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***Transformative Education, Critical Education, Marxist Education:
Possibilities and Alternatives to the Restructuring of Education in Global
Neoliberal / Neoconservative Times***

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Abstract This paper briefly examines the context-specific paths and policies of neoliberalism and neoconservatism and the resistance to their deprivations. While calling for activism with micro-, meso- and macro-social and political arenas, the paper focuses on activity within formal education institutions. It suggests a series of measures - a socialist Manifesto for education, for discussion. It concludes with a call to action for teachers and education workers (and others) to be "Critical Educators," Resisters, Marxist activists, within and outside official education.

Neoliberalism and (Neo)-conservatism and The Nature and Power of the Resistance

The paths of neoliberalisation and (neo)-conservatism are similar in many countries. But each country has its own history, has its own particular context; each country has its own balance of class forces, its own level of organization of the working class and the capitalist class, and different levels of confidence within the working class and within the capitalist class. In countries where resistance to neoliberalism is very strong, as in Greece, then the government has found it actually so far very difficult to engage in large-scale privatization. When the Greek government tries to privatize public-sector activity, the ports, the buses, the trains, the museums, and so on, these efforts are met with general strikes. In Greece, working-class consciousness and class organization, in a situation of naked- and literally deathly- class war from above, are highly developed. In Portugal, to take another example, recently there were one million on strike, one million in demonstrations. That is in a small country of eight million people.

But in some countries, where trade-union resistance and working-class organizations' resistance are historically very weak, for example, Ireland, the United States, then neoliberalism and the capitalist class have an easier path. In Ireland, there are very small demonstrations. The most noteworthy action in Ireland against austerity and neoliberalism was one worker driving his big digger truck into the gates of parliament.

There has been little resistance even to extreme measures taken by, for example, recently in Wisconsin in the United States, the state government's passing a law which made it illegal to negotiate with trade unions. In other words, it has said there would be no more collective bargaining with trade unions. There were major demonstrations, and trade union protests—but the law passed, even if it did electrify the left and the trade union movement in the US. Levels of resistance vary considerably in different countries.

To Leftists in Britain and other states with an historically strong organized Left/ trade union/ working class organization, this was incredible, in the sense of it being hard to believe. Although there has been a succession of neoliberal and neoconservative governments in Britain, both Conservative and New Labour, the trade unions still have great strength. The Trade Unions Congress (TUC) in Britain has around six million members. On October 20, 2012, one hundred fifty thousand of us went on the march in London against austerity. That followed on from the student and worker marches against education cuts of 2010 and 2011.

When the organized working class wakes up, when it has the consciousness of acting as what Marx called a 'class for itself' (with class consciousness) instead of simply a 'class in itself' (a group of workers with similar relationships to the means of production, i.e. as workers, not capitalists), and when it has the experience and the ability to organize large scale protest and action, then we can take very strong action. However, some trade-union leaderships sometimes lead comfortable lives; sometimes they have good

relations with the government and are incorporated into the (capitalist) state apparatuses. Far from all the trade-union leaders are politically radical. However, some union leaderships are Marxist. To take Britain as an example, the Communist Party of Britain (CPB) has some power in unions at the top level; so does the Trotskyist group, the Socialist Party, (whose international is the CWI, the Committee for a Workers International) and so does the Socialist Workers Party (whose international is the IST, the International Socialist Tendency). And of course, socialists and Marxists are very active within the membership of trade unions, pushing the leaderships into more radical action, as organized in various rank and file, shop-floor-based groups. The power of the organized working class, if spurred into action, can have very considerable impact.

