



MANIFESTO  
of the  
INTERNATIONAL  
COMMUNIST  
LEAGUE

40p

# The Fight for Workers' Power

FIRST EDITION JULY 1977. REPRINT JANUARY 1981.

# INTRODUCTION

## 1. CAPITALISM

The history of all society more advanced than primitive subsistence-level communism is a history of the struggle of classes, of oppressed against oppressors.

Germinated within west European feudalism, capitalism overthrew feudal society there in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. It established itself as a world system, powerful enough to encompass, intermesh, and exploit the whole world, including those areas previously dominated by the evolutionarily-distinct, but **static**, Asiatic mode of production.

Capitalism is the most developed form of class society. The characteristic classes of capitalism are the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. It is characterised by commodity production under conditions where the major means of production are owned by the small **bourgeois** class and the immediate producers, the **proletarians**, are economically forced to sell their labour power as a commodity.

At each stage, capitalist production **reproduces** these conditions, and creates an ever-greater mass of **capital**, that is, the accumulated unpaid labour of the proletariat, appropriated by the bourgeoisie. Its regulator is the exchange relations of the market, governed by the law of value.

The market-regulated system of capitalist production, based on free labour, generated the revolutionising of technique, constantly spurred on by the needs of the accumulation of capital. Capitalism thus develops production more radically and more rapidly than any previous form of society. It creates for the first time the material preconditions for freeing humanity from the domination of the struggle for the elementary means of life. But capitalism also works to push up the rate of exploitation of the working class, to perpetuate uncertainty and poverty.

And capitalism necessarily and constantly tends to expand the productive forces, and production, **beyond** the limits of the market.

Crises of overproduction thus appear. For the first time in history

a social **surplus** of goods, amid general scarcity, produces crisis. Periodically the market is glutted, capital is destroyed or declines in value, unemployment increases. The smaller and weaker capitalists go bankrupt while the stronger survive and grow. At a certain point equilibrium is reached. New investment in new means of production begins a new cycle, generating demand, beginning an upward spiral that will also end in crisis.

Each crisis marks a step further in the concentration of capital in the hands of an ever-smaller number of large capitalist enterprises. The process of the concentration and centralisation of capital, destroying free competition, led by the beginning of the 20th century to the creation of powerful, monopolist, capitalist combines which acquired a decisive significance in economic life; it also led to the amalgamation of banking capital with highly concentrated industrial capital, and to the vigorous export of capital into foreign lands. The richer capitalists powers partitioned the world among them. This epoch of finance capital, inevitably intensifying the struggle between the capitalist states, is the epoch of imperialism.

Initially capitalism eagerly and freely developed the means of production to the fullest extent then possible; it was a progressive and inescapable stage in the development of human society. It created the modern proletariat.

Under monopoly capitalism the historic potential of the system begins to close. Technological improvement can now be optional for small numbers of monopolists able to agree among themselves. Capitalism becomes decadent, a brake on human society and culture.

Competition increasingly become competition of national blocs. Hence inevitably arise imperialist wars, war for markets, for spheres for the investment of capital, for raw materials, and for labour power, that is to say, war for world dominion and for power over small and weak nations. Such were the first and second world wars.

Once-progressive capitalism has reached the stage of **decline**. It is to a greater and greater extent a brake on the development of society. But by the very nature of the system and its in-built, recurring, organic crisis, its stage of historic decline is not always **absolute** decline.

## 2. THE WORKING CLASS

The proletariat is an essential part of capitalism; it is also its negation. Within capitalism the conditions of its existence commit it to perpetual class warfare.

The tendency of its major struggles is not merely to encroach on the rights and fortunes of capital, but to expropriate the capitalists.

Together with the concentration and centralisation of capital grows the concentration and organisation of the working class — and so also grows the contradiction between the **socialisation** of production and **private** appropriation. **Monopoly** capitalism is a system in which the social character of production is, to a degree, consciously exercised, but exercised by an oligarchy still bound by a social organisation whose law is war of all against all, less and less so within the national market but still very much so on the world market.

The proletariat can only liberate itself from capitalism by liberating the means of social production from capitalist control. It will replace production for profit with the beginning of production for human need; through social control and conscious planning it can liberate both itself and the material possibilities of production.

