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There Is No Substitute For Social Revolution As A Mass Struggle

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The radical movement in this period needs to reject the Old Left ideal of the “revolutionary substitute”. What is this about? The attempt of various cults, political parties, and opportunist leaderships to substitute a revolutionary organization purporting to take the place of the masses of people in revolutionary social change. Allegedly, they make the revolution in their name.

Yet, history records that it is the masses of people that make the revolution, not vanguard political organizations, though they may play a role. Some opportunist groups claim to be “riding the people to power”, (like a flea on a dog’s ass, one supposes) and we know how that turns out, not worker’s democracy or people’s self-management of the economy, but bureaucratic dictatorship, mass murder, gulags and state repression, capitalist production methods. Terror with the beat-down of the very masses that authoritarian socialists extol so much in their rhetoric.

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The failure to recognize the decisive role of the people, as opposed to revolutionary politicians, theorists, and leaders has led us to the path of the current defeat of the Left and Socialism as mere caretakers of capitalist regimes in this period. These Leftists hold up Zimbabwe, Brazil, Venezuela or Nicaragua as sterling examples in this period of revolutionary regimes, but truthfully there has been no social revolution overturning capitalist property relations in either of these countries, and what is left of the revolutionary forces in Nicaragua and Zimbabwe have now been turned into a disgrace of an authoritarian one-man presidency, while the movement itself has faded away.

This has been repeated over and over with the subversion of one Old Left revolutionary movement after another in this period. They exist now not to overthrow capitalism, but to use it to have a “radical reform” government, and just provide social benefits to the masses and maintain enough popularity to stay in office. Even in the United States and other capitalist countries, Leftists and Black nationalists are rushing to join the government, now that Obama has been elected President, and is being used to hold back mass struggles, while posturing as a “progressive reformer”.

They want to become a more popular, “Left version” of Obama, not to lead the masses to overthrow the capitalist regime itself, but reform it even more. They say they are doing this because “this is all we can win.” If you limit yourself to radical reformism, maybe it is all you can win! That is what has led to years of treachery, political opportunism, repression, dictatorship, and ideological error in the so-called “ex-Soviet” states as well. Capitalism has subverted these ex-Communist parties into capitalism, and in some cases, like Russia, run by Mafia style ruling entities. In China, it is “capitalistic communism”, a communist bureaucracy which runs a capitalist economy and state. They are now in a capitalist economic and political conglomeration in opposition to Euro-American capitalism, while running their own variant.

What are we left with here? We do not have to be trapped in dogma and dead ideology; we can come up with an alternative. Too many groups and individuals, however, think you can mechanically take the practice of one country many years ago, and universally apply it through all time, as though it were gospel to all the countries of the world. We see now it has not worked, and has in fact, increased the suffering of the people of the world.

We need to put the masses in command, and recognize that all revolutionary social change must be as the result of mass action against capitalism, not vanguard cults to perpetuate their rule as the new masters of society. We know that the alternative of state socialism does not work, and in fact leads to more oppression by a “dictatorship of the state” [over the people] with state communism.

There is plenty of book theory at this time, but we still have not seen any viable alternative [be demonstrated] in this period to the state or capitalism. Certainly, we in Black Autonomy do not have all the alternatives, but we at least can ask the right questions.