

CLASS 1. BOURGEOIS DEMOCRACY

READING

- a DSP, *Program of the Democratic Socialist Party*, Part I, Section 1, pp. 14-19 (6 pages)
- b Novack, *The Mystifications of Bourgeois Democracy* (53 pages)

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

- c Novack, *The Bourgeois Revolutions: Their Achievements and Limitations*

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1 "... in the historical sequence of social philosophies in the Western world, the genealogy of democracy takes its place as a secularised offspring of the Christian teaching on the abstract equality of all men." (Novack; b, 5) What was the progressive side of Christianity? What was its conservative side, and how did it enable Christianity to be used as an ideological instrument of the exploiting classes?
- 2 "The early advocates of the democratic cause translated the mystical promise of equality in the hereafter into prosaic legal and political terms by means of the second strand in their system of ideas the theory of natural law." (Novack; b, 6) What are the basic tenets of the doctrine of "natural human rights"? How are they in contradiction with the reality of capitalist society?
- 3 "The new democratic conceptions were most deeply rooted in the soil of capitalist commodity relations, sprouting and thriving where these were most powerfully operative." (Novack; b, 10) How does bourgeois democracy's conceptions of equality and freedom reflect capitalist commodity relations?
- 4 "The spread of the idea of individualism, which is the most prized value in the bourgeois ethic, is coeval with the generalization of commodity relations." (Novack; b, 11) Why is the idea of individualism the most, prized value in bourgeois ideology? What were the progressive aspects of this idea? What are the negative sides of bourgeois individualism, and how do they reflect the realities of capitalist commodity relations?
- 5 "Nationalism was a mighty force for overturning the old order and cementing the new one. In its heyday, the national-democratic movement was a potent generator of material, moral and cultural advancement for the people." (Novack; b, 17) Why is nationalism a fundamental component of the bourgeois outlook? When and under what conditions did nationalism play a historically progressive role?
- 6 "Liberalism designates both a specific phase in the evolution of bourgeois democracy and the ensemble of ideas and practices corresponding to it." (Novack; b, 19) What are the basic ideas of classical liberalism? How did they correspond to a specific phase in the development of capitalism? How were these ideas modified by the rise of capitalist monopolies?
- 7 "Parliamentarism has been the standard type of democratic rule in the most highly developed capitalisms ... Liberal supporters of capitalism esteem this kind of government as the supreme expression of self-rule." (Novack; b, 26) What were the origins of parliamentarism? What are the chief characteristics of this form of government? How does it serve the interests of the capitalist class?
- 8 "Liberalism was buoyed up and kept afloat by two illusions." (Novack; b, 43) What are these?
- 9 "A representative democracy is alien to the economic institutions of corporate capitalism. (Novack; b, 47) Why is this?"

CLASS 2. SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC LIBERALISM

READING

- a DSP, *Program of the Democratic Socialist Party*, Part I, Section 1, pp. 22-23 (2 pages).
- b Zinoviev, *The Social Roots of Opportunism*, pp. 11-12, 17-18, 23-37 (18 pages)
- c Painter, "Introduction," *Labor and the Fight for Socialism*, pp. 1-5 (5 pages)
- d DSP, "The ALP and the fight for socialism," *Labor and the Fight for Socialism*, pp. 9-19 (11 pages)
- e DSP, *Program of the Democratic Socialist Party*, Part III, Section 1, pp. 70-71 (2 pages)

