

For a Lasting Peace, for a People's Democracy

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FROM A PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC POLAND TO A SOCIALIST POLAND

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At a meeting of the Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party held in April 1947, we analysed the system on which our people's democracy is built.

We defined it as a mixed economy of three socio-economic groups: Socialist, Capitalist and small producers.

We described our state industry at that time as an industry with considerable socialist elements. But we could not then call it a completely socialist industry, since our state is not, as yet, a socialist state and therefore is not strong enough to counteract the negative influence exercised by the capitalist and small trade sectors on the economy as a whole. We pointed out that quite a considerable portion of the output of our state industry was finding its way into the hands of the capitalist elements.

Our Party concentrated on combating these elements, on bringing them under the control of the people's democracy, on restricting their activities and transforming them into state capitalism.

The theoretical line worked out by the April meeting was the starting point for an offensive against the capitalist elements, which was prosecuted successfully during 1947-48 and became known as the "battle of trade". The result was a marked development of the socialist elements in our economy. The capitalist elements were restricted in some sectors and dislodged from others.

POLAND'S ECONOMY

What does the socialist sector of our economy represents, of what is it composed, and what is its strength? The socialist sector of our economy includes state industry, industries run by local authorities and cooperative industry. These three branches account for about 85 per cent of total output of the country and 75 per cent of the entire labour force in industry and the handicraft trades.

In transport the socialist elements are represented by rail, road, river and sea transport; in finance by the state banks; in the trade by the wholesale and retail state trading organisations and in a certain sense by the wholesale and retail cooperative undertakings.

In April 1947, the Central Committee note that the choice facing the cooperative was this. Either they would become the specific form by which the broad masses of population, especially the small producer, is linked with the economy of the people's democracy and its driving force, state industry, or they would become a weapon enabling the small producers, especially the small capitalists to oppose state control by the people's democracy and to fight for the restoration of capitalism.

However, by overcoming the incorrect views which prevailed about the cooperative movement by fundamentally changing its structure and by linking its activity with state industry and trade, it was guaranteed that the cooperatives would take the first course.

State industry accounts for 59.1 per cent of country's wholesale trade, the cooperatives for 36.6 per cent, while private wholesale trade has dropped to 4.3 per cent. This has not only prevented private wholesale trade from diverting a considerable part of the surplus output of state industry but has also made it possible to use state wholesale trade as a level for controlling private retail trade.

As for the all-important problem, the grain supply, purchase made the state fund supply the urban market almost completely, direct purchases constitute 16 per cent, purchases through the cooperatives 70 per cent and purchases through private wholesale trade 14 per cent.

The meat supply position is less satisfactory. The state and cooperatives apparatus [accounts] for less than 40 per cent of the trade turnover.

On the whole the proportion of socialist elements (state and cooperatives) in the wholesale trade, in industry and agriculture, is somewhere between 60 and 70 per cent. Such is not the case in retail trade, although the proportion of socialist elements now totals about 25 to 30 per cent as a result of the "battle of trade" and the development of state trading and other forms of state retail trade including, of course, the growing network of cooperative stores.

In agriculture, the socialist elements are represented by land which is social property, such as state estates and so on, which today covers about 10 per cent of the arable land and which accounts for approximately 7.5 per cent of the gross grain output and for about 10 per cent of the market grain.

In summarising, it should be stressed that the basically socialist elements of our occupy dominant positions in industry, transport and finance, that they are an important factor playing a decisive role in wholesale trade, that they are growing steadily in retail trade and construction. They also occupy important positions in agriculture although so far these positions have not been fully utilised from the point of view of production.

These positions were won in a steady struggle against the capitalist elements. As a result of economic and administrative steps taken by the state, the capitalist elements in town and countryside were resolutely, though not sufficiently, restricted. These capitalists tried to force up prices, to undermine our economic foundation, to cash in on state industry and to plunder the workers and working peasantry.