Levels and types of resistance against neoliberalism and austerity capitalism in the USA (Malott and Agostine-Wilson, 2013a, b), England and Wales (Canaan et al 2013; Hill, 2010d), Greece (Sotiris, 2013; Vatikiotis and Nikolakaki, 2013;), Ireland (O'Flynn et al, 2013; Power et al, 2013) and Turkey (Gezgin, Hill, 2013b; Inal and Akkamayak, 2012; Inal and Ozturk, 2013; Inal and Hill, 2014; Sayilan and Turkmen, 2013;) are described and analysed in great detail from a Marxist perspective in the chapters on 'Resistance' in *Immiseration Capitalism and Education: Austerity, Resistance and Revolt*. (Hill, 2013a). In an earlier set of books, published in 2009, struggles against neoliberalism in education in countries such as India were also set out (Hill, 2009a, b; Hill and Kumar, 2009; Hill and Roskam, 2009).

Teachers, both university/ higher education teachers and school teachers are among the most highly organized and unionized groups of workers, and sometimes the most militant. I have written elsewhere of the various arenas in which Marxist and Critical Educators can be, are and should be active- within the limits of individual capabilities and strengths, of course. These arenas are: 1) within the classroom; 2) within the wider school community / organization- such as the staffroom, the union branch; 3) within the local community/ town/ city- for example in tenants' or benefits' or anti-racist, or anti-austerity or other local community organisations and movements- and within town-wide/ city-wide political parties; social movements and trade unions; 4) at national levels within such movements, parties and organisations.

I point to these arenas for transformative political social and educational activism, since education- whether transformative or reproductive, whether revolutionary, reformist or conservative or reactionary- takes place without/ outside formal schooling and education systems as well as within.

However, in this paper, to this conference, I will focus on education and schooling within formal education systems.

Resistance, Critical Education and Critical Educators

Critical Education, Critical Educators, Marxist Education, Marxist Educators

Critique, dissent, transformation are not easy. Critical Marxist educators engage in critique that frames educational experiences within the conditions of Capitalism and, currently its current neoliberal and neoconservative form. And, I would add, they/ we should also do so recognizing its increasingly repressive Neo-conservative form, whether that be couched in terms of religion (Hindutva, Fundamentalist Christianity, Islam, Buddhism or Christianity) or in terms of Fascist/ Nazi thuggery and/ or in terms of increased repressive tactics and weaponry used by the police. The political context in different states from India to Turkey, from the USA to the UK, from Ukraine to Greece, shows the different faces of and interrelationships between calls to religion, armed racist/ neo-Nazi thugs and murders, and chemically treated water-canon used by the police. And, as ideological state apparatuses (Althusser, 1971, Hill, 2004) schools and universities themselves have a repressive function with repressive surveillance, punishment and new public managerialist mechanisms and measures to dissuade, and punish, 'deep dissent', 'deep critique'.

However, either quietly or openly, In schools, colleges, universities, many radical and Marxist critical educators try to affect four aspects of learning and teaching, asking questions about (at least) four aspects (see Hill, 2012a, b). These questions are common to many types of radical educator, not simply Marxists. Below, I add what is *specifically Marxist* about these four questions.

Pedagogy

Some critical educators question the teacher-centred *pedagogy*, the pattern of teaching and learning relationships and interaction, what Freire termed 'the banking model' of education. Instead, using Freirean perspectives and praxis, they and try, instead, to use democratic participative pedagogy which can break down, to some extent, patterns of domination and submission, and is a pedagogy that listens to children's, students' and local communities' voices. But this is no postmodern or liberal uncritically or relativism. This is no uncritical, postmodernist, or liberal, uncritical acceptance of polyvocality. As McLaren, in his postmodern phase put it, attempting to develop a resistance or Marxist postmodernism accepting metanarratives of Class, of Capital, or the Labour-Capital Relation- (an attempt which he subsequently recognized as unattainable), 'always totalise'. (Hill et al 2001; McLaren, 1994).

Critical Marxist educators also attempt to utilize different types of pedagogy in teaching, to engage in non-hierarchical, democratic, participative, teaching and research. Such approaches are rooted in social constructivist Vygotskian understandings of learning, and are also aimed both at producing co-learning, by teachers as well as taught, and at overtly welcoming and valuing more cultures than are commonly valued in a transmission mode of teaching. Vygotsky, as a Marxist, was inspired by Marx's *dialectic* in that it rejects top-down and bottom-up accounts of the learning process - these unidirectional models originate in class-based societal relations which Marxists reject.

