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#### Mutual aid saves party lives

Strugglesessions, 21 "Four Points on Mutual Aid." 2-17-21, Accessed 11-18-2021. https://struggle-sessions.com/2021/02/17/four-points-on-mutual-aid/ // duongie

4. Mutual Aid when understood and implemented correctly We must warn against the risk of over-correcting the mistakes of arid-revolutionaries—obsessed with charity and calling it mutual aid—and refuse to accept the verdict of outright rejection of mutual aid or social service programs run by revolutionaries. There are those who will, in a knee-jerk reaction, reject any attempt to help the masses with any programs or mutual aid, and these types swindle themselves; they cede the trench to revisionism. If mutual aid is used, then it must actually be mutual and also must aid the revolution. What does this look like? It looks like auxiliary services in a given struggle. Bandaging up fighters during an uprising, or raising bail money for the arrested fighters and masses is valuable mutual aid—provided it does not exclude revolutionaries—because of the fact that it improves the fighting conditions and fortifies the fighters, increases morale etc. A clear example is the formation of people’s mess halls during strikes or protracted struggles even by those who are not directly in the struggle, because they are once more fortifying the ranks. Further, these actual mutual aid teams must be politically organized; like everything else they must form a part of a broad struggle. Lack of organization will ultimately diminish the fighting capacity of the revolutionary forces or mass struggles. Not only are there cases where mutual aid is an acceptable auxiliary, but in many cases it is an absolute necessity to the victory of a campaign. It must not be understood as a means of propaganda or a means of education, but mainly as a means of sustaining combat. That it to say, a means to improve fighting capacity, a means to mobilize the people who are not yet ready to fight by giving them tasks which support the fight. Aimless distribution of goods cannot accomplish this. The masses will come to organize to meet their immediate needs; if revolutionary forces do not use this to aid the revolutionary struggle, then it is certain that the revisionists and other reactionaries will. The masses are a site of struggle in which proletarian and bourgeois leadership collide. Implementing mutual aid is also not a casual thing. It will not aid the revolutionary struggle if it is not based in the correct method of leadership. Chairman Mao expressed: “The Central Committee has issued several documents to combat excessive meddling, and this has done some good. What is meant by excessive meddling? Drawing up subjective plans at variance with reality and regardless of what is imperative and possible, or carrying out plans, even realistic ones, by means of commandism. Subjectivism and commandism are always bad and will be so even ten thousand years hence.” There are two errors here; 1) carrying out plans at variance with reality and 2) carrying out realistic plans with commandism. Many so-called mutual aid groups carry out their charity with little regard for the reality of the people; they act on assumptions and merely give things to people and people take them. There is most often no concrete analysis. These will imagine a program which will draw in hundreds of participants and gain crowds eager to hear about Mao. This far exceeds these groups’ actual ability, which is to pass out groceries to people who may or may not be glad to get them. The second type, in many ways even more dangerous than the first, are those with preconceived notions of what is imperative. They come to do what is possible and use commandism. These types often have an idea of their own; we must save this housing complex from being “gentrified” etc. and then proceed to tell the tenants of the complex this, to which the tenants respond, “We hate this place and it should be demolished.” Commandism can destroy imperative and possible mutual aid programs mainly by coercing those with meager means to distribute them at their own expense and hence it deviates immediately from being either mutual or aid. Convincing with democratic means takes more effort than peer pressure or intimidation but is ultimately the only possible way to proceed. When 1) correct methods are used, and 2) it is in service to the revolutionary effort, only then is the catchphrase “Solidarity not charity” actually realized. We should dispense with any illusion that solidarity is ever possible without being based in clear politics, or that solidarity is possible when based mainly on social need and not on concrete politics. We again turn to the pertinent example of a strike mess hall; it is imperative and possible to prolong the strike action with food services—and this must be entirely political. To put this another way: such rights are guaranteed under socialism only, but there is the need to fight for them in the fight to conquer power indispensably. Work among the poor must be understood in the same way; there are millions of fighters among the poor who—in order to be organized—require certain aid, be it child care, food assistance, or other things. In the absence of organized class struggle, such programs are meaningless. The proletariat can administer its own affairs only after it has conquered the room to do so, and such administration cannot be arbitrarily imposed. Even in the most simple acts of collective administration, co-option from bourgeois forces and interference from the police and the agents of the old-state must be combated and resisted. It is important here to fight to not only snatch conquests from the enemy, but to administer these conquests once conquered. That is the essence of revolutionary mutual aid.