

Utopian or Realistic

By Bill Foster

Recently a young friend told me how she gets quite angry when people try to write off her struggle for social change – for socialism and communism – by saying: “those are nice ideas, but they’re utopian.”

The same thing has happened to me and it makes me angry too. In fact, I imagine that most people, especially young people, who stand up for positive social change have had the experience of being shunted aside as “utopian” and told that they will see things more “realistically” when they “mature.”

It is worthwhile to note the logic of these “realistic and mature anti-utopians.” On the one hand, they pretend to agree with the criticism of the status quo – to agree with my friend when she condemns the wars, the racism, the exploitation of the capitalist system. They even agree that eliminating these things would be good. But they insist that things can never be set right, that human beings can never make their society better. They are telling my friend, myself and countless others that we are wasting our time and should just give up. Their “realism” and “maturity” means bowing their heads and accepting their oppression.

It’s a good thing that our fathers and mothers (in fact, all the generations who came before us) never accepted this “logic.” Slaves were told that it was “utopian” to think that slavery could be overthrown. The peoples enslaved by colonialism were told that it was “utopian” to think they could be free and rule themselves. The workers were told that it was “utopian” to think that they could ban together, organize unions and improve their conditions.

So too, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, the founders of modern communism, were called “utopian” and “unrealistic.” But within a short period of time the program of socialism and communism has spread all over the world. In the Paris Commune in 1871, in the Soviet Union from 1917 until the mid-

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Editorial

Guarantying the Economic Rights of the People

Nowadays, the facts of life for the working people are:

– at least 10 million workers are out of jobs and the majority of the unemployed receive no governmental assistance and are therefore left without any means of a livelihood. Some 30 million can only find part-time or temporary jobs.

– 37.3 million people live below the official government poverty line. This includes millions of retired workers and millions of children who are daily denied enough food.

– tens of millions live in substandard housing.

– 45.7 million workers and their families have no health coverage whatsoever and millions more are under-insured.

Most of us are struggling harder and harder – working longer hours, putting up with inhuman workloads, cutting expenses to the bone, etc. – just to keep our heads above water. And everyday the prospects look worse, not better.

The plain truth is the current economic system is unable to provide a secure, stable livelihood for most of the people. This is true now and before the government and official economists starting calling this a “recession.”

Yet everyone knows that the productive capacity of our country is enormous – more than enough to guarantee all the basic economic rights of the people.

In other words, there is no good reason for all the intolerable economic deprivation, exploitation and insecurity facing the people.

Unemployment, poverty, denial of health care, etc. – these plagues are not natural nor are they the result of a lack of resources. They are only a result of the way in which the economy is organized; they are the inevitable, cancerous outgrowths of present-day capitalism.

Under capitalism our country’s vast natural resources, our modern

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U.S. Declares the Asia-Pacific Seas As a Protectorate of the U.S. Military

On August 21, the U.S. Department of Defense issued the U.S. government Asia-Pacific Maritime Strategy. In the document, the U.S. DoD declared that it plans to expand its definition of “freedom of the seas” to include the aim to secure the open waters for U.S. ships, submarines and aircraft to roam freely in the waters of the Asia-Pacific region to help prevent future conflicts.

The strategy document declares, “While not a defined term under international law, the Department uses ‘freedom of the seas’ to mean all of the rights, freedoms, and lawful uses of the sea and airspace, including for military ships and aircraft...”

The U.S. government is claiming

that no country can make any claims on its coastal waters beyond the 12-nautical-miles along its shores.

In other words, U.S. imperialism aims to redefine international law when it comes to the concept of “freedom of the seas” to mean that they can be occupied by the U.S. military in the name of peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

This ever-growing militarization of Asia stems from U.S. imperialism’s strategy of preemptive war and absolute military superiority. This reliance on military force is at the core of U.S. capitalism’s drive to expand its world empire and enforce its domination over the entire world.