Of course critiques of over-dominant teacher-centred pedagogy are not restricted to Marxist educators. They are also made by liberal-progressive, child/ student-centred educators, anarchist educators, and by some conservative educators, concerned about teaching effectiveness and preparation for the workplace. And, following Gramsci, Marxist teachers, by virtue of their role in actually teaching, in actually carrying out the role of teacher, should maintain an authoritative stance where appropriate.

But critical education is about far more than pedagogy (Hill, 2014). Indeed, it takes place outside schools and universities as well as inside (Hill, 2012c, 2013a) as the rise of alternatives to the English university indicates (Canaan *et al*, 2013; Hill, 2013a). There is educational resistance not only within, but also outside the state-controlled education structures. Marxist teachers, cultural workers, intellectuals, are active within teach-ins at the 'Occupy' occupations, their Tent Cities, the Free University movement, and through oppositional media and cultural workers, as well as within trade union and student groups- and within political parties.

Curriculum

A second question Marxist and other critical educators can and should ask is about the *curriculum*- who selected the content and how rigid is it? Even where the curriculum is very tightly controlled, even where it is very rigidly prescribed, there are, as Gramsci, taught us, always spaces, little spaces for us to infiltrate, to use, to colonise. These spaces- sometimes broad, sometimes narrow- exist in schools, prisons, youth clubs, universities and vocational colleges and in 'tent cities', teach-ins and teach-outs and in emergent alternatives. And in various social media and even, occasionally, in 'official' media.

Marxist educators, indeed critical educators in general, can, with students, look at the curriculum and ask, 'Who do you think wrote this? 'Who do you think decided on including this in the curriculum?' 'What do you/ we think should be in the curriculum that is currently absent?' 'Why do you think it is absent?' 'Who do you think benefits and who loses from this curriculum?', 'What is the ideology behind this book/ task/ lesson/ curriculum piece?' These questions can be asked with ten year olds, 16 year olds, 40 or 70 year olds.

However limited the spaces are, within a school, university or educational site, within a curriculum, we can always find some possibility to question and to encourage the children/ students to do this as well so that they are, in effect, developing an awareness of what can be called 'ideology critique' (Kelsh and Hill, 2006). And then we can suggest, and seek from students, an alternative, perhaps even if only for five minutes in a lesson/ session. We can question existing versions of history. We can ask, 'is there a different version or view of the past, the present, or the future?'. So, looking at the work of Marxist and Communist teachers and Critical Educators, we can affect the content of curriculum, or, if that is, at any particular time/space, almost impossible, we can seek to

develop ideology critique, an understanding of the Capital-Labor relation, of capitalism and its relationship to education systems, of ideological and repressive state apparatuses, and of how schools and universities are shaped and controlled into producing politically and ideologically quiescent and hierarchically organized and rewarded labor power. Where Marxist educators, and Revolutionary Critical Educators (McLaren, 2005) differ from more social democratic and liberal critical educators is in the emphasis placed on resistance and socialist transformation (Hill, 2014; Kelsh and Hill, 2006; Skordoulis and Hill, 2012). Social democratic and liberal educators rarely, if ever, suggest, teach about, or proclaim the need for an anti-capitalist revolution, the need to replace capitalist economic and social relations by socialist ones.

Organisation of Students

A third question in education that critical and Marxist educators can and should ask is about *organization of the students*. How should children of different social class, gender, and ethnic backgrounds and different sexual orientations be organized within classrooms, within institutions such as schools and universities, and within national education systems? Are some groups, such as girls, such as some ethnic minorities, such as the working class, or the poorer sections of the working class, in fact systematically labeled, segregated, divided, demeaned?

