

Nationalism: Progressive And Reactionary

In most "third world" countries, petty-bourgeois nationalist parties are in power. This is due to the fact that the working class is generally underdeveloped, and consequently communist and workers' parties are relatively - weak or non-existent.

As a result of the dual character (labour and capital) of the petty-bourgeois class, nationalist regimes generally vacillate. Sometimes they take labour/progressive positions; at other times, conservative/reactionary positions.

This vacillation is characteristic of the PNC, a petty-bourgeois nationalist party.

Pro-Imperialist

In the first period (1964-70), after coming to power with the help of Anglo-American imperialism, its nationalism manifested itself in a reactionary role. Its domestic and foreign policies were geared to foster imperialist interests.

This was made clear by Dr Wilfred David, Economic Adviser to the government; and Dr Ted Braithwaite, Guyana's first Ambassador to the United Nations. Dr David in 1971 stated: "... we have had growth without development, characterized by a high level of dependency."

Dr Ted Braithwaite, the author of "To Sir With Love," exploded a bombshell on his resignation as Ambassador. He said that every time he wanted to take positions at the UN which he thought were in the best interests of Guyana, he would get messages from the government telling him what the Americans felt about those issues, and to take positions in accordance with those views.

In the 1971-73 period, the PNC nationalist regime vacillated, with the balance in favour of imperialism. It was forced to nationalize the Demerara Bauxite Company (DEMBA) after its Canadian owners, Alcan, refused to accept "meaningful participation in bauxite," paid overgenerous compensation, and appointed the US company Philipp Bros., as the marketing agent. At the same time, the regime attacked the Soviet Union by espousing the "2 superpowers - 2 imperialisms" line.

Anti-Imperialist

In the 1974-76 period, the dominant tendency of the petty-bourgeois duality in the PNC leadership played a progressive role. It carried out limited national tasks of recuperating the national economy from imperialist ownership and control.

However, through racial and political discrimination, lack of democracy at the political, social and economic/industrial levels, manipulation and corrupt practices, the PNC established a bureaucratic/military, and not a revolutionary-democratic, form of rule.

Nationalization under the PNC regime is serving not the masses of the working people but the bureaucratic-bourgeoisie, the neo-comprador parasitic bourgeoisie (contractors, commission agents and others servicing the state corporations) and the emerging rural monopoly bourgeoisie on the other.

Conservative

The same petty-bourgeois nationalist leadership which played a progressive role in the 1974-74 period has become a force of conservatism, an obstacle to change in the liberation process. The balance of forces in the PNC leadership has shifted in favour of the conservative/pro-capitalist tendency in the petty-bourgeois duality. Bureaucratic-state, cooperative and parasitic capitalism fetters the productive forces, thus wrecking the economy and opening the way to imperialist political blackmail and dictation through "aid with strings."

By refusing to make changes at the super-structural level, by making the party and state indistinguishable, and by declaring the doctrine of paramountcy of the party (in effect, the dominant role of the PNC petty-bourgeois nationalists serving the middle strata, the petty-bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie and not the working class and peasantry), the state has become an instrument of accumulation and gain for the PNC as a party and its leaders.

The petty-bourgeois nationalist PNC has built up a corrupt bureaucratic/military elitist structure and is unwilling to make any fundamental changes at the superstructure level (political, ideological, institutional and cultural).

During the 1977-82 period, the PNC vacillated, as in the 1971-73 period, with the balance in favour of imperialism.

Dichotomy

From 1983, the regime moved against imperialism in foreign policy, although not as firmly as in 1974-76. At the same time, in domestic policy, it takes an anti-working class position. The dichotomy cannot be maintained for long. If there is no change in internal policies in favour of the working class, the economy would be further undermined and the progressive anti-imperialist position would be lost.

The two aspects of nationalism were demonstrated in Egypt: under President Nasser - progressive/revolutionary nationalism; under President Sadat who succeeded Nasser - reactionary nationalism.

In India during World War II, one saw within the Congress Party the different faces of nationalism. One faction saw Britain, which was denying independence to India, as enemy number one. It was prepared to fight with German fascism and Japanese militarism to get India free. A second faction saw as enemies both British colonialism and Hitler fascism; it decided to remain neutral. A third faction, the communist saw Hitler fascism and Japanese militarism as the main enemy; it joined the war on the side of the anti-Hitlerite coalition, which included Britain.

As a petty-bourgeois nationalist party, the ruling PNC has 2 tendencies - a majority conservative/reactionary tendency and a minority labour/progressive tendency. The latter can talk about socialism, but the former cannot put it into practice.

Cooperation

Cooperation between communists and revolutionary-democrats is possible and necessary for liberation and social progress (revolutionary-democrats are the left-wingers of the petty-bourgeois class). Guyana offers a unique opportunity to move forward along this path. It has abundant resources; the PNC has complete control of the bureaucracy, military and mass media; and the majority PPP is struggling to go forward to a socialist-oriented course. Salvador Allende's Popular Unity government did not have such favourable conditions: it did not control the state apparatus and the media, and his opposition was rightist, pro-imperialist and linked with the CIA.

The class struggle must be intensified to push the PNC to a revolutionary nationalist to a patriotic and internationalist left position in internal and external policies. This struggle must be waged inside and outside of the ruling Party.

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