The modern proletariat is a historically unique class. Unlike the bourgeoisie within feudalism, it does not own a portion of the existing means of production; nor does it exploit anyone. Even when it gains from the exploitation of underdeveloped countries by 'its' national bourgeoisie, the gain is marginal (though its **political** effect may not be). Unlike the peasantry the proletariat cannot aspire to subdivide the means of production into individually-owned portions. It can only aspire to **collective** ownership and management of the **socially**-developed means of production — that is, to a socialist mode

of production. There is no class that it can aspire to exploit, since it is itself the central productive class.

These features of the proletariat mark the capitalist system as the last system of the class-society cycle in human history.

As for the Stalinist states, the repeated proletarian revolts, together with the fact that Stalinism itself only arose from the isolation and degeneration of a proletarian revolution in a backward country, prove that those societies, where collectivist economies are ruled by a totalitarian bureaucracy, are not an alternative, still less the historically **necessary** alternative, to the advanced capitalist societies. Their existence in some backward countries is a result of the belatedness, through betrayals and defeats, of the proletarian revolution in the more advanced capitalist countries.

The activity of the proletariat itself, in many countries over many decades, bears witness to its revolutionary character. For two months in 1871 it established its rule in Paris. In Russia in 1905 it mobilised for the first time in a spontaneous general strike, and created a network of workers' councils. In 1917 it seized power in the former Tsarist Empire, and replaced the exploiters' political system by a specifically working-class form of rule, through Soviets. In 1956 it counterposed workers' councils to the Stalinist bureaucracy in Hungary.

In 1968 10 million workers in France erupted in the greatest general strike ever. Many showed that it was an entirely different social system they wanted, by initially refusing to focus on specific limited demands on the bourgeoisie. All the treacherous ingenuity of the Stalinist party, in alliance with the bourgeoisie, was necessary to persuade the working to settle for big concessions **within** capitalism.

## 3. IMPERIALISM

The epoch of capitalist imperialism is also the epoch of proletarian revolution and of the struggle for liberation of nations oppressed by the imperialist predators.

Only three years after the beginning of the great imperialist slaughter of workers by workers, the Russian proletariat seized power and held

it against civil war and intervention by 14 imperialist powers. In Bavaria and Hungary the working class took power but was defeated. Revolutionary struggles took place all across Europe.

And one and a half years after the war's outbreak, a largely working class force in Dublin rose to free the Irish nation from British imperialism. In India, Indonesia, Vietnam, in Africa and South America, national liberation wars have disrupted imperialist control.

The communist working class movement, whose programme is for free association of the working classes of the entire world, actively supports the revolt of the colonial slaves against their capitalist masters.

The programme of communist internationalism **subsumes** the struggles for national liberation, including national separation; it **absorbs** the progressive elements in the nationalism of oppressed nations, the elements of struggle for freedom from oppression and of assertion of the right to national identity, into its own programme, and fights for these (and against the bourgeois and chauvinist versions of such demands) from the position of the working class and of the communist international programme of the working class. It recognises that the road to the real world-wide unity of the working people will not be over the protesting backs of the oppressed nations and peoples of the world, on tracks already laid down by brutal capitalism — but that it runs through a whole period of reconciliation, including freedom of separation, leading to a voluntary world federation of workers' states, and thence to the stateless united communist world system.

#### 4. THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION AND PERMANENT REVOLUTION

Many times the working class has risen and struggled for power, and even taken power for brief periods. But only once has it consolidated its political power — after 1917, in much of the former Tsarist Empire.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 was of world-historic significance, showing the way beyond capitalism for the working class of the entire world. Proletarian victory in Russia was achieved under the leadership of

the unique party built by Lenin, the Bolshevik Party: and without that Party it would not and could not have been achieved.

The beginning of the mortal crisis of the capitalist system was simultaneously the beginning of a crisis of political leadership for the working class. Capitalism was now bankrupt. But over the decades the social democratic parties, still nominally adhering to anti-capitalist goals, had, under the influence of the labour aristocracy and labour bureaucracy dominant within them, begun to accommodate to their national capitalisms. At the outbreak of war in 1914, the major working class parties betrayed socialism and supported their national bourgeoisies. Concerned above all to protect the results of their reformist work within their national bourgeois states — the trade union machinery, their Parliamentary positions — they sided with their own bourgeoisies against foreign bourgeoisies **and foreign workers**. This logic worked itself through when, in the revolutionary struggles at the end of the war, they sided with their own bourgeoisie against "their own" working class.