In some countries virtually all children go to the same *type* of school. But children tend to go to schools where their own class predominates. And this can be a problem. Some socialist municipalities ('local education authorities') in England in the 1960s and 1970s such as Sheffield and the ILEA (Inner London Education Authority, where I taught in a comprehensive secondary (high) school in the late 1960s) did use measures such as 'zoning' (drawing catchment areas for schools that deliberately included poor, average income and high income urban areas) or taking a set proportion of children/ students from what were called 'ability' bands (in reality, 'attainment' bands). But there is a clash of principles here, with no set Marxist solution- the clash between the deliberate mixing of attainment/ ability bands or groups of children/ students, and a deliberate mixing of different social strata) on the one hand, and a different principle of neighbourhood schooling on the other.

In considering how children/ students should be grouped between schools and within them, there is also a question of how the education system inculcates a differentiated sense of class awareness in working, middle and ruling class students. And it tries to keep the working class as a working class that is obedient, subservient, individualistic, interested in only themselves not in collectivity, not in community. Marxist and other egalitarian educators clearly prefer and work for what in Britain is called 'comprehensive' schools, and in India, for example, is called 'the common school'. But then, even where this happens (as in Finland, where there are only a single handful of private schools, where students up to the age of sixteen are taught in common/ comprehensive schools in 'mixed ability' classes) there are internal informal

mechanisms, the hidden curriculum of differentially ('raced', gendered' and 'sexually oriented' expectations and responses to different cultural capitals (Hill, 2009c; Reay, 2006).

Ownership, Control and Management of Schools and Colleges and Universities

A fourth question Marxist and other critical educators ask is about *ownership and control of schools* (and, indeed, vocational colleges and universities). Who should own, control and govern schools, further education (vocational) colleges and universities? Of course we cannot change the law at a stroke, but we can lead a movement that at some stage- in two years time, ten years time, twenty years time- the ownership and governance of schools can be changed, made democratic, and secular and can attempt to be egalitarian. Instead of, as in some countries, schools, colleges and universities being run by a religious state, by transnational corporations (Ball, 2012), or by religious organizations themselves, by 'for-profit' private companies, by companies that are in theory and public discourse 'not-for-profit' (but which reward handsomely their executives and their friends), or schools that are run and governed by rich businessmen or women.

Marxist educators (and others, of course) believe that schools, colleges and universities should be run democratically, with education workers and students, as well as elected representatives of local communities, having powers in and over those education institutions, within a secular, democratic national framework. Explicit in this is the assertion that education is a public good and a public right that should not be distorted and corrupted by private ownership- there should be no private schools, colleges or universities. (For attempts to address these various aspects of education, in developing a socialist policy for education, see Hill and Boxley 2007, and, in particular, Hill, 2010b).

A question related to 'who should own and control schools' is that of how should they be managed, what should be the style of management- to put it crudely, should it be democratic and participative and collegiate, or should it be authoritarian, top-down control. Associated with ownership and control, the move globally to privatize and pre-privatize state education (which has gone a long way in the USA and in England) is that form of control and management of the workforce- of teachers, lecturers, school support and administrative staff- known as New Public Managerialism- the importation of the huge differentials or pay, perks and power typical of the private sector, into the public sector, into education (and other public services such as health and welfare/ social services).

Marxist Educators

What is specifically Marxist about these four questions is that while Marxists work for and willingly embrace reforms such as are implicit in the above criticisms, we are committed to three forms of analysis and action, that social democrats, radical liberals,

or radical democrats, or non-Marxist feminists, or non-Marxist anti-racists or non-Marxist Queer activists are not.