If this had not been struck at the capitalist elements during 1947-48, successful economic development in Poland would have been quite impossible. We should have come up against a serious development of the capitalist sector of our economy, a danger of undermining the economic and social system of the people's democracy and with this, the threat of a return to capitalism.

We can see from our own experience that when the socialist elements play a decisive role, by waging a resolute class struggle, they are restricting and dislodging the capitalist elements from the economy, and, at the same time, are changing the structure of small trade

economy. This is the fundamental law which governs the development of the social-economic system of the people's democracy.

It would, however, be a grave mistake to underestimate the reverse side of the medal, namely, the limits and scope of activity of the small-producer and capitalist elements in our economy.

Capitalist economy in Poland consists of the following elements: (1) 18,000 private industrial and building enterprises employing about 200,000 workers; (2) certain independent handicraft workshops which employ a large number of workers; (3) private trade; (4) retail private trade of a capitalist nature; (5) peasant households of a capitalist type which constitute approximately 10 per cent of all the peasant households; (6) other capitalist groups such as property owners, private transport firms; (7) various types of speculators.

Small-producer economy in Poland consists of the following elements: (1) about 90 per cent of the households of small and medium peasants; (2) a large part of the 140,000 independent handicraft workshops (a total of some 327,000 people are employed in these workshops); (3) the bulk of the retail private trade (in all about 300,000 people are engaged in this trade).

A comparison of the scope of activity of the socialist, small producer and capitalist sectors, on the basis of the number employed in each of these sectors (the only index possible in our statistics under the present circumstances) shows the following approximate figures: socialist sector 24 per cent; capitalist sector 14 per cent and the small producer 62 per cent.

These figures, of course, have nothing in common with the division of the population into social classes. For instance, the data on the capitalist sector include not only the number of capitalist owners of firms or industries, but also the number of workers employed by them.

these figures also have nothing in common with the cost of production or the share of the different sectors in the national income, for it is clear that the proportion of the socialist sector in the national income is relatively much higher.

These figures indicate that, in spite of the considerable scale of the socialist sector in present-day still holds a strong position and that the small producer is still predominant, especially in the countryside.

NO MIDDLE WAY

The strength of the capitalist elements in our economy should not be measured only by the direct scale of their operations. This strength should be gauged also by the framework of the small producer, which is the basis for the development of capitalism. Marxism-Leninism teaches that small individual economy gives birth to capitalism and the bourgeoisie constantly, daily, hourly, spontaneously and on a mass scale.

Before the war, under capitalist conditions the process of capitalist differentiation in the countryside has reached the stage where about 65 per cent of all the households in Poland had become impoverished households of the rural poor.

During the enemy occupation, the Germans continued the policy of the old Polish landlord-capitalist government, a policy of forcing the medium peasants out of existence, swelling the ranks of the poor peasants and strengthening the rural capitalists – the kulaks.

This process was arrested, but only for a short time, by the national liberation and the formation of a people's democratic government. The land reform and the resettlement of the Western territories gave millions of acres of land to landless, poor and medium peasants. This enabled a section of the poor peasants to reach the level of the medium peasants and stopped the downgrading process among part of the medium peasants.

However, regardless of the land reform and the resettlement of the Western territories, our government policy has always aimed at restricting the capitalist elements in the countryside and at halting the differentiation process which had been taking place there.

This is being accomplished through a tax policy mainly directed against the rural capitalists and through the credit policy which helps the poor and medium households. These are also the aims of our policy for the distribution of manufactured goods – especially goods needed in production – by the policy of the organised redistribution of the surplus rural population and by attracting these people to industry.

It is clear that the process of capitalist development is continuing in Poland, even if at a slower pace, that the rural capitalists exploit a large section of the countryside by exploiting labour, lending grain and money and by other means. From this it follows that in order to secure the forward movement of the people's democracy, it is necessary not only completely dislodge the capitalist elements but also to transform the small producer economy into a socialist economy. Experience teaches that any attempt to remain still, to establish some kind of equilibrium or compromise with the capitalist elements, any attempt to regard small commodity production as a constant and invariable factor, must inevitably lead to the return of capitalism.

