

PEOPLE'S WAR VERSUS INDIVIDUAL TERRORISM

The politics of individual terrorism is once again in the news. It is an issue of importance not only for the growing revolutionary movements in this country and in Ireland, but for every part of the world where people are struggling to liberate themselves from capitalism and imperialism. An incorrect approach is capable of setting the working class movement back years. Hence it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the class roots and significance of this negative form of political activity.

Individual terrorism is based upon three notions. One is that it is possible for a handful of people by engaging in single combat to overthrow the ruling class or deal it crippling blows which will result in its overthrow after a period of time. Another is that it will excite the masses and draw them to the side of the revolutionaries. A third notion is that it will force the ruling class to resort to fascist rule thus clearing away all confusion regarding the benevolent or peaceful nature of capitalist/imperialist dictatorship.

Reality establishes that each of these notions are romantic, idealistic and harmful to the great task of making the revolution. Individual terrorism is not new. It has been tried out in practice and practice is the acid test. Only by testing ideas in reality is it possible to discover the laws of things. In practice across long stretches of historic struggle against exploitation and oppression the abysmal failure of individual terrorism has had its barren core laid bare. There exists no example of revolution being made by this method. No example of a handful being able to substitute for the masses of the people.

Workers, whether here or in Ireland, are not going to be drawn to revolution by the thought that they "might be next" to be blown up or savaged by the terrorists. It was noticeable that even after all the outrages committed by the RUC in the north there were still people who openly expressed dismay and sorrow for the two RUC who died as a result of the booby-trapped car a couple of months back. Far from winning the people to revolution and getting home the need to do consistent work, terrorism is capable of paralysing mass work and the raising of political consciousness and can turn even the most advanced workers away from the movement, even if they are to return at a later date.

The third notion of forcing on fascism is criminal, particularly here or in Ireland where there does not yet exist a mass-based movement with tried and tested leadership capable of leading the masses and smashing fascism. Fascism is coming at fast enough a rate without artificially spurring it on, even if this could be done. But it can't, for the class in power will resort to fascist rule when it suits it, and at a rate that suits it, not the subjective desire of a handful of individual romantics. What such acts can do is to provide the imperialist class with the excuse it is hoping for to launch a fascist onslaught, an excuse which if not provided for it, it will organise itself.

ONLY THE MASSES MAKE HISTORY Those who advocate and practice individual terrorism fail to grasp the laws determining the course of human history and in particular that the masses of the people make history, not a handful of individuals however determined or sincere. They underestimate the masses and reject their role as the main force and leader of liberation. They do not see that all major transitions (from primitive communalism to slavery, from slavery to feudalism, from feudalism to capitalism and imperialism) have been a product of mass revolutions involving many millions of oppressed people armed with revolutionary consciousness and arms. Counterposed to this the individual terrorists rely on artificial stimulants, such as the bombing of buildings and the assassination of individuals. They are romantics who seize the line of least resistance rather than engaging in the untiring arduous work of organization, education and agitation. Such harmful illusions can only result in retarding the vital work of preparing the masses of the people for an all-out attack against the capitalist system.

INDIVIDUAL TERRORISM IS A DESERTION OF THE PEOPLE'S STRUGGLE

Terrorism stems from frustration born of a sense of defeatism and impotence at ever being able to win the masses to the

struggle against capitalism and establish the socialist order. It satisfies only the frustrations and individual ego of small groups of "heroes" who condemn the real heroes, the people, as being passive bystanders. Individual terrorism is based upon romantic dreaming, whereas revolutionaries are realistic materialists. Terrorism is a desertion of the people's struggle and the task of preparing their political consciousness for revolution. Terrorists are false friends of the people and it befalls all serious comrades to undertake the responsibility of exposing this individualistic form of struggle by delivering well-aimed political blows whenever this issue is raised. If correct ideas do not combat this incorrect idea then the movement will be harmed and the imperialist class objectively served. The essential point to be driven home is the leading role of the working class as the only force capable of rallying around it other exploited strata discontented with the system. Also it must be stressed that when one representative of imperialism is assassinated there is always another to take his place. The terrorist should be asked what difference did it make to the lives of the American working class when Kennedy was shot in Dallas. Of course his death solved none of the problems of American workers, black or white. And neither could it for it left intact in power the imperialist class which is in a state of perpetual war with workers and oppressed peoples at home and throughout the world. Similarly, what would it matter in Ireland were Lynch or Chichester Clark to disappear from the stage of treachery in the absence of the destruction of the political power wielded by their masters, the British imperialist ruling class? It would matter very little, for there would still be Ireland the colony and the Irish people the oppressed. Individual terrorism has only a confusion of the real enemy to offer, and imperialism thrives on confusion.