What define Marxists is *firstly*, our belief that reforms are not sustainable under capitalism, and that therefore what is needed is a revolution to replace, to get rid of, the capitalist economic system with its capitalist economic relations of production and its capitalist social relations of production- the ownership by capitalists of the wealth and the power in society. Revolutions can be violent (ruling classes do not often give up their power peacefully) or it might, possibly, be through the ballot box or a combination of the two. The ballot box alone cannot bring about revolution because state institutions in capitalism are not democratic. A Congress or Parliament or president or Prime Minister has limited power over these institutions. An elected socialist government would not be able to bring about much change which went against the interests of the capitalist class because the military, judiciary, police and corporate hierarchy are not democratic. They use state violence to stop it. This is the critique for example made by the Greek revolutionary Marxist coalition Antarsya of the radical left Syriza coalition, which can be characterized as left social democratic, in Greece which is, on current projections (summer 2014) likely to be elected into government. But for revolutionary Marxists, a socialist revolution is necessary, so that there comes *into power* (not just *into government*) an egalitarian, socialist economic, political and education system (Hill, 2012e).

The *second* point of difference between Marxist and non-Marxist radicals is that in order to replace capitalism, Marxists have to actually work to organize for that movement, for that action. Thus a duty as a Marxist is as an activist, within the limits of one's ability and competing demands, and a recognition that political organization, programme development, and political intervention are necessary. Revolutions do not fall off trees, like apples. They have to be fought for- and defended.

The third point is the *salience of class* as compared with other forms of structural oppression and discrimination and inequality. Marxists, Marxist Feminists, Marxist anti-Racists, Marxist Queer Theorists stand together with social movements and civil rights campaigners in opposing racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination. But Marxists go further than criticizing (and acting against) social discrimination, oppressions, into economic rights. And further than that, into the recognition that full economic rights cannot be achieved under a capitalist economic system, but only under a socialist or communist system.

Furthermore, that it is only the organized working class (black-white; male-female; straight-LGBT, Dalit and all other castes) that can organize to and succeed in replacing the Capitalist system. These are the points of difference between Marxists and other radical liberals and leftists. (Hill, 2008; 2009; 2012d).

A Socialist Manifesto for Education

Below I itemize twenty-one policy aspects and proposals, rooted in the analysis I have set out. To repeat, many of these will be and are supported by a variety of social democratic, liberal, social justice ideologies, teachers, citizens. But taken together they offer a sustained challenge to neoliberal capitalism. The extent to which they might offer a fundamental challenge to capitalism itself, as opposed to the current neo-liberal-neoconservative phase of capitalism, the extent to which this might be part of to what Trotsky termed, a 'transitional programme' is a matter for debate.

Prior to doing so, I wish to acknowledge that to make proposals in educational theorising, we must always recognise the real limits of the situations and the restrictions placed on us and during that process. As Toulmin puts it, 'until the basic empirical or experimental facts are established, we are not in a position to develop theoretical explanations. Till then the pursuit of theoretical generalizations is premature' (Toulmin, 1999, p. 61). It is fruitful, following such analysis, to engage at a normative level of what should happen in schools and in an education system. This is not independent of what does happen. This normative section below, this attempt at programmatising, has been preceded by a factual analysis of the history, structure, content, functioning and features of compulsory State schooling and education systems.

Below, I present a Programme, or Manifesto, for Education, for discussion (this a development of Hill, 2010b).

[1] **Cut class sizes** in England, for example many classes in primary (elementary) schools have more than 30 pupils- currently some of the largest in the rich world- much larger than in private schools for example. According to OECD research Britain is 23rd out of 30 developed countries in terms of large class size. Other countries such as Finland have a maximum class size of 20. Finland is widely seen as providing an extremely high quality of education. On countries with a lower GDP, of course, class sizes of 50 to a hundred are not uncommon. For a **maximum class size of 20 by 2020** in both primary and secondary schools!

[2] **Abolish league tables and abolish most externally set assessment tasks** (some external testing is necessary, but the types of regular tests of factual knowledge typical of the USA and England- termed 'high-stakes testing' so very often restricts teaching to 'teaching to the test', relegates non-factual learning to the sidelines, and also results in undue stress (and an increase in bedwetting, compared to the testing eras, for example).

