

enormous surge of support for the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries during those months was not at all the product of any decline in support for the Bolsheviks among the conscious workers. On the contrary, the Bolshevik grip on the vanguard of the class was growing. But the reformists were growing even faster, since hundreds of thousands of workers who had never before been politically active were turning to the movement for the first time. And they, of course, initially gravitated to the more moderate forces.

*Does this analysis of the class consciousness of the proletariat imply that the policy of the workers' united front must be the fundamental strategic line of revolutionaries?*

Here we must distinguish two political, or rather socio-political, objectives. The working class cannot overthrow capitalism, exercise power, and begin to construct a classless society unless it attains a degree of unification of its social forces and a level of politicization and consciousness qualitatively higher than what exists under the capitalist system in normal times. Indeed, it is only through such unification and politicization that the entire class constitutes itself as a class for itself, beyond any distinctions of occupation, level of skills, regional or national origin, race, sex, age, and so on.

The majority of workers acquire class consciousness in the highest sense of the word only through the experience of this sort of unification in struggle. The revolutionary party plays a crucial mediating role in all this. But through its own activity it cannot replace this experience in united struggle by the majority of the workers. The party alone cannot be the source of acquisition of this class consciousness for millions of wage-earners.

Now, the organizational framework most suitable for this unification of the proletarian front is a system of *workers' councils* that can assemble, federate, and centralize all working men and women, both organized and unorganized, without regard to political affiliation or philosophical creed. No trade union, no united front of parties, has ever been able to achieve such unification by itself. Nor will it ever be able to do so.

For this reason, revolutionary Marxists always press for the unification of the demands and struggles of all working men and women—not only economically, but also politically, culturally, and

so on. They strive to combat any manoeuvres that would tend to divide the class. They act as the most resolute and effective advocates of the most united mobilizations and struggles. And this, by the way, requires that special attention be paid to the super-exploited and doubly oppressed sectors of the class; otherwise this unification cannot be achieved in practice.

Without any doubt, then, the policy of unification of the proletarian front is a constant, a *permanent strategic objective* for revolutionary Marxists.

This problematic of the unification and politicization of the entire proletariat, however, is distinct from the question of particular proposals for united fronts addressed to different organizations and political currents within the working class. I will not go into the objective and historic origins or particular role of these various parties and organizations. But I would like to examine the precise articulation between the policy of the united front as it concerns the two traditional mass parties of the workers' movement—the Communist and Socialist Parties—and the strategy of unification and Marxist politicization of the entire proletariat.

There are a number of reasons why these two sets of problems are not identical. First, the Socialist and Communist Parties do not at all include—or even influence—all working men and women. Second, within the proletariat there are vanguard layers, some organized but many not, who have drawn conclusions from the past betrayals of Social Democracy and Stalinism and who already deeply distrust the bureaucratic apparatuses of these currents. Third, within the working class the bureaucratic leaderships of the Socialist and Communist Parties uphold political orientations that often conflict with the immediate interests, and always conflict with the historic interests, of the proletariat. It is therefore perfectly possible for them to conclude united agreements designed to disorient, curb, and fragment workers' mobilizations. This is particularly the case during revolutionary and pre-revolutionary situations, when these apparatuses typically strive to prevent the seizure of power by the proletariat.

But although these two sets of problems are not identical, they cannot be completely separated either. For in all countries in which the organized workers' movement has a long tradition, a significant section of the class continues to manifest some degree of confidence