It became necessary to reorganise and reorientate the entire labour movement.

The communist International set out to build new revolutionary parties, drawing the lessons from the negative experience of the Social Democratic Parties, the positive experience of the Bolshevik Party, and the defeats of the revolutionary movements in Europe in 1918-21.

The working class is a **unique** revolutionary class which must abruptly from the condition of a **slave** class to seize political power in society. Unlike the bourgeoisie, which gradually established strength by amassing its own type of property within feudalism, the basic exploited class within capitalism can only establish the strength to make its revolution by building a revolutionary party.

And, where previous revolutions simply established a new economic mechanism dominating humanity, the workers' revolution inaugurates conscious human control over society.

The revolutionary proletarian party is thus a party unlike any other party. Its fundamental task is to define, develop and give active organisational embodiment to the clearest scientific proletarian class consciousness. It operates, necessarily, within capitalism, but in

permanent revolutionary antagonism to the system, watching for the opportunity to strike it down.

Without the leadership of such a party, the working class is tied and dominated by the "ruling ideas, which in each age have ever been the ideas of the ruling class". But, with the Stalinist degeneration of the Communist International, the crisis of proletarian leadership continues unsolved, a central fact of proletarian life.

□ □ □

The epoch of imperialism is the epoch of world politics — that is, the enmeshing of the countries of the world into a whole, and predominance of the effects of the whole within the parts. The epoch of proletarian and of national liberation struggles is, therefore, the epoch of **permanent revolution**.

World capitalism penetrates and establishes its sway within the most backward countries, generating 'combined and uneven development', the interaction of very different levels of social and economic development.

In Russia it was not **Russian** capitalism that developed industry; the industrial development was evoked by **world** capitalism, using the most advanced techniques in the midst of backward, feudally-dominated Russia. Serfdom was abolished in Russia only in 1861 — yet by 1905 a working class concentrated in giant industries could challenge Tsarism and the bourgeoisie.

The bourgeoisie was a weak bourgeoisie, linked with foreign capitalism and linked symbiotically also with Russian feudal landlordism. It no sooner knew that it was alive and might, following the historic experience of the west European bourgeoisie, have antagonistic interests to Tsarism and landlordism, than it was gripped by the paralysing fear of a strong and combative proletariat.

The working class found itself faced with an all-out struggle against the capitalist class — within a society where the task of smashing and expropriating feudalism, politically and economically, was yet to be achieved. The workers' struggles of 1905 and 1917 posed for them the question of taking power — and showed that only by doing so, in alliance with the poor peasants, could they accomplish the tasks of the **anti-feudal** revolution.

But Russia was, in itself, too backward for the possibility of a socialist working-class transformation. **World** capitalism, however, was over-ripe for the socialist revolution. The Bolshevik Party took power in 1917 with the perspective that it was the first link in the chain of world revolution.

Generally in the backward countries only the proletariat can lead the national, anti-imperialist, anti-feudal revolution to complete victory; and that victory will require that the working class takes power. But only the linking of proletarian-revolutionary movements in the backward countries can make possible the victory of socialism.

□ □ □

Fighting for permanent revolution in the neo-colonial countries, the proletariat must unite the plebian forces under its leadership. It must fight to take the lead not only in the struggle for national liberation, but also for other demands, especially those of the peasantry.

The revolutionary proletariat will support the peasants' demands for 'land to the tiller', for an end to their oppression by the landlords, money-lenders etc, while setting as its ultimate aim the creation, through peaceful persuasion and without coercing the peasantry, of large-scale collectivised agricultural production.

Democratic demands also have a particular significance under military dictatorship or fascism, or in countries just emerging from such regimes (Portugal from 25th April 1974) Spain since Franco's death). The revolutionary party must utilise the demands for the legalisation of all workers' organisations, full trade union rights, and purging of agents of the old regime, and the crowning democratic demand for a Constituent Assembly, as a means to mobilise the working class and plebian masses both against military dictatorship and against the programme of a cold, controlled movement towards 'strong' bourgeois democracy. The Marxist programme neither tries to 'skip over' the struggle for democratic demands as an element in the mobilisation of the working masses for the socialist revolution (as did, for example, the PRP-BR in Portugal), nor condones the use of democratic demands as a hangman's noose on the neck of the socialist revolution (as with the Portuguese Socialist Party)

