can we assess its limitations while exploring the potentialities it makes possible.

It is only when we understand that the concrete form of exchange under capitalism takes the form of unequal exchange, does it become possible to understand how the profit motive actually works. Unequal exchange allows a labour saving investment to be advantaged through value flowing to it from less productive competitors. More money comes in less money goes out. Thus despite being labour saving, this investment is rewarded by additional profits at the expense of competitors making the investment worthwhile and driving capitalism forward.

But in the Soviet Union there could no unequal exchange because there was no exchange to start with. As I show in my pamphlet with graphs, this meant any labour saving investment immediately reduced the enterprises share of the labour time of society which was not compensated for by transfers from other enterprises, and correspondingly it reduced its share of the unpaid labour of society as well

making it harder to fund its imposed margins set in Roubles. Thus had I not understood capitalism via Marx's analysis, I could not in turn have explained why profit could not and did not work in the USSR.

And more than that, why once the market economy and exchange is abolished the profit motive is ended for all time. But what replaces it in the early stage of a communist society? Once again *Das Kapital* comes to the rescue when Marx explains the distinction between actual costs of production and paid costs of production, or the difference between what the expenditure of labour costs the worker and what it costs the capitalist. Once this is understood price becomes the outward appearance of actual costs of production, or more precisely, price expresses the weighted average labour time expended on that product.

This revelation is found in Chapter 10 of Volume 3. Its significance cannot be overestimated. By weighting labour time, we homogenize the differences in productivity resulting from workers working with uneven amounts of means of production thereby ensuring that collective ownership of these means of production does not give rise to any inequalities. And further, as workers become more productive and efficient it follows that as the weighted average labour time is reduced so too will price.

And here we come to the end of the chain. Falling prices under communism replaces rising profits under capitalism as the motive force in these opposed societies. Falling prices becomes the immediate reward for collective effort. Hitherto, it was assumed that the reward would be taken on the income side in the form of bonuses. This would be disastrous. It would create sectional interests and it would unbalance the production and consumption side. For a more detailed explanation visit my website and [read this article](#).

Thus the objective of a communist society at its outset is the goal of falling prices. It's as simple as that. And by falling prices we mean prices that fall due to productivity and efficiency improvements, not the cutting of corners, because as the USSR showed us, this leads to rising not falling costs. As long as the pursuit of society is falling prices as an end in itself via the economizing of labour time, there is no trigger for any economic crisis.

Once we dispense with rates of return as the motive of society we skirt around recessions because of the compounding contradiction between falling prices and rates of return. Falling prices sets in motion falling rates of return because it compresses profit margins, and if the sole purpose of production is the preservation of these rates of return, then that necessarily disrupts production, what we know as recessions or the phase when higher priced capital is purged. Something the 'Austrians' euphemistically call creative destruction.

Thus we find this revelation between price and return within *Das Kapital* itself in the section where Marx's analyses the tendency for the rate of profit to fall. In every way *Das Kapital* outlines how a society can be run free of contradiction, free of limitation and therefore free of crisis. And how by distraction, the USSR violated the essence of *Das Kapital* and the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* by using margins, by using returns and by using prices which did not reflect actual costs of production.

Conclusion.

All of this is summed up in my [programme](#). We are heading for a pre-revolutionary period in the West. Economies are in recession. Climate change is roaring. Computer programs are besieging jobs. And a hegemonic war provoked by the USA is threatening everyone. At no other time in the history of the

modern working class has it been more important to present an alternative to workers born in of the womb of solid theory.

Critics may say, Brian, but your programme is for the future, it is not for today. The best answer against this is to use the example of a ballerina. A ballerina may spin round and around, but he or she, by flipping their head and keeping their eyes pinned on the same spot, does not get dizzy, does not get disorientated and does not fall over. And the same applies to us. If we keep our eyes pinned on our goal as described by the programme, we will not be disorientated as the class struggle ebbs and flows buffeting us here and there, we will always be able to pick ourselves up and recover. But this would not be possible were we to lose sight of our goal. Which is why there can be nothing more important than this truism - program first - for it defines who we are, it distinguishes us, and it guides us. Without a programme we would not have a operative strategy, and without strategy the tactics which makes this strategy concrete through connecting it to the reality of struggle and the balance of forces would have lost its compass.

Finally, the capacity to change. Humans do not change for the sake of changing. Habits wire our brain automating our actions in order to free up creative thinking while connecting us to the outside world. Over 40% of the time we are on auto-pilot, the so called sub-conscious. It follows that changing our lives requires rewiring our brains, which involves a real wrench. This creates inertia something which the capitalists feed on by claiming change is disruptive and unnecessary.

This inertia can be broken, but only through providing a rewarding alternative. Without providing an alternative that can be defended, and all science must be capable of being defended, discussion around the capacity to and probability of change becomes redundant. Of course this alternative does not exist in isolation. Many other solutions will be thrown up and it will only be through the clash of ideas that one body of thought will become dominant, and through so becoming, act as a unifying guide to action.

Our audience as always is the vanguard of the working class, the most organised and politically cultured sections of the working class. If they can be won over then the bridge to the rest of the working class will have been built; workers who in turn are less amenable to theory, more swayed by the misleaders in the working class, and more inclined to a minimalist programme. For these workers experience counts more than words and it is by putting their experiences to the test that they will be won over by the vanguard.

Developing and propagating revolutionary theory, focusing it on the most receptive sections of the international working class, that is our mission. If workers act on theory we have a world to win, and if they don't, we have a world to lose.

Brian Green, 7th April 2024.