

THE PARK AND THE REVOLUTION

The park was a beautiful thing, especially to those who participated in it and found, as one reporter put it, that "non-alienated work is fun". The chain of events which led to its construction on a vacant lot by the people of the neighborhood is completely understandable: The reaction against the criminal University policy, which had the land cleared to remove "undesirable elements", and then ignored it only until the people decided to make something beautiful of it themselves, is completely justified.

However, it was also a tragedy. As has been amply demonstrated, the ruling class in capitalist society, which depends for its survival on the principle of private property, cannot tolerate the seizure of any property by "unauthorized" people. This system must be unjust to survive, it must defend the interests of the powerful few against the people.

Many of the participants, maybe even most of them, were aware that what they were doing would "bring down the pigs", sooner or later. The tragedy is that they did not realize that fighting the property system this way will do no real damage to the system. If the rulers grant the park as a concession, they will do it according to their own legal structure. This will set no precedent against the property system.

"But what about the great masses of people who are being educated against the system by this," someone may object, "Isn't this a great enough victory to justify the losing battle for the park?" Certainly the education that people are receiving about the nature of the system is the greatest value of this struggle. But this education alone does not justify the losses that our side has suffered. Revolutionists should not provoke the system into violent reactions and attacks on the people just for the sake of education. They should seek to prepare the people to protect themselves against the blows of the system and to educate them to see that only a complete social revolution will give victory to their struggles. The revolutionist does this by being with the people in their struggle, by going through the experience with them and recruiting and educating among them.

One danger in the current struggle is that the serious revolutionists may seek to form small terrorist bands to conduct a clandestine war of sabotage and terror against the ruling class. The frustrations of the battle against overwhelming odds may lead some again, as in June 1968, in the terrorist direction. Of course, no one would object to seeing a helicopter shot down, or a police station blown up, but this course of action is a dead end fraught with danger and frustration. It is a way for revolutionists to become isolated from the people and their struggles, to lose sight of the goal, to become frustrated when the system fails to collapse. Dynamite will not blow up the system because the system is not made of concrete. It is made of social relations based on the capitalist private-property relations of production, and only the class struggle can blow it apart. Dynamite and terror will help, but only at the right time, only when they are part of a really massive workers' struggle.

The people in the Berkeley movement have done well to try to approach members of the national guard, recognizing that the Guard are themselves oppressed members of the working and middle classes, seeking to avoid Vietnam. They are not like cops, who make a career out of being the hated armed thugs of the rulers. Many individual guardsmen have responded favorably, smiling, giving the "V" sign, taking off gas masks, and so on. But soldiers do not defect to the other side en masse until they know that they will not have to go back to the barracks that night--that is, when they believe a real transfer of power will take place. It is clear that this struggle never reached that point. The most powerful response to the armed occupation of Berkeley would be a general strike. Imagine the effect of a work stoppage in all the basic industries and transportation in the Bay Area. The cops are aware of this potential as is shown by their strategy of attempting to confine the struggle to the campus, away from the commercial areas.

In the case of a general strike, the entire city and population are immediately affected, and it is much more clear to the soldiers that they are being sent against the people themselves. The power of the working people becomes very manifest, and along with this, their power to seize and reorganize society is clearly implied.

The problem, of course, is that the working class, defeated, brainwashed, demoralized or temporarily bought off, is not ready to move in this way over such an issue as this. There is much work, hard work of organizing and educating among the working people, ahead of us. Part of the problem is that the radical movement has been too tied to the campus, too interested in its own "community issues," and too unconcerned with the class struggle, to do this work in the previous five or six years.

BUILD A VANGUARD PARTY !

GENERAL STRIKE AGAINST PIG TERROR

BAY AREA SPARTACIST LEAGUE

P.O. Box 852

Berkeley, Cal. 94701 Phone: 548-0763

In San Francisco: P.O. Box 26076, Customs House, S.F. 94126

Phone: 861-2090