## 5. REVOLUTION AND COUNTER-REVOLUTION, 1917-1939.

After World War 1 the proletariat was defeated except in Russia. Isolated there, the workers' state degenerated. A bureaucracy with a distinct material interest arose, which was represented within the Communist Party by the Stalin faction. At first this faction, reflecting the reactionary inertia of the state and party officialdom, played a centrist role. It balanced between the economic gains of the revolution on the one side, and, on the other, the kulaks and nepmen. Increasingly, it rendered the state apparatus, in which it was itself embedded, independent, creating a form of Bonapartism.

Allying themselves at first with the neo-populist Bukharinite right wing of the Bolshevik Party, the rich peasants and the NEP bourgeoisie, the Stalin clique was able to crush the Left Opposition. Within a short time Stalin turned on and crushed his erstwhile allies and began a forced-march collectivisation of land and industrialisation at breakneck speed.

By the early 30's the bureaucracy had achieved its complete domination: it forced the agrarian population into collective farms; physically terrorised and politically atomised the proletariat; reverted to Great-Russian chauvinist oppression of the non-Russian national minorities (and, in some cases, liquidated whole nationalities); and it reversed the new freedoms won by women. This process culminated in the mass murder of almost the entire revolutionary generation of Russian communists.

But the bureaucracy remained on the property forms established by the revolution. It was forced, for self-preservation, to defend and even to develop the property forms set up by the proletarian revolution.

Because the USSR remains based on the nationalised property forms created by the October Revolution, the I-C.L. characterises it as a **degenerated workers' state**. Since 1933 our movement has stood for a political revolution of the working class against the Stalinist bureaucracy. At the same time, we defend the nationalised economy against capitalism and imperialism, unconditionally; that is, irrespective of the self-serving, usually anti-working class and reactionary policies of the ruling bureau-

crats, and against those policies. In any clash, or apparent clash, between this 'defencism' and support for working class revolt against the bureaucratic tyranny, we stand entirely with the working class against the bureaucratic parasites who oppress them with police-state terror.

The Stalinist degeneration in Russia derailed the revolutionary vanguard of the world working class. Wave after wave of working class upsurge was defeated through the mistakes, or betrayals or sabotage of the Stalinists — and of the Social Democrats. In Germany and Spain those defeats led to the crushing of the workers' movement by fascism. The epoch was not only one of revolution — but of the most ferocious means of counter-revolution, used by the bourgeoisie.

## 6. THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH

In the second world war for global division, the powers defeated and plundered, or disappointed in World War 1 allied to challenge the victors. The USSR was drawn into war on one side because attacked by the other. For the USSR it was a defensive war; for the other participants, a robbers' imperialist war.

At the end of the war, in France, in Italy and in Greece, the armed workers of the Resistance had power within their grasp. In Greece the CP-led Resistance was brought to defeat by the direct sabotage of the Soviet Union; in France and Italy the CPs helped to disarm the workers and reestablish capitalist state authority. Throughout the advanced capitalist countries, capitalism defeated the post-war workers' struggles and took off into a new period of expansion.

But every great defeated revolutionary struggle generates new permutations in reality and affects the options in future struggles. The net result of the enormous class battles from 1917 to 1943 had been the eclipse of revolutionary Marxism and the survival of the Soviet Union as a workers' state, but under monstrous bureaucratic degeneration.

In Yugoslavia (1943), China (1949), and North Vietnam (1954), Stalinist parties seized power after armed struggle at the head of popular, largely peasant-based movements. Later in Cuba (1959), a radicalising petty bourgeois movement smashed the apparatus of the decrepit Batista

dictatorship; and the Stalinists also took power in South Vietnam(1975).

In each case the insurgents resolved the contradiction between their anti-imperialist demands and the imperialist grip necessarily consequent on continued capitalist domination of the economy by proceeding to expropriate the capitalists and nationalise the major means of production, transforming society according to the 'model' of the degenerated Soviet Union. With the partial exception of Cuba, active working-class participation in these transformations was kept to a minimum.

