

**workers  
power 5**

**autumn  
1977  
45p**

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a statement

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# workers power

Autumn 1977  
The Quarterly journal of the Workers Power Group

Editorial and business address:  
1a Camberwell Grove,  
London, SE 5

Published by Workers Power.  
Printed by RYE EXPRESS (TU).

## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

We must apologise to our readers for the late appearance of Workers Power No 5. We hope to regularise its appearance on a quarterly basis — though issue No 6 — devoted centrally to the Trade Unions and the Rank and File Movement will appear in early January. To assist us in keeping to this schedule as well as making possible other Workers Power publications (including pamphlets on Women and Ireland) we are launching an appeal for £1000. We need office equipment and a typesetter to guarantee regular and efficient production. We hope our readers will send in donations to the address above.

DAVE HUGHES

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# The attack on the shop floor:

## The

## Labour Government

## after Phase Two

The Labour Government is larding its insistence on a new round of wage restraint with promises that there will be a significant economic upturn next year providing, of course, that wages are held down. Certain indicators do give credibility to the claims of the Labour Government; the stock market is high the pound is steady in the currency markets, the Treasury is predicting a £1.5 billion trading surplus in 1978. But all the real indicators of economic performance and prospects suggest that British capitalism has failed to overcome its deep seated ills and that the world economy is tottering towards a new generalised recession.

The Labour Government is still presiding over a stagnant economy. GDP fell by 1% in the second quarter of 1977, industrial production was down by 0.7% in the same period, consumption reached its lowest point for five years. The Industrial Production Index in the middle of this year stood just a little over the 1970 level and 7% below its 1973 'peak'.

This shrinkage in the first half of 1977 goes alongside only a marginal increase in capital spending by manufacturing industry. Last year the Department of Industry projected 15-20% growth in 1977 capital spending, it argued that such a growth was necessary for the scale of modernisation and re-equip necessary to render British capitalism more competitive. Figures announced by the Financial Times show that British capitalism is nowhere near its target - in fact in the first half of this year capital spending is only up 2½% on 1976 levels.

The Labour Government has looked to expansion on the part of the 'stronger capitalisms' to stimulate the British economy. But if we look at those stronger capitalisms we can see that West Germany has scaled its predicted growth rate down from 5% to 3% this year, and that all indicators show that the US economy is slowing down. Steel output, a key indicator of world economic performance, fell by four million tonnes in the first seven months of this year in the 29 major capitalist economies - it fell by 8.2% in West Germany in this period, and by 7.7% in Britain. The OECD, the UN Conference of Trade and Development are bracing now for a recession before the end of 1978.

In this situation further attacks on workers living standards are absolutely necessary for the British ruling class. They are not an option or a 'preference'. In the last 12 months the official price index rose by 17.7%, wages by 9.7%, the problem for the British ruling class, and the Labour Government, is how to force a further cut in living standards.

For the last two years British capitalism has been able to cut real wages by direct agreement with the trade union bureaucracy. Anger and frustration amongst rank and file workers have made this an inoperable strategy for a third year.

The TUC could not have sold another formal incomes policy to shop floor workers. The employing class and their most responsive agents know that they will have to confront this shop floor militancy and anger head on.

It is in this context that we must understand the Labour Government's commitment to stand firm, to support and even pressure all employers in the struggle to hold wages increases below 10%. It is in order to attack shop floor prerogatives and organisation that the Leyland bosses are moving to force through a national bargaining structure that would insulate annual negotiations with the trade union officials from the pressure and mood of the rank and file. The new hard nosed Tory stance on Grunwick, on the closed shop, is not an aristocratic lapse, it is a recognition on the part of significant sections of the ruling class that if the Trade Union cannot deliver the goods then the employing class will have to organise itself anew to attack workers organisation and strength. The Grunwick dispute, the increasing number of recognition disputes, indicate this line of attack on the part of an important section of employers.

The Labour Government and the employers have a series of key weapons to use in the struggle against shop floor militancy and anger. Firstly they hope the threat of unemployment (figures now stand at a post war record, and are going up) of lay offs and insecurity will force key sections of workers into submission and passivity. Secondly, they know that the Trade Union bureaucrats will not lead struggles to defend shop floor strength, or undermine the Labour Government. The Leyland package does not threaten the bargaining position and role of the Trade Union Officials, the threat of a 'Tory' Government can be invoked to force the TUC into retreat.

Against these tactics revolutionaries have to be absolutely honest about the preparedness and ability of the working class to fight back. Whole sections of workers clearly reject the wage cutting policies of the Labour Government and the complicity of the Trade Union leaders in these policies. But the anger and militancy remain sectionalised and insular. The knowledge that the Trade Union leaders will not lead a serious fight, underlined by the acceptance of the 12 month rule at the TUC Congress, poses a serious crisis of policy and leadership on the shop floor, in the shop stewards committees and trade union branches. Two years of TUC policed wage cuts, of ideological barrage from the Labour Government has seriously undermined the fighting confidence of militant workers - who know that to fight alone is to fight their trade union officials, who know that traditional forms of wage 'leap-frogging', of 'special case' and 'skilled status claims' bring the shop floor organisation up against the Labour Government with no guarantees of support from the Trade

Union movement - official or unofficial.

It is in this context - of mounting anger alongside a crisis of direction and leadership - that we can understand the continuing simmering lull in struggle, the climbdown of such groups as the dockers when faced with fighting alone, unofficially, against the employers and Government. It is in this situation that the Trade Union leaders will organise to play sections of workers off against each other to isolate and sell out struggles. This was made quite clear by the AUEW leadership in the Leyland toolroom struggle.

This crisis of leadership, of political direction, poses sharply the need for policies that can lead a united fight against the plans of the employers and the Labour Government. It poses urgently the need for rank and file organisation to fight for those policies, independent of the Trade Union leadership and refusing to hold back or limit struggles in order to maintain the anti-working class Labour Government.

Such a rank and file movement must be built in the period ahead on the basis of a clear political alternative to the sell-outs of the Trade Union bureaucracy and to merely sectionalised militancy.

A shop steward based rank and file movement must be internally democratic, allowing freedom of debate and discussion on questions of tactics and strategy. So-called 'Rank and File' movements organisationally controlled by particular political groups - the ATUA, the SWP 'Rank and File Conferences' - cannot meet this need. But a rank and file grouping must pass immediate tests in action, and struggle, independent

of the trade union leadership. "Democratic" talk shops incapable of deciding on questions of tactics and strategy for fear of a decisive break with the left bureaucrats (the STA, the Engineering Voice) can only be an obstacle to the building of a fighting rank and file movement.

What are the key tests in struggle that a shop stewards based rank and file movement must pass in the period ahead? It must be able to organise industrial solidarity action, strike action in support of all workers fighting the Labour Government's policies, fighting to defend shop floor strength, and for trade union and democratic rights. The Grunwick dispute shows clearly that the trade union bureaucracy, the left and the right, will organise only token and symbolic action - even under pressure. A rank and file movement must organise to support more vulnerable and less well organised workers, supporting their right to caucus, fighting to drive male chauvinism, active racism and the fascists out of the unions.

A rank and file movement must lead struggles for a wage policy that can unite workers in struggle, that is an alternative to wage cuts, special status claims and productivity deals. Against social spending cuts, against unemployment and layoffs, a rank and file movement must fight for policies that can stop the attacks and maintain the fighting unity of the workers' movement - employed and unemployed, public and private sector workers.

It is our conviction that only a communist programme can equip a rank and file movement to oppose the current attacks, to lead workers in struggle independent of the trade union bureaucrats, to organise a movement capable of struggling for power. In the rank and file conferences this year Workers Power will be fighting for this position.

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# EUROSTALINISM

## Its Enemies and its accomplices

by DAVE HUGHES

The public split in the CPGB, the formation of a 'New' Communist Party, the attacks on Santiago Carrillo in the *Moscow New Times*, the rapprochement between the new Chinese leadership and the erstwhile 'arch revisionist' Tito all demonstrate a 'World Communist Movement' passing into a new phase of internal upheavals. These events and the debate and discussion they have unleashed in the ranks of the Italian, Spanish, French and even British parties have prompted those groupings stemming from Trotsky's Fourth International both to analyse these developments and attempt to intervene in them. The potentialities for an intervention are obviously greater than at any time since 1968 (the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia) or perhaps even the situation after Khrushchev's 'secret speech' and the Hungarian Revolution. This time however it is the developing period of capitalist crisis and the role the western CP's will be called to play in the political re-alignments that this has precipitated, which is at the heart of the upheavals in the Stalinist Parties. The responses of a whole spectrum of 'Trotskyism' to this situation reveal the disintegration which has occurred in the last 30 years in what was once the only coherent revolutionary communist opposition to Stalinism.

The New Draft of the British Road to Socialism, the critic-

isms of the Soviet Party by the Euro-Communist parties of Spain, Italy and France, the loyal bargains struck by these parties with their national capitalisms, have prompted many on the left such as the SWP (GB) and the RCG to argue that these parties are no longer Stalinist, that they have become classic social-democratic parties. Public disputes in these parties between the 'Old Guard' and the Euro-Communists (most sharply the campaign launched by Sid French in Britain) have posed the question to Trotskyists as to whether either side is in any way progressive in these disputes, as to how to relate to the differences in the Stalinist parties.

Stalinism came to power in the Soviet Union under the slogan of "Socialism in one Country" against the Internationalist Left Opposition. Its fundamental political platform (from which all other positions were derived) was that socialism could be constructed in the Soviet Union, without the victory of the proletariat in an advanced capitalist country as long as the Soviet Union was protected against armed intervention. Turning their back on the International programme of the Comintern and the Leninist Bolshevik Party, the Stalin faction amalgamated with the philistine conservative Russian bureaucracy on the basis of a nationalist programme.

'Socialism in One Country' meant the turning of the Russian party and Comintern away from the tasks of preparing the International revolution. It had immediate implications for the non-Russian parties. Their first task, from the late 1920s, was now to protect and aid 'socialism' as it was being constructed in the USSR and the aid meant campaigning for peace, against all plans for invasion against the USSR. This necessitated forging alliances with all those forces who could be won to peace and non-aggression while the Soviet Union built 'Socialism'.

In a series of turns 1925-1928; 1928-1934; 1934-1939; 1939-1941 1941-1947 the CPs were ordered into crippling alliances with one section of the world bourgeoisie or another depending on the tactical requirements of the Russian bureaucracy. The victims of these opportunist alliances were the Chinese, German and Spanish proletariats and their vanguards. Trotsky, from the mid-twenties onwards, analysed the development of Stalinism from the initial adherence to the theory of Socialism in one Country.

Firstly it follows inevitably that if Socialism can be built in 'one country' then there must be a series of national programmes, of national roads to socialism. The theory of 'socialism in one country' propounded for Russia; leads inevitably to each Stalinist party adopting national programmes for its particular socialism. Trotsky pointed this out as early as 1928,

*"If Socialism can be realised within the national boundaries of backward Russia, then there is all the more reason to believe that it can be achieved in advanced Germany. Tomorrow the leaders of the Communist Party of Germany will undertake to propound this theory. The draft programme empowered them to do so. The day after tomorrow the French will have its turn. It will be the beginning of the disintegration of the Comintern along the lines of Social-patriotism."*  
(Third International after Lenin Pathfinder 1970 edition)

The process of political degeneration of the Stalin faction which accompanied its destruction of the last vestiges of working class power in Russia was completed in the period 1933-38. Between 1933 and 1936 Trotsky thoroughly revised his characterisation of the Stalin tendency abandoning his definition of it as Centrist. 1933 and the endorsement by the Comintern and all its parties of the strategy which led to the capitulation convinced Trotsky that the Comintern was "dead for the revolution". The Stalin-Laval pact of May 1935 demonstrated that the former had "repudiated revolutionary internationalism and passed over to the platform of social-patriotism". Further Trotsky stated that "nothing now distinguishes the Communists from the Social Democrats except the traditional phraseology and that 'Stalinism and Social Democracy are not antipodes but twins'".

This analysis was to be rapidly confirmed. Just as Social Democracy, which in 1914 had led the German workers into the Imperialist holocaust and within 4½ years was organising the physical liquidation of the vanguard. So Stalinism - after assuring the capitulation to Hitler, was 4/5 years later engaged in a bloody task, in Spain as in Russia which differed from the work of the Eberts and Noskes only in its greater dimensions.

These events prepared and accompanied the Popular Front, a bloc with the reformist bureaucracy and the liberal bourgeoisie on the programme of these two 'progressive' forces. Between 1936 and 1938 such a Popular Front demobilized and betrayed the revolutionary upsurge of the French workers, making inevitable the second Imperialist War. Open support for 'one's own' bourgeoisie, provided it was in alliance with or friendly to the Soviet Union, the defence of bourgeois democracy (against the proletarian revolution) these reactionary positions obliterated Leninist Defeatism and the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat. The total destruction of every vestige of inner party democracy and the employment of gangster tactics against the small nuclei of Trotskyists set new standards in counter revolutionary ruthlessness.

Trotsky stressed throughout the 30's the trend towards 'organic unity' between the Social Democrats and the Stalinists.

Yet this coalescence was not to occur. Why was this? Firstly the Russian bureaucracy proved to be a much more solid social formation - than Trotsky had foreseen. (Whether this was because it was a caste or a social class lies beyond the scope of this article). Stalinism played a crucial counter-revolutionary role both during the Second World War and after it. It provided the Imperialist Bourgeoisies of Britain and the USA with a progressive, democratic cover and demobilised and betrayed the mass movement of the Western European working classes. At the same time the establishment of states in all respects similar to the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe initially gave it enormous prestige. In the post-war period Stalinism re-elaborated the reformist strategy of the Popular Front.

But the idea of a national road to socialism is in itself a position that was originated by Social Democrats and is upheld by them to this day. Should we not say then that these parties are therefore indistinguishable from Social Democratic Parties? What this position forgets is that the national roads of the Communist Parties are elaborated on an understanding that particularly after World War II, socialism has been consolidated, indeed built in the USSR. This is of bedrock significance to the Stalinist position. What is specific to Stalinism is that a reformist strategy and tactics are predicated on a favourable balance of class forces created by the aftermath of the Soviet Union's victories in the Second World War. Through the mouth of such ideologues as E. Varga, Stalinism held and holds that this strengthening of the socialist camp' makes possible a new type of social formation between capitalism and socialism - the People's Democracy!

The 'People's Democracy' programme is based on the following Stalinist reasoning:- the world is divided between those forces representing monopoly and militarism and the forces of peace and socialism. The pillar of the forces of peace and socialism is of course the Soviet Union. In this new balance of forces it is possible to build an alliance with antimonopolist and pacific sections of the bourgeoisie alliance which will take the form governmentally of a People's Democracy. The British Road to Socialism of 1954, published with Stalin's full approval is precisely such a programme for People's Democracy. It is a nationalist programme for class

# CLASS STRUGGLE

20p

From: 12, Landrishe Place,  
Dublin,  
Eire.

issues  
1 & 2



collaboration in the cause of 'sovereignty' and 'peace'.

What is at the heart of Stalinism then is not reliance on Russian tanks or immediate subordination to every whim of Soviet foreign policy. It is the theory of 'Socialism in one country' elaborated programmatically on the basis of the supposed 'triumph' that made possible the People's Democratic programme (i.e. made the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' redundant to Stalin). It is the possibility of building 'Socialism in one country' that makes the Stalinist programme inevitably national.

This world view is clearly riddled with contradictions. They are becoming more apparent on a world scale. But we must not lose sight of these essential defining features of Stalinism. The RCG for example, in their headlong flight from Trotskyism, are now trying to argue that the European CPs have ceased to be Stalinist since at least the days of the Popular Front.

*"Such parties are no longer appendages of the CPSU - they are not Stalinist organisations, whose strategies reflect the foreign policy interests of the Soviet Union. The Communist Parties of the advanced capitalist countries are reformist parties and have been so for more than thirty years"* (RC No 6 p2 written March 1977 - our emphasis)

The RCG conflate Reformism and Social Democracy and because the CPs clearly have a reformist strategy see them as identical to Social Democracy. They thus cannot explain the apparent 'left' turns of the CPs, for example, the 'defeatist' line of the Comintern in the early '40s.

What further differentiates the Stalinist Parties from their Social Democratic 'twins' is their bureaucratic monolithism. The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, the Stalinist parties organise a more class conscious, militant section of the working class than the Social Democrats. The stolen heritage of Leninism and the October Revolution are a necessary ideological smoke screen for the Stalinist bureaucrats. Yet their whole strategy and tactics are in constant conflict with their fake 'Communism'. Secondly unlike the Social Democrats their continued link with the foreign policy of the Russian bureaucracy means that they cannot totally merge themselves with the bourgeois public opinion of their respective countries. Thus, neither the norms of bourgeois democracy, nor of proletarian democracy, are possible within their parties. A pale reflection of the organisational practices of the Russian party is thus a key feature of these parties.

There is certainly a contradiction between the continued adherence of the Western CP's to the position that the bureaucratic tyrannies of Eastern Europe and Russia are socialist and their national democratic roads to socialism, a contradiction which has a reflection in the continued existence of separate bureaucratic Stalinist parties. The resolution of this contradiction via 'organic unity' with Social Democracy, however, lies in the future and to affirm that it is already accomplished is to disarm revolutionaries in dealing with the distinct phenomenon of Stalinism. A task which incidentally co-operates with the Euro-Communists vigorous assertions that Stalinism is merely a historical phenomenon.

What then is the significance of the current splits and rifts in world Stalinism? The search for democratic allies, the popular alliance, is a sanctioned platform of World Stalinism. That is not at stake in the conflicts. But in order to cement those alliances with Social Democrats, Christian Democrats and radicals, the Western CP's have found it necessary to distance themselves from the Kremlin, from the Soviet Communist Party. The support of dissidents in East Europe, the renunciation of the one-party 'Russian' model are necessary entry tickets for the Western CP's into coalition and alliance with the Bourgeois parties. Euro-Communism, in spite of its counter position to 'Russian Communism' has its roots in the very politics of 'People's Democracy' and 'Popular Front', in the political programme of Stalinism.

Secondly, certain of the ruling bureaucracies, manoeuvring for greater independence from the Soviet bureaucracy in the face of declining outlets for trade in the West, a desperate search for credit, mass resentment at price rises and continuing shortages, see the Euro-Communists as a lever to use and apply in that manoeuvre. Kadar in Hungary, Gierek in Poland, Ceausescu in Romania have all defended, to a greater or lesser extent, the Euro-Communists in their own bureaucratic national interests.

What is a t issue for the Soviet bureaucracy is not the national alliances and class collaboration of the Western Stalinist Parties. They have not condemned the strategy and tactics of Western CP's on this terrain. They have not criticised the Spanish CP's abject capitulation to the Spanish monarchy. When the Moscow New Times talks of Euro-Communism as responding "exclusively to the interests of Imperialism and the forces of aggression and reaction", they do not mean any criticism of the Italian or French CP's commitment to Nato. What upsets the Soviet bureaucracy is that in a particular way, the 'Euro-Communists' provide partial support for the forces of opposition in the USSR and East Europe. By supporting individual oppositionists, by publicising their criticisms of the regime in newspapers widely read in East Europe, the Western CP's, in pursuance of their national roads, render the Russian bureaucracy national and international repression more difficult. This contradiction is at the heart of Stalinism itself, it is at the root of the current public conflicts with the Russian party.

The 'debate' in the British Party has to be seen in this light. Despite the cant from French et al, the debate is not about the dictatorship of the proletariat, that was not to be found in the 1951 draft. The New Draft is simply a revised version of the original, no different in basic politics but adding material on women and gays, support for human rights in Eastern Europe in particular. The new draft is more explicit in its distancing of the CPGB from the Russian bureaucracy - "Britain's road to socialism will be different from the the Soviet road" (1089) but essentially remains the same. Thus

*"There is an objective basis for an alliance between many of these sections of the capitalist class...and the working class against the common enemy - the big capitalists"* (613-615) Exactly the model of the People's Alliance Programme.

The French grouping are incapable of putting any political alternative to this position. They have operated with, and still argue for, the central strategy of the people's alliance. What they cannot stomach is any criticism of the Soviet Union and East Europe, in the most literal sense their politics mean no more than supporting the bureaucratic regimes of East Europe as Socialism, supporting Stalin's terror as 'the dictatorship of the proletariat'. Sections of the Russian and East European bureaucracies may help buttress French's sect, may provide outlets for its press in particular. But on basic questions of programme and strategy it has no alternative to the demoralised CPGB's recipe of alliance with the Trade Union bureaucracy, pressure on the Labour left in pursuance of 'progressive' policies.

How should Trotskyists relate to these splits, to the issues that are posed in the debates?

If we characterise the Communist parties as Stalinist we do so understanding the counter-revolutionary nature of Stalinism both as ruling party and as collaborator in popular fronts and coalitions. Against the Stalinists as ruling parties we put forward a programme to organise the working class to overthrow the Stalinist regimes, a programme for the revolutionary instalment of workers' power. Against the Western CPs we fight for an international programme to organise the workers for power, independent of the Labour and TU bureaucracies.

While understanding the innate contradictions and tensions within world Stalinism we say that both the Euro-Communists

and the Brezhnevists stand to hold the working class back. Even if the Euro-Communist leaders (eg. Carrillo) were to deny the socialist character of the USSR, to deny that the USSR was a bulwark of world peace and socialism (i.e. were to "go further" in their critique of the USSR) the resultant social-democratisation of those 'Communist' parties would be no more progressive and no less reactionary from the standpoint of the working class. The tactic of the SWP(US) and the IMG in trying to push Carrillo further, suggesting new slogans for him to raise is thoroughly opportunist and misleading.

The SWP(US) clearly have great hopes that Carrillo will free himself from Stalinism, but to become what?

*"For the time being, Carrillo seems to have held his position by counterattacking with some powerful political arguments. In the long run, he could only resist the power of the Kremlin by deepening and extending his criticisms of Stalinist dictatorship, by educating the party ranks about Stalinism and building an incorruptible leadership (sic) In order to do that he would have to break completely with Stalinism and his own past, not just on international questions but in every sphere of party work.*

*The danger to Carrillo is indicated by the wavering of the biggest Eurocommunist party, the Italian CP." (Intercontinental Press July 18 1977)*

And what is it this Carrillo "breaking completely with Stalinism" would become for the comrades of the SWP?... it is clear he would be a reactionary social democrat, not a reactionary Stalinist. The IMG raise the same demand on Carrillo to break with Stalinism, but again they pose no more than that he should take up the arguments of the Social Democrats:

*"Despite these criticisms Carrillo's critique remains incomplete. He fails to understand the need for institutionalised organs of workers democracy in a socialist state. He does not call for the abolition of the one-party states in Russia, China and Eastern Europe. He does not because there are questions which would have repercussions on the internal organisations of the PCE itself" (Socialist Challenge no.5)*

The question is not for us to abstractly call for the abolition of the one-party states, most social democrats espouse that call in favour of 'multi-party' states. Our programme is for the revolutionary overthrow of those regimes by the working class. No reformists espouse that call. For the IMG however the issue can be boiled down to questions of democracy... how many parties under socialism, and organisation... hence the IMG's proposal that what holds back Carrillo ultimately is this fear of upsetting the internal structure of the PCE.

The USFI and the IMG have concentrated on lancing at these two supposed Achilles heels of Euro-Communism. The IMG and USFI pose an abstract vision of socialist society, as an alternative to the Stalinist States. Imprecor 7th July 1977 contains a 13 page resolution of the USFI on "Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" (p3 - 16) The whole purpose of this article is not with Stalinism in international dissaray, to argue the Trotskyist programme against the Stalinist parties. It is to explain that more than one party would exist in a healthy socialist society, that it is necessary to state this in order to win the masses' confidence in socialist politics. The necessity to organise the revolutionary dictatorship of the working class against the expropriated classes is seen, in passing, as a 'possible' exception to the flourishing of multi-party democracy.

*"In the process of establishing and consolidating the dictatorship of the proletariat, civil war or international military interventions have been and can be unleashed by the bourgeoisie (sic). Under conditions of civil war... restrictions on the political activities of the bourgeoisie may well be called for."*

But these arguments as to democracy are posed within a particular scenario by the USFI and IMG. There is a period of 'democratisation' of Marxist politics which the Euro-Communists, and reforming Stalinists in the East, can unleash whatever their intentions. The IMG in Socialist Challenge No 2 admonish them thus "socialists attempting to

*intervene in the run-up to the Belgrade Conference must not be tempted into merely denouncing imperialist hypocrisies, but must get our own house in order."* And by 'our house' the IMG mean the Stalinist regimes and to get them 'in order' the IMG propose the right of political parties, the right to strike and the separation of party and state. Nowhere do they pose the need for independent workers organisation to overthrow the Stalinist bureaucracy, in fact it becomes clear that the Stalinist bureaucrats, Carrillo in the West, Dubcek in the East, clearly can play a significant role in the process towards getting 'our' house in order.

*"Any workers state which operated on these principles (as even the limited and embryonic (sic) example of Ducek's Czechoslovakia demonstrates) would have an extremely powerful impact on the working masses of Capitalist Europe and America and would bring the possibilities of socialist revolutions in the West much closer to being realised". (ibid) keeping silent about the Trotskyist programme in favour of pushing the Euro-Communists further towards 'democracy' and away from Stalinism it comes as no surprise that the IMG related to the debates inside the CPGB fundamentally at the level of organisational norms not political programme. The IMG became outraged defenders of the old-fashioned Stalinists, blocked and suppressed as they were by the Euro-Communist majority. Charlie Doyle, a CP member who objected to the new Draft and more especially to criticisms of the USSR which he claimed was in the 'front line' of the world forces fighting imperialism, had his platform printed and his speech reported with no substantive political criticism. And why did the IMG do so? In order to debate and counterpose a Trotskyist position? No.*

*"But because we think a vital practical principle of Leninism is involved in the banning of this pamphlet" (Socialist Challenge no 1)*

The IMG do not understand that the organisational violations of Leninism perpetrated by the Stalinists flow from their political programme, that it is the politics of the Stalinists that we fight and the organisational methods that follow from them. Instead Dodie Wepler in the Socialist Challenge talked as if it were possible for an organisation committed to a Stalinist programme to healthily debate the politics of oppositions, such as that of French, and as if Trotskyists should see as their

Italian CP leader Berlinguer



prime orientation demanding that stalinists become internally democratic,

*"Ultimately his (French's) supporters will suffer the same fate as all those CP militants who are beginning to question the line of the EC under the impact of the rise of world revolutionary developments." (Socialist Challenge No 2)*

Now whilst revolutionaries support democratic demands in the Stalinist States, the Trotskyist programme is not distinguished by this position - liberal bourgeois and social democrats do likewise. Revolutionaries also support 'democratic rights' within the bureaucratic Stalinist parties. Neither of these positions are the bedrock of our programme however. Even to abstractly counterpose Soviets and a plurality of parties does not pass beyond a centrist position. For us Soviets are first organs of struggle before they can be organs

of working class government. The struggle that lies ahead in the Soviet Union is a revolutionary one against the bureaucracy for the smashing of the bureaucratic military machine, for workers control and then workers management in the factories. Splits in the bureaucracy as in Hungary and Czechoslovakia will doubtless occur opening up the road to working class struggle. But revolutionaries in Eastern Europe will at their peril act as left advisers to the Nagy's or Dubceks, presenting their programme as a more radical 'process of democratisation'. Likewise to intervene in the crisis of Western Stalinism as mere advocates of more 'inner party democracy' than the Carillos, Marchais or Maclellans are at present willing to grant as the periodicals of the USFI are doing is to locate oneself in the baggage train of Euro-Communism, not in the vanguard of World Trotskyism.

# Fascism and Antifascism

by STEVE McSWEENEY

In periods of developing economic and political crisis those strata who possess neither the collective strength of the organised working class nor the economic and political power of the bourgeoisie are forced into ever more desperate circumstances. They are powerless against inflation as it eats away their savings and their capital, the possibility of climbing the social ladder becomes ever more remote for them.

The existence of a petty-bourgeoisie in desperate straits is not, in itself, however, sufficient to build a Fascist movement. More than desperation and frustration are required. Fascists must instil the confidence, the belief that the petty bourgeoisie and sections of the lumpen proletariat rabble can be a force to be reckoned with. This confidence cannot grow as long as the principle protagonists in the class war are determined, indeed capable, of settling accounts in their own interests. But, if that struggle is in stalemate, if the working class is strong but incapable of settling accounts with capitalism then Fascism can grow apace. The growth and scale of Fascism is evidence of the defensive strength but offensive weakness of the working class. Under its banner Fascism can assemble not only the petty-bourgeoisie but sections of the lumpen proletariat and the most reactionary elements of the bourgeoisie for action against the workers' organisations.