AN ARTIFICIAL STIMULANT

It is the imperialist ruling class, not the working masses of Ireland or Britain, that needs some artificial stimulant. Individual terrorism often fits in neatly with its plans as it flounders in growing economic and political crisis in a new era in which mankind is advancing to worldwide victory over the system of imperialism which is heading for total collapse. At all costs the imperialists wish to isolate the revolutionaries from the masses. Every revolutionary, it is argued in the imperialist press, radio and television, is an animal, a terrorist, a bomber with no human values, a mindless thug fit for only the rope or the cell. They exploit individual terrorism for their own ends which are, of course, diametrically the opposite of those serving the people they always exploit and oppress. Is this the revolutionary movement? Is this socialism? say workers seeing film on their TV sets and pictures in the press of debris and death after a dose of individual terrorism. And even the politically conscious hold back from giving their all to the movement as they misguidedly think that what they see is the work of revolutionaries, when clearly it is not and cannot be when real terror and violence in the world today is caused not by the people correctly fighting for the liberation of their class but by imperialism denying the masses liberation. Thus no matter that some of the individuals concerned may pursue terrorism with the best of intentions and may be sincere in their support for this erroneous notion; the hard fact is that when the smoke drifts away it is the ruling class not workers who gain from the act.

INDIVIDUAL TERRORISM AND REVISIONISM

Moreover it must be pointed out that individual terrorism is linked with the revisionism of those who seek to contain the working class struggle within the reformist bounds of a few more crumbs from the table of the imperialists in the form of a few more shillings in the wage packet and better hours and conditions at the point of production. This is not to say that to struggle for these ends is wrong. It is to say that to make these ends the main issue and sidestep the central task of seizing political power is to present no challenge at all to the capitalist system. Wage rises amount to their cost being passed on to workers later. Revolution amounts to the passing of the ruling class into history. The link between individual terrorism and economism is their common denominator of a worship of spontaneity. In his great work "What is to be Done" Lenin explained the link in this way: that there was in reality no paradox in the unity

between economists whose position rests up on the "drab everyday struggle" and the terrorists who "call for the most self-sacrificing struggle of individuals". He went on to state: "The economists and terrorists merely bow to different poles of spontaneity; the economists bow to the spontaneity of the 'pure and simple' labour movement, while the terrorists bow to the spontaneity of the passionate indignation of the intellectuals who are either incapable of linking up the struggle with the labour movement or lack the opportunity to do so. It is very difficult indeed for those who have lost their beliefs or who never believed that this is possible to find some outlet for their indignation and revolutionary energy other than terror".

The revisionists extend the argument against individual terrorism and have developed a "theory" to attack all forms of revolutionary armed struggle, particularly People's War. Taking the Moscow line of "peaceful transition", which amounts to world imperialist power, America, they desperately try to trick people into believing that imperialism will allow itself to be overthrown and socialism built without the need for a mass armed revolt of the people led by the working class. So they too, just like the British ruling class and every other reactionary force, put before their people the lie that terrorism and People's War are the same, when in fact they are essentially different.

If individual terrorism is anti-working class, diverts people from a conscious understanding of the class enemy, alienates the masses who have not yet adopted the revolutionary road, has a history of total failure, and is an instrument of the imperialist class, then what is the way forward for the masses of the people who more and more wish to make revolution, build the socialist system and establish the dictatorship of the working class?

NEW ERA

First, it is crucial to grasp firmly that there is no need for frustration or despair. There is no need to resort to the depressive and negative practice of individual terrorism. Mankind has now entered the era in which imperialism is heading for total collapse and socialism is advancing to world-wide victory. It is an objective truth that workers and oppressed peoples across the globe are grasping that political power grows out of the barrel of a gun and are now waging fierce struggles for national liberation and socialism in country after country and continent after continent. Throughout Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean imperialism is being subjected to the hammer blows of the national liberation movements. Within the very heartlands of imperialism mass struggles are step by step unfolding, and as the reactionary authorities increase their fascist reprisals against the people so the scope of the revolutionary movement broadens and political consciousness intensifies, filling the people with a new hatred for capitalism and new courage to pursue the fight through to the end.