In Eastern Europe the Russian army of occupation took power at the end of the war, and imposed, in place of the shattered bourgeois states, new ruling apparatuses centred on the bureaucracies of the local CPs. At first they operated in coalition with local forces, but in the post-war period, at varying tempos in the different states, (partly linked to the deepening of the Cold War), the capitalists were eliminated, the Stalinists assumed complete control, and the states were 'structurally assimilated' to the model of the Russian degenerate workers' state.

### Deformed workers' states

The I-CL defines these states as deformed workers' states. The economic transformations are to be defended against imperialism. But all the deformed workers' states are characterised by the political domination over the working class of a nationalist, parasitic, and therefore repressive bureaucracy. The programme of communism, the programme of the completion of the permanent revolution in those countries, is the programme of the organisation and mobilisation of the working class to seize direct political power. Whether the resistance of the bureaucracy be minimal (as it might have been in Cuba in the early 60's), fragmented and disoriented (like the Hungarian bureaucracy's in 1956), or ferocious (as with the Russian bureaucracy's repression of the 1956 Hungarian revolution), this is the **political revolution**. Those who dispense with this programme of working class action in the deformed workers' states thereby abandon the most basic notions of communism.

This perspective governs our attitude to the opposition currents in the

Stalinist bloc. Alongside considerable proletarian opposition movements — the latest being the Polish workers' struggle against price rises — there are various 'dissident' groups and individuals, some of a non-socialist or non-proletarian character. Even the non-socialist oppositionists must be given support insofar as they advance democratic demands (freedom of expression, assembly, etc) and, in personally courageous ways, struggle for them. At the same time we recognise that insofar as the dissidents fail to embrace the necessity of the working class seizing power, they must drift into reliance either on the bureaucracy (or sections of it) — as with Medvedev — or on the western bourgeoisie — as with Sakharov.

### Unfinished Revolution

What is the political revolution? It is:

(a) The smashing, through revolutionary direct action under the leadership of a revolutionary party, of the bureaucratic state apparatus. Its dismantling and the assumption of direct power by the working class masses through a network of workers' councils.

(b) The concomitant assumption of direct control in industry by the working class — control in which factory and area organisations will interact creatively with the central state power, and organise the economy according to a democratically arrived at, and democratically controlled and implemented, working class plan. In short, the seizure of control and administration of the means of production from the hands of the bureaucracy.

(c) The complete destruction of the bureaucracy as a social stratum by removing its material privileges, as well as destroying its totalitarian monopoly of control and power in society.

This supplementary anti-bureaucratic revolution is also necessary from the point of view of the world revolution. In certain areas the deformed workers' states have had a destabilising effect for imperialism, particularly in South East Asia. The superiority of their economic systems to even those of the 'Third World' capitalist states which have seen substantial growth since World War 2 is a witness to capitalism's decadence. But for the **proletarian world revolution** the bureaucracies of the deformed workers' states are

**supplementary enemies**(with the very partial exception of Cuban policy in Latin America in the 1960s). Even Castro lined up behind the French CP's stifling of the May 68 strike movement. The value of the Chinese bureaucracy's 'leftism' had been shown by the Indonesian tragedy of 1965, where the largest non-ruling CP in the world was led into a massacre by a class collaborationist policy pursued under Peking guidance.

The corruption and confusion sown by the bureaucracies of the deformed workers' states with regard to the basic notions of socialism and workers' democracy has also been an obstacle.

### **The end of colonialism**

Contrary to Marxists' expectations, these distorted anti-capitalist revolutions did not ruin the stability of imperialism; nor did the liberation, by armed struggle or by a cold and calculated act of imperialist policy, of most of the colonies.

Neo-colonialism was successfully imposed over large areas.

This was the result of the petty bourgeois nature of the leaderships of the independence movements, which often ended as Bonapartist, capitalist regimes, sometimes balancing externally between imperialism and degenerated and deformed workers' states. In some cases, these governments nationalised foreign property and talked demagogically about their own specific 'socialisms'. In Egypt and Syria, petty bourgeois forces carried through almost complete nationalisation of industry, and constructed a state-capitalist order where the state acted as locum tenens for the bourgeoisie during a period of nationalist economic development. In Egypt at present, after a period of such development, industry is being handed back to direct private ownership.

Even in these most radical cases, these petty bourgeois nationalists never reached the point of a radical revolution opening the way to large-scale independent development, on the model of the classic west European bourgeois revolutions. The neo-colonial ruling classes feared to go beyond a certain point both because of foreign intervention and because they feared radical mobilisation of the masses.