In spite of this, there are people who are seeking a so-called middle way. These people reason something like this: since the people's democratic order is a fine thing and excellent results have been achieved under it, why change it, why move forward? Why not stabilise the present order which would be the third path, the middle way between capitalism and socialism?

Or take another version of this form of reasoning: since it is necessary to advance from a people's democracy to socialism, this should be done in the towns while preserving the prevailing system in the countryside. Everything then would be socialist with the "exception" of agriculture which would continue as small-commodity production, or capitalist agriculture.

Is it not obvious that the so-called third path, the middle way between capitalism and socialism, the path of strengthening the People's Democracy in its present form, while holding up the forward movement, the path of attempting to built socialism in the towns while preserving the countryside as a permanent source of small commodity and capitalist production, is certainly no third path. It is in reality nothing other than the first path, the capitalist path. For the capitalist elements which have not been dislodged by the socialist elements would, before long, breach the dykes of the economic and social system of the people's democracy by basing themselves on small commodity production. They would sooner or later submerge the main elements of this system, and particularly of socialist state industry and would lead of the restoration of capitalism.

The experience of building socialism in the Soviet Union is of world historic significance and serves as an example to all people who have taken the path of socialism, as well as to those

who are still fighting for the overthrow of capitalism. The experience of the Soviet Union teaches that the complete and final abolition of capitalism and the building of socialism in the countryside is possible only on the basis of socialising the basic means of production on the basis of collective economy.

The transition to socialism in the various countries, including Poland, will take place in different ways, according to their economic, political, historical, national and other peculiarities.

The specific character of our path is in the forward movement toward Socialism through a people's democracy. Hence it would be a mistake in principle to think that the Polish way to socialism is to preserve intact the present form of economic and social system of the people's democracy, for this would be the way back to capitalism. There is only way and that is the path leading from the Poland of people's democracy to a socialist Poland.

PATHS TO SOCIALISM

Side by side with the all-round steady development of industry with the construction of socialism in the towns, the main task of socialist construction in Poland will be the transformation of the small-producer, peasant economy, into an economy of socialist type.

The peasant masses oppressed and ruined by capitalism in the countryside have for years been searching instinctively for precisely such a new form of development. The desire to abolish rural poverty and to develop large-scale well-ordered farming by re-organising the peasant holdings on cooperative principles found expression in the programmes of the peasant movement, especially of its Left-Wing. It was expressed, for example, in the articles of the founder of the Polish peasant movement, M. Malinowski, and the programme adopted at its congress in June 1919 by the Polka Stronictwo Ludowe – by its Left-Wing (so-called Stapinczycy).

The Marxist working class movement regarded these cooperative conceptions of the peasant parties – conceptions which, incidentally, found expression not only in capitalist Poland but also in a number of other countries – as fantastic, utopian and harmful.

Experience has shown that under capitalism, cooperatives and especially cooperatives – contrary to the idealistic and romantic principles of the old cooperators – soon became organisation which served the capitalist, particularly the rural capitalists. Under capitalism, instead of hindering or weakening capitalist agricultural development and capitalist differentiation in the countryside, the cooperatives intensified these processes.

However, under the economic and social conditions of people's democracy, the situation has changed radically.

This is because at present, power is not in the hands of the capitalists but of the people's government, based on the alliance between the workers and peasants in which the leading role belongs to the working class. Thus, popular power is able to influence the development of the cooperative movement, helping and speeding it, and with the help of the peasant masses, preventing the rural capitalists from utilising the cooperatives in their own interests. It also means that the people's power is able to control the cooperatives and coordinates them with the

national plan, making them an integral part of the economic system of the people's democracy in its development toward socialism.

The second important factor is that the worker-peasant alliance, represented by the people's government not only wields real political power but also considerable economic power. It means that by basing ourselves on our socialist strongholds in industry, the wholesale and retail trade, transport and finance and by taking certain steps concerning credits and the distribution of customer goods, we can prevent the danger of cooperatives developing along capitalist lines.