What separates Fascism from other right wing formations is that it seeks to build a mass movement to impose its policies by direct action and force. At the centre of all Fascist movements, therefore, must be the street gangs, the picket-break squads, the street armies and marches. From the beginning street marches and intimidatory gangs are vital to instil confidence into those who, as individuals, are insignificant and unorganised. Such marches must have a direct target to attack and humiliate.

This is not to say that marching on the streets, the formation of intimidatory gangs are the sum total of Fascist activity. They are supported by all the traditional forms of pol-

itical activity, work in the unions, leafletting, the formation of racist community associations, newspaper selling and electioneering, wherever the Labour movement leaves them the openings. Of course, Fascism only comes to state power at the behest of the bourgeoisie. The historic role of Fascism is as the mailed fist of the counter-revolution smashing the working class movement. Only in certain very specific situations, therefore, does the bourgeoisie place state power in the hands of the Fascist gangs.

Essentially the National Front represent a small and embryonic Fascist movement. This must give us no grounds for complacency. There are important differences between contemporary Britain and the Weimar Germany from which the Nazis emerged. Unlike the Nazis the National Front cannot look to masses of discontented demobbed soldiers to form the core of their street armies. In Britain the vast majority of those whose objective social situation could drive them to Fascism, are not yet desperate enough to take to the streets against immigrants and the working class' organisations. The Tory Party, with its institutionalised right wing, is capable of articulating the demands and grievances of small businessmen, the self-employed, to a significant degree.

However, the objective capitalist crisis, the racism and bankruptcy of the Labour leaders, makes possible the formation of a Fascist nucleus in Britain today, a nucleus that is larger and more relevant than at any time since the Thirties.

The essential link between the small number of trained Fascists existing in Britain in the Sixties and the layers of potentially enraged and organised Fascist support is racism. By linking falling living standards, decaying social services with immigration, Fascism can feed on and grow from that reservoir of racist culture nurtured under British imperialism. Unlike the 'respectable racism' of the Tory and Labour politicians, the National Front pose the need for direct action, for intimidation and force.

The National Front is, at present, precisely a 'front' — a



training school for the Nazis. The discrepancy between their vote, their paper membership and the actually declining numbers that the NF can mobilise for their marches, are an indication of the problems facing the trained Fascist leaders, and the tasks facing the Left. The main problem for the NF at present is how to maintain their precarious 'right' to parade and march, to use that 'right' to draw their waverers and stragglers into the intimidatory street marches. Such 'action' can appeal to the hardened Fascist thugs, to sections of white youth outside the influence of the labour movement (it is no accident that the NF are at present making a prioritised bid to build a youth movement) to the lumpens and the committed. However, their ability to transform electoral supporters, routine NF members is threatened every time the working class organises physically to prevent their marches.

The Front's electoral performance has been weaker in all areas where the labour movement has organised against them on a significant scale. Wood Green, Ladywood, Bradford and Leicester are all examples of this. The low turn-out of National Front members at Lewisham (around 600) show the difficulties facing the NF leadership in mobilising their street forces against certain physical resistance from the labour movement and sections of the black community. The rout of the NF march in Lewisham underlines the necessity to mobilise in order to impose no platform for the fascists - no marching, no selling, no meetings. It also shows that significant sections of young workers and black youth can be won to fight alongside revolutionaries on a scale large enough to stop the fascists.

Once again the lesson that Trotsky drew from the rise of Fascism in Germany - that it will only grow if it is allowed to, if it is allowed to gain control of the streets, has been proven. What other lessons must the Left learn, or re-learn?

Although we can halt the Front through counter-mobilisations, this is not the same as destroying Fascism once and for all. Fascism is rooted in the objective crisis of capitalism, the conditions for its growth remain. The enormous strength of the working class is dissipated, misled by reformist leaders. The argument that the fight against Fascism is the fight against capitalism - the fight for workers' power, is no mere rhetoric.

It is in this situation that a bitter struggle must be waged in the workers' movement against those - certain black community leaders, the Stalinists and the Labour Party lefts, who argue that the campaign against the National Front should be directed to persuading the capitalist state to ban the National Front. At a time when Lewisham, and the mobilisation in preparation for the Front's Thameside march show the real possibility of halting the forward march of the British fascists all reliance on state forces will only play the role of positively disorienting and demobilising the anti-fascist forces.

The bourgeoisie will never ban fascism, will never dismantle fascist organisations or seriously impede their growth. Whilst the capitalist class looks to fascist organisations to maintain its power only in specific situations, it always sees the fascist gangs as a potential auxiliary and aid in the class battle. A developing fascist organisation, in a period of mounting social crisis, is a potential weapon that the bourgeoisie will not discard. In the 1930s, and again at Thameside, the State forces intervened in the conflict between the workers movement and the fascists in order to prevent the working class organising to stamp out fascism and extend and develop its own strength.

The very state forces being called on to implement such a ban are organised against the working class in every key struggle, their purpose is of course to defend the interests of the capitalist class. It is in fact to sow illusions in the neutrality of these forces to suggest that they are a neutral weapon which can be used against the fascist organisations, and will "protect" the black community and the workers movement.

To call on the bourgeoisie to ban the fascists is to abdicate the responsibility of revolutionaries to mobilise the only force that could stop fascism - the working class movement and the immigrants - organised to impose no platform for fascists.

## THE TAMESIDE BAN

In the aftermath of Lewisham the Labour Government and the police moved to ban the National Front march in Thameside. Predictably the Morning Star proclaimed the ban as a victory and the North-West Region of the TUC took it as a signal to call off their planned anti-racist demonstration. Less predictably the largest groups to the left of the CP, the SWP(GB) and the IMG both responded by welcoming the ban whilst criticising only its application to the meetings of the left.

Why was the ban in Thameside imposed? Was it aimed at preventing the National Front from organising? The ban was not, and could not have been, aimed at stopping the fascists. What concerned the police and the forces of "law and order" was that whole sections of young blacks and young workers were mobilising to fight alongside the left to physically stop the Front. When Merlyn Rees and the chiefs of police talk of "preventing violence" they mean preventing the breaking up of the Front's march by organised anti-fascists. The ban served to prevent the left from organising its forces, from settling accounts with the NF again. That is why it is not an unfortunate or accidental side effect that the left was banned too, as both the Socialist Worker and Socialist Challenge have implied, it was in fact the central object of the state forces.

The SWP has hailed the ban as a victory. Their only difference with the CP and the Labour Lefts has been to argue that it was the militant struggle at Lewisham, not peaceful marches and protests that secured this victory: the Thameside ban. In this sphere of activity, as in the economic struggle, the SWP turned to the reformists and argued that only through militant tactics can reformist goals be achieved. Despite the militancy of their tactics this summer the SWP had no answer to the Thameside ban concentrating instead on organising a victory demonstration in Manchester.

The IMG and Socialist Challenge while claiming the ban on the Front to be a victory opposed the ban imposed on the left. In this way not only did they fail to understand the real meaning and object of the Thameside ban they too have no alternative to the "ban the National Front" campaign of the reformist left and the smug complacency of labour officialdom when the ban was imposed. The task of revolutionaries was to expose and oppose the Thameside ban, to oppose all reliance on the state machine in the fight against fascism. To that purpose the revolutionary left, and its largest component the SWP in particular should have called for a national united campaign against the ban and for no platform for fascists. Such a campaign of meetings and demonstrations could have posed the only alternative to the legalistic and pacifist campaign of the lefts and the TU bureaucracy, could have prevented the Thameside ban serving its purpose of demobilising or fragmenting the forces of black youth and the working class prepared to fight the Front. Such successes as were secured at Lewisham are, by their nature temporary unless they serve to break sections of the workers movement and the black community from reformist and pacifist illusions in the state forces. No movement can be organised to take the working class forward in the period ahead without that struggle. Despite the successes secured by the Lewisham mobilisation, and despite the confidence of the left since then, and the evident disarray in the fascist ranks, the failure of the revolutionary left to campaign against the Thameside ban was therefore a serious political setback in the struggle against fascism.

In fighting Fascism we have to develop methods of struggle which strengthen the working class on all its battlefronts. While we must build a working class anti-Fascist movement this must be done as one part of organising the fighting strength of the class as a whole. This is the keynote of our approach to anti-Fascist work.

We are for a principled Labour movement united front against Fascist organisation. The central element of this activity must be collaboration to impose NO PLATFORM FOR FASCISTS - no selling, no marching and no meetings - in all areas. No platform must mean organised national and loc-

al caucuses in all unions to drive the Fascists out of the unions. In the Labour Party we have to drive out all active racists. Such united fronts in the areas, nationally co-ordinated and focussed, must be composed of bona fide delegates of Labour movement organisations and the fighting bodies of the immigrant communities.

We must not simply counterpose the Labour movement 'sociologically' to the pacifist projects of the Stalinists and Labour Left. We must counterpose a principled class programme that can both unite and equip those sections of the Labour movement prepared to act, to organise, against the Fascist menace. We will fight in all committees committed to the No Platform position for a programme of :-

- \*Opposition to all immigration controls
- \*For Labour movement support for black self defence
- \*For the right of immigrant workers to caucus in the Trade Unions and Labour Movement.

This programme is not optional - without it an effective working class campaign cannot be waged. The attacks on immigrant organisations and Left groups, the attempts by the Fascists to build a youth movement and Trade Union caucuses are an urgent warning to the working class movement. The successes of Lewisham and Ladywood must not blind us to the need for ongoing principled work, on a united basis, to defend the Left and immigrant organisations, to systematically destroy the organised base of Fascism.

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# TOM:UTOM

## Two roads to nowhere

by B. GROVES and B. McADAM

We have always argued that a central task of British revolutionaries is the organising of support for the struggle against British Imperialism in Ireland. We argued this as the Left Faction of IS. The failure of IS to undertake serious work to organise this support was not an unfortunate, unrelated omission on the part of the IS leadership, it was not a partial misdemeanour. It reflected a wrong approach to building a revolutionary workers' party, and a wrong political line on the struggle in Ireland.

The Aldershot and Birmingham bombings provoked from IS (now the SWP) a response that had nothing in common with revolutionary internationalism. The bombings were criticised not from the standpoint of their efficacy in furthering the struggle against the British ruling classes' plans in Ireland, but from the point of their affects on British workers. A party that cannot stand 'against the stream' of chauvinist hysteria in this imperialist war, cannot build a revolutionary vanguard that can weather the storms ahead. In this way Ireland remains an acid test for British revolutionaries.

The failure of early attempts to build a movement against British imperialism in Ireland - the anti-internment league, the Irish Solidarity Campaign - indicated the unwillingness of the major part of the 'revolutionary' left to conduct serious agitation aimed at British workers. The objective situation - from the fall of Stormont to the Ulster Workers' Strike - was also one where the British Government was able to pose to whole sections of workers as a mediator. Counterposing 'power-sharing' to Stormont, the British Government was able to present a 'democratic gloss' to its policies.

The collapse of the AIL, the phasing out of virtually all work on Ireland by the IS, prompted the Left Faction to call, in mid-1973, for a new initiative on the Irish question. This initiative, we argued, should take the form of a Troops Out Campaign orientated to the trade union and labour movements. We argued that IS was uniquely posed because of its toehold in the trade union movement, to initiate such a campaign. **IS REJECTED THIS CALL WITH DERISION.**

At the same time, a Troops Out Movement was in

the process of foundation - primarily by individual activists. Despite half-hearted (at best) support from the major left groups, the TOM were able to organise a Labour Movement Conference on the role of the British Army in Ireland in May 1974. It was attended by 326 delegates from trade unions, trades councils and Labour Party organisations.

The conference showed the objective possibility of building a Labour Movement based campaign for the withdrawal of troops. The Ulster Workers' Strike was the clearest indication of the impasse in British Imperialisms' plans to move to new forms of power-sharing to maintain its dominance. The failure of British plans prompted chauvinist, war-weary, anti-Irish calls for withdrawal from such reactionary MP's as Abse. There was a real possibility of winning and organising a significant section of the Labour Movement to an anti-imperialist campaign for the withdrawal of troops. We should not confuse such a campaign with the mass anti-war movement built in the USA. The absence of a conscript army suffering heavy casualties, the long history of British Labour complicity in the repressive sectarian Northern State, means that we cannot mechanically transpose the model of the US anti-war movement.

The failure to develop and build such a movement is the result of the failure of the major left organisations to take up the issue and the politics and orientation of those who controlled and organised the TOM campaign.

A serious campaign could only have been built as a united front of Labour movement organisations and political parties. IS' negligence, vacillating IMG support left the campaign in the hands of a small grouping of individual activists (around G. Lawless). Their politics were based on an hostility to the left groups, and an attempt to build a single issue campaign organisation of individual activist members. They sought in fact to build a political party on this one issue. A united front presumes a leadership and membership based on its constituent parties and organisation - it is not itself a party! Rejecting proposals to move towards a united front structure based on local and national affiliation of trade union bodies, LPYS branches,

left groups, etc., the TOM individual activists built their own organisational framework with TOM discipline and TOM politics.

What were these 'TOM politics'? Held together only by hostility to the left organisations and Irish nationalism, the TOM leaders had no perspective for growth. Their campaign consisted of a series of stunts and gimmicks, organised in search of publicity and influence. Imagined massive breakthroughs - winning over whole numbers of Labour MPs, splitting the Parliamentary Labour Party on Irish policy, for example - were always counterposed to the actual task of developing the base for a working class campaign. This failure is best understood if we look at the history of the labour Movement Delegation to Ireland.

One of the best opportunities for focussing the work of TOM on developing a Troops Out current in the Labour Movement was posed by the LMDI in the autumn of 1976. The delegation was organised and presented as a fact-finding mission of Labour Movement bodies. But the TOM leadership jealously opposed all proposals for an organising committee of sponsoring bodies to determine the activities and policy of the delegation. They insisted that the mission would not be talking to Protestant organisations - laying the delegates open to the charge of not hearing both sides of the argument, depriving the delegates of the opportunity to explain and characterise the sectarian demands of the Orange workers on their return.

The success of the delegation could only be judged on its ability to initiate a campaign around a democratically agreed report and national campaign of report-back meetings throughout the Labour Movement. Such a campaign did not materialise. The delegation was organised instead as a nine-day wonder in search of publicity. A few report-back meetings may have been 'encouraged', a larger meeting of Trade Union delegates is now envisaged, but none of this can hide the fact that a final report meeting was held nearly one year later, with under half the delegates attending and that the TOM leadership saw the LMDI as simply another stunt not the springboard for a campaign in the working class.

As TOM 'work' revolved around a series of disconnected national events, one off shows and publicity stunts, so the TOM leadership inevitably opportunistically seeks out the good favours of 'allies' with no record of principled or serious struggle on the question of Ireland. Such an unprincipled alliance was struck up by TOM with the SWP (IS) in jointly staging the Bloody Sunday Commemoration rally last January. The rally did not aid the promotion of the kind of movement which must be built. It served to let the SWP off the hook, to cover up their disgraceful line and lack of work on Ireland.

The failure of TOM to utilise its national focuses for consistent and meaningful intervention within the Trade Union and Labour movement, coupled with the woefully inadequate response of the British Left has resulted in an enormous vacuum on the Irish question in Britain. Mounting opposition within the shrinking and demoralised TOM came to a head at last April's NDC with the support of Big Flame and the IMG. This opposition, around a breakaway from the Lawless caucus, faced the task of developing a systematic political alternative to the discredited TOM leadership. The grievances were incoherent and unformed - ranging from criticisms of the undemocratic life of TOM, to suggestions that the TOM was not sufficiently 'outward looking'. Supported by many of the TOM branches, they walked out of the NDC and proceeded to organise an open conference in July to re-initiate a Troops Out Conference. About 200 people attended this open conference. The end result was, on the proposal of the IMG and Big Flame, to organise an International Tribunal on the war crimes of Britain in Ireland, a Tribunal peopled by international

figures and names proposed as a re-run of the Bertrand Russell war crimes Tribunal on American crimes in Vietnam. Seeing this as the principle orientation the conference also decided to organise another open all-comers conference in the autumn. The purpose of this conference was never made clear by the IMG and Big Flame proposers - except that it would draw more people in ... to what? that it would be democratic ... for what?

On the basis of this perspective, it can be safely assumed that the new 'united' TOM will not pose itself as any real alternative to the old TOM. The channelling of all its resources into a Tribunal to express liberal outrage and horror is simply another diversion from the real tasks. It is no accident that this stunt was already up the sleeve of the Lawless TOM. The IMG and Co. are only proposing to organise it on a larger international scale. 'Socialist Challenge' indicates that the Tribunal will serve, by way of publicity, as a means of introducing the Irish question into the British Working Class. This comes from the IMG, who argued against a Workers' Power proposal for a delegate Labour Movement Troops Out Conference in the autumn to lay the basis of an ongoing United Front campaign. They argued then that we did not have significant enough forces for such a conference - that it was necessary to 'think big' by using the Tribunal to break into whole new layers of the British working class!

Like the opportunists of the old TOM they can only offer schemes for winning the masses tomorrow - as an alternative to a principled, unfortunately but necessarily small at present, united front based in the working class movement.

The new TOM has learnt nothing from the mistakes of the old TOM. It has merely reacted to the decrepit organisational structure, it is unwilling to, and incapable of, offering a political alternative.

#### FOR A LABOUR MOVEMENT CAMPAIGN

The principle force in opposition to these plans was the Workers' Power group. We proposed the convening of a Labour Movement Delegate Conference which could set about formulating perspectives and policy for the opening of a campaign to get the troops out. The conference should be called under three slogans :-  
Troops out of Ireland, NOW!  
For the right of the Irish people alone to decide the future of the Six Counties!  
Immediate repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act!

Such a conference could have been used as an organising focus in the localities and to serve as a means of winning support and affiliations from trade union branches, Trades Councils, Labour Parties, Young Socialists branches and left groups and involving them in united front activity at national and local levels, organising propaganda around the demands of the campaign. As an essential back-up to the campaign we proposed the following areas of activity; local meetings in support of the delegate conference, the production of a broadsheet for trade union and Labour Party work, the promotion of anti-recruitment propaganda directed at school leavers and the young unemployed and the organising of Troops Out resolutions for national conferences of the major unions.

We will continue to put forward the case for a serious Labour Movement orientation for Troops Out work and will do so in any forums created by either the old or new TOM's. We view both as inadequate for developing the necessary perspective. We will fight in them, support and work for those initiatives we believe can win advanced workers in this country to an anti-imperialist stance, but we give political allegiance to neither the old nor the new TOM. The continuing struggle and sacrifice in the North demand this of us, it demands a lot more of us than perpetually flaunting ourselves in the time-worn manner of publicity shows, stunts and rallies.

# The Workers' Government

## Problems in the application of a slogan 1917 ~ 77

by  
**Stuart King**

Recent events in Europe have confronted the extreme left with situations where crisis-ridden national bourgeoisies are forced to turn to the traditional parties of the working class to impose the necessary austerity measures on their members. In Portugal a revolutionary situation was only headed off by the actions of the Communist and Socialist Parties in Government, acting as defenders of Portuguese capitalism. In Italy the CP remains in alliance with the Christian Democratic Government fighting to stabilise Italian capitalism at the expense of the Italian working class. In France the 'Union of the Left' is fighting for the privilege of doing the same thing while in Spain the PSOE and the CPE wait eagerly for the call to join a coalition which will attempt to solve the economic crisis at the expense of the Spanish workers.

These events have forced the Left to make clear its attitude to the 'workers' parties' and the policies they pursue in Government, and raised acutely the problems of arguing their programmes to workers committed to these parties. The response of the International Left, which has fallen either into opportunism by liquidating its programme in the search for 'Socialist' or 'Left' Governments, or into ultra-leftism, posing the united front only from below, testifies to the programmatic degeneration of the far left and, in particular, of those International tendencies, like the USFI, who claim to represent programmatic continuity with the Fourth International of Trotsky.

The renovation and re-elaboration of the Transitional Programme is only possible on the basis of a clear and correct understanding of its fundamental positions, and the method for using them. It is for this reason that we publish this article on the Workers' Government — an article which looks both at the origins and the development of the slogan and its application by the 'revolutionary' left in Portugal.

Though the slogan of the Workers and Peasants Government was not formulated until the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, it was based not only upon the projected needs of the proletariat in Western Europe where the Social Democrats retained the allegiance of the majority of the proletariat but upon the experience of the Bolsheviks in Russia between April and November 1917. The speed and apparent ease with which the Bolsheviks had been victorious obscured, and to this day obscures, the strategy and tactics the Party used to win the masses during this momentous eight months.

The situation of Dual Power which emerged from the overthrow of Tsarism in February rested on the continued existence of bourgeois power, albeit badly weakened in the army and state bureaucracy and the Cadet-dominated Duma, and on the Menshevik-SR dominated Soviets. The Provisional Government, consisting of Cadets, SRs and Mensheviks represented a coalition between the leaders of the largest workers and peasants parties and the imperialist bourgeoisie. The former covered this treacherous pact with promises for the future — a negotiated peace with no annexations and no indemnities and land reform.

The first response of some of the Bolshevik leaders, most notably Stalin, was 'critical' support to the Provisional Government. Lenin on his return indignantly rejected this position. Defencism was possible only after power had passed into the hands of the proletariat and peasantry. Until then the war remained an Imperialist one. Though the workers, peasants and soldiers had elected delegates to the Soviets who supported the Dans, Tseretellis and Chernovs, indignation against the Provisional Government ran high, particularly in the major industrial centres and most intensely in Petrograd.

As early as April demonstrations with the slogan 'Down with the Provisional Government' took place in Petrograd. However, Lenin was against this slogan. The Bolsheviks were still a small minority within the working class and had not as yet won the majority to the side of the socialist revolution. In these circumstances the slogan 'Down with the Provisional Government' was either an empty phrase or incited the advanced workers to a premature insurrection. The key task was the winning of the supporters of the Mensheviks and the SRs over to the side of the Bolsheviks. As long as wide ranging democracy continued to exist in the Soviets, that is as long as the bourgeoisie did not feel strong enough to attack soviet democracy, there existed the opportunity to win over the majority of workers peacefully, by propaganda and agitation. The Bolsheviks argued for a series of immediate measures to be taken by the Government — redistribution of the land to the peasants, an end to the war, breaking of the secret treaties etc.

Obviously the Government of Prince Lvov and the Cadets would never implement such measures. The Bolsheviks argued to Menshevik and SR supporters that their parties should break their coalition with the bourgeois parties and implement such a programme. This could only be done, given the power of the bourgeoisie and landowners, by such a Government basing itself on the power of the Soviets. The key

slogans of this period 'All power to the Soviets' (in which the Mensheviks and SRs held a majority) and 'Down with the Capitalist Ministers' expressed the demand that the Mensheviks and SRs 'take the Power', ie form a Menshevik-SR Government based on the soviets.

After the spontaneous semi-insurrectionary movement of the 'July days', when the Bolsheviks were outlawed and the power and freedom of the soviets severely curtailed, the Bolsheviks dropped these slogans and called for the overthrow of the 'Kerensky military dictatorship'. Lenin held that in this period the Soviets had been hopelessly crippled by their Menshevik and SR leaders and that the Factory Committees were likely to become the basis of working class mobilisation and insurrection. However, the attempt by the reactionary general Kornilov to overthrow the provisional government, once again raised the question of the united front as an urgent need for the working class. But even now the Bolsheviks refused political support for the Kerensky Government, indeed the dropping of the demand for his overthrow was based on Kerensky being forced to allow full freedom of propaganda to the Bolsheviks, full freedoms being restored to the soviets and the arming of the workers against the Kornilov onslaught, 'The compromise on our part is a return to the pre-July demand of 'All Power to the Soviets' and 'A Government of SR's and Mensheviks Responsible to the Soviets' ... The compromise would amount to the following: the Bolsheviks without making any claim to participate in the Government (which is impossible for the Internationalist unless a dictatorship of the proletariat and poor peasants has been realised) would refrain from demanding the immediate transfer of power to the proletariat and poor peasants and of employing revolutionary methods of fighting for this demand. A condition that is self-evident and not new to the SR's and Mensheviks would be complete freedom of propaganda and the convocation of the Constituent Assembly without further delays or even at an earlier date.... The Bolsheviks would gain the opportunity of quite freely advocating their views and trying to win influence in the Soviets under a really complete democracy. In words 'everybody' now concedes the Bolsheviks this freedom. In reality this freedom is impossible under a bourgeois government or a government in which the bourgeoisie participate, or under any government in fact other than the Soviets. Under a Soviet Government, such freedom would be possible (we do not say it would be a certainty, but still it would be possible). For the sake of such a possibility at such a difficult time it would be worth a compromise with the majority of the Soviets.' (On Compromises - Lenin)

The compromise did not mean for one minute that the Bolsheviks supported or toned down their criticism of Kerensky's Government, 'We are changing the form of our struggle against Kerensky. Without in the least relaxing our hostility towards him, without taking back a single word said against him, without renouncing the task of overthrowing him, we shall not overthrow Kerensky right now. We shall approach the task of fighting against him in a different way, namely we shall point out to the people (who are fighting against Kornilov) Kerensky's weakness and vacillation. That has been done in the past as well. Now it has become the all-important thing and this constitutes the change.' (To the CC of the RSDLP - Lenin)

And at the heart of the demand for the Mensheviks and SRs to take the power was a programme of demands both directed at them but most importantly at their supporters who were not only encouraged to force their leaders to act, but also to act on the demands directly themselves, 'The change, further, is that the all-important thing now has become the intensification of the campaign for some kind of 'partial' demands to be presented to Kerensky: arrest Milyukov, arm the Petrograd workers, summon the Kronstadt, Vyborg and Helsingfors troops to Petrograd, disband the Duma, arrest Rodzyanko, legalise the transfer of the landed estates to the peasants, introduce workers' control over land etc. etc. We

must present these demands not only to Kerensky and not so much to Kerensky as to the workers, soldiers and peasants who have been carried away by the struggle against Kornilov, We must keep up their enthusiasm, encourage them to deal with the generals and officers who have declared for Kornilov, urge them to demand the immediate transfer of land to the peasants, suggest to them it is necessary to arrest Rodzyanko and Milyukov, dissolve the Duma, close down Rech and other bourgeois papers and institute investigations against them. The 'Left' SR's must be especially urged in this direction.

'It would be wrong to think we have moved further away from the task of the proletariat winning power. No, we have come very close to it, not directly, but from the side'. (ibid)

The essence of the demand for a workers government is set out even more clearly in a resolution from the Bolsheviks to the central executive committee of the Soviets (the TSIK). The resolution points to the complicity in the Kornilov coup of the Cadets and demands their exclusion from government along with all other 'representatives of property owning elements', it declares that the policy of conciliation and non-accountability must end and goes on, 'The exclusive authority of the Provisional Government and its lack of accountability are no longer tolerable. The only way out is to form a government of representatives of the revolutionary proletariat and peasantry, which must take the following basis for action:

1. A democratic republic must be decreed.
2. Private ownership of landed estates to be abolished immediately without compensation and the land put under the control of peasant committees...
3. Workers' control to be introduced on a state wide scale.
4. Secret treaties to be declared inoperative and a universal and democratic peace be offered immediately to all the peoples of the belligerent states.

Immediate measures to be decreed;

1. An end to all repression directed against the working class and its organisations...
  2. The right to self determination of nations living in Russia to be made a reality...
  3. The dissolution of the State Council and the State Duma, Immediate convocation of a Constituent Assembly...
- ('On Power' in, 'The Bolsheviks and the October Revolution; Central Committee Minutes of the RSDLP' Pluto Press, P. 42

Here we have in essence the demand for a workers and peasants government. Firstly a programme of key demands which meet the burning needs of the masses - against the war, economic sabotage and the landowners, and knocking from the hands of the enfeebled bourgeoisie of the instruments of repression. Secondly such a government must be answerable to the organisations of struggle of the workers and peasants and soldiers - Soviets. Thirdly the question of who shall participate in such a government is posed algebraically, ie its composition is not declared as fixed in advance. The Mensheviks and SRs are imperatively called on once more to break with the bourgeoisie and take up these tasks.

The use of these tactics helped accelerate the realisation of the masses that the Mensheviks and SRs would not carry out these measures and that only the Bolsheviks would. The elections to the Soviets in September/October gave the Bolsheviks the Majority they needed to organise the insurrection against the Provisional Government. Even after the October rising and the placing of the power into the hands of the Congress of Soviets, the Bolsheviks still offered the united front at a governmental level to the other workers and peasants parties on the basis of the key demands of the programme of ending the war distributing the land, recognising workers control of production and basing the government on the armed Soviets.

This tactic produced a split in the ranks of the SRs with the Lefts joining the government, whilst division and confusion reigned amongst the Menshevik leaders. The 'Workers and Peasant Government' was realised as the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Poor Peasants.