The nature of the dependence on imperialism did change, however.

'Imperial Preference' in the economic field was replaced by an international regime of free trade, and those backward countries where government did try a policy of self-sufficiency behind tariff barriers were usually forced to abandon these policies after a time. Economic aid was increasingly used to bolster up dependence and ensure political clients. More recently, capitalism has begun to move highly developed industry into the metropolitan sectors of some of the more advanced and stable countries, particularly in Asia and Latin America (e.g. Iran, Taiwan, Brazil, partly Argentina), building them up as policemen in their respective areas. With their proximity to unsaturated markets for high-technology goods, their low labour costs and their military repression of the labour movement, they form a rich field for the activity of the imperialist multinationals.

### **7. AFTER 1968**

Yet it was the greatest, longest and most heroic of the colonial struggles that finally undermined capitalist stability. US hegemony had been gained at the expense of the older imperialist powers. The Vietnam war drew it directly into a quagmire.

At a time when capitalist rivals like Japan and the EEC were growing in strength and would anyway have challenged its hegemony sooner or later, the USA found itself over-extended, both in the imbalance of foreign payments which placed it at a disadvantage with its rivals and also in its human commitments: the people of the USA made an unprecedented stand against their criminal government and ultimately crippled its ability to function.

The 1971 devaluation of the dollar registered a major retreat from the hegemony of the USA within the capitalist world. The post-war expansion had been slowing down perceptibly, with the 1969-71 recession the most serious since the war.

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 30s.

This is not however a reproduction of the chronic dislocation following World War 1. We must get used to thinking in terms of capitalist **cycles**



again, and not mistake the first major post-war crisis for 1929-31.

But this simmering crisis offers tremendous opportunities for recreating a mass revolutionary workers' movement, for building substantial revolutionary organisations; and thus for undoing the terrible effects on the working class of the betrayals, defeats, mass slaughters and crushing disappointments leading to demoralisation, which social democracy, Stalinism and fascism inflicted on our class and on revolutionary socialism over many decades.

The capitalist class believed that the post-war relative affluence had bought off the working class and weaned it irrevocably away from dreams of building a better, socialist society, under its own democratic control. But now that capitalism demands cuts in working class living standards, that relative affluence will reveal itself as a double-edged sword, cutting at capitalist power, as workers refuse to accept the sacrifices which capitalism demands. The French general strike of May 1968 was only the first proof of the continuing revolutionary potential of the working class in the advanced capitalist countries.

We are not in the 1930s of the working class. We are in the 1930s of the ruling class. They are weak and we are strong.

The 'traditional' parties of the working class, Social Democratic, Labour and 'Communist', are most certainly still a power to be reckoned with in aiding capitalism to control and beat down the working class. In 1968 the CP was strong enough still to derail the almost insurrectionary general strike in France.

But they face greater difficulties in aiding capitalism than they did in the 30s and 40s. Now they pay for their betrayals, as they never did in the past, when they could lead the workers to demoralisation, or into the concentration camps of fascism, without having their hegemony broken.

The continued growth of support for explicitly revolutionary candidates in France since the betrayal of the 1968 general strike shows that.

Since the counter-revolutionary bureaucracy took power in the Soviet Union and seized control of the Communist International, there have been few openings so great for creating powerful revolutionary organisations which, taking advantage of

capitalism's crises, will put an end to capitalism.

The building of such organisations, the activity of revolutionaries, armed with the science of Marxism, is the decisive question on which will depend the outcome of the imminent major battles between Capital and Labour — revolutionary working class victories or major defeats.

## 8. BRITAIN'S CRISIS NOW

The crisis of world capitalism hits with exceptional force at British capitalism, one of the most decrepit members of an increasingly sick capitalist Europe.

Zero growth or less. Steady decline relative to its major competitor nations. Bounding inflation. One and a half million unemployed. Severe cuts in those social services which Labourism had regarded as its most solid achievement.

Increasing class tension, despite that tension being contained for now by the official labour movement's support for the capitalist Labour government. Growing resentment, beginning to spill over into action, by the Labour rank and file against their leadership.

The inability of the ruling class to muster the strength, either to create a non-sectarian superstructure in the Six Counties of occupied Ireland, or to crush the resistance of the militia of the oppressed Catholics, the Irish Republican Army. The emergence of the Army as a discernibly independent force in British political life, running one whole 'province' of the 'United Kingdom'.