[3] **Restore local democratic control of state schools that have been handed over to private corporations, charities and individuals to run, and establish local democratic control of such schools.** In England and Wales such schools are known as 'Academies',

in the USA as 'Charter Schools'. In addition, in England, there are state funded 'Free Schools', run by specific groups, often sectional groups of parents. Schools should be run by the democratically elected local councils/ municipalities, and keep to national pay and conditions agreements for those who work within the institutions. It is unacceptable that rich businessmen and women, or religious organizations, or 'educorporations'/ private companies running a 'chain', or 'brand' of school should be handed control of state funded schools, such as Academies or Charter schools. It is also unacceptable that such pre-privatising pet projects of governments should be more advantageously funded than the rest of the state schools. The added investment that governments put in to 'pump-prime' their favoured experiments should be kept and enhanced, *but* it should be distributed between all schools. Our schools and the children in them are not for sale! Nor, through uneven funding for different types of school (e.g. Academies) should some schools be set up for success at the expense of others being set up (and under-funded) for relative failure.

[4] **For a fully Comprehensive Secondary School system (known in India as a Common School)** so that each school has a broad social class mix and mix of ability and attainment levels.

[5] **Private profiteering out of our schools!** Education services that have been privatized, hived off and their contracts given to private profiteers should be brought back into public control. These include, in England, the schools inspectorate, known as Ofsted, the body that runs student loans, school meals, cleaning and caretaking. This is so that proper pay and conditions can be restored to those workers whose jobs have been 'contracted out', and so that, in schools and universities, all school / university workers- all who work contractually in those institutions- can feel and act as part of the school/ college/ university community. Students and school workers who are protesting at further privatisation should be supported.

[6] **For the integration of existing private schools into the state education system** – so that the benefits of the private school system are shared amongst all pupils/ students. All schools should be placed under democratic locally elected local council control. Private schools should be prohibited. Religious groups of any religion should not be allowed to control and run schools. No to big business / private capital running our schools and children!

[7] **'Faith Schools' and organised religion should be removed from schools.** If Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Zoroastrians, Buddhists, or whichever religion wishes to teach religion, they should do it in their own time, places of worship (Saturday/Sunday schools) or in their supplementary or complementary schools. Ethics and spirituality can be taught, and teaching about religions, but there should be no indoctrination or brainwashing. A critical approach should be taken towards religion, recognizing its social and personal functions but also its political functions.

[8] **A good, local school for every child.** “Surplus places” should actually mean lower class sizes! And increased community use of school facilities.

[9] **Free, nutritious, balanced school meals** for every child to combat poor diets, obesity, for some children, actual hunger!

[10] **Restore free adult education classes** in pastime and leisure studies as well as in vocational training/ studies.

[11] **Restore or establish free, state-funded residential centres and Youth Centres/ Youth clubs** for school-children so they can widen their experiences of life in safe circumstances and enhance their education beyond the confines of the home or city.

[12] **Free up curricula that are over-prescriptive** so there can be more creativity and cross-subject/ disciplinary work.

[13] **Revise inspectorial and surveillance systems such as (in England) Ofsted.** The results of school inspection systems such as, in England, Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education) are to penalise even the best schools (outstanding in every aspect- other than in SATS attainments) in the poorest areas and to strike fear into teachers. Some external supervision and inspection is however necessary, in extreme cases, for example, to make sure there are no ‘ghost schools’- that is, to make sure that schools actually exist, and to keep some oversight of school performance across a range of criteria, a range wider than attainment in tests.

[14] **Encourage Critical Thinking** across the curriculum. Teach children not ‘what to think’, but ‘how to think’. Teach about Marxist analysis and the class exploitative nature of capitalism. Such critical thinking should include how to think critically about the media and politicians and also about Marxist analysis. Critical analysis should be self-critical.

[15] **Teach in schools for ecological literacy and a readiness to act for environmental justice as well as economic and social justice.** Encourage children to ‘reach for the stars’ – and to work for a society that lets that happen – a fairer society with much more equal chances, pay packets and power, and about environmental and sustainability issues.