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1 "The surplus profit which the British bourgeoisie has derived thanks to its monopolistic position, has enabled it to bribe its workers and thereby tear them loose from the socialist movement ... with these crumbs they bought off mainly the upper stratum of the working class — the labor aristocracy. That sufficed in order under otherwise favourable conditions for the bourgeoisie to demoralize the British labor movement." (Zinoviev; b, 24) What do we mean by the term "labour aristocracy"?
- 2 "The labor bureaucracy and the labor aristocracy are blood brothers. The group interests of the one and of the other very often coincide. Nevertheless, labor bureaucracy and labor aristocracy are two different categories." (Zinoviev; b, 12) What is meant by the term "labour bureaucracy"? How does the labour bureaucracy differ from the labour aristocracy?
- 3 "The social-liberals treasure Australia as the Promised Land, in which a coal miner can become a minister. But what has actually happened? Here too, a small parasitic band of labor leaders — the Messrs. Fisher, Hughes, and Company — rise, upon the shoulders of the oppressed mass of unskilled workers and, brought to the surface by a little group of labor aristocrats, are betraying the interests of the working class with a cynicism unprecedented in history." (Zinoviev; b, 28) How did the opportunist labour leaders betray the interests of the working class in World War I? How were they able to carry out this betrayal and yet remain at the head of the labour movement?
- 4 "To foster splits between the various strata of the working class, to promote competition among them, to segregate the upper stratum from the rest by corrupting it and by making it an agency for bourgeois 'respectability' — that is entirely in the interests of the bourgeoisie." (Zinoviev; b, 36) How do socialists combat the influence of "the labour aristocracy in the workers" movement?
- 5 "For nearly 100 years the Australian Labor Party has dominated labor movement politics in this country. For all of that time it has been the main obstacle to the advance of the socialist movement." (Painter; c, 1) Whose political interests does the ALP serve? How is it an obstacle, to the advance of the socialist movement?
- 6 "The formation of the Australian Labor Party reflected an advance in working-class consciousness ..." (DSP; d, 9) In what ways did the formation of the ALP reflect a step forward for Australian workers? In what ways was it a step backward?
- 7 "The class-collaborationist outlook of the union bureaucracy has been powerful within the ALP since its inception." (DSP; d, 10) How does the trade-union bureaucracy control the ALP? Is the ALP a working-class party or a bourgeois party?
- 8 "Important sections of the capitalist class usually favour the election of the ALP to office during periods of crisis, such as economic depressions or wars." (DSP; d, 12) Why is this? What are the limitations of Labor governments to the capitalist class?
- 9 "The struggle for reforms does not automatically lead to the erroneous view that reforms alone can solve the problems facing working people under capitalism." (DSP; e, 70) What is the difference between a revolutionary and a reformist approach to the struggle for reforms? What do we mean when we describe the ALP as a reformist party?
- 10 "Formerly, the typical Labor parliamentarian was a worker who had become part of the trade union bureaucracy and used his union base to secure preselection. But today, the typical Labor parliamentarian is likely to be a former arbitration commission lawyer or an academic. Present-day Labor politicians are more often people who feel a closer affinity with big business and less embarrassment about openly serving its interests." (DSP; d, 15) Discuss.
- 11 "Because the Labor left values its allegiance to the ALP more than its support to progressive policies and movements, and refuses under any circumstances to break with Laborism, it is unable to combat the pro-capitalist course of the ALP right and is forced to capitulate to it at every decisive turn." (DSP; d, 18) Discuss the role of the ALP "left."
- 12 "A socialist strategy cannot be based on the utopian perspective of transforming the liberal bourgeois ALP into a proletarian socialist party." (DSP; d, 19) Why is this?

CLASS 3. UNDERSTANDING HISTORY

READING

- a Novack, "Major Theories in History From the Greeks to Marxismn," *Understanding History*, pp. 21-39 (19 pages)
- b Novack, *The Long View of History*, pp. 3-12 (10 pages)

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

- c Novack, *Can the Future be Foreseen?* (17 pages)
- d Novack, *An Introduction to Dialectical Logic*, Lectures IV and VII (28 pages)