The continued strengthening of the repressive apparatus of the state, under Labour as under the Tories, in preparation for clashes with the working class and especially for war against that embodiment of working class power, the picket squad. The growth of a fascist party, the most powerful since the '30's.

Above all, the forces of organised labour, partly side-tracked and perplexed for the moment, but still unbeaten, still uncowed, and still combative. These are the elements of the gathering storm in Britain.

## 9. THE BRITISH LABOUR MOVEMENT AND ITS HISTORY

Britain was the first great country of industrial capitalism; and the

Chartists, in the first half of the 19th century, were the first specifically working-class mass movement.

Developing before scientific socialism had been created, the movement was defeated. Independent proletarian politics was extinguished in the British working class.

Within expanding British capitalism a substantial labour aristocracy and labour bureaucracy grew up in the latter part of the 19th century. When, in the early 20th century, the majority of those bureaucrats were at last driven to break from the Liberal Party and form an organisationally independent party of labour, it was a resolutely reformist, anti-revolutionary (and insular) party.

Thus when, by the 1920s, the British working class mobilised to challenge capitalism, it was terribly ill-prepared and led by double-dyed traitors. After the defeat of the 1926 general strike, and in the depression, the British labour movement subsided, though — British imperialism still

being relatively strong — it was not crushed like the German, Italian, or Spanish labour movements.

Reformism 'worked' after the war as capitalism began the long post-war boom that has only now ground to a sobering halt. The Labour Party and 'socialism' declined, as the working class 'made do' with limited direct action struggles on wages and conditions.

The British labour movement has almost unparalleled social weight and organisational strength — crippled by an almost unparalleled tradition of nationalism, class collaboration, and trade unionist routinism i.e. economic, then political, reformism. The tremendous and victorious struggles of the British working class in 1972-4 showed that the current crisis of British capitalism furnishes the opportunity to break that tradition. They could not, and did not, break that tradition spontaneously. The working class has reacted to a Labour government with marked docility — so far.

---

# THE NATURE OF OUR ACTION PROGRAMME

A Socialist Programme of action is neither an optional nor an arbitrarily chosen weapon for a party with the politics and the goals of the I-CL. Its nature sums up the essential content of our politics — proletarian self-liberation.

It expresses the most advanced lessons of the attempts by the proletariat between 1848 and 1919 to hammer out a political practice which linked the goal of socialist revolution with the day to day organic struggle imposed on the working class by capitalism.

## **Social Democracy: Minimum and Maximum Programmes**

In the epoch of social democracy before the great international labour movement collapsed into national

fragments at the feet of the warring bourgeoisies in 1914, socialists operated with a minimum programme and a maximum programme.

The maximum programme was the millennium, the unseen goal in the far distance, the subject of abstract propaganda, holiday speeches and moral uplift; the theoretical proerty of an elite within the loose parties of social democracy. The minimum programme consisted of limited practical goals and the immediate aims of the everyday struggle of the working class.

What was the link between the two? The party and the trade unions, being built in the struggles and through propaganda. (A sect like IS[SWP] today provides a miniscule historical fossile for students of the tragedy of the Second International and its methods).

Capitalism was advancing organically; so was the labour movement. The 'right' Social Democrats saw the process continuing indefinitely until capitalism became transformed by its own evolution, of which the evolution of the labour movement was part — "The movement is everything, the goal nothing", said their theoretician, Eduard Bernstein. The mainstream Left believed evolution involved qualitative breaks and leaps, and that the evolutionary process would have to culminate in a revolutionary proletarian seizure of power.

† Both failed to link the daily class struggle with the goal of socialism. For the right, accommodating to capitalism and moulding what it could of the labour movement accordingly, this separation made sense, and their rigorous thinkers attempted to make theoretical sense of it. For the Left, the separation led to sterile 'maximalism' and hollow 'orthodoxy' (Kautsky)

In practice, control and hegemony was left in the hands of those whose practice corresponded accurately to the minimum/maximum model; in turn, this overweening reality of the labour movement led the 'orthodox' Left to accommodate to the Right. Ultimately, having won one hollow verbal victory after another in debate, they capitulated to the Right in practice.