## THE DEBATE IN THE COMINTERN

In the revolutionary upsurge which swept Europe after the First World War, the importance of the united front tended to be underestimated by those seeking to emulate the success of the Bolsheviks. The embryo Communist parties in the West, for all their admiration of the Bolshevik revolution were almost universally ignorant of the strategy and tactics of the Bolshevik Party in the period leading up to the seizure of power. The dislocation of war, and the collapse of the old International had almost completely cut off one country's revolutionary movement from another, while the new International was chronically weak organisationally. The disastrous results of a CP/Social Democratic 'Soviet' Government in Hungary did nothing to recommend the united front to the Western parties, who had little knowledge of the mistakes made by the Hungarian Communists under Bela Kun.

The underestimation of the importance of orienting towards the mass of workers still under the influence of the Social Democracy was in part a result of the composition of the young Communist Parties. The latter were largely made up of revolutionary syndicalists, left Social Democrats and the best of the revolutionary anarchists etc. As a result they displayed strong ultra left tendencies. The role of the Social Democrats in Germany, butchering Luxemburg and Liebknecht, the need to split with these parties, made the tactic of offering co-operation with these 'agents of the Bourgeoisie' seem either impossible illusion mongering or outright betrayal. In Germany and Austria the ruling class reeled under the impact of defeat, the rank and file of the army was in revolt, workers seized their factories, the Social democrats appeared prisoners of their own mass base, soviets sprang up and Republics, sometimes 'Socialist' or 'Soviet' ones, were declared.

Even the 'victorious' powers were racked by massive upheavals as the impact of the Russian revolution, and the deprivations of the war spurred the working class onto challenge the existing order. Both the young Communist Parties and the Bolsheviks themselves believed that the social upheavals following the war would lead directly to the conquest of power in at least one of the major capitalist states. Despite set-backs, this perspective dominated the Comintern up to 1921 and is reflected in the manifestoes of the First and Second Congresses. In this period as Trotsky pointed out, *'...because of the relative ease with which the October Revolution was accomplished, the victory of the Russian proletariat did not present itself commensurately to the leading circles of European workers as a politico-strategic task, and this aspect was not sufficiently assimilated by them... Thereby the questions of revolution strategy in the epoch of the struggle for power were naturally reduced to a minimum.'* (First Five Years of the Comintern Vol.2 p. 28)

The European communists had not absorbed the special circumstances which made Russia the weak link in the capitalist chain, the weakness of its bourgeoisie, its dependence on European capital, a revolutionary party steeled over a long period of underground struggle and the absence of a powerful trade union bureaucracy, etc. The defeat suffered by the Communist Party in Germany in March 1921 signalled to the Bolsheviks and the Communist International, the need to reassess the immediate revolutionary perspective. In

the Soviet Union after the Kronstadt rising, it led to the adoption of NEP, a retreat in the economic sphere intimately linked with a retreat on the political field in Europe. (Only with victorious revolutions in the West could war communism have led to a relatively rapid advance towards Socialism and Communism.)

The reassessment which started at the Third Congress and was developed and extended during the fourth, started by examining why the massive, largely spontaneous upsurge following the war, had failed to lead to the seizure of power by the working class in the West. While recognising that by 1921 European capitalism had achieved a temporary stabilisation, The Comintern reaffirmed that the parties still operated in a period of revolutions where any stabilisations were transitory and of short duration. The Communist Parties in Germany, Italy and France whilst winning to their banners hundreds of thousands of revolutionary workers, particularly young workers, had not succeeded in winning the mass of workers from their traditional parties which remained under



Karl Radek, 1924

the ideological sway of the old reformist leaderships.

The united front tactic addressed itself to this problem. In a situation of capitalist instability where the communist parties embraced a substantial minority of the working class while the remainder were organised by the reformists and centrists, the question of the united front was posed in all its acuteness. The parties needed to seize every organisational avenue to ensure the maximum co-ordinated action between communist and non-communist working masses around the immediate needs of the class: Taking the offensive against the reformists into both trade union and political fields simultaneously, making a series of specific proposals to reformist trade union and political leaders, demanding joint aid to strikers, action over the unemployed, joint defence against fascists, etc and recording before the eyes of the masses their response.

Such a tactic could not be limited to the trade union field alone — a position which Bodiga wished the Fourth Congress to adopt. Nor could it, in a period when the Social Democracies were being thrust into office by their supporters, only to pull the shaken bourgeoisies chestnuts out of the fire, stop short at the question of Government. What

was to be the attitude of the young CPs to the Social Democrats when they held office, either in co-alition with bourgeois parties or on their own. Clearly in terms of these Governments actions they were bourgeois governments. Yet their mass support elected them and expected them to act in the workers interest. It was clearly not enough for the communists to denounce these governments and counterpose simply the slogan of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The masses had both with their votes and with their trade unions and Social Democratic Party membership cards indicated that propaganda alone would not convince them that the CPs were right. They suspected the communists of wanting to split the forces of the working class in action against the bosses for immediate, pressing demands. If this could be combatted in the unions and in campaigns by the united front against an openly bourgeois government, were the communists to have nothing to say when the workers parties were faced with the question of taking governmental power? It was this problem that the debate at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern centered around.

The resolution of the Communist International makes clear that the slogan for a workers government 'is an inevitable consequence of the united front tactic' (Theses on Tactics - Fourth World Congress). The partial struggles of the working class inevitably ran up against the structures of the capitalist state, against the government of the day. Revolutionaries must be able to provide answers to these 'governmental' questions as well as to the questions of involving direct action of the working class.† As Radek put it, 'But these demands (for higher wages, retention of the eight-hour day) are not sufficient. Workers who belong to no political party

*at all can, and do, demand the daily wage of 1000 marks, whilst 500 marks will not obtain for them the necessities of life. But, they see that to increase their wages in paper money provides no solution from their trouble. To begin with such watchwords suffice, but the longer the struggle lasts, the more essential does it become to proclaim political watchwords, the watchwords of social organisation.'*

The Comintern recognised that a political crisis which threatened the bourgeois order could come about as a result of the mass struggles of the working class while the communist parties still commanded the allegiance of only a minority of the working class. In such a situation, the reformist parties would attempt to 'solve' the crisis at the expense of the working class, in open or concealed alliance with the bourgeois parties. It was necessary for the Communist Parties to demand of those parties which claimed to represent the workers' interests that they break with their bourgeois allies, take the power and enter on the path of struggle for a workers' government, 'At a suitable time, prepared for by events and our propoganda we shall address ourselves to the working masses who still reject the revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat or who have simply not matured enough for these questions and speak to them as follows. "You can see how the bourgeoisie is restoring its class unity under the 'Left Block' and is preparing its own 'Left' government. Why should not we the workers, belonging to different parties and tendencies, create together with non-party workers our own proletarian block in defence of our own interests? And why should we not put forward our own Workers' Government?" Here is a natural, simple and clear statement of the whole issue.'

(Trotsky - Letter to the convention of the French CP, in First Five Years of the Comintern)

The Comintern did not argue that all societies would pass through a period under a workers government as a necessary transition to the dictatorship of the proletariat, it was only one possibility. Obviously such a development was more likely in countries with historically strong reformist parties, and it addressed precisely the problem which was most likely to arise in those countries where the reformist parties maintained their grip on the majority of the working class even in a period of chronic capitalist instability..

A clear distinction was made between genuine 'revolutionary workers governments' and 'liberal or social democratic governments'. A revolutionary workers government would necessarily be based on the active mass organisations of the working class and have been formed out of a period of mass struggles, 'A Government of this sort is only possible if it emerges from the masses themselves, if it is based on working class organisations that are suited for combat and formed from the broadest layers of the oppressed working masses.'

(Theses on Tactics)

Such a government must carry out a series of measures aimed at solving the crisis at the expense of the bourgeoisie. It must support all working class struggles and aim at strengthening the working class organisations while assaulting those of the bourgeoisie, 'The most elementary programme of such a government must consist in arming the proletariat, disarming the counter-revolutionary bourgeois organisations, installing supervision over production, ensuring that the main burden of taxation falls on the rich, and smashing the resistance of the bourgeois counter-revolution.'

The implementation of such a programme would have a dramatic destabilising effect on the capitalist state and provoke a violent reaction from the bourgeoisie. Such a government could only be a temporary phenomenon, giving rise as it must to a civil war with the forces of the bourgeoisie. Although such a government was not the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Comintern allowed for the possibility of Communists entering such a government under certain strictly laid down conditions,

1. Participation in a Workers' Government can take place only with the approval of the Communist International.
2. The Communist members of a Workers' Government remain under the strict control of their party.
3. The Communist members of a Workers' Government remain in direct contact with the revolutionary organisations of the masses.
4. The Communist Party has the absolute right to maintain its public identity and retain complete independence of agitation.

(ibid)

Only the communists could provide the resoluteness of programme and of will to rally the working class against the onslaught of the bourgeoisie. The communists supported by the masses would kick out the social democrats whenever and wherever they betrayed or vacillated in the life or death struggle, winning to the banner of communism the best elements of the reformist parties. Trotsky criticised the ultra-lefts and the French party coming as they did from a revolutionary syndicalist tradition, who in their eagerness to be 'intransigent' towards the socialists failed to understand the effect that a period of social crisis, combined with a properly carried out united front tactic would have on that party. 'But can Communists conceivably participate in the same government with Renaudel, Blum and the rest? some comrades

\*It is precisely because the SWP (IS) does not address itself to these problems, preferring to stick to the direct action within the economic struggle, while propogandising for 'Socialism', that its members are disarmed in questions relating to the general administration of society. They can only denounce the 'programme' of the 'Lefts' in the Lab-

our Party and the Communists Party's 'British Road to Socialism' while providing no alternative strategy to workers under the influence of these programmes. They are left telling these workers to 'step up the economic struggle' while attempting to convince them what a good idea socialism is through pamphlets like Paul Foots 'Why you should be a socialist'.

will ask. Under certain conditions this might prove temporarily unavoidable, just as we Russian Communists were willing, even after our October victory, to permit Mensheviks and SR's to enter the Government, and we actually did draw in Left SR's ... For matters to reach the point of creating a Workers' Government, it is first necessary to rally the majority of the working class around this slogan. Once we achieve this... the stock of Renaudel, Blum and Jouhaux would not be worth much, because these gentlemen are able to maintain themselves only through an alliance with the bourgeoisie, provided the working class is split'

'It is perfectly obvious that once the majority of the French working class unites under the banner of the Workers' Government, we shall have no cause whatever to worry about the composition of this government. A genuine success for the slogan of the Workers' Government would already signify, in the nature of things, the prelude to the proletarian revolution. This is what those comrades fail to understand who approach slogans formally and assay them with the yardstick of verbal radicalism, without taking into account the processes occurring within the working class itself.' (Trotsky, Letter to the Convention of the French CP.)

The use of the workers government slogan is not of course limited to periods where the formation of a workers government is an immediate or impending possibility. Its importance as a weapon for breaking workers from reformism lies in agitation around the slogan, counterposing the workers government and its programme to their party's hidden or open bloc with the bourgeoisie. In this we do not say in advance that such a government will consist of the Communist Party and Socialist Party, we argue for a specific programme that a workers government would carry out. To those who agree with such a programme and wish to fight for it in their parties, we say, we will fight alongside you and build a mass movement which will either force your leaders to adopt such policies or sweep them aside and replace them with leaders who will.

## LEFT AND RIGHT OPPORTUNISM ON THE UNITED FRONT

Clearly by the Fourth Congress the Comintern was only just beginning to work out the concrete application of the workers government. The death of Lenin, the defeat of the Left Opposition and the growth of the Russian bureaucracy as an independent force was to rapidly destroy the Comintern as a revolutionary democratic centralist international.

The Fourth Congress recognised that the United Front and the Workers' Government slogan in particular was, because it was a *tactical compromise*, open to serious misuse. Much time was spent in allaying the fears of the left that the formula was not in itself a *right opportunist deviation* which would play into the hands of those sections of the national parties who still remained tied to social democratic and parliamentary practices. As Zinoviev admitted, 'Even our best comrades have made mistakes in the application of this policy ... It is only a question of knowing how to apply it ... We shall meet even greater difficulties here than in the application of the United Front. But this is no reason why we should reject it as our French comrades have proposed.' (Zinoviev's speech to the Fourth Congress.)

Ironically enough it was Zinoviev himself who was to use the slogan in a sectarian fashion, equating it with the

Dictatorship of the Proletariat, and thus 'throwing it away' 'The Workers' Government is the same as the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. It is a pseudonym for Soviet Government. It is more suitable for the ordinary working man and we will therefore use it.' (Zinoviev's speech to the enlarged executive committee of the CI quoted in Meyers speech Fourth Congress.)

Despite verbal concessions made by Zinoviev in the debate it is clear from his later positions, particularly those put forward at the Fifth Congress that Zinoviev, even before the Fourth Congress, had tendencies towards a left sectarian position on the United Front. By the next year these had blossomed, starting from a characterisation of social democracy as 'the left wing of fascism'. †

Zinoviev goes on to reject any possibility of a Workers' Government involving the social democracy, in the sense envisaged by the Fourth Congress. 'The strength of the CP's and of the other alleged workers' parties is certainly very great. If these workers' parties were real workers' parties, not according to their composition, but politically, and we could form a coalition with them, we would become unconquerable in Europe. But these parties are workers' parties only in name. It is, therefore, nonsense, it is a sin, it is counter-revolutionary utopianism to talk of a coalition of all workers' parties.'

For Zinoviev the Workers' Government had only one meaning. 'As a matter of fact, the slogan is connected with the Russian Revolution. What was the meaning of the slogan in the Russian Revolution? It was a pseudonym for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat - no more, no less.' And again, 'The Workers' Government is for us the most powerful and popular form of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. The workers and peasants perform the deed and then understand it.' (Zinoviev Report from the EC, 3rd Session 5th Congress)

This position led directly to the adoption of the 'United Front from below'. The tactic of the United Front as, a means of breaking the masses from social democracy was effectively abandoned. To justify this position the strength of the CP in Germany was massively over-estimated and the hold of the Social Democracy over the working class under-estimated. Revolutionaries were left calling on workers and peasants to leave their parties and fight for the proletarian revolution. 'On this question we must shun circumlocution. We must say - Comrades, a Workers' Government is a splendid thing, but in order to form it we must first overthrow the bourgeoisie, and in order to do this, we must have arms, we must organise, we must win over the majority of the working class.' (Zinoviev, 15th Session of the 5th Congress)

Zinoviev and his modern-day imitators, fail to realise that in abandoning the workers' government, they abandon one of the most important weapons for winning over the majority of the proletariat to the side of the communists. No compromises for them, everything is black and white, one is left denouncing social democrats as counter-revolutionaries, and demanding their members fight with you for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat (but under the guise of the Workers' Government). † It was against just such 'lefts' that Radek argued at the Fourth Congress, trying to point

Under a section of his speech entitled 'Social Democracy A Wing of Fascism', he argues, "the most important factor in all this is that the Social Democratic Party has been converted into a wing of fascism. This is a great political fact."

The purest example of this approach today is represented by the International Spartacist Tendency which only conceives of the United Front tactic being conducted on the basis of "the full Transitional Programme". For them this means the acceptance of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat i.e. the Workers Government. Such an approach not only makes nonsense of the United Front tactic but, as Radek pointed out in the Comintern debate, is nothing more than opportunism under the guise of sectarianism. "To many comrades the idea of the Workers Government sounds like a sweet lullaby. They say, "dictatorship, the devil knows what may come, at all events it is a difficult thing to carry on agitation under the banners of dictatorship, I will rather talk of a Workers Government. This sounds so sweet and innocent." If you're fighting for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, why disguise it as a Workers Government?"



out that the social democracy in times of crisis under the pressures of the masses might well take an apparent left turn. *'At the meeting of the enlarged executive and in his speech on tactics, Zinoviev used a very happy phrase. True the Social Democrats are traitors to the proletariat, but they can also betray the bourgeoisie whenever this becomes necessary for their salvation.'* Now the second question is to what extent can we rely on this. *Comrades, if curses could kill a party, we would ask Comrade Zinoviev to sign a ukase ordering Scheidemann and company to disappear from the face of the earth. Since this is impossible, we must fight them. The only question is when will we be able to destroy them. It is possible that these people are so tightly bound to the bourgeoisie that they cannot break away from them, so that we will have to destroy them together with the bourgeoisie. But it is possible that there will come a time when, the coalition with the bourgeoisie having become impossible for them, they will be forced to enter a coalition with us. In this coalition they will attempt to betray us. We will be able to conquer them only after their actions within the coalition will have discredited them totally and the masses will have gone over to us.'*

While the sectarians reject the United Front to maintain their 'purity' the opportunists grasp at it, not as a means to expose the vacillation and treachery of the reformist leaders, but as a method of influencing the policy of these leaders in a 'left' direction. The slogan is often interpreted by the opportunists in a purely parliamentary and democratic way, as involving a parliamentary configuration of one or more 'workers' parties' which is then designated a 'workers' government'. The role of the mass workers' organisations and the fight within these for a workers' government committed to a programme which answers the immediate needs of the class in its fight against the bourgeoisie, is minimised or disappears completely. The most recent example of this opportunist use of the slogan was the content given to the call by 'Democracia Proletaria' in the 1976 General Election campaign for a 'Government of the Left', made up Lotta Continua, Avanguardia Operaia, and the PDUP, and joined later by the Italian section of the USFI, this centrist grouping argued that a CP/SP led government would be a 'transitional government opening the way to socialism', 'a government motivated by progressive intentions within the capitalist framework'. (sic) Thus fighting for a Workers' Government becomes fighting for a CP/SP government on its programme. The opportunists fail to make the distinction that the Comintern made between 'ostensible workers' governments', and end up supporting bourgeois governments. Left people think it is only the Italian section of the USFI who have such a notion of the workers' government, one finds an essentially similar formulation in the Issue No. 6 of *Socialist Challenge*. In a debate on the *British Road to Socialism*, Robin Blackburn argues, *'We are in favour of the formation of Workers' governments on the terrain of bourgeois democracy, but the key question remains to delineate the character of the socialist transition. As revolutionaries, we insist that the whole orientation of such a government should be to stimulate soviet-type bodies. It doesn't mean creating armed workers' councils as soon as possible. That would be the sheerest adventurism. It does mean creating workers' councils as soon as possible and rooting them in the masses.'*

The statement that the Workers' Government should be formed on the 'terrain of bourgeois democracy' and that it doesn't mean 'creating armed workers' councils as soon as possible' stamps this as an extreme right-opportunist position, contradicted in every point by the theses adopted as the Fourth Comintern Congress and by every occasion that Trotsky used this slogan. Firstly, to locate the Workers' Government 'on the terrain of bourgeois democracy' is a flat, one-sided and false posing of the situation. A Workers' Government becomes a possibility precisely in a period when 'bourgeois society is particularly unstable', that is to say when bourgeois democracy is in process of dissolution under the blows of open class struggle between the working class and the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie. In Radek's words, *'What we have in mind is not a parliamentary*

*combination, but a platform for the mobilisation of the masses.'* It is an intrinsically transitional slogan, i.e. it opens the road to the working class to transcend bourgeois democracy. What does this mean. Certainly it means the creation of organs of working class power - the organs of workers' democracy. But Soviets cannot become instruments of class rule before they have become instruments of class struggle. That struggle culminates in armed struggle in the crushing of the military resistance, the dissolution of the 'special bodies of armed men' at the service of the class enemy. Thus the Fourth Congress theses stress that, *'The overriding tasks of the workers' government must be to arm the proletariat, to disarm bourgeois, counter-revolutionary organisations, to introduce the control of production, to transfer the main burden of taxation on to the rich and to break the resistance of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie.'*

If Comrade Blackburn imagines that the bourgeoisie would sit back and watch a workers' government come to power and proceed to 'stimulate soviet-type bodies' then not only does he not understand revolutionary tactics, but he has no measure of the class enemy either. If he does realise this, then why does he decide that 'creating armed workers' councils' to meet this threat is adventurism? The most elementary form of proletarian struggle, the strike, poses the question of force - of picketing. The political general strike poses the question of an armed workers' militia (*'a General Strike that does not safeguard itself from acts of force and rout is a demonstration of cowardice and doomed to defeat. Only a lunatic or a traitor could call for a struggle under such conditions'*) (Trotsky, *Where is Britain Going.*) . Does Comrade Blackburn propose that the workers should take governmental power and leave the arsenals in the safe keeping of the generals?

In fact Comrade Blackburn has a totally passive parliamentary notion of a Workers' Government. But, it will be replied, what about the Soviets? Here again the reality is robbed of all concreteness. The Provisional Governments of Lvov and Kerensky co-existed with Soviets. The Ebert-Scheidemann Government, which butchered Luxemburg and Liebknecht, rested on Soviets. Ramsay MacDonald in 1917 supported the call for soviets. The Austro-Marxist centrists wished to integrate workers' councils into a republican constitution. The crucial question is what are soviets for? The answer is that as long as the bourgeoisie holds in its grasp the instruments of coercion, the key task of the soviets is to seize those instruments, to mobilise the workers for this struggle.

What Blackburn is in fact doing is diametrically the opposite of what the Comintern Theses advocated. He is disguising a Liberal-Labour or Social Democratic Government as a Workers' Government with the addition of impotent, disarmed Soviets. He is translating the *British Road to Socialism* into Trotskyese.

## PORTUGAL

It was the situation in Portugal in 1975/76, where an acute crisis posed the question of workers' power while the reformist parties continued to hold the allegiance of the majority of the working class, which showed that the inability of the 'revolutionary' left to grasp the basic premises of the united front tactic led to the most crass opportunism and sectarian errors on the governmental question and a failure to provide any revolutionary strategy for the Portuguese working class.

The overthrow of the Caetano regime in Portugal in April 1974 ushered in a period of chronic destabilisation for Portuguese capitalism. The upsurge of the working class, the disintegration of discipline in the ranks of the

army, the discrediting of most of the key political and industrial figures of the bourgeoisie due to their total involvement with Salazar and Caetano, created a situation where only the MFA chiefs could hold the ring. This Bonapartist role was possible because of the tremendous prestige the MFA held as the initiators of the April Coup, the lack of political experience of the Portuguese working class and the universal support it received from the political formations of the working class - Social Democrats, Stalinists, and Centrists alike. Not only had the bourgeoisie had to resign political power into the hands of the MFA leaders, it had also been forced to resign control of important sectors of the economy into the hands of the state. This increase in the state capitalist sector, under pressure from the mass struggles of the working class and the fight and sabotage of the bosses was accelerated by September 1974 and March 1975 coup attempts. The MFA leaders became correspondingly more radical in their language. The attempt to retain a foothold in Africa was abandoned. At the same time the MFA leaders launched vicious attacks on workers' struggles and in particular at the mushrooming battle for workers' control, coming to a head in the conflict over Radio Renascença and the newspaper, Republica. The MFA monolith began to fragment into groupings loosely allied with the various political parties or formations - loosely because none of them wished to abandon the *key role of the MFA*, i.e. its Bonapartist role. Even the quixotic Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho who stood closest to the left-centrist groupings and mouthed slogans about 'Peoples' Power', was a firm advocate of 'non-partyism'.

The working class was divided into three basic camps, The best organised, unionised sections of the working class mainly in Lisbon and the south, as well as the agricultural proletarians of the large estates were overwhelmingly behind the CP. The less organised sections of workers stood behind Soares' Socialist Party. These workers were won to the SP by its radical rhetoric, its support of strikers at a time when the CP was opposing them, its commitment to 'democracy' i.e. elections, rights to organise and assemble, etc.

The third, and markedly the smallest section, was made up of younger workers and soldiers drawn to the struggle to build commissions in the factories and barracks. Impatient of the big workers' parties' resistance to this, they tended to generalise their reaction into an anti-party attitude and a propensity to hero-worship figures like Carvalho and the left officers. In this milieu the left-centrist formations - UDP, MES, PRP (B R) held considerable influence. To this milieu was drawn the USFI section, the LCI.

The major workers' parties the PSP and PCP had differing but definite strategies. The PSP leadership receiving its financial and political support and guidance from the European and above all the German bourgeoisie through the medium of the Social Democratic and Labour leaders, had the clear project of creating a 'normal' West European parliamentary democracy in Portugal. The PCP - no more interested in a socialist revolution than the PSP - preferred a state capitalist dominated economy, a 'Left' MFA dominated government with itself installed as bureaucratic representative of the workers - a junior partner in Bonapartism.

The centrists had no definite strategy whatsoever. In their ranks all was confusion. The key task facing revolutionaries was to break the masses of workers from their illusions in the 'socialist' nature of all varieties of MFA Bonapartism and in parliamentarism. This meant *defeating*, in the class, the propagators of these illusions - the CP and SP leaders. This could not be done by propaganda alone. Yet the existence of a significant strata of young militants free from direct CP and SP leadership (though not from the influence of Carvalho and the left officers) as a receptive and growing audience for this propaganda seduced them into believing that it could. Worse, it seduced them into accommodating to the illusions prevalent in this stratum, of avoiding the clear posing of governmental slogans which would expose the nature of the MFA-dominated Provisional Governments.

The utopian-reactionary nonsense of a government of national independence, or a military-people's government, was adopted and the parliamentary chicanery of Soares, who was looking for an anti-working class pact with the PPD leaders, was denounced but not challenged by a tactical assault on the CP workers.

Yielding to centrist impressionism they took the 'Peoples' power' rhetoric of Carvalho and the Cop-Con officers as good coin, merely needing a little tidying up and encouragement to go further. On the other hand, Soares' project of a stable, bourgeois democracy was so dangerous that democratic slogans were to be abandoned. After all, Carvalho was in favour of Soviets (more or less), whereas Soares wanted a (bourgeois) parliament.

This approach led to two related errors. Firstly, the failure to tackle the democratic illusions of the great majority of Portuguese workers - i.e. to really fight bourgeois democracy, and secondly, a total inability to combat left Bonapartist demagoguery.

The elections to the Constituent Assembly in 1975 gave the SP and the CP together an overwhelming majority. Yet the MFA had extracted from Soares and Cunhal their assent to a pact which guaranteed the role of the MFA in the 'revolution', i.e. they reduced to nullity the effects of the elections and condemned the Assembly to impotence. Revolutionaries should have called for the breaking of this pact, for the breaking of the open and secret deals between the SP and the PPD and the CP with the MFA leaders for a pledge to form a CP/SP Government based on the Constituent Assembly. Such a government would not be a 'Workers' Government', and no attempt should have been made to disguise it as such. On the contrary, revolutionaries should have fought to form a United Front of CP, SP, centrist and non-party workers via the centralisation of the workers, soldiers, tenants and peasants' commissions to fight for the key immediate needs facing the masses, including centrally, democratic rights for soldiers including the election of officers and the disbanding of the military police, for an armed workers' militia, for defence and extension of



Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho

nationalisation of key industries and the land, for workers' control of production, etc. Revolutionaries should thus have called for the struggle for a *workers' government*.

Roughly the same situation presented itself before and during the legislative assembly elections in 1976. Here again the workers' parties struck a deal with the MFA Bonapartists (now, after 25th November debacle, openly and consistently carrying out military repression against workers in struggle). Again revolutionaries should have raised the demand for a CP/SP Government-based on the Legislative Assembly, the breaking of the pact with the MFA and Eanes, the total rejection of the military/presidential system.

The various Trotskyist tendencies on an international scale, faced with the task of tactics in the 'democratic' phase of the Portuguese revolution, fell into two basic errors, both of which amounted to a superstitious

fetishising of bourgeois democracy, one 'negative' the other 'positive'. The Mandel tendency in the USFI and the British SWP (IS) developed a violent fear of bourgeois democracy and of the democratic illusions of the Portuguese masses, which must not be 'indulged' by the use of democratic slogans. Their horror stricken shrinking from the constituent and legislative assemblies led them to almost total blindness to the MFA/Bonapartists and to their publicists in the working class, the PCP and the centrist groupings like the PRP (BR) and thus to fostering illusions in the bedrock formations of the bourgeois state. The fact that the army was destabilised and that it wore a 'socialist' or 'left' disguise calmed the anxieties of Cliff, Mandel, et al. Only when the 'right wing' generals began to push aside the 'lefts' did these weathercocks indicate that the storm was upon the completely unprepared ranks of the Lisbon workers.

The 'positive fetishists' of Bourgeois democracy, the SWP (USA), the OCI and to some extent Lutte Ouvriere, created a cast iron 'stage' out of the democratic tasks facing the workers - the key task was to establish bourgeois democracy first. Emphasising the Bonapartism of the MFA and the bureaucratic sectarianism of the PCP they fell into at best passing over in silence, at worst, painting in glowing colours, the 'democratic' nature of the SP's policy. Soares' coqueting with the right wing parties and generals, his preparedness to continue mobilisations openly being used by fascists to attack CP and Intersyndical workers and institutions, his threat to remove the Assembly to the North to act as a potential Versailles against a Lisbon 'commune' was passed over in silence.