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1 "The low level of their productive powers, the immaturity of their economic forms, the narrowness of their activities and the meagerness of their culture and connections are evidenced in their extremely restricted views of the course of events." (Novack, a, 22) Is a sense of history innate or a socially derived phenomenon? When did "history" emerge?
- 2 "More immediately, glaring differences in the condition of life within their own communities and bitter conflicts between antagonistic classes induce thoughtful men who have the means for such pursuits to speculate on the origin of such oppositions, to compare the various sorts of societies and governments and to try and arrange them in order of succession or worth." (Novack; a, 23) Who made the first studies of history? What was their purpose?
- 3 "The main preconditions for an historical outlook upon history in the West were brought into being from about 1100 to 700 BC by the transition from the Bronze to the Iron Age in the Middle East and Aegean civilisations." (Novack; a, 24) What were the main precursors to the development of history as a scientific study?
- 4 "Just as they knew and named the major kinds of political organisation from monarchy to democracy, so did the Greek thinkers of both idealist and materialist schools originate the basic types of historical interpretation which have endured to the present day." (Novack; a, 25-26) What are the basic types of historical interpretation?
- 5 "Predominant among the Greek thinkers, however, were the sorts of explanation which ever since have been the stock in trade of historical idealists. There were five of these." (Novack; a, 26) What are the five main idealist theories of history? What are their main tenets?
- 6 "The next big advance in scientific understanding of history came with the rise of bourgeois society and the discovery of other regions of the globe associated with its commercial and naval expansion." (Novack; a, 30) Why did big advances in the understanding of history come with the rise of bourgeois society? Whose interests did the new understanding serve?
- 7 "Many leading philosophers of the bourgeois era had a materialist view of nature and man's relations with the world around him. But none of them succeeded in working out a consistent or comprehensive conception of society and history along materialist lines." (Novack; a, 32) What factors inhibited bourgeois thinkers from developing a consistent materialist conception of history?
- 8 "In the early decades of the 19th century Hegel revolutionised the understanding of world history, placing it at the widest vantage point of the bourgeois era. His contributions may be summed up in thirteen points." (Novack; a, 33) What were these? How did they revolutionise the understanding of world history?
- 9 "Not until the truthful elements in these two contrary lines of thought converged and combined in the minds of Marx and Engels in the middle of the 19th century was a rounded conception of history produced that was solidly anchored in the dialectical development of material conditions of social existence from the emergence of early man to contemporary life." (Novack; a, 36) What were the truthful elements in the understanding of history in Hegelian idealist dialectics and in 18th century French materialism that Marx and Engels combined?
- 10 "The all-embracing synthesis of history offered by Marxism' contrasted sharply with the worm's-eye view he had had in the Midwest ..." (Novack; b, 4) What is meant by the long view of history?
- 11 "This radical overturn is undeniable in the case of the birth and the evolution of the fish and its ultimate surpassing by higher species. But it is much harder for many people to accept such a conclusion when it comes to the transformation of a lower social organisation into a higher social organisation." (Novack; b, 7) How does society evolve? How is it related to biological evolution?
- 12 "If the fish can change, or be changed so much, on what grounds can narrow restrictions be imposed upon the changeability of mankind? Did our species lose its plasticity, its potentialities for radical alteration somewhere along the line from the transition of the primate to the human?" (Novack; b, 9) Discuss.

CLASS 4. THE ORGANISATIONAL CHARACTER AND STRUCTURE OF THE DSP

READING

- a DSP, *Program of the Democratic Socialist Party*, Part III, Section 1, pp. 62-67 (6 pages)
- b *Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Party* (19 pages)
- c Mohideen, "The Need for a Revolutionary Party," *Organisational Principles and Methods of the Democratic Socialist Party*, pp. 3-18 (16 pages)
- d Percy, "Building a Revolutionary Party — Our Concepts and Methods," *Organisational Principles and Methods of the Democratic Socialist Party*, pp. 19-39 (21 pages)
- e Lorimer, "Selecting a National Leadership Team," *Organisational Principles and Methods, of the Democratic Socialist Party*, pp. 40-51 (152pages)
- f Brewer, "The Party, the Political and the Personal," *Organisational Principles and Methods of the Democratic Socialist Party*, pp. 52-65 (14 pages)
- g Lorimer, "On Joining New Members to the Party," *Organisational Principles and Methods of the Democratic Socialist Party*, pp. 66-69 (4 pages)