Under the economic and social conditions of people's democracy the cooperatives can put into practice the dream of the old peasant leaders by stopping capitalist development in the countryside and setting the village along a new path.

Under the economic and social conditions of people's democracy, the agricultural cooperatives constitute the best way of coordinating the individual interests of the peasants with the national interests. They are simplest, easiest and most acceptable way for a peasant to change over to new farming methods – to large-scale collective farming, utilising all the achievements of modern agricultural science.

We have in mind the three types of cooperatives – distributors, consumer and producer. This does not mean that all these can develop equally, parallel and at the same rate. It is quite obvious that the distributor and consumer cooperatives, since they are the simplest form requiring less expenditure and less psychological effort, will develop more quickly than producer cooperatives.

This is borne out by the development until now. While distributor and consumer cooperatives enjoy comparatively positions in the countryside, the producer cooperatives either have not yet got going, or are still in the early stages of organisation.

The programme of the United Workers' Party must make it clear to the Polish peasants that the way out of the blind alley of capitalism, the rapid abolition of a hundred years of poverty, the saturation of the countryside with modern technique and science, the really rapid and large-scale improvement of the material and cultural well being of the peasants – that all this cannot be secured by consumer and distributor cooperatives alone. For this, agricultural producer cooperatives are essential.

Recognition of this prevails not only in the working-class circles and among the people who understand the science of Marxism. It is realised on a growing scale by many peasant leaders. For instance, No. 4 of the magazine WICI January 1947 (issued before the democratisation of WICI, the Peasant Youth Union) contained an article entitled "Cooperatives Problems" which stated: "Since the modern agricultural technique frequently needs expensive machinery, capital expenditure and collective work beyond the scope of a single family, there is no other way out but the way of collective work".

To ensure that the transformation from small peasant farming to cooperative farming in the sphere of consumption, distribution and production – that is to collective farming – is really a large- scale process, it is necessary to observe the following condition:

(1) Our state industry must supply the countryside with agricultural machines insufficient qualities – the tractors, lorries, fertilizers, and electricity, all of which are essential for effective large-scale farming.

(2) Lenin teaches that every social system comes into being with the financial support of a definite class.

The large-scale development of agricultural producer cooperatives requires financial assistance – and on a big scale – from the people's democratic government. It is natural that our people's government which solving such enormous tasks on the financial side as economic rehabilitation, reconstruction of ruined cities, rehabilitation and extension of the communications, ports, industry, and so on can only gradually accumulate and allocate the large sums of money necessary for the development of agriculture cooperatives, especially producer cooperatives.

(3) For the large-scale development of agricultural, particularly of producer cooperatives, a radical change in the psychology of the individual farmer is necessary. This change can only take place as the result of the actual experience of the peasants and their conviction that the formation of agricultural cooperatives is the only way to safeguard the peasant families from degradation and ruin. This psychological change will take time. Even more time pass before the mass of the Polish peasants are able, through their work to find the forms of producer cooperation most appropriate to Poland.

Engels once stated with brilliant foresight: We resolutely support the small peasant; we will do our best to make his life easier and to help him to set out on the path of cooperation, if he decides to do this. However, in case he is still not in a position to make such a decision, we shall try to give him as much as time possible to think it over on his own allotment.

The extension of industry, the accumulation of large financial means, the change in the Psychology of the mass of the peasants, their ability to profit from their experiences and the development of the most suitable forms of producer cooperatives – all this will take time. It will be a complete stage in the development of the people's government and of the masses of workers and peasants. This is obvious since it represents a very considerable undertaking. The large - scale development of agricultural cooperatives which will create the essential basic elements of socialist system of agriculture in Poland.

Marxism-Leninism teaches that classes departing from the stage of history will resort to all means in order to cling to their existence. However, both outside Marxist-Leninist principles does not apply to the present-day Poland. They think that after the downfall of the big capitalists and landowners, the capitalists who still remain in the town and country will be too reluctant, or not strong enough to resist the forward march of people's democracy toward socialism.