The putting forward of an independent working class programme in counterposition to that of Social Democrats was effectively abandoned, and the fight for a 'Workers' Government' identified with a fight for an SP/CP Government. So Gerry Foley, spokesperson for the SWP on Portugal, argues: *'if the CP had been interested in establishing a government representative of the workers, it had only to base itself on the constituent assembly and call on delegates there to act in accordance with the clear mandate given them by the voters.'* (Intercontinental Press, 21st July 1975)

This is how the opportunists reduce the 'Workers' Government' to little more than a parliamentary combination of 'workers' parties'.

Had the clash between the SP and the CP and their generals come to open civil war, it is by no means certain that the two international tendencies in the USFI might not have found themselves in opposite camps.

In this, as in other matters, the SWP find itself in solidarity with the French OCI. Starting from the same premise, *'... it is not the Socialist Party which in Portugal is waging a bitter struggle against the masses for the benefit of the restoration of power of the bourgeoisie under the form of a corporatist regime. It is the Stalinist party the PCP,'* the OCI goes on to endow the formation of a parliamentary bloc between the SP/CP with almost magical properties. *'Whatever its policies (sic), a government of workers parties which comes to power lifted on a revolutionary wave, with no ministers representing bourgeois organisations and parties has a tremendous revolutionary significance: the proletariat can bring to power a government of the parties it considers to be its own.'* (New Defeat for the Counter-Revolution in Portugal', from La Verite, reprinted in Marxist Bulletin 2/3.) The 'revolutionary significance' of such a government would depend first and foremost on a revolutionary party's intransigent criticism of its anti-working class policies. Those who cheer uncritically the formation of such governments only disarm the proletarian vanguard in the face of treachery by Social Democrats and Stalinists alike.

This is not to say that a CP/SP government, let alone a workers' government, is an inevitable 'stage' in Portugal. What is essential is to overcome the resistance of the CP and SP supporters to the transformation of their organisations

into workers, peasants and soldiers councils. In Portugal the united front was and is crucial to the formation of Soviets. The congenital centrists such as the PRP (BR) and the MES imagined that propaganda for soviets and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat would vapourise the CP/SP obstacle. The existence of a significant strata of non- (or anti-) CP workers, mainly younger workers and largely in Lisbon, convinced the Trotskyist sympathising section of the USFI and its mentors in Paris and Brussels that the 'revolutionary process' was producing a 'new vanguard'. They too fell into tireless propagandism for soviets disconnected from the struggle for the united front. Whilst they avoided - on their own initiative at least - the idiocy of calling for the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly (whilst there were no soviets it could only have been done by and played into the hands of, the MFA bonapartists) they fell into endless confusion when it came to the question of governmental solutions. In the resolution of the United Secretariat June 1975 (Inprecor No. 29) we find that the LCI is putting its stress on *'the necessity of a permanent mobilisation of the workers which allows them to enforce their demands, to expel all the bourgeois ministers from the government and to form a WORKERS AND PEASANTS GOVERNMENT, that is to say of workers organisations and of representatives of agricultural workers and poor peasants: a government of the SP/CP, Intersyndical and other organs representing sections of the working class and agricultural workers. For the decisive advance of the revolutionary process such a government would have to base itself on a system of workers, soldiers and peasants councils.'*

Here we find no clarity whatsoever: a CP/SP government, a 'workers' and peasants' government' and the proletarian dictatorship are all confused or rather rolled up into a 'revolutionary process'. All that is certain is that this 'process' does not start in the actual world of today. The question of the masses' illusions in the elections for the Constituent and Legislative Assemblies are simply ignored. As there is no 'system of workers and soldiers and peasants' councils' to force the formation of a 'workers and peasants' government' the USFI neatly takes a step sideways from reality to fantasy and chooses, as the launching pad, a 'National Workers' Assembly'. In sum, they refuse to take up the concrete governmental issue - a CP/SP Government, and the United Front in favour of 'building soviets' and a critical tolerance of the MFA government.

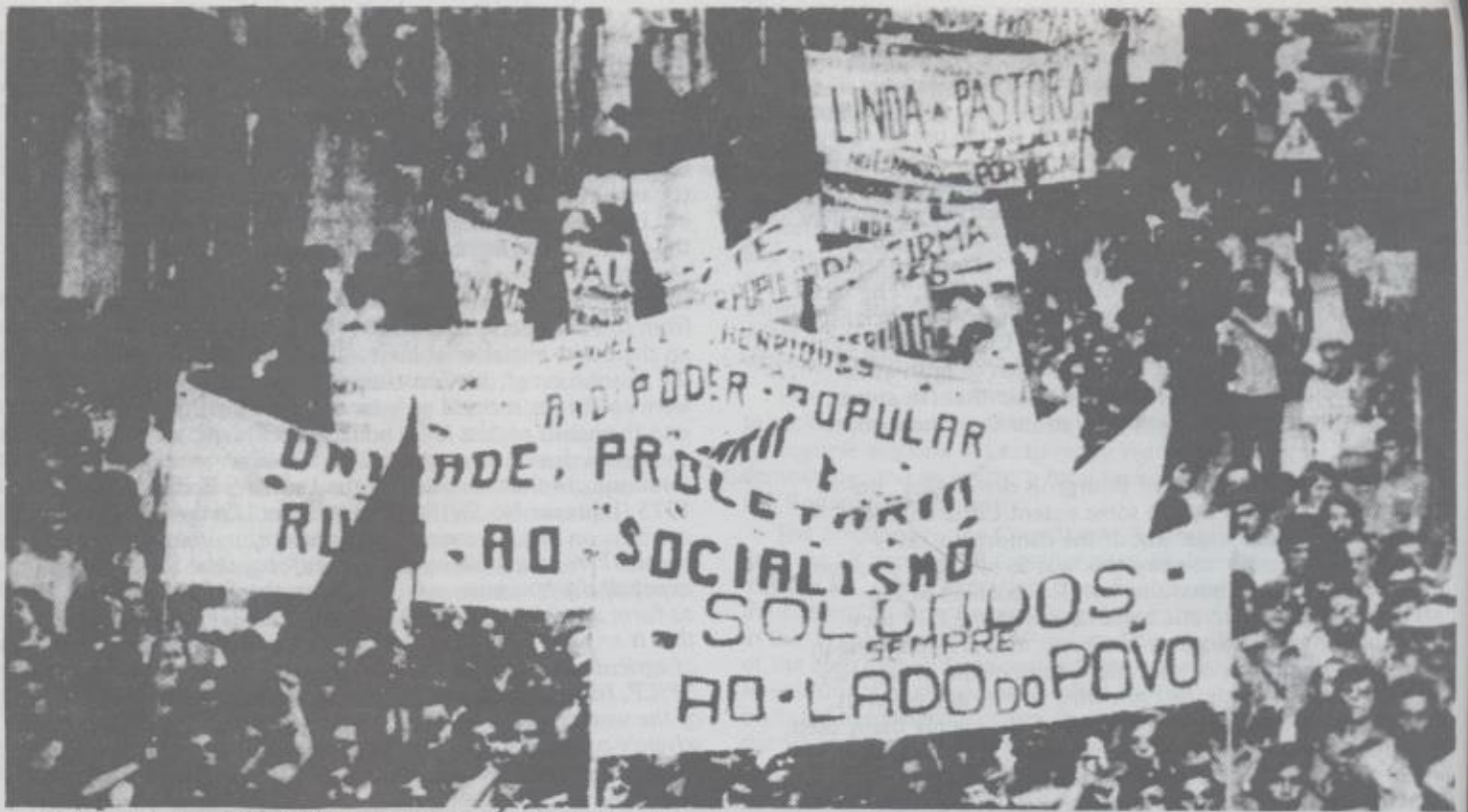
While the minority in the USFI used the workers' government in a thoroughly opportunist fashion, identifying it with a CP/SP parliamentary combination, the Majority Tendency and its sympathising section, the LCI, threw in its lot with those who rejected the United Front strategy towards the CP and the SP, and peddled illusions in a 'government of revolutionary unity'. From June 1975 the IMT of the USFI, despite its formal position of calling on the CP/SP to break with the bourgeoisie and its abstract posing of the question of a workers' government, in practice counterposed to these slogans the building and centralising of Soviets: *'The bureaucratic leaders of the CP and SP still control the majority of the working class, although the prestige of these leaderships is increasingly being undermined and shattered. To overcome the present divisions of the working class it is necessary to establish organs within which socialists, communists and revolutionaries*

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As if recognising this weakness in their thinking, MMF go on to dispose of the influence of the CP and SP amongst Portuguese workers via the 'revolutionary process'.

*'Behind the reasoning of the comrades Foley, Hansen and Novack is the assumption that the grip of the CP and SP leaders on their followers is so strong that their followers will not generalise the embryonic organs of workers' power before first going through a parliamentary experience with an SP/CP government, or at least without a protracted campaign of propaganda and agitation around the slogan of an SP/CP government. We believe that this assumption is incorrect. We think it is rooted in an underestimation of the depth of the revolutionary process now going on in Portugal, of the depth of the crisis of the capitalist economy and the bourgeois state machine.'* (Revolution and Counter Revolution in Portugal - Intercontinental Press)

Trotsky's words are relevant here: *'Marxists - do not unload upon the "historical process" those very tasks which the historical process has posed before them'* (Open letter for the FI 1935)



Revolutionary slogans obscure the hold of the reformist parties

can meet, discuss, develop their differences and debate in front of the entire class, so that the entire class can judge. What better forum for free debate and freely accepted unity in action than freely and democratically elected Workers' Councils.' And, again: *There is no road to victory and no road to building a mass revolutionary party in Portugal today other than the road of tirelessly campaigning for an extension, generalisation, coordination and centralisation of democratically elected Workers' Councils.* (Mandel, Maitan and Frank, 'In Defense of the Portuguese Revolution'. Intercontinental Press, 8th September 1975) †

What the IMT trio leave out of this 'scenario for revolution' is that it was precisely that active opposition from the CP and SP and their influence in the working class, which was the main stumbling block to building such Soviets. Only the most flexible and audacious united front activities at all levels - workplace, trade union, community and governmental - around a specific programme would have enabled revolutionaries to fight alongside socialist and communist workers in the construction of soviets, with the aim of breaking them from their reformist leaderships. Certainly this united front had to address a whole series of immediate questions, but it could not ignore the crucial question of who should form the government now - particularly in the middle of a violent governmental crisis which saw the CP and SP and their respective generals at one another's throats. Instead the USFI joined the other sectarians and ultra-left centrists - the PRP, ISGB, etc. - in ignoring the United Front except 'from below', and posed it as an ultimatum to CP and SP workers to form Soviets.

The immediate and actual questions of governmental power cannot be simply ignored by revolutionaries. Politics like nature, abhors a vacuum. Nor is it enough to try to fill this vacuum with abstraction such as the LCI/IMT's use of the 'Workers' Government' was. What is involved is not filling a space in a list of demands on a piece of paper - a purely literary task, but pointing to the working class the next steps on the road to power. The USFI majority, by downgrading the importance of the united front and the call for a CP/SP government in favour of 'building soviets', slipped into a benevolent neutrality towards the 5th Provisional Government, with its mixture of Bonapartists and Stalinists. Increasingly the logic of this position was to identify a coalition of 'workers' parties' as worse than a popular front because the latter

was built on an unstable bonapartist base, whereas the former might stabilise bourgeois democracy. This definitely led to 'lesser evil' support for the CP - Goncalves bloc, and to trusting the MFA regime to defend the gains of the Portuguese working class. *'Given the present political line of the SP and CP leadership, the masses cannot and will not understand the slogan 'SP/CP Government' in any other way than as a government based on the constituent assembly, that is the reconstruction (sic) of the bourgeois state apparatus, of bourgeois law and order. That is the immediate goal of the bourgeois counter-revolution, we must oppose it with all our strength.'* (Revolution and Counter Revolution in Portugal - Intercontinental Press, December 22nd 1975)

This covering for the MFA should be no surprise to those who read MMF's earlier article where they attacked the SWP/US for warning of the possible Bonapartist intentions of Carvalho and the left MFA. *'In the July 28th issue of Intercontinental Press, Comrade Foley represents Carvalho as a 'possible' 'General on a white horse', that is a possible Bonaparte emerging from the power struggle in Portugal. We have no interest in speculating about the secret intentions or basic character of this or that individual officer. We can only judge class and political trends.'*

And, later, *'Lenin and Trotsky suspected Kerensky of not a few 'bonapartist intentions' and denounced them but the bolsheviks never concentrated their accusation on Kerensky's presumed desire to become a dictator. Had they done so, there would have been great confusion when it was Kornilov who actually struck.'* (In Defense of the Portuguese Revolution MMF Intercontinental Press, September 8th 1975)

Thus the USFI muted its criticism of the 'left' MFA and CP, preferring to direct its fire against the 'right', this in a situation where a significant proportion of the vanguard of the Portuguese working class had tremendous illusions in lefts like Carvalho. This should not be too surprising because, for the USFI, there is always the possibility that a Carvalho or a Cunhal may, under exceptional circumstances, lead a socialist revolution which would result in a 'deformed workers' state'. Cunhal might turn out like a Tito, Mao or a Ho Chi Minh, who were able *'to lead their deformed revolutions to victory ... by breaking with the key strategic and tactical theorems of Stalinism.'* (MMF in Defense of the Portuguese Revolution.)

Now, while for MMF it is 'overwhelmingly likely that the Portuguese revolution will follow the classical pattern and will triumph only through the conquest of power by the proletariat', the possibility of other forces leading it automatically leads to a defence of the 'left' MFA and CP (potential leaders of deformed revolutions) against the 'restorers of capitalism', the SP and the right.

To support this opportunist position, MMF are forced to distort the history of the Bolshevik struggle against the provisional government and Kerensky. Lenin in 1917 attacked those bolsheviks, who, like the USFI, fell into defending the 'left' bonapartists against the threat from the right. *'It is my conviction that those who become unprincipled are people who (like Volodarsky) slide into defensism or (like other bolsheviks) into a bloc with the SRs, into supporting the Provisional Government. Their attitude is absolutely wrong and unprincipled. We become defensists only after the transfer of power to the proletariat, after a peace, after the secret treaties and ties with the banks have been broken, only afterwards.'*

And, again:

*'... even now we must not support Kerensky's government. This is unprincipled. We may be asked: aren't we going to fight against Kornilov? Of course we must! But this is not the same thing. There is a dividing line here which is being stepped over by some Bolsheviks who fall into compromise and allow themselves to be carried away by the course of events. (Lenin to the Central Committee of the RSDLP. Collected Works)*

It is little wonder that such a policy in the International led its Portuguese section, the LCI, into a class collaborationist bloc, the FUR. A bloc which characterised the elections as 'bourgeois', demanded the dissolution of the Legislative Assembly (presumably by the military) when no alternative workers government was actually in existence, endorsed Carvalho's guide plan (the Copcon document) for 'soviets' and a 'military-peoples' government', as well as the anti-working class record of the fifth provisional government and invited the MFA to join it. As the LCI described it in their self-criticism, it was an *'accord that supported the MFA and the fifth provisional government, giving rise to all the centrist confusion about the character of the CP and developing a sectarian policy towards the SP.'* (Imprecor, 2nd May 1976). Despite the attempts of the leadership of the USFI to distance themselves from this policy, putting it down to an 'immature' leadership in the Portuguese section that was corrected by the steady hand of the International, it can be seen that such a position flowed logically from the positions argued by the leadership of the USFI - Mandel, Maitan and Frank.

The USFI's majority's left opportunist distortion of the United Front: 'left' phraseology concealing opportunism towards the MFA, flowing from their denunciation of democratic demands which threatened the MFA's position (e.g. on the Constituent Assembly); led them to occupy a similar position to that of the other major 'international' centrist group, the IS (GB) (now SWPGB). The IS chose as a vehicle for its particular brand of centrism the PRP/BR. What made this grouping an 'authentic revolutionary Marxist organisation', according to the British IS, was that it *'argued the need for an armed insurrection, (stood) squarely for the dictatorship of the proletariat and (believed) in the need for autonomous organisations of the proletariat councils (soviets).'* (Portugal at the Crossroads - Cliff) Certainly what it had in common with its British mentor was a rejection of the method of the transitional programme. Also it rejected the United Front tactic. During the spring and summer of 1975 the PRP launched a campaign to build 'revolutionary workers' councils - CRT.s. These were to, *'carry out a constant ideological struggle - to destroy the bourgeois state apparatus - to be the organs of the application of revolutionary violence'*, i.e. far from being the highest form of the united front, the PRP confused them with the revolutionary party.<sup>†</sup> What the PRP had no conception of was soviets as arising out of the united front. In a situation

where the vast majority of workers remained under the influence of the reformist parties, soviets could only have been built around concrete issues of struggle, not general revolutionary declarations, around the fight to force the reformist leaders to take the power. Only such a tactic could expose the reformist leaders and forge real unity in action. The PRP (like the British IS) had no strategic notion of how to break the hold of the reformists over the working class, and continually lapsed into 'wishful thinking'. In a hopeless exaggeration of the degree to which workers had broken from their reformist leaderships, the PRP's paper, 'Revolucão' declared, as early as September 1975, *'it is now time for the revolutionary forces and the workers to pose the question of insurrection'*.

The British IS could give no advice on winning the SP and CP influenced workers to a revolutionary position. The SP was a 'petty bourgeois' party with little organisation in the working class. As with the British Labour Party, the ideological strength of the reformist parties (indicated by its voting base) was ignored. The CP, they argued, certainly had an 'organised' base, and that was a problem. But even here the question of the united front was not raised. Indeed such was the weakness of reformism, IS could see no bourgeois democratic solutions as being open to the Portuguese ruling class. The 6th Provisional Government as a *'short-lived transitory phenomenon, leading either to the victory of the proletarian revolution, or the victory of fascism. It (was) a void between two dictatorships.'* (Portugal at Crossroads). It was only in September, after keeping silent for most of the summer and autumn, or rather, bathing in the reflected glory of the 'successes' of their Portuguese brethren, that IS began to make some criticisms of the PRP's more glaring excesses. It was only in the autumn that the importance of the united front was suddenly discovered by Tony Cliff in 'Portugal at the Crossroads'. Again, it was only presented as a united front from below and even here there was silence as to whether the reformist SP would be 'invited' in. *'What forms exactly, with what parties, the united front will be built in Portugal, we can never know in advance. Quick changes of tactics including that of the united front are needed in a swiftly changing situation.'*

The PRP must have been grateful for such clear-sighted, concrete advice. And, sure enough, Comrade Cliff, an expert in the quick change of tactic, dropped all reference to the united front in a pamphlet written two months later. Once again their lack of understanding of using the united front, and a programme of partial demands, as a lever to win workers from their reformist leaders is amply demonstrated. Their explanation of the inability of the revolutionary left to mobilise the workers in defiance of the paratroopers on the 25th November was absolutely correct. *The decisive factor in the defeat of the 25th of November was the weakness of the revolutionary left. When it came to the decisive test the reformists were shown to have incomparably more weight within the working class than the revolutionaries.'* And again, *'the failure of the working class to respond en masse to the calls from the paratroopers on the 25th of November shows that over the class as a whole even in the Lisbon area, the paralysing grip of the reformists was much stronger than the directing influence of the revolutionaries.'* (Lessons of November 25th, Cliff and Harman)

But how do we change the situation? Through the most audacious and flexible use of the united front tactic?

Trotsky, arguing against the ultra-left in Germany in 1933 made the point that, 'verbal genuflections before the Soviets are as equally fashionable in the left circles as the misconception of their historical function. Most often Soviets are defined as the organs of struggle for power, as organs of insurrection, and finally, as the organs of dictatorship. Formally these definitions are correct. But they do not exhaust the historical function of the Soviets. First of all they do not explain why, in the struggle for power, precisely the Soviets are necessary. The answer to this question is: Just as the Trade Union is the rudimentary form of the United Front in the economic struggle, so the Soviet is the highest form of the United Front, under the conditions in which the proletariat enters the epoch of fighting for power. (The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany. Pathfinder p.194)

Far from it. With an almost audible sigh of relief, Cliff and Harman direct Portuguese revolutionaries back to the terrain on which the British IS is most at home - the economic struggle: *'Now, after a period in which political questions have dominated everything, the class will recoup its powers through economic struggle.'*

Thus, IS, true to its economistic tradition, ignores the fact that, even within the economic struggle, political tasks, albeit different ones, are just as central, that the united front and the workers' government slogan is a crucial tactic in breaking the hold of the reformists in the trade unions and the factories. In the last analysis, IS has no tactics for fighting reformism in Portugal or Britain - it can only adapt to it, or denounce it.

More recently, the SWP (GB) has gone into more details on its position on the Workers' Government, and the United Front, in its International Discussion Bulletin Number Four. In taking to task their ex-fraternal organisation in Italy, Avanguardia Operaia, for using the workers' government in an opportunist way (in the Democrazia Proletaria election bloc), the SWP make clear their rejection of the Workers' Government as developed by the 4th Congress of the Comintern. While conceding that 'real workers' governments might come about before the dictatorship of the proletariat as 'extreme exceptions', they have no conception of using the slogan except as part of the united front which takes place from below; *'In such a movement, unity would be formed between revolutionaries and the base of the mass reformist parties'* (page 11 International Discussion Bulletin No. 4:); Alex Callinicos, in a letter on the United Front, goes on to spell it out more clearly, taking to task another leading SWPer, Ian Birchall, who dismisses demands being made on reformists as 'orthodox Trotskyism' (presumably enough to damn it before the SWP membership)- Callinicos goes on to argue for the united front in purely organisational terms,

*'For revolutionaries to argue seriously for the united front, they must be in a position to exercise sufficient pressure on the reformist leaders to have to respond to the demand for unity in action. In other words, revolutionaries must possess real forces of their own to bring to the united front'*

He goes on to suggest that for the SWP, given the relationship of forces between them and the Labour Party, to call for a united front between the two would be meaningless, while the SWP is becoming big enough to enter into united fronts with the CP. Thus the united front is reduced to organisational agreements. The method of using a set of demands and a programme as the basis for the fight for the united front, of winning reformist workers to such a programme, disappears.

## CONCLUSION

The workers government slogan remains a tactic of central importance for revolutionaries in the present period because of the strength of reformism in the working class movement. It is not a simple slogan to be raised or dropped as appropriate. It is a difficult complex of tactics aimed at the problem of winning the mass organisations of the working class away from the reformist leaders in the process of winning state power for the working class. As such it performs a central part, it is in fact 'the crowning piece', of the United Front tactic; it is the method by which revolutionaries counterpose their programme and strategy, in struggle, to those offered by the reformists.

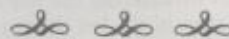
Its most simple omnipresent form, addressed to the Social Democrats in power, or on the verge of power, is 'break with

the bourgeoisie - act for the workers'. When they are allied with bourgeois parties, we demand the breaking of the coalition. But when we say 'act for the workers,' we do not pose this in the abstract. We put forward the key demands of the Action Programme of the Party - the key actions against bourgeois power and strategy in the given situation. Without this the call 'act for the workers', like the call for 'socialist policies' is vacuous, it does not actually put the reformist leaders to the test.

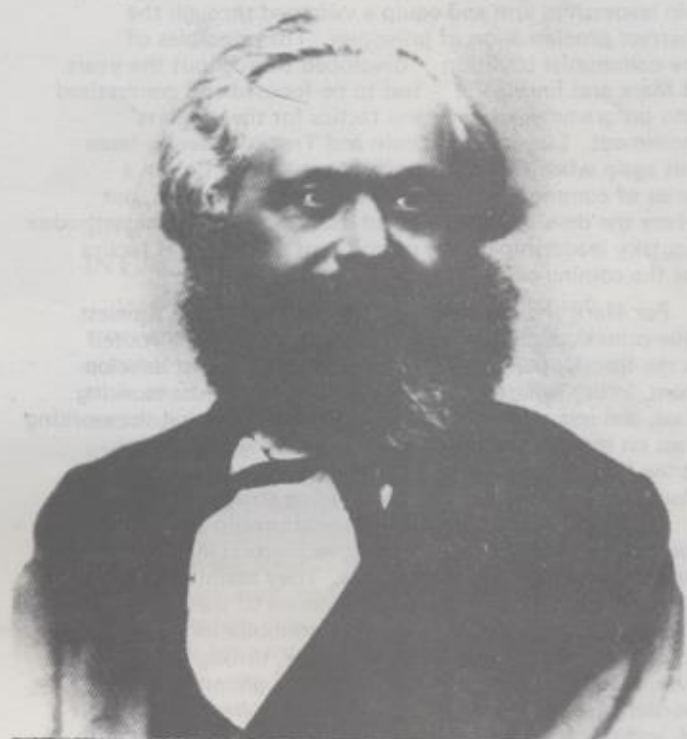
The slogan of a 'Workers Government' is inseparable then from popularising the party's own action programme of measures focussing, as it must, on organising the workers for power - arming the workers, mobilising the class in Soviets and factory committees, the struggle for workers control over production, the seizure of the real centres of economic power; the banks, the monopolies. To separate the slogan 'for a workers government' from the popularisation of the struggle for a programme meeting the objective needs of the working class is in fact to pose the demand in a reformist sense, to allow the reformists to dictate what is 'for the workers', to maintain their mantle as the workers' representatives'. (Hence the absurdity of Robin Blackburn and other 'Trotskyists' who talk of being in favour of a workers government 'on the terrain of bourgeois democracy', that does not arm the workers or support the class's direct organisation for power.)

But whereas our programme connected with the slogan is constant (ie revolutionaries have a workers answer to the crisis), the composition of the workers government is left open. We do this not as a trick played on the class but in order to put to the test, openly before the mass organisations, the revolutionary communists and the reformist leaders. The form that the workers government shall take, ie which parties shall be in it, of whom should it be composed, is left open, providing that it is based on the organs of struggle and democracy of the working class - factory committees, soviets, juntas, cordones, even transformed trade unions; not the 'normal' bureaucratized labour movement bodies - but ones created in struggle.

This is the form of workers government that communists call for, consciously recognising that such a government can only be transitional, opening up as it does, the prospect of open civil war with the bourgeoisie. It is not impossible that a class conscious and resolute working class could force some of its centrist or left reformist leaders onto that path, but this is not probable given the nature of the left reformists and centrists. The task of communists throughout remains winning leadership for their programme for working class power, fighting for the direction and programme of the workers government, openly fighting for the leadership in the mass organisations. The workers government remains a complex of tactics for communists to achieve this task.



# From Communism To Social Democracy



## Party and Programme Part 2

### Marx, Engels and the Mass Party in Germany

By  
Dave  
Stocking

In this article we continue our Party and Programme series with an analysis of the struggles of Marx and Engels to build a communist workers' party. We do so because the lessons of their struggles, the communist programme and method they developed, are of burning and immediate relevance to the tasks of equipping and training a new revolutionary vanguard for the battles ahead.

In any period, conscious communist cadres constitute a minority in the working class. In the struggle for leadership they are in contention not only with openly bourgeois programmes and leaders, but also with a spectrum of more or less 'radical' schemers and fighters, standing between

the nucleus of revolutionary communists and pro-capitalist tendencies there are inevitably a range of centrist programmes and formations - those subjectively opposed to capitalism but objectively incapable of developing a strategy or programme for its revolutionary overthrow.

These divisions are not simply posed on the level of 'ideas', of discussion between groups of intellectuals with their pet schemes and programmes. Capitalist society, its inherent instability and crises, propels the most conscious elements in the working class towards communist politics. But the struggle of the working class within capitalism does not of itself solve the questions of programme and strategy

for the proletarian revolution. This was most clearly explained by Lenin in 'What is to be Done?'. The task facing revolutionaries in all periods is to win leadership in the struggles of the working class, to win leadership for their programme for working class power.

This was the fundamental pre-occupation of Marx and Engels in their struggle in the international Workers Movement in the nineteenth century. They faced the task of winning ascendancy against the ranks of utopians and adventurists offering themselves as leaders in the newly burgeoning workers' movement. They faced the task of winning workers already under the sway of these misleaders to communist politics.

The lessons to be drawn from Marx and Engels' battles to develop a communist workers party are vital to two central questions facing revolutionaries today. Firstly, how to develop a programme for workers power? Marx and Engels were perfectly aware that they could not win leadership, arm and equip a vanguard through the abstract proclamation of principles. The principles of the communist tradition - developed throughout the years of Marx and Engels life - had to be focused and concretised into programme, strategy and tactics for the workers' movement. Luxemburg, Lenin and Trotsky were to learn this again when they stood with Kautsky and Co. on a series of common *principles* against the revisionists, but where the developing left found itself opposed to the orthodox Kautsky leadership on the question of strategy and tactics for the coming period.

For Marx and Engels the programme was not a timeless blue-print document. As we shall see, it had to be rooted in the specific period and perspective of capitalist development, in the living struggles and experience of the working class, and in a scientific analysis of the tasks facing the working class on the road to power. In this article we shall look at the method of programmatic elaboration developed by Marx and Engels in their party-building struggles.