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1 "Ultimately, only a revolutionary socialist party that has deep roots in the working class, that is composed primarily of workers, and that enjoys the respect and confidence of the workers, can lead the oppressed and exploited masses in overthrowing the political and economic power of capital. The central aim of the Democratic Socialist Party is to build such a mass revolutionary socialist party in Austrafia." (*Program of the Democratic Socialist Party*, a, 66) How does this central aim determine the organisational character of the DSP and its conception of revolutionary leadership?
- 2 "The revolutionary party] must function as a politically homogeneous campaign party capable of setting realistic objectives and concentrating its resources with maximum effectiveness." (*Program of the Democratic Socialist Party*; a, 65) Why is this? What do we mean by political homogeneity? Why is political homogeneity a precondition to unity in action?
- 3 "To achieve this homogeneity and unity in action, the party must above all be democratic." (*Program of the Democratic Socialist Party*; a, 65) Why is this? What are the essential requirements of party democracy?
- 4 "... the DSP is not 'all-inclusive' in the manner of the Labor Party or similar Social-Democratic fake-left parties in other countries." (Percy; c, 33) Why does the party select its members? What are the requirements for eligibility for membership of the DSP?
- 5 "As a voluntary union of revolutionaries, the party has both the right and the obligation to demand an unconditional loyalty to its program and organisation from all members and all who seek membership." (Percy; c, 33) Why is this? What do we mean by loyalty to the party? What are the other obligations of membership in the DSP?
- 6 "The purpose of [the party's] deliberations and internal discussions is to arrive at decisions for collective action and systematic work." (*Program of the Democratic Socialist Party*; a, 65) Why is this? What are the procedures for making decisions in the party?
- 7 "Members also have the right to form factions, to group together around a clearly defined set of objectives to change the policy, direction, or even the leadership of the party." (Mohideen; b, 14) Why do we defend the right to form factions in the party? What are obligations of factions, within the party and what dangers are these requirements aimed at avoiding?
- 8 "The organisational structure of the revolutionary party should combine democratic decision-making with centralised administration of the party's work, with lower units subordinate to higher units, beginning with its highest decision-making body - the national conference of elected local delegates." (*Program of the Democratic Socialist Party*; a, 65) Why does unity in action require centralised direction? How does the DSP combine democratic decision-making with centralised administration of the party's work? Why do we elect our leadership bodies?
- 9 What is the relationship between the basic units of the DSP (the branches) and its national leadership bodies? How is the national leadership committee of the DSP selected?
- 10 "The DSP is committed building an independent revolutionary youth organisation." (Percy; d, 35) Why? What is the relationship between the party and the youth organisation? What is the role and the obligations of party members in Resistance?

CLASS 1. MATERIAL PRODUCTION: THE BASIS OF SOCIAL LIFE

READING

Lorimer, *Fundamentals of Historical Materialism*, Chapter 4 [35 pages]

DISCUSSION POINTS

- 1 According to Marx and Engels, people “begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to *produce* their means of subsistence”. (p. 75) How does labour differ from the way in which animals acquire means of subsistence, e.g., food?
- 2 What is meant by the terms (a) “objects of labour”, (b) “means of labour”, (c) “means of production” and (d) “productive forces”?
- 3 How is the level of development of society’s productive forces measured?
- 4 What is meant by the term “social relations of production”? What is meant by the term “property relations”?
- 5 What is meant by “exploitation”?
- 6 “The interaction of the productive forces and production relations obeys a general social law that has operated throughout history, *the law of the correspondence of the production relations to the character and level of development of the productive forces.*” (p. 96) How does the character and level of development of the productive forces determine the existence of particular social relations of production as well as their replacement by other social relations of production?

CLASS 2. THE SOCIOECONOMIC FORMATION AND SOCIAL REVOLUTION

READING

Lorimer, *Fundamentals of Historical Materialism*, Chapters 5 & 6 [31 pages]

DISCUSSION POINTS

- 1 “The concept of socioeconomic formation is a cornerstone of Marxist social theory.” (p. 108) Why is this? What is meant by this concept?
- 2 “While every society is always characterised by a set of social relations of production, not every set of relations of production constitutes a *mode of production*.” (p. 110) Why is this? What is a “mode of production”?
- 3 “The basis and the superstructure are the fundamental structural elements of any socioeconomic formation.” (p. 114) Why is this? What is meant by the terms “basis” and “superstructure” of society? How does the former determine the latter?
- 4 “Social revolution implies a qualitative leap in the development of society, resulting in the replacement of one socioeconomic formation by another.” (p. 127) What is the fundamental cause of social revolutions? What is the main feature of a social revolution?
- 5 How does the proletarian-socialist revolution differ from all previous social revolutions in its tasks and character?
- 6 “... *social revolution demands unity of objective and subjective conditions*.” (p. 137) What are the objective and subjective conditions required for a social revolution?