[16] **Ensuring that schools are anti-racist, anti-sexist and anti-homophobic** – making sure schools encourage equality, welcoming different home and group cultures. As part of this, anti-bullying practices in every school must be fully implemented, to combat bullying of all sorts, including racism, sexism, homophobia, and bullying based on disabilities, on caste and- on social class and poverty/ wealth. Anti-bullying policies should also be part of the formal curriculum.

[17] **An honest sex education** curriculum in schools that teaches children not just ‘when to say no’, but also when to say ‘yes’. This should be a programme that is focused on positives and pleasure and personal worth, not on stigmatising sex and sexualities.

[18] **Proper recognition of all school workers, and no compulsory redundancies.** For teachers, secretarial and support staff, teaching assistants, school meals supervisory assistants, caretaking staff, there should be workplace democratic regular school forums in every school. Regarding jobs, there should be no compulsory redundancies – any restructuring to be conditional on agreement with the trade unions.

[19] **Setting up of school councils which include students** – to encourage democratic understanding, citizenship, social responsibility, and a welcoming and valuing of ‘student/pupil voice’.

[20] **Broaden teacher education and training** so that the negative effects of the ‘technicisation and de-theorising’ of teacher training (that were the result in England of the 1992/1993 Conservative re-organisation of what was then called teacher education-subsequently retitled teacher training). Bring back the study and awareness of the social and political and psychological contexts of teaching, including an understanding of and commitment to challenge and overturn racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of underexpectation, labelling and discrimination – such as discrimination against working class pupils.

[21] **A completely fully funded, publicly owned and democratic education system from pre-school right through to university.** Education is a right not a commodity to be bought and sold. So: no fees, like in Scandinavia, Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, where education up to PhD level is free. No to university or further education/vocational training fees! And bring in a living grant for students from less well-off backgrounds/income.

Educate, Agitate, Organize: a Marxist Analysis

We Marxists seek to serve and advance the interests of the working class. We, as teachers, as educators, are working class, too, we sell our labor power to capitalists and to the apparatuses of the capitalist state, such as schools and universities. We have to consistently and courageously challenge the dominant ideology, the hegemony of the ruling class, the bourgeoisie, the capitalist class. We are in a battle for dominance of our ideas; there are “culture wars” between different ways of looking at/interpreting the world. We have to contest the currently hegemonic control of ideas by the capitalist state, schools, media, and their allies in the religions.

But the situation we face is not just a war of ideas, an ideological war: it is also an economic class war, where the social and economic conditions and well-being of the

working class are threatened and undermined by the ruling class and its capitalist state (Campagna, 2013). David Blacker (2013) goes even further, and argues that contemporary and future capitalist onslaughts will result in deaths for 'superfluous' workers and sections of the non-working industrial reserve army (such as elderly people, for example the 13,000 extra deaths of old people in the winter months in the UK due to lack of affordable heating). If we sit and do nothing, if their ideas are not contested, then capitalism will continue to rule, to demean, to divide, to impoverish us, and the planet.

At certain times in history, and in certain locations, the disjunction—the gap, the difference—between the material conditions of workers' existence on the one hand, our daily lived experience, and, on the other hand, what the newspapers and the media and the imam and the priest and the rabbi say/ preach, that gap becomes so stark, so obvious, that workers' subjective consciousness changes. This is particularly likely when workers with more advanced revolutionary consciousness succeed in bringing about a widespread and more evenly distributed consciousness amongst the class as a whole.

At this moment—now—in some countries in the world, the gap between the "official" ideology that "we are all in together" and that "there is no alternative" (to austerity), or, in schools and universities faced by commodification and managerialism and (pre)-privatization—that gap becomes so large that the ruling party, and the ruling capitalist class, and capitalism itself, loses legitimacy. And so, as in Greece now, and in Portugal, in Spain, in Turkey and Brazil, and in other countries such as Britain and India, we Marxists are necessary. Necessary in leading and developing changes in consciousness, a change in class consciousness, and in playing a leading role in organizing for the replacement of capitalism.