Secondly, what should be the relationship between the communists and the centrists and vacillators? Marx and Engels were absolutely consistent on this. They maintained at all times, the integrity and independence of their programme. They refused all compromise or accommodation on programmatic questions. They waged a relentless war, throughout their lives, against all other tendencies and programmes in the workers' movement to that programme, a clear recognition of, and ruthless attention to, each and every step that won the real workers' movement, in struggle, towards communist politics.

This experience and method is of immediate relevance to us today. A new period of instability and crisis has opened for world capitalism. But the revolutionary left, bound together by a common thread of communist principles (the dictatorship of the proletariat, the revolutionary as opposed to reformist road to socialism), whole sections of which claim allegiance to a common programme (the Transitional Programme of the IVth International) is divided on fundamental questions of strategy and tactics. The communist programme - consistently re-elaborated, re-focused in the history of our movement - has not been re-elaborated and focused on the new period of struggle facing the working class movement.

Inevitably the crisis of capitalism, the crisis of leadership in the working class has thrown up, on a world scale, a variety of new centrist and revisionist groupings.

On an international scale the question of the elaboration of the Communist Programme, of the basis for *unity*, the relationship between tactical differences and differences of *principle* and *programme* are posed ever more sharply. It is in this context that we examine the struggles of Marx and Engels, in order to learn from those struggles.

Against the background of crisis and fragmentation the IMG, in particular, have attempted to rewrite the history of the communist tradition to *fit in* with their present practice and orientation. To justify their present drive for *unity*

on the left, for *unity* with explicitly anti-Trotskyist forces, to justify their project of building a *class struggle* left wing tendency in the workers' movement they have sought to recast the splits and polemics in the communist tradition in a new mould. Particularly in their *Party and Faction* series published in Red Weekly, they argued that splits between socialists are only, indeed have only been, justified between those who stand on differing sides of the class struggle. In *Workers' Power Number Four* we dealt with the IMG's attempt to prove that Lenin only split with the Mensheviks because they broke discipline, and that the split only became final and irrevocable when sections of the Mensheviks supported the Tsarist autocracy in the first imperialist war. We showed that for Lenin, and all communists, the question of unity with other tendencies is always subordinate to the maintenance of the independence of the communist programme, to a persistent and open struggle with all centrist and revisionist tendencies. This is the tradition founded by Marx and Engels.

The article analyses the development of the communist tradition in the building of international and national workers' parties. It examines the struggles of Marx and Engels to win the most conscious workers away from an allegiance to false and utopian programmes through *unity* in action and struggle, and *independence* of programme, strategy and tactics at all times.

## MARX AND ENGELS IN 1848

There can be no single model of the Marxist programme valid for all time. There is however a method for the development of a programme which can be seen in the great programmes and programmatic debates of the revolutionary tradition - in the Communist Manifesto, in the preamble to the Rules and the Inaugural Address and resolutions of the First International, in the critique of the Gotha Programme; in the Erfurt Programme and in Engels critique of it, in the Theses of the Comintern and the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International.

The tasks of a programme are to succinctly expound the strategy and key tactics of the proletarian revolution in the context of an understanding of Capitalism. At the most general level this necessitates the understanding of the basic features of Capitalism and of the class struggle. The basic correctness of Marx's and Engels' understanding of the laws of motion of capitalism - the root of capital accumulation in the unpaid labour of the proletariat, the internal contradictions and thus crisis-prone nature of capitalism, the inevitability of the class struggle, the necessity for the working class to seize political power and expropriate the expropriators, the necessity of the working class political party, lies at the heart of the universal relevance of the Communist Manifesto. Later developments - the dictatorship of the proletariat; the necessity of '*smashing the old bureaucratic military state machine*' (1) etc constitute the general theoretical conceptions which are a matter of codification in any programme. Clearly, whilst no programme which overthrows them can claim to be a revolutionary communist one, they are



not sufficient to make a programme so. A programme must outline the general questions of strategy and tactics which address the features of the class struggle posed by the *epoch* of development of capitalism and its principle features and the particular *period* and its features. It may be added that Marxists have further outlined their strategy and tactics in relationship to particular conjunctures ie in programmes of Action. Further a programme must define the evaluation communists make and the tactics communists operate with regard to non-communist tendencies within the working class movement. In this context it must be remembered that these tendencies are only sociologically within the movement. Politically they represent the influence of non-proletarian strata (i.e. the bourgeoisie, the petit-bourgeoisie, the peasantry, the labour aristocracy, the lumpen proletariat etc).

The Communist Manifesto had, as Engels notes in 1882 'as its object the proclamation of the inevitably impending dissolution of modern bourgeois property'. (2) It was as Trotsky remarked 'calculated for a revolutionary epoch' and thus contained demands 'corresponding to the period of direct transition from Capitalism to Socialism'. (3)

This revolutionary perspective was based on Marx and Engels prognosis of an 'immediately impending' series of bourgeois revolutions in Germany and in other central and southern European countries, an impending proletarian revolution in Britain and a revolution in France which completed the bourgeois tasks and moved onto the tasks of the proletarian revolution. Brilliantly confirmed in some respects this perspective had serious flaws: (1) It mistook capitalism's first serious period of crises for the impending general collision of the productive forces against the limits of capitalist property relations. In fact capitalism's period of ascent, its creation of a world market was only just beginning. Here the limits of their existing work on political economy told against them. (2) It overestimated the revolutionary role that the bourgeoisie would be 'compelled to play' and did not foresee the recoil from the revolutionary tasks which the emergence of the proletariat would produce in its ranks (3) It overestimated the cohesion and consciousness and organisation already existing in the proletariat and to a certain extent underestimated the harmfulness of trends such as Louis Blanc's 'Social Democracy' or the muddle of official Chartism.

None of this is to say that Marx and Engels were wrong to develop a programme for the revolutionary upheavals of 1847-49 - that the time was 'not ripe' because capitalism was still 'progressive' Capitalism was, and Marx and Engels never ceased to stress it, progressive - viz a viz feudal and patriarchal relations of production. It was, however, reactionary as against the possibilities of socialist development of the productive forces. It was Trotsky who pointed out that 'had it been possible in the second half of the nineteenth century to organize economy in Socialist beginnings, its tempo of growth would have been immeasurably greater'. (4)

(1) Viz 'Eighteenth Brumaire', S.W. (3 vol) vol. 1 p 477. 'Civil War in France' SW (3 vol) vol 2, passim. 'critique of the Gotha Programme' ibid, vol 3. The experience of the rise (1849-51) and fall (1870-71) of Napoleon III's Bonapartist state, analysed by Marx was the basis of his additions and clarifications.

The result of the 'mistakes' of 1848 prompted Marx to undertake his life's work of placing communism more firmly upon the basis of a scientific understanding of the laws of motion of capitalist society. Secondly it prompted both Marx and Engels to a more thorough consideration of involvement in the questions of organising the proletariat for its struggle with capital and combatting the existing dominant trends of utopianism and sectarianism. Above all it convinced them of the importance of winning mass organizations in struggle to the communist programme. It was with aim in mind that Marx and Engels worked in the IWMA and played a leading role in the development of German Social Democracy.

## THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL

It is sometimes maintained that the First International was a propaganda International. This is not so, though of course Marx and Engels carried their conceptions into its programmatic statements and thus into every section of the labour movement associated with it. Their polemics with the followers of Proudhon, Mazzini and Bakunin helped win a small nucleus of sympathisers in the principle European Countries and in North America. But in the sense that 'propaganda international' can mean anything i.e. of an international tendency limited by circumstances to largely propoganda work for a detailed and coherent common programme - the First International was by no means that. Marx and Engels summed up its role thus: 'The International was founded in order to replace the Socialist or semi-socialists sects by a real organisation of the working class for struggle. The original statutes and the Inaugural Address show this at a glance'. (5)

The conditions prevailing in the 1860s determined the form of the International. Engels characterised these as the reawakening of the labour movement after the destruction and repression of the 1850s, the temporary weakening of sectarianism, and economism and opportunism.

The strengthening and growth of workers' organisations in Britain, France and Germany forced the leaders of the sects of the Proudhonists and Lassaleans into international co-operation. Even the insular craft trade union leaders in Britain faced with a resurgence of class struggle were radicalised and sought the assistance of their continental brethren through the medium of the General Council of the IWMA.

These tendencies were still dominant in their respective labour movements but were muted by the pressure upon them from government repression on the one hand and the re-emergence of workers organizations on the other. The 1860s and early 70s was a renewed period of up- (2) "Ninety Years of the Communist Manifesto" LD Trotsky. 'Age of Permanent Revolution' ed Deutcher, p 285.  
(3) Ibid  
(4) Ibid  
(5) Marx to Bolte, November 23rd 1871: 'Letters to Americans', p 90.

heaval in Europe and North America - in certain respects the delayed culmination of the aborted struggles of 1848. The Polish rising, the liberation of the serfs in Russia, the wars of Italian and German unification, the Civil War and abolition of slavery in America, the granting of the suffrage to a majority of the male working class in England and the Paris Commune were the living context of the International Working Mens Association. As Engels said *'Its aim was to weld together into one huge army the whole militant working class of Europe and America. Therefore it could not set out from the principles laid down in the Manifesto. It was bound to have a programme which would not shut the door on the English trade unionists, the French, Belgian, Italian and Spanish Proudhonists and the German Lassalleans'*.<sup>(6)</sup> This however is not to say that Marx simply ignored the principles of the manifesto. Indeed Ryazanov in his *'Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels'* points out *'the new manifesto (ie the Inaugural Address) had to be written in a manner which would take account the low level of proletarian class consciousness among the masses and the leaders, but which would, at the same time, adhere to the basic principles laid down in the Communist Manifesto'*. Ryazanov points out that in essence the IWMA was a 'united front' that the Address formulated demands and emphasised points on which the existing movement should unite *'and on the basis of which a further development of the labour movement could be expected'*. From the immediate major tasks and struggles of the working class movement as it was, whether through cooperatives or trade unions, Marx points out the need to replace capitalist production by co-operative production and the absolute necessity of organizing this at the level of society as a whole. Thus the Address states: *'To conquer political power has therefore become the great duty of the working classes'*.<sup>(7)</sup> Marx was able thus to relate to the various strands of the varied national labour movements and of international co-operation and advance which led inexorably from co-operation in the daily struggles of the 1860s to the same task outlined in the Communist Manifesto: *'the organisation of the proletariat along class lines, the overthrow of bourgeois domination, the proletarian seizure of political power, the abolition of wage labour, the passing of all the means of production into the hands of society'*.<sup>(8)</sup> One may add to Ryazanov's list the disappearance of classes: *'the abolition of all class rule'* (Provisional Rules).

The Inaugural Address and the Provisional Rules were not a magic talisman. They had to be fought for and explained in concrete struggles and in polemic against the utopian nostrums of the other tendencies before the masses in struggle. Engels again clearly states this *'For the ultimate triumph of the ideas set forth in the Manifesto Marx relied solely and exclusively upon the intellectual development of the working class, as it necessarily had to ensue from united action and discussion. The events and vicissitudes in the struggle against capital, the defeats even more than the successes, could not but demonstrate to the fighters the inadequacy hitherto of their universal panaceas and make*

*their minds more receptive to a thorough understanding of the true conditions for the emancipation of the workers'*.

As events showed the workers struggles particularly in Germany and Britain did not develop on a broad or far reaching enough scale for Marx's principles to win a dominant position and oust the existing sects. The Paris Commune, the first experience, albeit confused and brief, of workers holding power in a large capital city, was, in Engels' words, *'bound to explode this naive conjunction of all fractions'*.

It is to Marx's everlasting honour as an organiser as a practical 'party leader' (in which terms he is often unjustly contrasted with Lenin) that he managed to carry the International through the experience of the Commune and align its sections alongside the Communards in an atmosphere of reactionary hysteria and witch hunt - not merely keeping the programmatic banner of the IWMA unspotted but taking it forward in a tremendous leap in hailing the first proletarian dictatorship in history.

The defeat of the commune - annihilating the flower of the European working class, the proletariat of Paris - dealt a staggering blow to the International. The opportunists wavered and began to slink away. The British skilled Trade Unionists after receiving the vote and legal protection for their unions were already becoming increasingly conservative. On the other hand, the Bakunist re-hash of a mixture of abstention from politics, of conspiracy mongering unrelated to the class struggle, of demagogic attacks on leadership, threatened to overtake the weakened organization. To accept this would have meant abandoning the crucial lessons, negative and positive of the Paris Commune, the dictatorship, the need for resolute leadership and mass organization. Marx, with Engel's assistance, fought like a tiger to save the programme of the International from relapse into the old sectarian backwardness. To do this they were prepared in the last analysis to sacrifice the organisational existence of the International itself. Was this a mere act of embittered sectarianism? The IMG's thesis would force us to say yes. An 'Anti-Pabloite' on the other hand would commend their actions as universally valid. The answer lies with neither position. Marx and Engels saw after the defeat of the Commune that, in Europe at least, the development of the forces of the working class on a mass scale had suffered a serious set-back. In these circumstances it was extremely unlikely that the counter attacks of the sectarians could be fought off forever, or that a defeat on central programmatic importance could be reversed.

The London Conference of the International had already declared *'considering that against this collective power of the propertied classes the working class cannot act as a class, except by constituting itself into a political party, distinct from and opposed to all old parties formed by the propertied classes. That this constitution of the working class into a political party is indispensable in order to ensure the triumph of the Social revolution and its ultimate aim - the abolition of classes;'* <sup>(9)</sup>

<sup>(6)</sup> Preface to the German Edition of the Communist Manifesto - 1890 - Engels.

<sup>(7)</sup> Ibid

<sup>(8)</sup> "Karl Marx and F. Engels", D. Ryazanov, p 153.

<sup>(9)</sup> Resolution of the IWMA London Conference No. 9, "Political Action of the Working Class" - The First International and After, (Penguin) p 269.

To this central task Marx and Engels now devoted themselves. Their voluminous correspondence is testimony to the world-wide scope of this task and the London homes of these two men provided an invaluable 'International' to which the socialists of all countries had recourse. Engels explained his and Marx's strategy and tactics in a polemical critique of what they regarded as the best strand in the French working class movement - the Blanquists. Blanqui himself whilst recognised as a 'man of action' is characterised as 'essentially a political revolutionary; without socialist theory'. Engels attacks the unscientific nature of Blanquism, because it is not based on an understanding of the development of capitalist society (and in this respect retains the rationalism of the utopians). 'The revolution' is simply to be 'made' at a given moment when the conspirators are fully prepared. Further it has no conception of relating to the proletarian masses except by the exemplary 'coup'. In this respect Blanquism does not escape the Communist Jacobinism of Babeuf and Buonarrotti. It is completely incapable of relating to the day to day struggles, economic and political, of the proletariat. Against this he contrasts German Communism, 'The German Communists are Communists because through all intermediate stations and compromises, created not by them but by historical development, they clearly perceive the ultimate aim the abolition of classes, the inauguration of a society in which there will be no private ownership of land and means of production'. (10) The 'German Communists' were however few in number. Perhaps only Wilhelm Leibknecht and one or two others understood the programme of Marx and Engels and imperfectly at that. However Germany - newly united 'from above' by Bismarck was the only advanced country with an organized working class party - or to be more accurate two. Marx and Engels turned to the task of winning real working class formations to communism.

## GERMANY AND THE BIRTH OF MASS ORGANIZATION

The origins of the revived German workers movement of the 1860s lay in the agitation launched by Ferdinand Lassalle. On April 12th 1862 he delivered an address to the machine workers of Borsig in the Berlin suburb of Oranienburg which was shortly printed as his famous pamphlet 'The Workers Programme'. He visited Marx in London in July and failed to persuade him to support his agitation. Nothing daunted he proceeded to launch his 'German General Workers Association' on 23rd May 1863 in Leipzig, and there after he travelled the length and breadth of Germany building branches of the new organization. In January 1864 he launched into a fierce polemic with the founder of

the Liberal co-operative movement Herman Schulze-Delitzsch. On the 31st August 1864 he was shot dead in a duel in Switzerland. Marx and Engels soon recognised the historic significance of Lassalle's brief agitation 'After fifteen years of slumber, Lassalle has roused again the labour movement in Germany. This will remain his undying merit.' (11) Yet Marx would not support Lassalle Why? Because he has the most profound disagreements with him, differences which extended over Lassalle's programme, tactics and organizational methods.

At the level of programme Marx utterly rejected Lassalle's primitive and unscientific approach to the political economy of capitalism. Lassalle concentrated exclusively on what he termed 'the iron law of wages'. This theory resurrected the old 'law of wages' of the classical bourgeois political economists which argued the impossibility of raising wages above subsistence level. Lassalle invoked Malthus law of population: 'if living standards increased so would the birth rate thus reducing standards to subsistence again. The conclusion was that workers could not by industrial combination (trades unions) improve their lot 'Association rights cannot be of any use to the worker they cannot bring about a serious improvement in the workers conditions'. Hence flowed Lassalle's hostility to trades unions. This contrasted sharply with Marx and Engels assessment of them as 'the real class organizations of the proletariat, in which the latter wages its day to day struggle against capital; in which it schools itself.' (12)

The abstention from the trade unions was the first element of sectarianism Marx perceived in Lassalle's programme. The second element was Lassalle's 'answer' to the problem of the exploitation of the proletariat. The working class must win universal suffrage, use it to vote state credits to voluntary producer co-operatives which would gradually replace capitalism. Both economically and politically this programme had nothing in common with that of the Communist Manifesto. It had a great deal in common with the 'petit-bourgeois socialists' of 1848, with Louis Blanc's 'Organisation of Labour' which envisaged a similar scheme. Lassalle added his typically Hegelian assessment of the positive role of the state.

*"Thus the purpose of the state is to bring about the positive unfolding and progressive development of man's nature, in other words, to realise the human purpose, ie the culture of which the human race is capable; it is the education and the development of the human race into Freedom". (Workers Programme)*

Marx pointed out that co-operatives financed by Prussia would merely make the workers pensioners. Lassalle's formulation of the role of the state was accompanied by a pledge to work only by "peaceful and legal means". Lassalle was in the habit of saying to intimate friends "When I say universal suffrage, I mean the Revolution". Marx and Engels rejected this typically Lassallean real politik which involved deceiving the workers. For them nothing could excuse miseducating the workers as Lassalle was doing. Their attitude was summed up thus:

*"Beyond a doubt the disappointment in Lassalle's hapless illusion concerning socialist intervention on the part of a Prussian Government will come. The logic of things will have*

(10) Programme of the Blanquist Commune Emmigrants - Engels, June 1874, SW. 3 vol, p 380-86.

(11) Marx to J B von Schweitzer, October 13th 1868. Selected Letters, p 200.

(12) Engels to Bebel, March 18th 1875. Selected Letters, p274.



Ferdinand Lassalle, 1825–1864

its say. But, the honour of the workers party demands that it reject these optical illusions even before their flimsy texture is rent by experience. The working class is revolutionary or it is nothing".

Lassalle's programme turns its back on the trade unions espousing a struggle for the suffrage as the sole political demand. This programme on its positive side led to a stress on the need for an independent workers party and a sharp clash with the Liberal bourgeoisie (who favoured a limited franchise based on a property qualification). It was however fatally vulnerable in the face of a political phenomenon that appeared in France in the 1850's and in Prussia in the 1860's and 1870's - Bonapartism, whether of the Napoleonic or Bismarkian variety. Lassallean statism played right into the hands of Bismark. Marx and Engels again and again vigorously attacked Lassalle and his disciples total ignoring of the Military - big land owner class who actually ruled Germany. Marx and Engels were no lovers of the bourgeoisie yet their strategy in Germany was still to support the bourgeoisie in its clashes with the Junker Monarchy.

Lastly in the field of organisation, where Lassalle set the precedent of appointing himself as an all powerfull President of the General Workers Union of Germany, Marx dissented sharply.

"Here, where the workers are under the thumb of bureaucracy from childhood on and believe in authority, in constituted authorities, it is a foremost task to teach them how to walk by themselves." (13)

The other strand in the German Labour Movement, inaugurated by Wilhelm Liebknecht at a later date (and also August

Bebel), was born out of the left wing of Liberalism. In 1866, the two of them founded the Saxon Peoples Party - a radical party which they were able in three years to build into a small national formation and rename "The Social Democratic Workers Party" - at a congress at Eisenach: (Hence forth they were known as Eisenachers.)

The name 'Social-Democrat', common in both strands of German socialism, was never the object of admiration by Marx and Engels, for one thing it had associations with Louis Blanc's party in 1848. They referred to it as "a pig of a name" and to the end of his days Engels regarded it as "inexact" for a party "... whose economic programme is not merely socialist in general, but downright communist and whose ultimate political aim is to overcome the whole state and consequently, democracy as well." (14)

Marx and Engels always referred to themselves as Communists, and the question of the name is not an accidental or trivial matter. For Marx and Engels the Social-Democrats in Germany were not fully developed communists - they were a formation with which they struggled, to win them to the communist programme.

Initially the struggle was to overcome the Lassallean sectarian programme. At first Marx corresponded with the Lassallean leader J.B. Von Schweitzer when the latter appeared to be taking steps away from sectarianism by calling a congress to organise trade unions. However Liebknecht and Bebel were more receptive to the advice offered from London. They were however, scarcely less in need of it. The programme adopted at Eisenach marked only the first steps away from Radical Liberalism but it had certain marked superiorities to that of the Lassalleans. In a series of articles written by Bebel (later collected as a pamphlet entitled "Our Goals") he exposed the error that a 'half-free or despotic state could ever accomplish the workers emancipation'. He broke silence on the need to replace the Prussian State with one which embodied the will of the majority - a "Peoples State" (Volkstaat) ie. in the language the censor imposed - a republic. Bebel's views come close to the "social republicans" of 1848.

## THE "CRITIQUE OF THE GOTHA PROGRAMME"

In May 1875 a joint congress was held of Bebel and Liebknecht's Social Democratic Workers' Party and the Lassallean General German Workers Union. This Gotha Congress adopted a common programme for a unified workers party in Germany. Marx and Engels subjected this programme to withering criticism.

The heart of the criticism that Marx and Engels made of the draft of the Gotha Programme lay in its political demands and here the thrust of their argument was directed as much against the Eisenachers as against the Lassalleans. The Lassalleans had for long shamelessly failed to expose the Monarchical Bonapartist state as totally inimical to the workers - the demand for state aided co-operatives would have turned them into pensioners of the King of Prussia. The Eisenachers - as their newspaper's title (Volkstaat) suggested were pledged to a democratic transformation. (Peoples State was understood to mean Republic, a word they could not legally use. By inserting "Free Peoples State into the programme, the Eisenachers no doubt felt they

(13) Letter to J.D. Von Schweitzer, September 13th 1868.

(14) Engels' preface to 'On International Topics from "The Peoples State"' (1894).

had preserved the essence of their democratic faith. Marx singled out for heavy attack, their formulation:

*"The Socialist Labour Party of Germany strives with every legal means for the Free State and the Socialist Society".*

Marx's attack on this is twofold. Firstly it is evasive even as a democratic demand — and Germany was a country where the democratic tasks were the ones immediately facing the proletariat.

*"Even vulgar democracy, which sees the millenium in the democratic republic and has no suspicion that it is precisely in this last form of state of bourgeois society that the class struggle has to be fought out to a conclusion — even it towers mountains above this kind of democratism which keeps within the limits of what is permitted by the police and not permitted by logic." (Critique of the Gotha Programme)*

Secondly the programme fails completely to embody the key lesson of the Paris Commune.

*"Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat".*

These two criticisms run like a red thread through Marx and Engels later relations with the German Social Democrats. Marx and Engels made it clear that they would take no responsibility for this "thoroughly objectionable programme that demoralises the party". Their position on the Gotha unification was that it was wrong.

*"... one should simply have concluded an agreement for action against the common enemy."*

The only sort of programme that is possible in such circumstances is a "programme of action" (K. Marx letter to W. Bracke, 5th May 1875)

The attitude of the party leaders to the advice of the 'Londoners' is symptomatic. Liebknecht expressed relief that "the party was not under the direction of the theoreticians. Even Bebel, to the end of his days never fully understood their objections.

*"It was no easy job to come to an agreement with the two old fellows in London" (My Life — 1913)*

The aid of the 'theoreticians' was needed sooner than Liebknecht could have expected. The party leaders following on from the formlessness of the programme opened the publication of the party to all shades of opinion — looking to all 'Socialists' to assist them. The State Socialist Eugen Dühring, rapidly came to exert an enormous influence within the party.



August Bebel

Liebknecht and Bebel at first welcomed this. Bebel in the 'Volkstaat' recommended one of Dühring's books on economics as 'the best thing on the subject since Marx wrote Das Kapital'. Bracke wrote articles referring to Dühring as a party comrade.

Liebknecht only became alarmed when it became apparent that Dühring was developing a faction within the party. Then panic stricken he turned to Engels, pleading for a 'reply' from London. The response was 'Anti-Dühring'.

In these articles, later published as a book, Engels with Marx's assistance produced the first handbook of scientific socialism which not only demolished the Berlin professor but educated a whole generation of the leaders of Social-Democracy throughout Europe.

## THE ANTI-SOCIALIST LAWS AND THE BATTLE AGAINST EVOLUTIONISM

Marx and Engels remained deeply pessimistic about the likely future development of Social-Democracy in Germany.

*"A rotten spirit is making itself felt in our party in Germany not so much amongst the masses as amongst the leaders. The compromise with the Lassalleans has led to compromise with other half-way elements too." (15)*

This 'rotten spirit' was reformism and was the natural offspring of sectarianism. Marx understood that the utopian element in the Gotha synthesis was not the profoundly progressive, critical utopianism of Owen, Fourier and St Simon which had prefigured many of the essential features of scientific socialism. In the context of a modern labour movement and in count counterposition to 'materialist - critical socialism' it was in Marx's words "silly, stale, and fundamentally reactionary". The 'other half-way elements' were a considerable influx of petit-bourgeois intelligentsia, including Dr Karl Hochberg and his secretary Edward Bernstein. Of them Marx observed:

*"These fellows want to take the teeth out of Socialism... to make the party respectable in the eyes of the philistine. They are poor counter-revolutionary windbags" (16)*

Far worse in Marx's eyes was the attitude of his own closest collaborators. Far from fighting these ideas they connived at their propagation.

*"Hochberg was stunned when Engels told him the unvarnished truth: he is a peaceable evolutionary —. He declared that Liebknecht had told him that we all agreed au fond (at bottom). All those in Germany — ie all the leaders shared his view etc. Indeed after making the great mistake in the transactions with the Lassalleans, Liebknecht has opened the doors wide to all these barbarians, and thus paved the way malgre lue (in spite of himself) for a demoralisation in the party —." (17)*

This development of 'peaceable evolutionism' was only checked by the onslaught of Bismark on the Social Democrats. The Anti-Socialist Law passed the Reichstag in October 19th 1878 and was renewed at roughly two yearly intervals until September 30th 1890.

Two tremendous dangers faced the Social Democrats — capitulation or putschism. Bismark obviously hoped to provoke the the party into an outburst that would have given him the ex-

(15) Marx to Sorge, October 19th 1877. Letters to Americans, p 116.

(16) Marx to Sorge, London September 19th 1879.

(17) ibid

cuse to drown it in blood. The Reichstag, much to his fury had refused to make the Social-Democrats totally illegal. It had left the loophole of elections to the Reichstag open to them. For 12 years Bismark tried to block it without success. The dangers of an outbreak were real — feeling amongst the Berlin workers workers ran high. But the opposite danger was the greater as Marx had foreseen, amongst the leaders. In 1879, Liebknecht in the Reichstag pledged the Social-Democrats to keep completely within the law and added for good measure that the party aim was to reach its goal by 'peaceful reforms' and that 'violent revolution' was an absurdity. An article by Vollmar in 'Sozialdemokrat' declared "The assertion of our enemies that the dictatorship of the proletariat is the goal to which we are striving is branded as a lie by the clear wording of our party programme".

The leadership of the party lay with the parties deputies to the Reichstag — the Fraktion. All party papers in Germany had been closed down. The party had allowed the only Social-Democratic organ to be published in Zurich by Hochberg, Bernstein et al.

Marx and Engels were so alarmed at the capitulation of the leadership that, as with the Gotha Programme, they resorted to a Circular letter to the party leaders. This remarkable document is a prophetic indictment of Reformism. It clearly defines Hochberg and Co as a 'bourgeois' trend in the Social-Democratic party. Marx and Engels also foresaw where this trend would end.

*"If Berlin should ever again be so uneducated as to have another March 18th (1848), the Social-Democrats, instead of taking part in the fight like 'riff-raff with a mania for barricades' (p. 88), must rather 'follow the path of legality', put on the brakes, clear away the Barricades and if necessary march with the glorious army against the one-sided, coarse, uneducated masses."* (18)

Marx and Engels likewise saw through this pre-figuration of the disease that was to kill Social-Democracy for the revolution.

