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Malaysia - Socialism 2012: Revolt of the 99%... in the drowning of Capitalism

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Socialist Party of Malaysia (PSM) organizes socialist forum since 2005. This year, in the buzz of election and the midst of some people's events such as the Green Walk, Hindraf 5th year anniversary gathering and peaceful protest against new education blueprint by Chinese Educationist groups, PSM successfully held their annual forum on 24-25th Nov at Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall, Kuala Lumpur.

The auditorium was pleasingly full with participants from various organizations, political parties and individuals. The heavy downpour did not hamper the Malaysian public from attending the two days forum which had both local and international speakers, activists and academicians.

Among the topics being discussed were:

- Occupy Movement: Its root cause and consequences
- Is global capitalism on its last leg?
- Where are the International Lefts heading to?
- The struggle to defend our planet from environmental destruction
- How would democracy look in a socialist society?
- The Left and Election
- Challenges of workers movement

PSM chooses the topics well, very relevant to the current global situation especially with the economic and political turmoil in the Western and Arab world. It raises a big question on Capitalism - is it working? As a result, there are numerous resistances from all walks of life. Are those resistances capable to bring significant changes to our lives?

In line with the topics, PSM also took the opportunity to launch a 27 pages cartoon book in Malay language, *Capitalism - Death the Humanity*. It was a privilege to have our one and only 'wanted' cartoonist, Comrade Zunar to launch the tiny effort to engage young people to read and understand how destructive and evil capitalism is.

Each topic had quite a momentous discussion. One of the panels from USA, Professor Kenneth Surin, spoke about growing disparity between the rich and poor in US and the American people's resistance, the infamous Wall Street Occupy Movement. The occupy movement in America and elsewhere in the world proved a point - they lived as a commune and shared among them what little they have while occupying. People want wealth to be shared. People do not want greedy businessmen and corrupt government. Unfortunately, the Occupy Movement that spread to the

entire world, not able to stop the businessmen from ripping billions of profits even though they had to be bail out by the government. However, Prof Kenneth is confident that Occupy Movement can be a strategy to fight neo-liberalism.

There were many interesting questions from the floor on these topics as in how genuine are people's movement when it is influenced by political parties. Can ethnic based movements be progressive? Is failure of capitalism purely a moral issue? On alternative economic model, one participant commented that the Left has not paid enough attention to the issue of self autonomy, the individual and to spiritual development. He said that we should look at the Gandhian economic model of simplicity and self sufficiency. Comrade Tommy Thomas, one of the panel responded well, 'Gandhian economic model wasn't accepted by Nehru and other leaders as it would not have the need of providing employment for the millions of underemployed people in India at that time. We have also to look at the context. Gandhi's economic model was at the same time very political - it was a stand against the colonial policy of retarding India's economy and making India a market for British textiles.'

Not many agree that Capitalism is on its last legs. One point of view was that it always bounces back after each crisis with more greed. Another view is that it is dying but unfortunately the Left is not united and allowing capitalism the breathing space to pick itself up. Comrade Luke, participant from Philippines phrase his comments very well, 'Capitalism creates the working class - the social force that will bring it down. On that sense it creates the conditions for its own destruction. But we need to act to actualize that possibility.'

Talking about the Left, Alex de Jong from the Dutch Section of Fourth International who spoke on where the Left is heading said that there is an assumption among the left, that in the capitalism crisis the left will benefit... but it's not true. Nationalist and the right wing factions who work in line with the bourgeoisie are the one who gain benefits. Meanwhile, Dr. Jeyakumar, the Parliamentarian and PSM's central committee member who spoke on Socialism and Democracy claims that Socialism has been painted as the antithesis of democracy and millions of people the world over believe this untruth. He also said that many socialists are caught in a Time-Wrap. Lot more interesting stuff he said and those of you not able to make it to the forum don't worry, you could get the proceedings soon from PSM!

PSM also invited Tian Chua to speak on The Left and Election on the second day of the forum. Unfortunately he was not able to stay to answer some of the question from the audience. A question from Comrade Boon Kia Meng, if the other 2 panel agree with Tian's statement that our society is semi-colonial and semi feudal. Both Comrade Luke and Arutchelvan (PSM Secretary General) said 'NO'. Their argument, 'Capitalist relations have taken over most of economic activities in Malaysia. It is now production for the market and not for own use. Look at the mode of production, it is capitalist!'

There were some other interesting questions raised during this topic - can Socialism be achieved through election? Do you go into election with eyes wide open or close? Should the Left boycott election? All in all, we can say that the Left and the Right has different motive, aim and principals towards election. It's definitely a much simplified statement but if you are excited to know what was discussed in detail, please be in touch with PSM.

The last two topics in the forum which is more grounded on grass root issues - challenges of workers movement and the future of people's movement had contribution from many activists including Comrade Sultoni from Indonesia. He is involved in the current massive workers strike in Indonesia against contractualisation of labour. Comrade Soloman from NUBE and Sivaranjani from JERIT articulated very well the power of working class - the majority, the 99%.

The many contributions of views and analysis during the 2 days intense socialist forum is very useful for PSM to move forward and we believe the participants too benefit from the discussions. Our heartfelt thanks to all the moderators, speakers and the loyal participants for made this socialist forum successful. The coordinator of the forum, Comrade Chon Kai (PSM CC member) stated in his presentation, for the Left to advance, we need to be accessible, principled, ideologically clear and prepare to work sincerely with other in the social movements, as well as to remain relevant in today's politics. It's a fine conclusion.

Written by,
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