In America, for example, the growing black movement is uniting about it other revolutionary sections of society and white, black and students are slowly but surely coming together. Such is the raw material of making the revolution and opening a second front within the largest imperialist nation on earth.

All over the world people are coming to understand that imperialism really is a paper tiger, outwardly fierce and strong, inwardly weak.

In a word this great and historic new era will surely witness the downfall of imperialism as a system and the establishment of people's power throughout the world.

REVOLUTION IS THE MAIN TREND IN THE WORLD TODAY

In a word the struggle is on and the objective conditions render revolution the main trend in the world today. This development is true for Ireland as it is for the rest of the world's peoples. Despite all the many problems and the confusion sown by imperialism the conditions in Ireland are growing riper day by day for the emergence of a mass movement of the people. "A weak nation" said comrade Mao in his historic message to the people of the world on May 20th this year, "can defeat a strong, small nation can defeat

a big. The people of a small country can certainly defeat aggression by a big country, if only they dare to rise in struggle, take up arms and grasp in their own hands the destiny of their country. This is a law of history."

It is this correct reading of history, as opposed to an incorrect reading by those who advocate individual terrorism, that is the source of confidence and determination shared by revolutionaries, Marxist-Leninists throughout the world. The people are winning, and no force, no force is capable of turning back this historical upsurge, for there exists no force mightier than the revolutionary masses armed with class consciousness and guns.

INVINCIBLE PEOPLE'S WAR

Only the masses armed with the invincible weapon of People's War can hurl the imperialist system into its grave: the masses, not a handful of individual "heroes" bent upon, objectively, relieving their pent up frustrations at the expense of building the movement, but a vanguard party forging ahead leaving in its wake the opportunists right and left.

If the masses are the depository of the task of smashing imperialism, and if People's War is their invincible weapon, then the first step and the only possible starting point, taking into account the conditions that exist rather than those we would like to see existing, is for serious revolutionaries to go to the masses and learn from them, in the spirit of "From the masses to the masses"; we must, as comrade Mao points out "Take the ideas of the masses and concentrate them, then go to the masses, persevere in the ideas and carry them through so as to form correct ideas of leadership—such is the basic method of leadership".

The task is to go to the people with a programme of agitation, education and mobilization. There are no short cuts here, in Ireland or elsewhere. The people and the people alone are the motive force in the revolution and these tasks must be undertaken. Only the working class is directly connected to the most advanced form of economy and production. There is no class more exploited and thus revolutionary than the masses of the proletarians. Only the proletariat grows bigger day by day, only this section of society bears the historic burden of liberating the masses through leading the revolutionary movement as a whole.

The task before revolutionaries in the great cities of Ireland and Britain is to conduct many-sided agitation and take up the problems of the people and show through patient argument and discussion that all these problems are linked to capitalist society and that the only way to end the problems is to end capitalism and the only way to do that is to unite all the forces that can be united into a principled mass-based movement headed by a truly workers' revolutionary party composed of the most advanced elements of the working class and other exploited strata.

MASS AGITATION, EDUCATION AND ORGANIZATION

The practice of mass work must be linked to the theory of the masses, the theory of revolution, Marxism-Leninism. Without a theory there can be no revolution. Going to the people is not enough. We must go to the people with revolutionary politics, not add to their confusion by preaching right or left opportunism, e.g. economism, peaceful transition, individual terrorism, and so on. Both the Tory and Labour Parties go to the masses. They go with their politics, the politics of capitalism. We go to the masses with our politics. The politics of smashing capitalism. To attack individual terrorism and to expose its weaknesses is in no manner of speaking to attack revolutionary mass violence. Only through armed struggle can Ireland and ultimately Britain be rid of the capitalist system. But armed struggle by the working masses in their class interest, not by a handful for other reasons which amount to misleading the course of things and confusing aims and objectives. A People's War alone will free Ireland. There is and can be no other way. Imperialism entered at the point of a gun. A People's War is just that: a war by the oppressed and exploited people to smash the oppressor beast. To reach this point of struggle the stages of agitation, education and mobilization simply cannot be bypassed. Theory and practice, city and country must be linked. Here and now this is what must be done.