*"The programme is not to be given up but only postponed — for an indefinite period. One accepts it, though not really for oneself and ones own lifetime but posthumously, as an heirloom to be handed down to one's children and grandchildren. In the meantime one devotes one's 'whole strength and energy' to all sorts of trifles and the patching up of the capitalist order of society so as to produce at least the appearance of something happening without at the same time scaring the bourgeois."* (19)

The conclusion they drew was that this tendency had to be driven out of Social Democracy. *"If these gentlemen constitute themselves into a Social Democratic petty-bourgeois party they are quite entitled to do so, one could negotiate with them, form a bloc according to circumstances etc. But in a workers' party they are an adulterating element. If reasons exist for tolerating them there for the moment it is our duty only to tolerate them, to allow them no influence in the party leadership and to remain aware that a break with them is only a matter of time. That time, moreover, seems to have come. How the party can tolerate the authors of this article in its midst is incomprehensible to us."* They concluded with the threat that if the party organ remained in the hands of the 'Zurich Trio' they would be immediately obliged, *"publically to declare our opposition to it, and to dissolve the bonds of the solidarity with which we have hitherto represented the German party abroad."* (20)

So near to rupture did it come that a delegation, including Bebel, was despatched to London. The result was an alliance between Engels and Bebel to fight opportunism in the German party, an alliance that lasted until Engels' death. A by-product was the 'conversion' of Bernstein, also on the delegation, from his 'peaceful evolutionism', to which he was to return within a year of Engels' death.

Throughout the 1880's, at first with Marx and then alone, Engels fought to educate the party. The situation of illegality and the massive growth of the industrial working class

aided this process. In a series of factional struggles the most prominent rightists were either defeated and silenced, or the hardships of illegality drove them out of the party. The semi-anarchist tendency of Most and Hasselmann was defeated and expelled at the Weyden Conference in August 1880. At the same time, to the delight of the Londoners, the word 'lawful' was struck from the phrase, *'the party strives by all lawful means...'* The Marxian perspective alone offered guidance to the illegal party nuclei. The growing numbers of workers grasped eagerly at the illegal pamphlets and papers emanating from the party centre in Switzerland. Under Engels' direct encouragement, 'Der Sozial-Demokrat' was established in Zurich as the illegal party organ. Its intransigence and militancy led it to clash with the Reichstag Fraktion on many occasions, most notably when it condemned their vote for the Steam Ship Subsidy in 1885. At one point 'Der Sozial-Demokrat' was officially renounced by the party leadership — an action which produced mass protests by the workers of Berlin and Saxony.

In the 1880's Engels concentrated on hammering out a party strategy with Bebel and the other party leaders. He sought to draw their attention to the unfinished tasks of Germany's bourgeois-democratic revolution. In 1885, he wrote a preface to a reprint of Marx's old pamphlet, 'The Communist Trial in Cologne'. In it he explained the strategy and tactics of the Communists in 1848. He reprinted the old pamphlet, 'Demands of the Communist Party in Germany Today' advising his readers that they could, "still learn something from it". They could of course find in it a courageous and outspokenly republican programme with a series of measures pointing beyond the bourgeois republic, 'universal arming of the people' ... national workshops and the right to work ... the nationalisation of the means of transport' etc.

Engels saw the Bismarkian system as chronically unstable and doomed to disruption. The bourgeoisie, despite its subjective cowardice would, believed Engels, be forced into conflict with it as the expansion of the productive forces came into conflict with the social and political relations of the Second Reich. Though never finished or published in his lifetime, Engels began a masterly concrete study of German society, 'The Role of Force in History'. In numerous articles for Sozial-Demokrat he tried to draw the attention of the party to the tasks which lay ahead of it. In particular he pointed to the need to win the rural labourers, the raw material of the Prussian regiments, to the party. He advocated agitation around the demand that the Crown estates in Prussia be leased to co-operatives of rural labourers for common cultivation. Bebel replied that it was a waste of time demanding things that the existing government would not grant. Here he put his finger on a question of political method which was to become a decisive negative feature of Social Democracy. While paying tribute through constant propaganda to 'Our Final Goal' and maintaining a parliamentary stance of absolute intransigence, 'Not a man, Not a penny for this system', the daily agitation of the Social Democracy was limited to those things which 'could be expected' within the system. Engels outlined a different method.

The Social-Democrats should certainly not dream up utopian demands on the existing Bismark Government. This could only, as with Lassalle, paint the existing sordid reality in the colours of the society of the future. But even the demand for co-operatives could be useful in a concrete situation. Even in 1875 he had suggested that the Lassallean demand for co-operatives would be admissible as a, 'subordinate transitional measure, one among and alongside of many other possible ones' if it were not presented as, 'the universal panacea'.

Now he suggested the demand for agricultural cooperatives as a means of, *'drawing their attention (i.e. the rural labourers) to the fact that their future calling is the cultivation of the estates of their present gracious lords for the common account'* (21)

He further explained, in essence, the way in which, 'transitional measures' could be used. Replying to Bebel's insistence (18) Marx and Engels — Circular Letter to Bebel, Liebknecht, Bracke et al. September 17th/18th, 1879. Selected Letters, p 302 - 307.

(19) Ibid.

(20) Ibid.

(21) Engels to Bebel, 11th/12th December 1884; cited in Ernst Wangerman's Introduction to Engels 'The Role of Force in History', p 23/24.

on the 'practicable' he agreed, but added, '... objectively practicable, not necessarily practicable for the present government. I go further, when we suggest socialist measures calculated to lead to the overthrow of capitalist production (like this one), then only measures which are objectively practicable but impossible for this government ... This proposal will not be carried out by any Junker or bourgeois government. To show the rural proletariat of the eastern provinces the way to end Junker and Tenant exploitation; to put the means to do this in their hands; to set in motion the very people whose enslavement and stultification produces the regiments which are the foundation of Prussia; in short, to destroy Prussia from within at the root — they certainly wouldn't do that. It is a proposal which we must take up under all circumstances as long as the large estates exist ... With this alone can we destroy Prussia, and the sooner we popularise the proposal the better.' (22)

The party had seemed to stagger badly after the passage of the Anti-Socialist Laws but by the mid-80's things stood on a much firmer basis. In the Reichstag elections of 1884 the party gained 550,000 votes (9.7% of the total). Engels was enthusiastic, pointing out that mass working class movements, as opposed to secret societies, had never before resisted oppression. Everywhere the German workers learned to rebuild the party organisations often behind a variety of legal fronts, gymnastic societies, singing clubs etc. Nine thousand copies of 'Sozial Demokrat' per issue were smuggled into Germany — often using the Imperial Mails by Julius Motteler who became known as 'the Red Postmaster'.

The party made full use of the Reichstag elections, the one loophole in Bismark's repressive apparatus. Bismark had said that if he did not want any chickens then he would have to smash all the eggs, by the late 1880's the eggs were hatching out all over Germany. The Hamburg organisation alone had between 5,000 and 6,000 members. It is hardly surprising that electoral work became known as the tried and tested tactic, to thousands of party activists.

## THE VICTORY OVER BISMARCK

Engels was not naively elated at the growth of the Social-Democrats. He recognised that the immediate period ahead was one of massive expansion of German industry and with it the proletariat. But neither could he ignore the parallel growth of militarism — hence his repeated eagerness for the Social-Democrats to penetrate the recruiting grounds of "The King of Prussia's regiments". The Franco-Prussian War had a dual consequence which Marx and Engels realised. The passage of the leading role in the International working class movement to the Germans, and the possibility of a future war of catastrophic proportions. The seizure of Alsace-Lorraine made certain a Franco-Russian alliance against Germany and a 'world war' would follow unless there was a revolution in Russia. The consequences of the war would be incredible, "chauvinism would swamp everything", though he did not believe the existing order could last more than three years of protracted war. However Engels was convinced that ten more years of peace would see the Social-Democrats in such a powerful position that the seizure of power would be on the order of the day. He thus envisaged two basic revolutionary situations, one arising out of the exhaustion of a devastating war; the other the product of a clash between the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois parties and the military Junker regime which would open the road to the Social-Democrats.

In the late 1880's the Bismark 'dictatorship' was clearly in a process of dissolution. What is more German society was experiencing the accumulated effects of twenty years of industrial expansion — a chronic housing shortage, appalling working conditions, low wages (many of the trade unions had been dis-

solved under the Anti-Socialist Laws) A massive miners strike exploded in the autumn of 1888 — involving 120,000 workers in the Ruhr. An economic upswing which lasted from 1888 to 1891 tripped the number of workers in the unions under Social-Democratic influence — a parallel to the Docks Strike and New Unionism in Britain. On January 25th 1890, the Catholic Party, the Liberals and the Social Democrats in the Reichstag combined to reject Bismark's request for the renewal of the Anti-Socialist Law.

The new Kaiser, Wilhelm II announced his support of extended labour legislation — against Bismark's express advice on February 4th and on the 20th Germany went to the polls. The results were shattering for the Iron Chancellor. The SPD doubled its strength with 1,427,298 votes (nearly 20% of the vote) giving them 35 Reichstag deputies. Bismark tried to force Wilhelm's hand for further and more savage repression with his familiar offer to resign. To his astonishment the Kaiser accepted it. The Bismark era was over — on September 20th the Anti-Socialist Law lapsed. There were massive celebrations all over Germany.

There were events, that in retrospect can be seen as ill omens. Firstly, Bebel and the party stood aside from the Ruhr miners strike, advising caution and to vote for Social-Democracy. Secondly the International Congress in Paris in 1889 had called for strike action May 1st 1890. Despite, or indeed, because of tremendous mass enthusiasm for action Bebel and the executive called off the strike and with the British Trade Unionists celebrated May Day on the Sunday following. Engels, ruefully, endorsed the decision.

## THE ERFURT PROGRAMME

In 1890, a triumphal year for Social Democracy, these events must have seemed like spots on the sun. We cannot smugly pass judgement on Engels, deciding with the benefit of hindsight that he aided and abetted Revisionism — a practice common amongst academic and humanist 'Marxists'. However we must utilise the light which the 1914 collapse casts on Social-Democracy to examine the initial political malformation which Engels only faintly perceived. That he did partly perceive it becomes clear from his activity at the time of the adoption of the Erfurt programme. This period also brings to the fore the figure who was to succeed Engels as the most widely recognised theoretician of the Second International.

Karl Kautsky, who was to become known as, 'the Pope of Marxism' in the period before 1914, was won to Social-Democracy by reading Engels' Anti-Duhring. He first met Engels in 1881, and in January of 1883 began publishing the theoretical journal 'Die Neue Zeit' which became in time the most famous journal of its kind in the world. In 1887 he published, with Engels' assistance, 'The Economic Doctrines of Karl Marx', a handbook that was to educate two generations of party militants. Engels contributed a series of articles to the journal which became a major weapon in combatting the theoretical eclecticism of Social Democracy and obliterating the doctrinal vestiges of Lassalleism.

The prospect of legality opened up a period of profound self-questioning amongst the Social Democrats on the subject of the party's strategy and tactics. As early as 1887 the Congress held at St. Gall in Switzerland had appointed a commission to revise the party programme. Its members, Ignaz Auer, Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel, represented the right, centre and left of the party respectively. Engels had to conduct something of a conspiracy with Kautsky to get Marx's 'Critique of the Gotha Programme' published. The party leadership were angry at what seemed to them unnecessary attacks on the revered memory of Lassalle. Engels, however, was eager to see the party adopt a consistent revolutionary strategy, to see its transition to Communism. He recommended the party leaders to take Marx's, 'Introduction to the Programme of the French Workers' Party' published in 1880, as a guide. This introduction

(22) Engels to Bebel, 20th January 1886, *ibid*, p 24.

was in fact a statement of communist aims, to be attached to a 'minimum programme' of demands. These demands themselves were based on winning or extending a series of democratic rights, the 8-hour day, equal pay for men and women, a progressive income tax and the universal arming of the people. However, the formal division of the programme did not have, for Marx and Engels, the significance it was later to assume, that is the divorce of the immediate aims from the communist goal. It did, however, represent their belief that the tasks facing the proletariat were organisation and preparation in struggle for the assault on the bourgeois order. In different countries different obstacles confronted the organised workers. For example, in France and the USA, conservative bourgeois republics existed. Assaults had to be launched at the bourgeois bastions within them — the standing army, the independent power of the chief executive, the bureaucracy and the unelected, or indirectly elected elements in the legislature. In Germany the immediate tasks were different. Political power was not directly in the hands of the bourgeoisie. The Reichstag, despite its election by manhood suffrage, had no control over the executive and the Emperor who ruled through a camarilla of princes, generals, landowner-politicians and big bankers. In this sort of state the struggle for bourgeois-democratic rights stood to the fore. When Social-Democracy re-conquered legality the crucial question was how to use it, and to what ends. It is in this light that the discussion of the Party Programme assumes a tremendous importance.

Liebknrecht was the first to produce a draft of the new programme. Engels wrote a critique of it, hailing it as having broken with the major inadequacies dating from the Gotha Programme, 'both the specifically Lassallean and vulgar socialistic'. He welcomed its adherence to, 'present day science'. Many of the specific drafting criticisms Engels made were incorporated in the final version. It is worth looking at those which were not.

Firstly, Engels suggested that the sentence which links the preamble to the demands should say, 'Social-Democracy fights for all demands which help it approach this goal' or, 'even better, say directly what it is all about, i.e. that it is necessary to catch up with what the bourgeoisie has missed.' Instead the final draft has, 'Setting out from these principles the Social Democratic Party demands immediately...'. This formulation stresses the separation of the demands from the goal and retreats some distance from pointing up the party's struggle against the state structure of Wilhelmine Germany.

The most telling criticism Engels made was closely related to this very point, 'It is an obvious absurdity to wish to transform all the instruments of labour into common property on the basis of this (i.e. the contemporary German) constitution'. This central fact had to be tackled because of the, 'opportunism that is gaining ground in the Social-Democratic Press.' Not only would the general struggle for Socialism within capitalist society, 'necessarily outgrow the old social order ... burst this old shell by force' but, Engels continued, 'in Germany in addition, it will have to smash the fetters of the still absolutist, and moreover, indescribably confused political order.' (23)

Engels conceded that it might be advisable to not call explicitly for a Republic in the programme, but he insisted it was necessary to demand, 'the concentration of all political power in the hands of the peoples' representatives ... complete self-government in the provinces, districts and communes through officials elected by universal suffrage. The abolition of all local and provincial authorities appointed by the state.' In other words, all the key elements of a Unified Republic.

Engels spelt out the consequences of not raising such demands, 'In the long run such a policy can only lead one's own party astray. They push general abstract political questions into the foreground, thereby concealing the immediate, concrete questions, which, at the moment of the first great events, the first political crisis automatically pose themselves. What can result from this except that at the decisive moment the party suddenly proves helpless, and that uncertainty and discord on the most decisive issues reign in it because these issues have never been discussed?' (24)

The final draft was written by Kautsky and Bernstein, the former dealt with the maximum programme, the latter with the immediate demands. The maximum programme made no



Wilhelm Liebknecht

direct reference to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat — a concession to opportunism according to Plekhanov. Instead it simply said, 'It (the working class) cannot effect the passing of the means of production into the ownership of the community without acquiring political power'.

In Kautsky's commentary on the Erfurt Programme it is baldly stated that the working class will, 'make use of its mastery over the machinery of government to introduce the socialist system of production.' (25)

In the same work Kautsky widened the gap between the immediate demands of the party and its goal, 'the Social-Democratic Party can make positive propositions only for the existing social order.' Whilst true against utopianism it was fatally one-sided. Kautsky later recalled his rejection of the suggestion that 'measures of transition' should constitute a section of the programme, 'When, more than ten years ago, the German Social Democracy proposed to include in its programme demands for such measures as would accelerate the transformation from a capitalist to a socialist manner of production, I opposed this because I maintained that the party could not lay out a definite road for conditions of which we can only have a dim presentiment and which may easily surprise us with much that is wholly unexpected.' (26)

The Erfurt Programme thus covered over a disjuncture between principles and tactics and at the Erfurt Congress the first far-ranging discussion on the latter accompanied the programmatic debate. During the period of the Anti-Socialist Laws the party had been left one loop-hole, electioneering. Thus, organising for elections and the propaganda work associated with them, had become the central tactic for the party. Its leadership had become the Reichstag Fraktion, although the editorial board of *Sozial Demokrat*, in alliance with the Bebel wing of the Reichstag deputies, gradually achieved an ascendancy. The outstanding success of the electoral work strengthened it as, 'the tried and tested tactic'. Bebel's attitude is well summed up in a speech he made to the party

(23) Engels, Critique of the Draft SD Programme of 1891. SW 3vol, Vol. III, p434.

(24) Ibid

(25) Karl Kautsky, 'The Class Struggle', p 191. Here Kautsky states what was to be a central kernel of his 'Marxism', the taking over of the State machinery.

(26) Karl Kautsky, 'The Social Revolution', German first edition, 1900. English first edition, 1902, p 103.



Congress in 1887, 'At no time has there existed a doubt among the party comrades that the power of the Social Democratic Party rests fundamentally upon parliamentary activity and its participation in the elections. Thus, it is not the participation in elections which harms the party, but only the over-estimation of parliamentarism which is dangerous.' Whoever believes that the final goals of socialism can be reached by the existing parliamentary-constitutional road either does not know its goals or is an imposter.' (27)

At the Erfurt Congress there appeared a faction known as the 'Jungen' (Young Ones) — composed of young intellectuals like Paul Ernst and Max Schippel and skilled workers such as Wilhelm Werner and Karl Wilderberger. Though not opposed to parliamentary work per se they condemned the 'success mongering parliamentary direction of present Social Democracy.' They had, however, little but negative criticism to offer — certainly they had no programmatic or tactical alternatives. Engels supported Bebel who crushed them decisively, expelling Werner and Wilderberger at Erfurt. Liebknecht's contributions to the attack on the 'Jungen' indicate the developing tactical impasse of Social Democracy, 'I hold, we all hold, that the centre of gravity for our party's activity is not to be found in the Reichstag, but outside it, and that our activity in the Reichstag, as long as we do not have a decisive influence there, should have propaganda chiefly in view... If we had as many votes, and as much force behind us as the bourgeois parties have, the Reichstag would be as little unfruitful for us as it now is for them... To say this is not to maintain that every question can be solved by legislation; but let someone show me any other road that leads to the goal! The essence of revolutionism lies not in the means but the end.' (28)

This splitting of ends and means was the seed of the collapse of Social-Democracy. At Erfurt the party failed to re-orient itself tactically. Already the right-wing, led by Georg Von Vollmar, were proposing the abandonment of the 'propagandist' use of the Reichstag in favour of electoral pacts with the Liberals, special reformist programmes for the medium-sized peasant proprietors of Southern Germany; voting for the Budget in certain states where Liberals might offer social reforms in exchange. Engels observed, '...this fellow is more dangerous than the former (Jungen) group.' All in all, however, Engels was satisfied with Erfurt. Not only that, he supported and defended the Bebel leadership's tactics for the next four years. When, in the same year, Marx's French son in law had criticised the Germans as 'flabby' and 'hesitant' because they again backed off from the May Day strike, Engels replied, 'The German Socialists best demonstration is their existence and their slow, steady, irresistible progress. We are still far from being able to withstand an open fight, and we have the duty, in relation to the whole of Europe and America, of not suffering a defeat, but of winning, when the time comes, the first great battle.' (29)

Engels supported Bebel vigorously against the right — in the debate over Agrarian policy, against Bernstein who, in 1893, advocated a deal with the Liberals in the Prussian Landtag elections, but also against 'left' attempts to alter the party's tactics. Why? Not because Engels had become convinced that the Junker-Capitalist Reich would drop like a ripe plum into the hands of the calmly waiting Social-Democracy. He had a very different perspective. On an international scale, Engels still held the view that a Franco-Russian conflict with Germany was possible, indeed inevitable, unless revolution erupted in Russia. In the event of a revived Bonapartist regime in France — and this threat appeared very real throughout the 1890's from the time of the movement around General Boulanger to the Dreyfus incident — Engels believed that a combined attack on Germany was likely. In these circumstances Engels saw the task of Social Democracy as winning the leadership of the movement of resistance to these reactionary forces which would attempt to dismember Germany. This was predicated on the belief that the Hohenzollern regime would rapidly prove itself incapable of leading such a resistance. When this became clear the Social Democrats should seize power and lead a war of national resistance. Domestically, Engels still worked on the assumption that the German bourgeoisie would be forced into sharp collision with the Hohenzollerns and Junkers should the latter

move against the Social-Democrats, that is, if they attempted a 'Royal Coup d'Etat' to halt the growth and organisation of the workers.

Engels saw the legality of the early 1890's as a short breathing space in which to win over the mass of the workers and the rural proletarians and, a theme he frequently stressed, to penetrate the Prussian Army, undermine it from within so that soldiers would revolt if ordered to fight the workers. Parliamentary work was thus, for Engels, temporarily central and to this end he supported Bebel against what he saw as semi-anarchist criticisms. At the same time he resisted the transformation of this tactic into an exclusive strategy for conquering state power. In every instance where he supported the party leaders his position was, it is clear from hindsight, different from theirs — a fact that is borne out by their increasingly frequent misrepresentations and falsifications of Engels' advice. Let us look at certain key examples of this.

The General Strike, which had been the subject of great discussion in the early days of the workers' movement, had, by the late nineteenth century, become the preserve of certain sections of the Anarchists who saw it as the sole and sufficient tactic to overthrow capitalism and dissolve the State. The advocates of the general strike increased in numbers after the Belgian General Strike of 1893, in which over 300,000 workers had responded to the Labour Party's strike call. The strike resulted in important concessions being granted by a divided and uncertain ruling class. A discussion on the question of the General Strike ensued in which Engels again supported the SPD leaders. In later years Engels' authority was to be cited against the advocates of the mass strike tactic. Yet, if one looks closely at Engels' criticism, it is far from being a blanket rejection of the general strike. Writing to Kautsky, he linked this tactic to the question of armed insurrection, 'You yourself remark that the barricades have become antiquated (they may, however, prove useful again should the army turn one-third or two-fifths socialist and the question arise of providing it with the opportunity to turn its bayonets) but the political strike must either prove victorious immediately, by the threat alone (as in Belgium where the army was shaky) or it must end in a colossal fiasco or, finally, lead directly to the barricades.' (30)

Here Engels puts his finger on the most important feature of the general strike — its political nature. Other than in exceptional cases, where the ruling class is unusually weak or divided and where the strike's objectives are limited, the general strike poses the question of political power and, therefore, must lead on to the armed insurrection (barricades). Engels own opposition to the semi-anarchist proponents of the general strike is thus clearly a revolutionary opposition. Yet his authority was increasingly misused. The most famous case of such misuse was the way in which the party leaders censored Engels' preface to Marx's 'Class Struggles in France'.

In it Engels observed that military developments, the precursors of the modern machine gun and street planning, had made barricade fighting, in its traditional role as the initial act of the revolution as in 1848, impossible. At the same time he re-emphasised participation in parliamentary activity as an essential way to mobilise and educate the working class. However, he added warnings that this tactic was not an absolute or good for all time. These warnings were deleted, without his permission, from the printed version — a censorship not fully discovered until the 1920's. Engels himself protested vigorously to Kautsky, 'To my astonishment I see in Vorwärts today an extract of my Introduction, printed without my prior consent and trimmed in such a fashion that I appear as a peaceful worshipper of legality at any price.' (31) Engels wrote to Lafargue in Paris at the same time, making his position clear, 'Liebknecht has taken from my Introduction everything that could serve him to defend the tactics of peace

(27) Cited in 'The Outlawed Party: Social Democracy in Germany, 1878 — 1890, Vernon L. Lidtke.

(28) Cited in 'History of Socialist Thought', GDH Cole Vol. III, p 253.

(29) Engels to Lafargue, Jan. 31st 1891: Letters to Paul and Laura Lafargue, Vol. III, p 22.

(30) Engels to Kautsky, November 1893, cited by Trotsky in 'Whither France'

(31) Engels to Kautsky, April 1st 1895. Selected letters, p 461.

at any price and of opposition to force and violence, which it has pleased him for some time now to preach... I am advising these tactics only for Germany of today and even then with an important proviso. In France, Belgium, Italy and Austria, these tactics could not be followed in their entirety and in Germany they may become inapplicable tomorrow.' (32)

In a letter to Richard Fischer, Engels protested even more vigorously against, 'legality at any price' and against being law-abiding as a moral compulsion. The SPD's observance of the laws of Wilhelmine Germany, he stressed, was a matter of compulsion and tactical convenience. When the people had enough power they would break these laws.

Within three months Engels was dead and the whole matter remained hidden. Even Rosa Luxemburg was unaware of it when, in 1919 she was presenting a new programme to the founding conference of the German Communist Party (KPD). Luxemburg had been a student in Zurich at the time of Erfurt and was in sympathetic contact with the oppositionist currents in the SPD. Later, she recalled those years as central to understanding Social Democracy's turn away from the revolutionary road, 'The parliamentary struggle was counterposed to direct revolutionary action by the proletariat and the former was indicated as the only practicable way of carrying the class struggle, parliamentarism and nothing but parliamentarism was the logical sequel of this criticism. It was characteristic of the party conditions at that time that the socialist parliamentarians should have the decisive word alike in theory and practice. They assured Engels that it was absolutely essential to safeguard the German Labour Movement from a lapse into into anarchism and in this way constrained him to write in the tone they wanted. The upshot of this change was that at every annual congress the energetic protests of the left wing against a purely parliamentarist policy, its urgent warnings against the sterility and danger of such a policy were stigmatised as anarchism, anarchising socialism, or at least, anti-Marxism.' (33)

In conclusion it must be asked, what responsibility did Engels have for the development of the SPD's 'passive radicalism'? Was he some sort of precursor of Kautsky? Many modern commentators have thought so.

The most sophisticated version of this approach is that contained in Lucio Colletti's essay, 'Bernstein and the Marxism of the Second International' in which Engels' political position is defined as, '...by no means yet revisionism. But if it is not revisionism, it is, nonetheless, its unconscious preamble and preparation'. This approach is not new. During the First World War voices were heard blaming Engels for the catastrophe, not in itself surprising since the Social Chauvinists were filling the pages of their journals with mangled and out of context quotes from Engels to justify their position. Lenin rejected this app-

roach, in a letter to Inessa Armand he wrote, 'In my day I have seen an awful lot of hasty charges that Engels was an opportunist, and my attitude is supremely distrustful.'

Lenin's attitude can be summed up as, 'Try and prove it'. On the issues of 'defence of the Fatherland' in 1891, and of Engels' views on the Belgian general strike of 1893, Lenin's approach was to look at Engels' positions in their concrete historical setting, in their relationship to his positions on other matters, and their validity as borne out in the development of events. Thus, he could conclude that Engels was, 'absolutely right' to advocate defence of Germany against any combined attack by a restored French Bonapartism and the Tsar. The parallel with 1914 was invalid, Lenin asserted, because, 'no imperialism existed at all.' On the other hand he could conclude that Engels might well have been wrong about the Belgian general strike. Why? Explaining this, Lenin wrote, '...events in recent times in general and 1905 definitely, have provided something new about general strikes which Engels did not know. Engels had been accustomed to hear about the general strike only from the empty phrases of the anarchists, whom he legitimately hated and despised. But, later events have demonstrated a new type of mass strike, a political one; i.e. a particularly non-anarchist one. This new feature Engels did not know yet, and could not know.' Lenin likewise rejected the conclusion drawn from these 'cases', 'Engels was the father of passive radicalism? Untrue. Nothing of the kind. You will never be able to prove this.'

What Engels did not, and could not, do, was to fully foresee the passage of world capitalism into a new epoch — that of Imperialism — and to re-adjust the strategy and tactics of the proletariat to deal with this. This task fell to a generation of militants who were drawn to Marxism in the 1890's — Luxemburg, Lenin, Liebknecht, Trotsky and others. They were aroused to this task by the controversy which broke out within a year of Engels' death.

## THE REVISIONIST CONTROVERSY

Scarcely a year elapsed before the Erfurt synthesis of theoretical radicalism and practical reformism found itself under attack from the right wing of the party, principally from Eduard Bernstein. Bernstein had spent the 1890's in London as Engels' closest disciple. However, even in Engels lifetime he had shown a liking for the writings of the Fabians — Bland, Webb and Shaw. Engels had remarked disapprovingly on his 'Fabian enthusiasm'. After the old man's death in 1895, Bernstein's abandonment of Marxism was rapid, and led to a debate which shook the whole International.

Bernstein opened his attack towards the end of 1896 in a series of articles entitled, 'Problems of Socialism' which appeared in Kautsky's theoretical weekly, 'Die Neue Zeit'. The first article, 'Utopianism and Eclecticism' attacked the Marxists for allowing their politics to be dominated by the idea of a sudden, i.e. revolutionary, transition to socialism. In following articles he attacked Marx's theory of capitalist crisis, maintaining that capitalism was becoming more stable. He argued for a policy dominated by the struggle for meaningful reforms, a cessation of opposition to all actions of the existing state and, in particular, resistance to the colonial policy.