CLASS 3. SOCIAL CLASSES AND CLASS STRUGGLE

READING

- a Lorimer, *Fundamentals of Historical Materialism*, Chapter 7 [24 pages]
- b Camejo, *How to Make a Revolution*, pp. 17-33 [17 pages]

DISCUSSION POINTS

- 1 What is the Marxist definition of social classes? Why is it scientifically superior to the way in which bourgeois sociology analyses social classes?
- 2 “In analysing society’s social structure, Marxism distinguishes between the basic and non-basic classes.” (Lorimer; a, 147) What defines the basic classes in any class-divided society? What is meant by “non-basic classes”?
- 3 What are the basic classes of the capitalist socioeconomic formation? Are all wage and salary earners members of the working class (proletariat)?
- 4 What is the cause of the class struggle? Why is the class struggle “the driving force of historical development”? (Lorimer; a, 155)
- 5 Why is the economic struggle of the workers “only a weak, embryonic, form of their class struggle”? (Lorimer; a, 158) Why is the political struggle the fully developed form of the class struggle?
- 6 “The proletarian party is the advanced, politically organised and active part of the working class, its political vanguard.” (Lorimer; a, 159) Why cannot the proletarian party embrace within its ranks the majority of the working class?
- 7 “Reformism is not an accidental phenomena in the working-class movement. It is an inevitable product of the spontaneous workers’ movement.” (Lorimer; a, 160) Why is this? What are the two fundamental types of reformism within the working-class movement and how do they differ?
- 8 “Opportunist tendencies and ultraleft sectarianism have the same class roots.” (Lorimer; a, 161) What are these?

CLASS 4. THE STATE, NATIONALISM AND PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM

Reading

Lorimer, *Fundamentals of Historical Materialism*, Chapters 8 & 9 [33 pages]

DISCUSSION POINTS

- 1 “Political activity comprises a number of organisations and institutions that were unknown in pre-class societies. The most important of them is the state ...” (p. 163) Why was political activity unknown in pre-class societies? What is the state?
- 2 “Just as the state cannot manage without law, so the law cannot function without the state ...” (p. 167) What is the law? If the state cannot *manage* society without law, why is every state a class dictatorship, i.e., “rule based directly upon force and unrestricted by any laws”? (Lenin, quoted by Lorimer, p. 165)
- 3 “Capitalist relations of production, based upon generalised commodity production, require the legal recognition of equality between all commodity owners ... This formal equality in the sphere of the capitalist market (which includes the labour market) is the basis for political democracy under capitalism.” (p. 172) What is democracy? Why is democracy under capitalism restricted and formal as far as the working people are concerned?
- 4 How does the system of parliamentary democracy exclude working people from involvement in governing society? How does the parliamentary system of government serve to maintain the rule of the capitalist class over the working class?
- 5 Why does the working class need to conquer state power in order to effect the transition from capitalist to socialist society? Why cannot the institutions of the capitalist state (army, police, civil service bureaucracy, parliament) be reformed to enable the working class to become the ruling class? Through what institutional mechanisms can the working class be organised as the ruling class?
- 6 “The dictatorship of the proletariat will wither away as all classes, including the proletariat, are dissolved into the classless, socialist society of freely associated collective owners of the means of production.” (p. 180) Does the “withering away” of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the advance to socialism mean the dissolving of all institutions of regulation of social affairs? What will replace the state in the classless, socialist society?
- 7 “... Marxists maintain that *nations are the product of the rise of capitalist economic relations* and of the struggle of the bourgeoisie against pre-capitalist social relations and classes.” (p. 185) What are nations? What distinguishes them from previous types of human community?
- 8 “... in the course of time, even the national framework proves too narrow for the capitalist mode of production. Capitalism creates a national and also a world market ... This leads to profound contradictions, to the emergence of *two tendencies in the development of nations under capitalism*.” (p. 187) What are these, and how are they historically manifested?
- 9 “In opposition to bourgeois nationalism, Marxists advocate the outlook and policy of *proletarian internationalism*.” (p. 192) What distinguishes the outlook and policy of bourgeois nationalism, on the one hand, and proletarian internationalism, on the other? Why do Marxists oppose all nationalism?
- 10 “... while Marxists oppose *all* nationalism, including the nationalist outlook of oppressed nations, they recognise that the nationalism of oppressed nations must be combated *in a different way* than the nationalism of oppressor nations.” (p. 195) How do Marxists combat the nationalist outlook of the working people of oppressed nations and win them to the outlook and policy of proletarian internationalism?