Such views are entirely false and harmful. How can one say that the capitalist elements in Poland have been completely defeated, that they are not strong enough to wage a fierce class war, or to mobilise every means to defend themselves?

Is it not refuted daily and hourly by the experience of life itself? Should we not call it a stubborn class struggle when the rural capitalist after consolidating his positions in trade, is

trying to disorganise it, while we, basing ourselves on the broad masses of the people are smashing these attempts? Should we not call it class struggle when the rural and urban capitalists are trying to evade tax payments and to place the burden of taxation on the small and medium peasant or artisan? Should we not call it class struggle when the urban capitalist is trying to corrupt our economic machine and to plunder our state industry and trade while we are holding him back? What is it but violent class struggle when the capitalist in the countryside is sparing no effort to get his grip on the agricultural cooperatives and to get hold of the credits and agricultural machinery provided by the state through the machine – tractor stations to the poor and medium peasants, while we are taking steps to stop him? As the capitalist elements are being more speedily dislodged, this struggle does not weaken. On the contrary it intensifies.

Immediately after the liberation, the alliance of workers and peasants was directed against the big landowners and capitalists and was aimed at distributing the large estates among the poor and medium peasants and of settling the Western territories. As that time the working class had as its ally not only the poor but also the medium peasants while the rural capitalist, hostile and certainly not reconciled to the land reform, nevertheless pursued a comparatively neutral line, since his interests were not directly threatened. Indeed, on some occasions, for example during the settlement of the Western territories, he even succeeded in grabbing something for himself.

However today, when the big capitalists and landowners have been eliminated, when the land reform has been in the main completed, when the settlement of the Western territories has advanced considerably, the situation has changed. Now the alliance of workers and peasants is acquiring a new meaning and embarking on new tasks indeed, what would be the feeling of both the poor and medium peasants if the working class left them alone to face their class enemy, the rural capitalist, and if it allowed unrestricted capitalist development in the countryside without interfering!

It is natural that now the rural policy of the alliance of workers and peasants is to restrict consistently the capitalist elements and help the small and medium peasants. As conditions and opportunities grow, it must become a policy of all-round assistance to the working peasants in organising agricultural cooperatives, especially producer cooperatives.

Now the worker-peasant alliance will be directed against the capitalist elements not only in the towns but also in the countryside, which in itself is further proof of the intensification of the class struggle.

Only a clear socialist programme which at the same time shows the way to socialism can be the compass which will prevent the danger of losing the socialist perspective and embarking on adventurism – a danger which exists in both the Workers' and the Socialist parties.

What does it mean under our present conditions to lose the socialist perspective?

It means: (1) failure to differentiate in political theory and practice between capitalist and small-producer elements, regarding them as a single entity without perceiving their differences; (2) not to carry on a resolute class struggle against the capitalists of town and country, not to restrict their development by all possible measures; (3) not to take good care that the state help is

given to the poor and medium peasants; (4) not to realise the great importance of the cooperatives, particularly of agricultural producer cooperatives, not to support them in every in every possible way not to create by sheer hard work the conditions for their large-scale development; not to struggle for the socialist character of the cooperatives, not to remove the capitalist from the leadership of the cooperatives in town and countryside.

What does adventurism mean under our present conditions? It means: (1) failure to understand that capitalist production still plays a considerable role in town and countryside, that under certain conditions the people's democratic government permits the activity of capitalist elements and tries to eliminate these elements by administrative measures when the social and economic conditions necessary for their presence no longer exist; (2) while steering a steady course for the development of the producer cooperatives, not to see that at present and for a long time to come we shall be a country of small producers, that individual farms constitute the basis of agricultural production; not to fully utilise the resources of the artisans and the poor and medium peasants so that their output can be raised; (3) mechanically to try to reorganise the small commodity economy, without the necessary economic, financial and psychology preparations which require a great deal of time.

There is no doubt that by their joint efforts the Polish Workers' and Socialist parties will work out a programme which will secure the leading role of the united parties in Poland's transition to Socialism.