Belfort Bax, the most frequent contributor from Britain to 'Die Neue Zeit', had been engaged in a theoretical debate of some bitterness with Karl Kautsky on the question of Ethics, a subject on which he had written a good deal in both English and continental journals. Kautsky acidly wrote to Adler in November 1896, 'Though I have little in common with the Fabians theoretically, they are yet more attractive to me than

(32) Engels to Paul Lafargue, April 3rd 1895, Selected Letters, p 461.  
(33) Rosa Luxemburg : Speech to the Founding Convention of the KP: 'Rosa Luxemburg Speaks', p 40.

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the third article in our Party and Programme Series. It will look at how the political heirs of Marx and Engels adopted their programmatic method to grapple with key questions of battle tactics necessary for that new period.

*Hyndman and Bax, with their utopianism concealed behind Marxist phraseology. The Fabians have damaged our movement in England much less by their criticism of superficial Marxism than Bax and Hyndman have by having compromised Marxism.* Bax, supported by Hyndman, had been arguing for the autonomy of ethics from economic determinism and as an important causal factor in men's actions. Heavily influenced in this by Kant, he was, as it happens, closer to Bernstein than to Kautsky.

However, Bernstein's conclusions were diametrically opposed to those of Bax and when he went on to attack socialism as an end to which immediate tactics must lead and be subordinate, Bax attacked him. It was Bax's attack, the first in what was to be a long battle which raged throughout all the European parties and drew in nearly all the distinguished figures of the period, which really provoked Bernstein into coming out into the open. Bax censured Bernstein for ignoring the final goal of socialism, particularly with regard to the latter's acceptance of Imperialism. Bernstein, stung by the sharpness of the attack replied, in words which were to dog him in the years to come, *'I confess openly, I have extraordinarily little interest or taste for what is generally called the final goal of socialism. This aim, whatever it be, is nothing to me, the movement everything. And by movement I understand not only the general movement of society, that is social progress, but political and economic agitation and organisation for affecting this progress.'*

This article, 'The Theory of Collapse and Colonial Policy' repeated Kautsky's sneer at Bax's 'utopianism'. Kautsky himself remained silent, indeed when questioned he said he regarded Bernstein's case with the utmost sympathy. 'Vorwärts', the SPD daily referred to the articles as, 'stimulating observations'.

Bax returned to the attack, in 'Justice' the SDF paper, he accused Bernstein of, 'trying to show Marx in the light of the Fabian ass in the lion's skin of Social-Democracy'. He mounted a full attack in an article published in 'Die Neue Zeit' on the 21st of December 1897, a month after the opening of Bernstein's second series of articles. Bax's article, 'Kolonialpolitik Und Chauvinismus' took up Bernstein on his attitude to Imperialism, repeating the arguments of Bax's earlier onslaughts on the dangers to socialism of a nationalist outlook., 'What Herr Bernstein writes and says, the Liberals also say, only in slightly different words.' To the accusation of utopianism Bax replied, 'In conclusion I will only stress that, far as I am from the tendency of the anti-parliamentary socialists, though the final goal without the movement sounds mere self-indulgence to me, I nevertheless stress (and that is my offence in Bernstein's eyes) that the socialism of the present can progress only if it remains constant to its final goal, the Communist society of the future.'

Bax fought Bernstein alone for nearly a year. Kautsky and the German leaders maintained an indifferent, or even hostile, silence. Since 1891 they had been moving further to the right themselves and had just won the final battle with the Anarchists and left socialists. The Bernstein debate was highly unwelcome to them and once again disturbed the 'balance' in their expanding party — that 'Erfurt' approach which was summed up by Bebel's words, *'The bourgeois society is working so forcefully towards its own downfall that we have only to wait for the moment to pick up the power that drops from its hands.'* (34)

However the opposition then spread to their own party and became more sophisticated. Alexander Helphand (Parvus), editor of the 'Sächsische Arbeiterzeitung' opened up a fierce series of denunciations under the title, 'Bernstein's Overthrow of Socialism' between January and March 1898. Amazed at the silence of the party leaders, Georg Plekhanov, the father of Russian Marxism, joined battle in an article in 'Die Neue Zeit' in July 1898 entitled 'Bernstein and Materialism'. Kautsky called for a moratorium and invited Bernstein to collect his views in a book and this he agreed to do.

The Stuttgart Party Congress in October brought the whole matter into the open. A new left was now openly in process of formation consisting of Parvus, Luxemburg, Bruno Schonrank, Clara Zetkin and Plekhanov, the last being present at the Congress as an observer. Luxemburg's two speeches signalled the new revolutionary approach. Referring to Bernstein's celebrated reply to Bax, she countered, 'On the contrary, the

*movement as such, without regard to the final aim is nothing, but the final aim is everything for us.'*

Bebel, Liebknecht and Kautsky still did not come out with an open criticism of Bernstein, they reserved their reproaches for the 'tone' of the left's polemics. They hoped it would blow over, but the battle, both in their own party and in the International, was only in its earliest stages. Though formally settled at SPD Congresses in 1899 and 1900 and at the International Congresses of 1900 and 1904, though solemnly exorcised by Kautskyan orthodoxy, the debate continued. It had opened up the contradictions within German Social-Democracy, though few could see it. Lines had been drawn and, though many of the protagonists were to cross them, they were, at root, the lines of cleavage of the period 1914-1920.

Although Bax, Plekhanov and Parvus were to find themselves amongst the chauvinists of 1914; although Bernstein was to find his place among the pacifists of the Kautskyite centre, both sides had taught important lessons to others who were more willing to carry them out to their logical conclusion.

Parvus, a creative though erratic Marxist, did not limit himself to a negative, or 'orthodox' criticism of Bernstein. Already in 1895/6 he had taken up the question that Engels had been concerned with but left unsolved — what tactics to employ in the event of a reactionary onslaught on the legality won in 1890/1. Parvus published in 'Die Neue Zeit' a series of articles entitled 'The Coup d'Etat and the Political Mass Strike'. In these articles he examined the willingness of the workers to use the political mass strike in Belgium and the fight for the eight hour day. He thus raised in a Marxist manner the use of the new mass trade unions for political struggle. By 1901; Parvus had come to the conclusion that, *'Only a revision to the left of our party principles is now possible in the sense of the extension of political activity; of the intensification of social revolutionary energy — of a bold endeavour and will, and not of fearful reserved softness.'*

## CONCLUSION

We have seen how Marx and Engels elaborated and themselves amended and developed a scientific communist programme. This programme, and the tactics associated with it, were based on an understanding of expanding capitalism — of capitalism in the process of creating a world market, of obliterating pre-capitalist modes of production and the political structures based upon them, above all, creating its own gravedigger, the modern proletariat.

Marx' and Engels life-work was to actively intervene in the growth of real mass organisations of the proletariat, trades unions and political parties, and to win them to the communist programme. This necessitated irreconcilable ideological struggle with all confusionists, whether sectarians or opportunists, no matter how successful or popular they might be in the working class organisations. Their criticism was sharp and unsparring when it came to all questions of strategy and tactics, having nothing in common with the view, widely propagated by centrists in all periods and today by the IMG and SWP, that this polemic is 'sectarian'. On the other hand, towards every real step forward of the working class they showed the greatest care and patience.

The last period of their lives was spent in aiding the political development of the first permanent workers' party, the German Social Democracy. Again their criticisms of the leaders were often harsh. Yet till their deaths they saw this party as on the road to communism. In hindsight we can see that from at least 1890 this forward movement had begun to falter. The tactics which had been adopted in certain concrete

(34) Erfurt Protokoll, 1891, p171.

circumstances and only for a period had started to ossify and corrode the revolutionary programme. The leaders, Bebel, Liebknecht and Kautsky had only partially grasped the doctrine of the two 'old men'. Most essentially the question of the State and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat was seriously misunderstood by them. Moreover, Marx' and Engels' active conception of tactics, intimately related to mobilising the workers in any given political situation for the onslaught on the ruling class, was increasingly replaced by a fetishism of organisational growth and a passive waiting for the collapse of capitalism which, in the context of the expansion due to Imperialism, seemed indefinitely delayed. These leaders, above all their ideologue Kautsky, separated Marxist principles from day to day tactics. The former they could, at best, defend as a barren orthodoxy. They could repeat a pruned and amended version of Engels' later writings, but they could not use his method either to redevelop a programme that took account of the changed circumstances — Imperialism — or to develop new tactics to meet its challenge.

When a new period of stormy class struggle developed in

the opening years of the new century the official leaders of Social-Democracy could neither learn from the spontaneous struggles of the proletariat, nor offer to the vanguard the programme and tactics they had inherited from Marx and Engels. This task fell to the younger generation who had been schooled in struggle alongside the Orthodox against the open Revisionists. Parvus, Lenin, Luxemburg and Trotsky believed, initially, that they were defending orthodoxy. Yet they were doing more than this, by grappling with the key questions of the battle tactics of the new period; the analysis of Imperialism, the question of the mass strike, developing a strategy for relating the bourgeois revolution to the proletariat in backward countries, discovering in practice how to build a combat party in conditions of illegality or semi-legality, they were laying the basis for a communist programme for the Imperialist epoch. They were re-discovering the method which had guided the work of the co-founders of scientific socialism. In part three of this series we shall look at this work and the lessons it holds for us today.

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# The Price of Unity

**'What is wrong with Socialist Challenge is that it represents an abdication of its duty to be a party organ...'**

Socialist Challenge was founded in June as a paper trying to create 'something different'. It set as its twin aims the question of 'revolutionary socialist unity' and 'constructing broad based class struggle tendencies in the unions'. In both these aims it must be judged to be failing lamentably. 'Workers Power' argues that the whole strategy of the IMG and Socialist Challenge makes this inevitable.

The record of Socialist Challenge and the IMG shows that by building a 'class struggle tendency' is meant a strategy of 'cajoling left bureaucrats, Stalinists and nationalists into opposition to the Callaghan/Healey government. In order to encourage' this development criticism must be muted, the Trotskyist programme tailored to what these candidates for the class struggle tendency will accept. This means inevitably a veering away from the central task of building solidly based rank and file caucuses independent of and in opposition to all sections of the Trade Union bureaucracy.

At a time of ferment in the unions, of growing resistance to the Labour Government's wage cutting policies, Socialist Challenge has in fact devoted most of its attention to electioneering as its central tactic. At the British Leyland Shop Steward sponsored conference in Birmingham on April 3rd the IMG supporters made no attempt to expose the betrayal and demobilisation being perpetrated by the Stalinists and left leaders. In organisations like Socialist Teachers Alliance the IMG fights to preserve a passive talk-shop 'unity' subordinating its politics to a 'unity' which avoids the sharp collisions with the right-wing CP leadership which a commitment to building a real rank and file movement on a fighting strategy would inevitably involve.

In the pages of Socialist Challenge Arthur Scargill is given an uncritical adulatory press at a time when the role of militant left bureaucrats is all the more dangerous as rank and file militants have illusions in them. As we point out in another article in this journal the warring Stalinist factions of the CPGB - Doyle, French et al - were criticised almost exclusively on the

basis of the lack of democracy and tendency rights in their party. Euro-Communism was treated mainly as an 'inadequate' move towards democratisation of the internal regimes of the CPs and inadequate criticism of the Russian and East European undemocratic practices. The Trotskyist Programme was dropped in favour of organisational criticisms of discussion and debate.

This method, of tailoring politics and programme to an imagined 'left' current means a failure to fight false leaders and bureaucratic lefts in all spheres. In the Working Women's Charter the IMG fought, and ensured the defeat of all attempts to amend the Charter into an operative fighting programme which would inevitably have brought the campaign into collision with its nominal supporters in the CP and Trade Union bureaucracy. At a time when the upsurge of reactionary petit-bourgeois nationalism in Scotland threatens to lead Scottish workers into a blind alley Socialist Challenge gave pages in its first two issues to the 'Marxist' nationalism of Tom Nairn. The anti-working class writings of Nairn were not even criticised by the IMG in their paper, so anxious are they not to offend their designated candidates for the new class struggle left wing.

All these retreats and evasions have been justified in the name of 'non-sectarianism', of the struggle for unity.

## LEFT UNITY

The IMG and Socialist Challenge have limited their overtures for unity to the Anti-Trotskyist 'Big Flame' grouping and the confused jumble of the Workers League. Both 'wings' of the Anarchist Workers Association have welcomed the initiative for debate and discussion. The IBs of the SWP (IS) have been rans-

acked in search of choice morsels to polemicise with in support of the two 'political' planks of Socialist Challenge, 'internal democracy' and 'a joint electoral platform'. The recipe of the IMG would seem to be that organisational unity is a precondition for political clarity, and that joint electoral propaganda is the shortest route to organisational unity.

A united organisation which included such a confused spectrum of positions without any fundamental agreement on strategy and tactics in the battles of the coming period would be incapable of decisive action. The IMG's nostrum of a party which is a coalition of permanent tendencies and factions is recommended to the warring sects of the 'far left' and the IMGs record of avoidance of splits offered as a model. Now whilst a proportion of the splits on the left are almost certain to be caused by the subjective ill-will of their protagonists trying to 'justify maintaining separate cliques', to explain all the divisions on this basis is clearly nonsensical. Nor can the fragmentation of International Trotskyism be explained by the post-war isolation from the class alone.

There are far-reaching differences on questions of strategy and tactics between the tendencies and a mere collection of them within a 'unified' organisation would simply produce a coalition incapable of presenting a coherent programme and fighting for it in a disciplined fashion. Such an organisation would have to be content with colourless abstract propaganda for Socialism and Soviets and would either educate its membership in contempt and indifference for those issues that might threaten unity or be wracked by bitter internal factionalism;

Workers Power believes that Left Unity can only be achieved by honest debate and discussion. By comparing in practice the strategy and tactics of the various groupings. At the same time there can and should be practical collaboration in action in various fields - in the unions, in the anti-fascist and women's movements. There is however, no magic short cut to unity and Socialist Challenge, which simply mirrors the confusion of the left, demonstrates this. For this reason 'Workers Power' cannot in any way support the project of Socialist Challenge elections and 'Socialist Unity'.

On the question of elections the confusions of Socialist Challenge and the electoral bloc 'Socialist Unity' become, if anything, more serious. The basis of 'Socialist Unity' is to be *policies designed to solve the crisis in a socialist way, anti-capitalist policies which are based on methods of class struggle* (SC No 11). What these policies are is not clearly spelt out, they are to be negotiated in the formation of the electoral bloc.

What is the nature of this bloc? Since Labour Party and CP members are *not excluded* it might seem that its protagonists see it as some form of United Front. Yet as everyone knows both the CP and the Labour Party have policies which they too claim are *in the interests of the working class* - policies which revolutionaries on the contrary hold to be policies of collaboration and betrayal. Now if the electoral bloc is to put forward the *alternative* it claims to do it must be diametrically opposed to the policies of the Labour Party and CP. There is thus a false naivete in inviting militants to join an electoral bloc on a platform that sets itself the task of opposing the policies of their parties. Were the Socialist Unity a 'United Front' then it could only be that deformed child of Stalinism 'the United Front from below only', in fact an invitation to militants of the CP and the Labour Party to 'join us'.

The Socialist Unity is not a united front, but a bloc of the IMG and Big Flame to make propaganda for a programme that has yet to be decided on. No communist organisation can offer to tailor its programme and propaganda to what is *democratically decided* by a conference of organisations and individuals who see the need for an alternative based on class struggle (which alternative?) to the present policies of the Labour Government. Neither do revolutionaries water down their programme, as did the IMG in their election campaign in the London council elections for example, to the expected programme of a non-existent class struggle tendency.

Revolutionaries must unite in actions, however limited, which

are in the interests of the working class. They do this every day in trade union and other struggles. But the creation of a programme is the task of a revolutionary party - a party that has delineated in theory and practice a combined series of tactics - a strategy for solving capitalism's crisis ridden nature at the expense of the ruling class, a strategy to organise the working class to expropriate the expropriators.

There cannot be a set of 'alternative policies', which stop short of this, the programme of the revolutionary party. Where parties do agree fundamentally on this strategy they should, of course, attempt to unite. But where they do not they should and must combat what they believe to be serious errors of programme and policy, openly in the working class. Practice - the experience of the class struggle - will decide, as it did in Russia between 1903 and 1917, whether tendencies are capable of leading the class to victory. Many workers consider the arguments on the left to be hairsplitting, consider open struggles on tactics, and strategy to be 'sectarianism'. No service is performed to the working class or its vanguard by flattering its current views and prejudices. A revolutionary party cannot be built without a struggle against these prejudices, one of the most common of which is that unity at any price is the highest good.

The entire Marxist tradition testifies that disagreement and conflict over key questions of strategy, tested in the class battle, is the basis of achieving unity at a higher level, at a level adequate to achieving victory in the struggle for the emancipation of the working class and the liberation of all oppressed peoples and strata. This painful, but necessary, 'disunity' never means sacrificing real unity in action against the exploiters and oppressors. It is nearly always the lowest common denominator 'unifiers' who sabotage this action in the name of the unity of inaction, of passivity, of programmatic compromise. This disunity exists not just between communists and the preachers of class collaboration, but necessarily between communists and those who tailor their strategy and programme to 'immediate policies' which can be accepted by the 'left wing' elements of the reformist leaders.

The revolutionary Marxist tradition has steeled itself in the fight for its programme against the reformists (these who have clearly 'crossed class lines') and no less against all varieties of centrism. Centrists talk endlessly about unity, but because they sacrifice all clarity and tactics and strategy to an amorphous, purely organizational concept of it they are incapable of achieving more than a rotten bloc doomed to fly apart at the first serious test.

What is wrong with Socialist Challenge is that it represents an abdication of its duty to be a party organ - on the crucial question of advocating clearly and trenchantly the strategy for the class of the USFI and the IMG. Yet this misnamed 'non-sectarianism' covers the fact that it is the organ of a really sectarian manoeuvre on the party of the IMG - a manoeuvre designed to draw into the IMG forces alien and hostile to revolutionary Marxism (the Big Flame, the Workers League, the various oppositional currents in the CP) not on the basis of breaking them from their reformist and centrist errors but on the basis of the need for unity and for combined electoral platforms.

## OUR ATTITUDE

WORKERS' POWER'S position on electoral work is that Marxists stand candidates to publicise their party's programme, which is a programme for the class, and to build their organisation which they must, of necessity, hold to be advocating the correct strategy and tactics for the class and its vanguard. When and whether to stand candidates is a matter of concrete assessment. Added to this we believe the correct general position, as long as revolutionaries are a small minority, is to give critical support to the mass reformist party based in the work-

ing class. This criticism of Reformism, via the placing of central demands on all the reformists, right and left, necessitates the presentation of the Marxist programme — the only real alternative, not cooking up a centrist half-way house between reformism and revolution. However, even this critical support is a tactic and not universally applicable. If centrist currents emerge in the working class or amongst the oppressed nationalities and sections which stand candidates, revolutionaries can be justified in giving critical support to these against the mass reformist party. Such situations can arise in periods like the present where violent conflicts can erupt between a Labour Government and Trade Union bureaucracy hell-bent on attacking substantial sections of workers fighting to defend their rapidly declining wages and social services, or where the reformists leave immigrants defenceless against the onslaught of police and Fascist racism.

However, we cannot give uncritical support, or even muted critical support to the inadequacies of centrist platforms let alone collaborate in drawing one up. The disastrous consequence of this approach is to be seen in Italy with the disintegration of the Democrazia Proletaria slate. Certain electoral

systems, France or the U.S., may necessitate nominally joint slates in order to get candidates on the ballot paper, but they do not justify joint programmes where there is no principled political basis for them. The British electoral system does not necessitate even this method. Thus, WORKERS' POWER will not participate in the Socialist Unity Conference or electoral slate.

The deliberate abdication of political leadership by Socialist Challenge, its institutionalised confusion, inevitably recommends it to those sections of the petit-bourgeois left who do not wish to make up their minds, who recoil from programmatic commitment. The very imprecision of Socialist Challenge, a market place of ideas and 'currents' can offer a temporary home for those who wish to avoid decision on the real issues facing the revolutionary left. But it is only by facing the differences that divide the Left openly in the arena of class struggle, by open conflict, whenever necessary, on questions of strategy and tactics, that the revolutionary left can transcend its present isolation and disunity, can achieve the political prerequisite of unity — clarified agreement on the central questions of tactics and strategy.

This the Socialist Challenge project will not achieve.

This article was submitted to the Editorial Board of Socialist Challenge on the 12th October 1977.

## REVIEW

### 'The struggle for workers' power'

## The I-CL action programme / manifesto

The central task facing communists today is the elaboration of and clarification of a programme for workers power. As we have demonstrated in our article on Marx and Engels elsewhere in this journal there is no timeless model of such a programme. The principles of the communist world view have been developed and ramified with every major step in the class struggle. Our method of analysis, our basic principles have been steered in the experience of the 1848 revolutions, the Paris Commune, Imperialism, the Russian Revolution, and the struggle against Stalinism. But these principles must always be concretised and focused as strategy and tactics for the working class revolution. New epochs in capitalist development — for example Imperialism — and changed periods in capitalist development, the generalised crisis of the 1930's, require of communists the re-elaboration of their programme, strategy and tactics.

The Communist International never completed its work of developing a new communist programme. The healthy debates within the Communist International on the question of the programme were cut short by the rise of Stalinism. The Comintern, in fact, produced an extremely abstract programme penned by Bukharin. It was primarily an ABC of Marxist principles, and a series of anti-Marxist Stalinist formulations — ie 'Socialism in One Country'. Bukharin had consistently argued — against Radek for instance — that the programme could only deal with general questions of principle. At the Fourth Comintern Congress in 1922 he offered a draft, the fourth part of which dealt with strategic questions but he was

adamant that they could only be dealt with on an abstract and timeless level.

"The fourth part should be devoted to general strategic questions, not such questions as the Workers Government, but such basic questions as, for instance, the attitude towards Social Democracy and Trade Unions."

But the Comintern did develop a series of strategic and tactical positions — on the United Front, the Workers Government, The National Question, Work amongst Women — that are part of the essential armoury of the Communist Programme. The task of re-elaborating the Communist Programme based on the experience of the revolutionary Communist International fell to the tiny Trotskyist movement in the 1930's.

Trotsky's programmes of the 1930's — the Action Programme for France in 1934, The Transitional Programme of 1938 — are not simply codifications of the principles, strategy and tactics developed by the Comintern ten years before. A scientific analysis of the crisis of leadership in the working class — most importantly the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism, an understanding of fascism and its historical significance and a rigorous understanding of the dimensions of the crisis, contradictions and dynamics of the world economy were in fact pre-requisites of Trotsky's elaboration of the strategy for proletarian revolution in that period.

Both programmes start from a clear understanding of capitalism as an international system, of the programme of the working class being an international one. In this way, although Trot-

sky's Action Programme for France focuses on the tasks of the French working class it is not simply a national programme.

Both programmes start from an immediate and concrete understanding of the crisis facing the working class. They outline, as the Party's programme, a strategic road to organise the workers' movement against the attacks on its living standards and organisation around a linked chain of demands and forms of struggle, that actually organises the working class for power. The Communist programme is not a list of demands for struggle now nor a recital of principles. It is a programme for organising the working class for the proletarian revolution — "a manual for action, not a catalogue of truisms" as Trotsky called it.

It is the position of Workers Power that the present period of capitalist development and class struggle demands the renovation, the re-elaboration of Trotsky's Transitional Programme. This task lies at the heart of re-building a Communist International around a common and operative programme and strategy. We also consider it necessary, understanding the international nature of the communist programme, to develop Action Programmes focusing the International Programme in concrete national contexts. The Action Programme for France must stand out as our model for this.

Revolutionaries who have no programme for organising the working class for power have, ultimately, no alternative to the false and diversionary programmes of the reformists and the Stalinists, they cannot address the crisis of leadership and direction in the working class movement. They are left like the SWP (IS) recommending particular militant tactics as an alternative to the programmes of the reformists and Stalinists and they are left, as with Paul Foot's 'Why You Should Be a Socialist' and Bob Pennington's 'Revolutionary Socialism' abstractly propagandising for 'workers democracy' and 'soviets'.

The task of communists is to relate the struggle for workers' control, for soviet organisations capable of holding power, to the immediate and actual battles facing the working class, not to propagandise for them as 'preferable' or 'superior' to the plans and projects of the reformists. A new period of deepening capitalist crisis demands of revolutionaries not simple recital of principles, but the sharpest programmatic clarity as to the tasks facing the working class in the preparation of the proletarian revolution. Running away from these tasks and from this method, the SWP offers militant tactics, and itself as 'the Party'. The IMG and the Socialist Unity offensive offer 'unity' and electoral blocs on a negotiable list of common denominator demands. In this context the attempt by the ICL to produce a Manifesto and Action Programme deserves serious attention from all communists.

## THE ACTION PROGRAMME

The proposal for an Action Programme (of the sort outlined above) was made by the Workers Power grouping at the time of the fusion that created the ICL. Our argument was, and remains, as follows. Since the late 1960's capitalism had moved, on a world scale, into a new period of instability and crisis demanding a systematic attack on the living standards and organisations of the working class. As Portugal has vividly demonstrated, the crisis opens up a new period of chronic instability and objectively revolutionary situations in the weaker links within the world capitalist system.

We argued for an action programme that started from this international objective situation, focused on the tasks of British workers and outlined a strategic road to workers power.

The Workers Fight comrades in the ICL presented two arguments against this. They are enshrined in their Manifesto and have been repeated with more or less sophistication ever since.

Firstly, they argue, the ICL is not capable of producing such a programme. S. Matgamna, National Secretary, explained "When the Transitional Programme was produced, a whole background of socialist culture, inside the Fourth International ranks and even to a degree on its periphery could be assumed. The massive debate and the hammering out of such slogans as on the Workers Government by the early Communist International was still living in recent memory (at most 15 to 17 years back) for many of the cadre". (International Communist 2/3, p61)

They argue from this that the task of their programme is to re-establish the principles of the tradition - to educate a new cadre. The programme is not seen as a strategy for the working class vanguard; it is a training manual for party members, a tool box of principles, demands and tactics for them to use as the struggle unfolds. But a programme that does not set itself the task of outlining the strategic path from the present attacks on the organisations and living standards of the working class to its organisation for power, is in fact no programme at all.

The ICL give further reason for programmes of the type produced by Trotsky in the 1930's being inappropriate to us today. They argue (see International Communist 2/3, p63) that the Transitional Programme "also relates to an immediate situation where the labour movement 'switches points' and fights back — or is crushed in the relatively short term. We can operate with no such assumptions."

Of course, the Transitional Programme did relate to an immediate and particular generalised crisis of capitalism. But what is important for us is that the method as well as the principle axioms of strategy and tactics of the Transitional Programme remain the central point of orientation for communists today. Our task is to focus and elaborate that method in the context of a changed period of class battle. What was crucial to Trotsky was the task of developing a programme for workers power — not the level of sophistication of his tiny band of followers.

There is never a period in the epoch of capitalist decay when the task of communists ceases to be the elaboration of a programme that poses the actuality of the proletarian revolution concretely, strategically; the type of programme elaborated by Trotsky is not simply relevant to the particular crises of the 1930's.

In arguing that the Transitional Programme relates to a situation of imminent catastrophic defeat for the workers movement or imminent collapse of capitalism itself, Sean Matgamna and Co find themselves among strange bedfellows. Tony Cliff and the SWP argue that the Transitional Programme was only relevant when the working class was faced with fascism and war. The programme, they argued, was therefore irrelevant now; now; it had become a museum piece. In arguing against those who seek to turn the Transitional Programme into a timeless, revered icon, the ICL in fact find themselves close to the arguments of Cliff — of those the ICL term the 'negative fetishists'.

A considerable effort has been made by the present ICL leadership, both in the Manifesto and in debates inside the fused ICL, to prove that we are not entering a period of collapse of the type experienced in the 1930's. Sean Matgamna expressed it this way in the first National Committee discussion in the fused ICL.

"We are not in a similar economic crisis to the 1930's. This is at the root of the debate. Our situation is different from that Trotsky faced in the USA in the 1930's." (Our emphasis, WP)



Likewise the ICL leadership deny the existence of a new period of international capitalist crisis and decay. We, in Workers Power, have never argued mechanically that capitalism is simply returning to its crisis of the 1930's. This was a straw man argument put up for entirely factional purposes by the Matgama leadership in the ICL. What we have said is that the period of relative stability and expansion in post-war capitalism is now shattered. A number of tendencies — the declining rate of profit, unproductive state expenditure, declining markets and investment outlets, and inflation, have worked themselves to the surface of the capitalist world economy.

The 1970's opens up therefore a new period of chronic instability where the immediate depth of the crisis will vary as stronger capitalisms win partial respite at the expense of the weak, to the extent that the working class movement is forced to pay the price. It is for this new period of crisis that the programme has to be re-elaborated. It is in order to elaborate that programme, that we need the utmost precision in our analysis of the economic crisis of world capitalism, and the crisis of leadership in the workers movement.