Programme

In 1938, in "*The Transitional Programme*", Trotsky addressed the types of programmes moving the discussion beyond the *minimum programme* (minimum acceptable reforms, such as those to protect and improve existing rights and entitlements, such as rights at work, social and political rights)) and the *maximum programme* (socialist revolution, with the type of society ultimately envisaged by Marx, a socialist non-capitalist/ post-capitalist society) that were advanced by late nineteenth and early twentieth century social democrats and by communists of the 3rd international and articulated a new type of programme: the *transitional programme*. Trotsky, with a distinct resonance to today's struggles, wrote:

The strategic task of the next period – prerevolutionary period of agitation, propaganda and organization – consists in overcoming the contradiction between the maturity of the objective revolutionary conditions and the immaturity of the proletariat and its vanguard (the confusion and disappointment of the older generation, the inexperience of the younger generation. It is necessary to help the masses in the process of the daily struggle

to find the bridge between present demand and the socialist program of the revolution. This bridge should include a system of transitional demands, stemming from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat.

Classical Social Democracy, functioning in an epoch of progressive capitalism, divided its program into two parts independent of each other: the minimum program which limited itself to reforms within the framework of bourgeois society, and the maximum program which promised substitution of socialism for capitalism in the indefinite future. Between the minimum and the maximum program no bridge existed. And indeed Social Democracy has no need of such a bridge, since the word socialism is used only for holiday speechifying. The Comintern has set out to follow the path of Social Democracy in an epoch of decaying capitalism: when, in general, there can be no discussion of systematic social reforms and the raising of the masses' living standards; when every serious demand of the proletariat and even every serious demand of the petty bourgeoisie inevitably reaches beyond the limits of capitalist property relations and of the bourgeois state.

Trotsky continued,

Under the menace of its own disintegration, the proletariat cannot permit the transformation of an increasing section of the workers into chronically unemployed paupers, living off the slops of a crumbling society. The right to employment is the only serious right left to the worker in a society based upon exploitation. This right today is left to the worker in a society based upon exploitation. This right today is being shorn from him at every step. Against unemployment, "structural" as well as "conjunctural," the time is ripe to advance along with the slogan of public works, the slogan of a sliding scale of working hours. Trade unions and other mass organizations should bind the workers and the unemployed together in the solidarity of mutual responsibility. On this basis all the work on hand would then be divided among all existing workers in accordance with how the extent of the working week is defined. The average wage of every worker remains the same as it was under the old working week. Wages, under a strictly guaranteed minimum, would follow the movement of prices. It is impossible to accept any other program for the present catastrophic period.

[...] The question is not one of a "normal" collision between opposing material interests. The question is one of guarding the proletariat from decay, demoralization and ruin. The question is one of life or death of the only creative and progressive class, and by that token of the future of mankind. If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities

generated by itself, then let it perish. “Realizability” or “unrealizability” is in the given instance a question of the relationship of forces, which can be decided only by the struggle. By means of this struggle, no matter what immediate practical successes may be, the workers will best come to understand the necessity of liquidating capitalist slavery. (Trotsky, 1938)

Conclusion

The ‘decay, demoralisation and ruin’ Trotsky speaks of, are, for many millions of workers’ families- including what in the USA and elsewhere are called ‘middle class’ workers- an everyday reality in this current era of capitalism, neoliberal capitalism, or ‘immiseration capitalism’. This immiseration is apparent through the rich as well as the poor worlds. The precise organisation and characteristics of the resistance to the deprivations is a matter for strategic and tactical considerations, relating to the current balance (strength, organisations, (dis)-unity) of class forces in specific local and national contexts. What is clear, though, is that the problematic regarding capitalism, for Marxist activists and educators, is not just to reform it, welcome though such reforms, such as ‘minimum programme’ are, and active in campaigning for and to protect such reforms we must be. But, regarding capitalism, our task is to replace it with democratic Marxism. As teachers, as educators, as cultural workers, as activists, as intellectuals, we have a role to play. We must play it.

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