The “War on Terrorism” Arises from the Crisis of Imperialism

The U.S. government declared a so-called “war against international terrorism” which it said would “last for decades.” Already, the U.S. has invaded and occupied Afghanistan and Iraq and keeps escalating counter-insurgency wars in these countries.

As part of the “war on terrorism,” the U.S.-backed Israeli aggressors are stepping up their war against the Palestinian people. So too, the Obama administration is preparing wars against Syria and Iran; U.S. military “advisers” are directing counter-insurgency wars in Colombia and the Philippines; the U.S. is threatening war against the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. The Pentagon is spending unprecedented sums building up a vast arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. U.S. imperialism has officially adopted the doctrine of “preventive war” including even the use of nuclear first-strikes against nonnuclear countries and proclaimed that every country must accept U.S. dictates or “be treated as terrorist.”...

This war program is the product of the all-sided crisis of the capitalist-imperialist system.

Violence and war are at the very foundations of this system because capitalist-imperialism imposes social relations of domination, suppression and exploitation on whole nations and peoples.

The very social existence of the U.S. monopoly capitalist class – the big banks and multinational corporations which dominate economic life – is completely bound up with not only the exploitation of the U.S. working class but also with the super-exploitation and domination of countries the world over – 1/3 to 50% of the profits of the U.S.-based multinationals comes from overseas

investments. Under this system, the mineral wealth, the land and other natural resources of whole countries and even continents is owned by the U.S. capitalists....

To police this system of economic domination and privilege – of dependence, colonialism and neo-colonialism – U.S. imperialism has established a network of 500 military bases in other countries. U.S. nuclear submarines and warships span the globe and U.S. weapons fill the skies and outer space. Hundreds of times, the U.S. has waged aggressive wars to “protect” and expand this empire.

For years, the U.S. imperialists have been shifting the burden of their economic crisis onto other countries. But every day this becomes harder.

It becomes harder because other imperialist powers keep gaining economic strength and contending with the U.S. for spheres of economic territory and influence, for profits and empire.

It becomes harder because everywhere the countries and peoples who toil under the yoke of imperialism are trying to take the path of independence and liberation....

The so-called “war on terrorism” is U.S. imperialism’s blueprint for global domination by force of arms.

U.S. imperialism wants and needs war in order to beat down its imperialist rivals and remain the number one exploiter and oppressor.

U.S. imperialism wants and needs war in order to stop the peoples’ drive for independence, liberation and social progress.

U.S. imperialism wants and needs war for profit and empire.

This is the problem, the challenge that we must face up to.

It means that in the course of fighting against every aggressive step taken by U.S. imperialism and working to stay the hands of the warmakers, we must organize ourselves into a force capable of countering, of politically defeating, the organized force of monopoly capital – the organized parties of war and imperialism.

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1950’s and in other countries, socialism proved that it is a very real system and infinitely superior to capitalism.

In every country of the world, all the positive advances of the last 100 years and more have come along the path of socialism. In the United States, such reforms as Social Security or universal public education were created by the struggles of the working people and constituted inroads against capitalism, steps in the direction of socialism.

Today from every pore of our society, the need for and the reality of socialism and communism is growing. Isn’t there an urgent need to guarantee everyone the right to health care? Isn’t there an urgent need to break the political dictatorship of the rich? Isn’t there an urgent demand to stop the wars? Don’t all these demands reflect the collective needs – the common social reality – of the vast majority? Aren’t the people more and more coming out to fight for this program?

Our “mature, realistic anti-utopians” may continue to ignore these facts. But I, for one, can never deny the real aspirations of my heart or the real activity and struggles of my friend and the thousands and millions like her who are struggling to change the world and who will change it.

Economic Rights

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factories, mass communications system, etc. – the whole of the national, economic heritage which has been created over generations by the working people – have been usurped by a few. Our modern economic infrastructure is not used for the purpose of meeting the basic needs of the people but only to se-

cure the maximum profit for the capitalists.

Thus what is staring us in the face is the need to change these economic relations – to reorganize economic and social life so that the very starting point is to guarantee the rights and well-being of the people.

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