The ICL's Manifesto starts with a light-minded and incorrect assessment of the world economy. We do not criticise this out of an academic fetishisation of 'economics'. Political economy is an indispensable part of the armoury of the working class in that it reveals the strategy and perspectives of the class enemy.

Attacking the Workers Power comrades in April 1976, Martin Thomas in 'The Last Word in Social Science' argues "we cannot base our politics on speculation — and given that we do not have an immediate crushing crisis (indeed, currently we have a recovery from cyclical crisis) (sic) to base our programme and perspectives on the crisis' is to base them on speculation". In fact the Manifesto of the ICL proceeds from the most shallow series of impressions and speculations to prove that capitalism is not facing a severe crisis and dislocation. The ICL offers us a series of events:

"US hegemony had been gained at the expense of the older imperialist powers. The Vietnam war drew it directly into the quagmire". (p7)

"The people of the USA made an unprecedented stand against their criminal government and ultimately crippled its ability to function" (p7)

"The dislocation in the world economic and pricing structure caused by the post 1973 assertion of their real power by the oil-producing countries set off the worst economic crisis since the 1930's". (p7)

And what perspective opens for capitalism, for the working class as a result of these events? The ICL's conclusion is purely negative — to warn against the danger of confusing the 1970's with the 1930's.

"This is not, however a reproduction of the chronic dislocation following after World War I. The shocks are much less; they fall on a world system still with immense reserves. We must get used to thinking in terms of capitalist cycles again and not mistake the first major post-war crisis for 1929-30." (p7-8)

The only characterisation of the period we are in, offered to us by the ICL is that we are back to "capitalist cycles". This startling piece of "analysis" merely covers up for the failure to proceed from a serious political economy of capitalism and its tendency to crisis — the organic composition of capital, the declining rate of profit, state expenditure, inflation are all missing from their analysis. Because of this, their programme cannot locate the real battles and struggles that face the working class in the period ahead.

The ICL are equally frivolous in their analysis of the crisis of leadership in the working class. It is the employing class

who face their 1930's we are told — although the preceding analysis seeks to prove that the capitalist world economy does not face generalised crisis. "We are not in the 1930's of the working class. We are in the 1930's of the ruling class. They are weak and we are strong" the ICL tell us on page 8. Such breast-beating hides a complete absence of any serious scientific accounting of the strengths and weaknesses of the working class in the present period. There is no accounting for the historic role being played by Social Democracy and Stalinism. They are in fact dismissed as being weaker than ever before.

"But they face greater difficulties in aiding capitalism than they did in the 1930's and 40's. Now they pay for their betrayals, as they never did in the past, when they could lead workers to demoralisation, or into the concentration camps of fascism, without having their hegemony broken" (p8)

And what proof do the ICL give of this development? At a time when Euro-Stalinism stands in the vestibules of bourgeois governments in Italy and France, supported by the mass of workers, the ICL tells us: "The continuous growth of support for explicitly revolutionary candidates in France since the betrayals of the 1968 general strike shows that". (ibid)

A programme has to start from, be based in, a scientific analysis of the particular particular period of struggle. This the ICL Manifesto fails to do, proceeding instead from an impressionistic description of some events in the last 20 years of the world economy. A scientific analysis of the period lays bare the concrete nature of the organisational and ideological crisis of the working class, the strategic options open to the ruling class. Such an analysis is indispensable not only to arm the vanguard of the working class but as the prerequisite to any formulation of strategy and tactics, of the road to workers power.

Given the ICL's conception of the role of the programme, of the nature of the period, it comes as no surprise that the ICL's 'Action Programme' is, in fact, nothing of the sort. What the ICL present is a collection of more or less detailed demands and recommendations for struggle, a series of static explanations of central questions of strategy (the General Strike, the Workers Government) and priorities for abstract propaganda.

1. The 'Programme' does not start from, address, the attacks on workers living standards and organisation, the crisis of working class leadership. The demands that are raised are timeless, they are divorced from the forms of organisation and struggle needed to achieve them in the face of the present attacks.

For example the I-CL have a section on the Social Services. We are informed that the I-CL are for the expansion of those services. But the only form of struggle discussed is that of the Clay Cross councillors. No road or strategy for struggle is posed, either against the current attacks on the social services or for the demands for expansion posed by the I-CL.

2. The forms of struggle and organisation called for are not addressed either to the current attacks on the class or to the demands raised by the I-CL's 'Action Programme'.

In 'Renovating the Labour Movement' forms of organisation are recommended in a spirit of complacency and abstraction. The proposals made are divorced both from the present field of battle and the task of organising the class for power, 'These tasks of renovation will proceed hand in hand with the struggle for WORKERS' CONTROL' (p.20, I-CL's emphasis) we are told. But factory committees are argued for simply as traditional shop-stewards committees. There is no focus either on the current attacks on their prerogatives or on their tasks in the struggle for workers' control.

There is no focus either on the current attacks on their prerogatives or on their tasks in the struggle for workers control. Industrial union branches, combine committees, fighting trades councils and international links are called for — with no more than routine indications of their tasks. We are offered stronger versions of existing organisations (such as combine committees)

on a class wide scale. But the task of a communist Action Programme is to outline the tasks of those bodies in defending the class and in organising for power — against the programmes of the false leaderships that stifle these bodies at present.

3. The demands and forms of organisation are not simply timeless in an immediate sense. The 'Action Programme' does not develop and argue a linked chain of demands that organises the working class, in the face of the present attacks, for power. The ICL say in their document:

"the Action Programme must cover the whole range of important possibilities and contingencies that will face our class over the period between now and the proletarian revolution". (p42)

They are right. But an Action Programme must do so, not as a summary of principles, but as a way forward, a road to power, for the working class. For the ICL 'workers control', 'workers power' remain in the realms of explanation and propaganda.

We are told that "our overall goal is the elaboration of the highest form of working class organisation, possible only in a working class upsurge of tremendous intensity — a network of workers councils" (p20). But how do the ICL link workers councils, organs through which the working class can exercise power, to the immediate tasks and struggles of the working class? We are offered a brief description of what a Soviet would be like: "Soviets will differ radically from even the most representative of existing Trades Councils" (p22) But the ICL can only pose 'Soviets' as propaganda in their programme for 'Action'. The 'Action' they propose is the continuation of the immediate tasks of renovation and organisation — while abstractly propagandising for Soviets.

"What we can do now is prepare, patiently explain the revolutionary conception of the democracy of Workers' Councils; and applying ourselves to democratising and reviving the organisations of the labour movement in line with the immediate tasks they face." (p23)

This has more in common with the maximum-minimum programme of Social-Democracy than it does with the method of the Transitional Programme, a method that sets as its object the organisation of the class for power in the battles and struggles it faces. The Action Programme for France in 1934 issued the call for democratic local, regional and national committees of the workers' alliance of parties and trade unions. Insisting that the "committees of struggle" must represent the masses themselves and must be prepared for armed defense, Trotsky posed the question of embryonic soviets, of organising the class for power, in that concrete situation.

For the ICL organising the class for power remains the subject of abstract and timeless propaganda. The entire 'Action Programme' remains at this level. More or less adequate lists of demands alongside timeless, unfocused recitals of principles. The recipe is in fact for a party educational series perhaps, but it is not a programme of action.

We do not intend to produce a line by line critique of the document. Our argument is that it is no 'Action Programme' at all, rather than that it is in need of amendment or drafting changes. But certain sections of the Action Programme are based on particularly dangerous political formulations.

On the Labour party the ICL maintains that: "The 'open valve' connection between the Labour Party and the unions allows for the possibility of large-scale working-class participation in the party". (p27) We have argued against this formulation before. In Workers Power No 3 (p31) we said: "Actually it is an evasive formula (the 'open-valve' — WP). What it suggests is not the possibility of involvement of the masses of trade union members in the Labour Party, but that this flow is likely, regular, normal etc."

Coming dangerously close to equating the struggle against reformism, the 'political' struggle with the Labour Party, and

the trade unions, with economic struggle, the ICL in fact fail to locate the principle, the central arena for fighting for the communist programme in the class — the trade unions. They fail to relate to the fact that since the last war the trend of working class, trade union, rank and file involvement in the Labour Party has actually been downward and that only serious defeats in the economic struggle or a fighting left reformist current would reverse that process significantly.

In this 'Action Programme' the ICL now commit themselves further: "The political condition of Labourism must be transcended, and that process will include the flooding of the CLP's with aroused trade union delegates, and a struggle with them". (p28) our emphasis — WP) In concrete and specific circumstances the flooding of CLP's with enraged trade unionists is possible. But it is no way inevitable, in no way a central strategy for transcending the political condition of Labourism.

The political logic of the section 'Ireland: for self-determination' is particularly dangerous. The ICL argue, but not in this document, that the theory of Permanent Revolution does not apply in Ireland. A number of linked positions become clear in their programme. They talk of the Republican struggle against the Northern State as inevitably a limited nationalist struggle. This is balm on the supremacism of the Orange working class which "has made inevitable the limited nationalist character of the struggle". (p36)

But while that struggle is inevitably limited and nationalist in character its prospect is bleak and tragic. "The small possibility of a revolutionary reunification other than as part of a communist revolution, is not the fault of the Six County minority." (Ibid) If there is inevitably a limited nationalist character to the struggle, if there is a possibility (small though it be) of revolutionary reunification not under communist leadership then the logic of the position is of pessimistic tailing of the Republican forces.

The need for communist leadership in the struggle for self-determination, the need to win working class leadership in the unfinished struggle for national unity and independence in Ireland as part of the communist revolution — the method of Trotskyism — is completely absent from the ICL's position.

The ICL include one paragraph on the South — "Those who need to pretend it is a classic imperialist situation, or who ignore the shift in the relationship between Britain and the 26 Counties . . . are not Marxist revolutionaries but unstable poseurs and demagogues". And what proof do we have of this characterisation, a characterisation that signifies that the anti-imperialist struggle is no longer relevant in the South . . . the 26 Counties is a relatively advanced country, Britain's equal in the EEC and in conflict with Britain on the Common Agricultural Policy. Elsewhere in this journal we publish a critique of the Official Sinn Fein's programme — a programme that seeks to prove that the Southern State is no longer under the imperialist domination of Britain. We hope that ICL members will study that review.

The question of developing an Action Programme remains central for communists. The ICL have not produced an Action Programme for working class organisation. Based on a false and complacent view of the period, a timeless view of the crisis of leadership in the workers' movement, they have not produced a strategy to organise the class in the face of the current offensive, a strategy to organise the class for power.

The ICL say that such a programme is not relevant at the present time, that the cadre does not exist to elaborate one. We do not criticise the ICL's failure abstractly. We are actively involved in the preparation of an Action Programme, a programme of struggle not a timeless propaganda document.

JOHN HUNT

# Officials in Wonderland

'The Irish Industrial Revolution'

Reviewed by Bernie McAdam

There has long been a need for a penetrating Marxist reappraisal of Irish history, and this book purports to be just that, beginning: 'This book is a study of the political economy of Southern Ireland from the standpoint of scientific socialism.' Unfortunately, the Stalinist claptrap that fills the pages of 'The Irish Industrial Revolution' is worthy of study only because of its Marxist pretensions.

Especially since 1972, the Official Sinn Fein (now somewhat ludicrously renamed Sinn Fein - The Workers' Party) have adopted a pro-imperialist stance on the struggles in Northern Ireland, blaming the troubles on the 'sectarianism' of the Provisionals. The first, and most important, part of this book is concerned with the invention of a myth that will rationalise SF-WP's betrayal of the struggle against British Imperialism. That myth goes something like this: Ireland's poverty is not caused by British imperialism, '... the basic cause of Irish poverty is the greed, backwardness and incompetence of the Irish Bourgeoisie.' This class *chose* not to invest productively in Ireland, an action that would have created a strong working class, and in an attempt to cover up its failure, it has had to invent excuses which lay the blame at the door of the Act of Union and the wicked British.

Greediness, incompetence and backwardness may all have characterised Catholic capitalism. However, by merely focussing on the Irish bourgeoisie as the basic cause of Ireland's underdevelopment, the book fails to examine the basis upon which this bourgeoisie survived, and thus fails to analyse its role vis-a-vis British rule in Ireland. By posing Ireland's failure to emulate British capitalism as a test of Irish bourgeois inefficiency, the Officials reveal their deep misunderstanding of the subordinate relationship of Irish capitalism to the British ruling class. This *imperialist* relationship explains the backwardness of the Catholic middle class as it also explains the strength of the Northern Protestant capitalists. It is puerile to compare these two capitalisms as if they were competitors. The English capitalists had to productively invest in order to survive, but the Catholic capitalists did not, they had been conditioned into a servicing role for the British economy. Both politically and economically they became agents of British imperialism.

A little more effort at grasping the nature of imperialism might have revealed to the Officials a set of characteristics representative of colonised countries, such as an economy deprived of its raw materials and based on exports, a reliance on imported manufactured goods, lack of heavy industry with a consequent small and weak middle class - this last having a small market in which to operate - and furthermore, a bourgeoisie tied to the imperial power and not daring to wage an all-out struggle for separation. All these features are manifested in that section of the economy in which the Catholic middle class operated. In no way can this be attributed to laziness or to any other behavioural quirks but rather to the way in which Britain fostered uneven development in Ireland. Indeed, with the failure of the United Irishmen's uprising and Britain's subsequent fear of separation which led to the Union in 1801, her sectarian policy was marked by an effort to localise industry in the North where her privileged Orange allies would act as a secure garrison. With heavy industry developing in the North and Protestant capitalists' access to the imperial markets ensured, their junior capitalist partners in the South were largely confined to commercial and distributive pursuits. Uneven development had firmly set in under the policy of divide and rule.

The book goes on to elaborate the continued inability of Irish capitalism to industrialise in the post-1932 period. Any industrialisation that has occurred is seen more as a tribute to the massive influx of foreign (especially 'objectively progressive'

American) capital rather than to native or British enterprise. The officials tend to shrug off the notion that British imperialism was engaged in serious exploitation of the Southern economy. Such notions are viewed as the property of 'populist and ignorant left-wing groups' - moreover, had Britain acted in such a manner, 'Irish capitalism would have been healthy and attractive.'

But why have not the monopoly capitalist giants of America, with their '... massive infusions of capital ...' produced the 'healthy' effects which Britain would have done given sufficient intervention? Despite all this, though, in 1971, profits totalling £21m (60% of total profits of all publicly quoted companies) were pocketed by British investors. In fact, British imperialism through her ownership of industry (70% of the 100 largest companies) and trading finds the South more lucrative than the North. Whilst no one would refute that American capital has clawed its way into the economy, it is absurd to use this in such a way as to minimise the role of British imperialism in Ireland. This also ignores the fact that the Irish economy is structurally integrated into the British, Ireland's stock exchange and currency are both tied to their British counterparts.

As a contrast to the incompetence of the Irish Bourgeoisie, the Officials point to the many state bodies in Ireland, models of efficiency that are only prevented from performing greater miracles by the '... myriad obstacles established by the anti-worker Fianna Fail and Coalition governments.' Certainly these parties are hostile to statification, but they have been forced to intervene in the economy, not by the 'laziness' of the Irish bourgeoisie, but by the backwardness of the country they inherited from their British imperial masters. But the state bodies are more than just shining examples of efficient capitalism, '... the state sector is the greatest enemy confronting capitalism in Ireland today.' Accepting this astonishing premise, the Irish working class is given the only thing resembling a 'programme' in the whole book: 'The struggle to defend, consolidate and expand the state sector is the *single most vital task* confronting the organised working class at the present time.' So, all those workers who have fought to maintain their living standards from the ravages of inflation by campaigning against the National Wage Agreements that have held down wages since 1970, or who have struggled to protect their jobs as unemployment soared, all those socialists that have tried to chart a path for their class to destroy the system that exploits them, have got it wrong, all along they should have been strengthening the state sector, '... the fifth column within the ranks of monopoly capitalism.'

The second part of the book is an 'economic plan' for the creation of 412,000 jobs by 1986 for the unemployed and Ireland's rapidly growing population. It is admitted that this is a reformist plan, that it will be urged on the government of the day. The only role envisaged for the working class is to quietly put up with the '... initial income restraint required to finance state company investment in the short term programme to fight unemployment.' The plan is for a rise in GNP of 8.2% *every year* between 1977-86, financed by £20,935m investment.

Such a plan owes more to Lewis Carroll than to Marx. Inflation is not recognised, either as a problem for working class families, or as an obstacle to unimpeded capitalist growth, indeed the word is not even mentioned.

Certainly Marxists wishing to study the Irish economy will find many of the facts and figures contained in this book most useful, but once it has been filleted of these figures, 'The Irish Industrial Revolution' will be useful only as a stark reminder of the lengths to which Stalinists are prepared to go in re writing history to excuse their latest betrayal of the class they claim to represent.

# WHERE WE STAND

**1** Capitalism condemns the vast majority of mankind to poverty, insecurity and war. Once a progressive system which vastly enlarged the productive forces on a scale hitherto unknown

known, it always rested upon the concentration of ownership and control in the hands of a few while the vast majority laboured in conditions of poverty and squalor.

Capitalism, having as its source the exploitation of the working class, is constantly impelled to increase the rate of exploitation in the interests of the competitive survival of each unit against its rivals. Blind production for profit, ever sharper rivalry and competition, result in periodic, more or less sharp, economic crises of over-production. Capitalism is torn with contradictions internal to itself; the most general is the conflict between the tremendous expansive powers of modern large scale industrial production and the fetters imposed on it by production for profit, national barriers and the planless rivalry of world market. The constant revolutionising of science and technology and the potential this holds for improving the lot of mankind is never realised under capitalism. Millions starve in a world of abundance. Indeed, the gap between the wealthy and the poor becomes ever wider.

The so-called communist countries are not communist or socialist. The proletariat does not hold state power in these countries. The mode of production is bureaucratic state capitalism and the bureaucracy is the ruling class.

The increasing intensity of competition between multinational cartels and nation states (including the Stalinist states) threatens mankind with economic ruin and war. The capitalists and the Stalinist bureaucracies are driven to intensify their exploitation of the working-class to escape from the crisis of their own making. From the deepening crisis and stagnation capitalism can only escape by crushing all the independent organs of resistance of the working class.

**2** Imperialism marks the maturing of capitalism into a conflict ridden world wide system of exploitation. It marks the opening of the epoch of wars and revolutions

Imperialism condemns two-thirds of humanity to super-exploitation and systematic under-development of their countries, crushing the development of their productive forces and making them sources of super profits and raw materials for the 'advanced countries'.

The exploitation and oppression practised by capitalism and imperialism call forth forces of resistance both from the working class-the proletariat- and the oppressed masses and nationalities.

The working class, itself the product of capitalism, has shown its power to challenge and overthrow this system in a series of struggles unprecedented in the history of all exploited classes.

The exploited nationalities, victims of imperialism, have also shown their ability to challenge and overthrow the forces of the strongest imperialist powers. The successful socialist outcome of such struggles, however, depends on the conscious leadership of the working class in national struggles under the leadership of a revolutionary party basing its programme on the theory of the permanent revolution: the independent organisation of the working class for power, the leadership by the working class of all anti-imperialist forces, the spreading of the revolution beyond the boundaries of a single state. The working class must take up, as its own, struggles of all oppressed classes and social strata: peasantry, oppressed nationalities, races, women etc. It must take up as its own, every serious democratic demand of the broad masses. It alone can lead these struggles to final victory.

**3** The bourgeois state must be smashed by the working class. It must be replaced by the dictatorship of the proletariat over the exploiters. Democratic collective control over the means of production and distribution is possible only by a state of workers' councils. The dictatorship of the proletariat is only a transitional period, ending with the complete withering away of the state and the abolition of classes - Communism.

Though a workers' state can come into existence in a single country, prolonged isolation opens the way to defeat or degeneration. The proletarian revolution must expand internationally or perish. The working class is the only class capable of leading an international onslaught against the bourgeoisie, though all oppressed classes and nationalities have a direct interest in supporting and forwarding its struggles.

**4** At the same time, the nature of capitalist production, the development of technology, its increasing concentration makes more and more possible and necessary the replacement of bourgeois relations by true social production - democratically planned production for social need.

Only a social revolution led by the working class can accomplish this transformation. Such a revolution would transfer the means of production into common property and abolish the division of society into classes, liberate all the oppressed and rid society of distinctions of class, creed, race and sex.

The working class gains the experience to revolutionise society by constant struggle against the ruling class, through mass organisations created in the course of that struggle - trade unions, factory committees, workers' councils, and through the struggle of the oppressed for their own liberation.

**5** However, the more intense and concentrated the class struggle, the deeper the social crisis, the more does the bourgeoisie seek to divide and confuse the forces of the working class, attempting through its various agencies to sow sectionalism, craft consciousness, nationalism, sexism and the worst poison of all, racism.

In the class struggle the working class must develop a clear class strategy for conquering power. History has shown that the indispensable instrument for this is a party basing itself on a Marxist programme and rallying the most class conscious militants to it.

The party sets as its tasks the overcoming of the unevenness of working class experience, the fighting of bourgeois ideas and forces in the working class, the presentation of the lessons of past struggles and the bonding together and unifying of all fragmented struggles. All this with the aim of developing a conscious and coherent offensive against capitalism.

Such a party must consist of revolutionary working class militants, it must be the real vanguard of the class. The creation of such a party is the urgent task of all revolutionaries and working class militants.

The revolutionary party cannot be built on a national basis alone. We fight to build an international democratic centralist party – to combat the bourgeoisie on the basis of an international programme for workers' power. Such an international programme and party must be built on the lessons and experience of the first four Congresses of the Communist International and the re-elaboration of the 1938 programme of the Fourth International.

Workers Power does not believe such an international party exists. Neither has the necessary programmatic work been completed. The Fourth International needs to be re-created around a re-elaborated transitional programme, on a democratic - centralist basis.

**6** In the twentieth century capitalism's survival has principally been the result of two forces:-

i) The reformist and Stalinist leaderships in the international labour movement. After World War I, capitalism, challenged by the first workers' state and a mass revolutionary wave, was saved in its heartlands by the reformist parties of the Second International. The incorporation of the reformist workers' parties and Trade Union leaders has remained a vital component of capitalist stability.

After World War II capitalism could not have survived and consolidated without the conscious support of the Stalinist parties. Notably in France, Italy and Greece the Stalinist parties disarmed the potentially revolutionary forces, giving power back to the bourgeoisie. In East Europe independent working class, peasant and nationalist movements were subordinated to the interests of the Russian bureaucracy (stability and shared spheres of interest) by the creation of client states to the Russian bureaucracy.

Born of the isolation of the Russian Revolution, nurtured on the destruction of the vestiges of workers' power in Russia and the elimination of revolutionary vitality in the Comintern, the Stalinist parties crossed to the camp

of the bourgeoisie. In Russia and East Europe they have created states that must be destroyed by workers' revolutions. In the West they offer only collaborationist, national reformist programmes.

Stalinism and Stalinist parties are reactionary, an obstacle on a world scale, to the Socialist Revolution.

ii) In addition to the conscious counter-revolutionary role of the Stalinist and reformist workers' parties, capitalism has only survived as the result of the wholesale destruction of capital in two imperialist world wars and the subordination of the world economy to American Imperialism's massive expansion after World War II.

The exceptional stability and expansion of world capitalism after World War II has to be understood primarily as a result of these two factors. However, capitalism in the twentieth century cannot free itself from the pressures of inflation, the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, increasing instability and a sharpening of competition on a world scale except at the expense of the working class.

**7** The working class has, over the last 150 years, fought to create organisations capable of leading the struggle for Socialism. The early workers' organisations (e.g. the Chartists in England) the Social Democratic and Labour parties the Communist parties of the 1920's, all, at their foundations, were looked to by the workers to accomplish their emancipation. Yet the bourgeoisie and its agents in the working class exerted enormous pressure to corrupt and destroy them as weapons of class struggle.

This corruption has taken the form of reformism and capitulation to chauvinism. That is, the supposedly gradual transformation of capitalism through parliamentary reform and the identification of the working class with "its" nation and ruling class against the workers of other nations. The Labour and Communist Parties are thoroughly corrupted in this way – although many of their members and supporters sincerely wish to destroy capitalism.

**8** The Labour Party, in its programme and policies, is firmly tied to the bourgeois state, committed to managing capitalism. It is a bourgeois party. In periods of boom, under working class pressure, it has enacted limited reforms which, however, leave the fundamental power bases of the ruling class intact. In periods of gathering storm like the present it acts as the bosses' most subtle weapon to claw back the concessions made over decades, attacking workers in struggle again and again.

Yet the Labour Party is a party rooted in the working class movement. The Trade Unions finance and support it and provide it with most of its activists. The vast majority of workers vote for it and see it as their party – as the one that should act for them and against the bosses. It is a bourgeois workers' party. In this contradiction lies the possibility of overcoming the crippling illusions in a peaceful parliamentary road to Socialism. We fight to strengthen every anti-capitalist action of the rank and file members within the Labour Party, every attempt to use it in the service of the class.

The Labour Party claims to be the party of the working class based on the Trade Unions. We defend the right of all varieties of Socialist thought to exist and organise in the Labour Party.

**9** The revolutionary Left consists of fragmented and dis-united groups stemming from the only consistently revolutionary tradition to emerge from the collapse of revolutionary communist in the 1920's and '30's, the followers of L.D. Trotsky and the Fourth International movement. Opportunism, sectarianism and dogmatism have wreaked havoc within this movement. However, the recreation of revolutionary parties and an International can take place only on the basis of the fundamental elements of this doctrine and method applied creatively to the new period of capitalist crisis opening before us.

The Workers' Power group sets itself the task of fighting for revolutionary unity based upon a principled programme. The elements of this programme are the basis for our current work and activity. We will co-operate in a non-sectarian fashion with all who agree with us in whole or in part. We seek fusion with all those with whom we have fundamental programmatic agreement.

#### THE PRINCIPLE PLANKS OF OUR PLATFORM

For a workers' revolution leading to the dictatorship of the proletariat. The parliamentary road to Socialism is an illusion demonstrated time and time again, most recently in the Chilean catastrophe.

For a revolutionary party based on a transitional programme and organised according to the principles of democratic-centralism - full freedom of political debate, disciplined unity in action.

For the reconstruction of the Fourth International on the basis of an international transitional programme and a democratic-centralist practice.

For unconditional support to all national liberation struggles against Imperialism and practical opposition to "our own" ruling class' policy of oppression.

No platform for Fascists. Against all forms of racism and immigration controls. For the right of immigrants to organise in their own defence. We fight mercilessly against racist ideas and leaders in the Labour Movement and for Labour Movement based united fronts to fight for these policies.

We support the workers of the so-called Communist states against their bureaucratic oppressors, considering that only a workers' revolution can transform them into true Workers' States. Such a revolution would mean the creation of Soviets, the smashing of the secret police and army and its replacement by a workers' militia, the smashing of the bureaucratic state apparatus and its replacement by soviet democracy and democratic, workers' controlled planned production. We adopt a defeatist

position in any conflict between the Russian/East European bureaucracy, itself imperialist, and U.S. / West European Imperialism. We, however, defend Cuba, North Korea, Vietnam, China against imperialism as these countries are non-imperialist powers.

We fight for complete social and political equality for Women, supporting their fight against male domination a feature of capitalism as of all previous class societies. We fight for all immediate demands promoting this aim while recognising that only the transition to Communism will remove the last vestiges of women's enslavement. In particular we fight for working class women who suffer both oppression as women and super-exploitation within the workforce at present. We fight against male chauvinism and the unequal treatment of women in society and the Labour Movement, for full and equal rights in the workplace. We fight for a woman's right to control her own fertility, for the socialisation of housework and for a mass working class women's movement. We support the struggle of gay people against discrimination on the grounds of their sexual orientation.

In the workers' movement and the Trade Unions we fight for:- the total independence of the Trade Unions from the State and from all legal shackles on the right to organise and to strike.

We fight to democratise the unions, putting them under the control of the rank and file. We fight for militant class policies; for all immediate and partial demands which increase and strengthen the morale and confidence of the working class. Against all attempts to make the workers pay the enormous cost, in terms of the loss of the partial gains made by generations of workers' struggles, for the British bourgeoisie to rationalise and re-structure industry for their own benefit.

For a working class counter-offensive, fighting to impose workers' control (not participation) of production, the only conclusion to this struggle is a planned economy and a workers' state. It is the duty of revolutionaries to convince the masses of workers in struggle and step by step, of the inevitability, necessity and possibility of achieving Socialism the only alternative offered to mankind is barbarism.

For practical solidarity with workers in struggle throughout the world. For the international unity of trade unions and especially for links between the rank and file of different countries.

We commit ourselves to polemic, debate and discussion with other tendencies of the Left to clarify the political differences, the possibilities of joint work, and to lay the basis for a principled regroupment on an international and national basis.

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