Central to both wings of mainstream Social Democracy, for differing reasons but with the same consequences, was the same failure. They failed to see in the creative self-controlling activity of the working class — including workers who were initially, at the beginning of struggle in which they could learn, formally backward politically — the central force for socialism.

Left and Right had in common a bureaucratic, elitist conception of socialism. Their operational image of the relationship of the revolutionary party to the revolutionary class was one of pedagogic teacher to passive pupil, or self-substituting bureaucratic instrument to inert mass.

### **The Revolutionary Marxists in the Second International**

Rosa Luxemburg, first, in company with the orthodox 'left', exposed the relapse to utopian socialism implicit in Bernsteinian 'revisionism' and also the relapse to the substance of utopia-building within capitalism involved in reformist practice.

She then, by 1910, came to under-

stand the empty futility of the political victories of the 'orthodox' and the practical impotence of those, like Kautsky, who accommodated to the dominant forces in the Second International. She learned from the tremendous self-mobilisations of, especially, the working class in the Tsarist empire during the 1905-7 Revolution, and came to see the reality of European Social Democracy clearly.

The Russian Bolsheviks did not see the nature of the European 'Left' until it capitulated to the openly chauvinist Right in 1914 — but they did, right through, relate to the central truth of Marxist socialism, which the tremendous combativity and creativity of the Russian working class kept before their eyes.

They had the advantage over Luxemburg and her small circle in Germany of not over-reacting to a bureaucratized, routinized, essentially elitist party, which they could only see a future for by looking to the explosive latent creative power of the working class to correct it 'when the time came'. The Bolsheviks built a revolutionary party which was uniquely sensitive to the creativity of the working class, in tune with the central and irreplaceable chord of Marxist socialism; which learned from the working class, absorbed the lessons of its struggles, synthesised them with the experiences of the international struggle, and codified them scientifically — thus educating a stable cadre.

### **Transitional demands and the Comintern**

The communist movement, reorganising itself during and immediately after world war 1, resolved to have done with the minimum/maximum division, with its inescapable consignment of the masses to passivity vis-a-vis the struggle for socialism, which the leaders would talk of and History would take care of.

The central thread of their revolutionary conceptions was summed up in the idea of **Soviets** (workers' councils) — at the same time the broadest, most responsive, most democratic and most effective means for the immediate struggle against capitalism, and the essential organs of the revolutionary proletarian regime. (Significantly, the first notion of a transitional programme is expressed in Trotsky's analysis of the 1905 Russian Revolution — the revolution that first produced Soviets).

Resolved to **mobilise the working class** to fight immediately for socialism, the communist movement elaborated the conception of a transitional programme — to link the everyday struggles of the working class with the goal of socialist revolution; to focus every struggle so as to rouse working-class masses and direct those masses against the pillars of capitalist society.

Luxemburg, at the foundation of the Communist Party of Germany in 1919 (shortly before her assassination) and the Communist International at the 3rd and 4th Congresses began to elaborate such a concept.

The Communist Parties attempted to root themselves in the immediate working class struggles and relate those struggles to an overall struggle for socialism. They began to bring 'socialist' propaganda down from the cloudy skies and harness it to the hard daily grind of working class struggle.

The full socialist programme was broken down into a linked chain, each link of which might successfully be grasped, and the movement hauled forward, dependent on the degree of mobilisation, intensity of struggles, and relationship of forces.

Everyday demands, as on wages, were expressed not within the framework of acceptance of a capitalism that the socialists believed to be maturing towards some optimum time for ripeness, when it would fall. They were expressed **against** capitalism, so as to challenge capitalist prerogatives and the assumptions of capitalist society on a day-to-day basis.

This transitional programme, in the hands of a party organised for immediate war on capitalism and neglecting at the same time neither general propaganda nor the most 'minimalist' concerns; that was the weapon that the communists armed themselves with (though the Comintern never actually **formalised** a transitional programme).

It summed up the pillars of the bitter post-1914 knowledge on which Marxist socialism reconstructed itself — War on capitalism, not coexistence with capitalism waiting to inherit its legacy either peacefully or with a little bit of last-minute force. Mobilisation and involvement of the broadest layers of the working class in immediate conflict with capitalism, a break with elitism, propagandism, and evolutionism. The integration of the various fronts of the class struggle, ideological, political, economic, into one strategic drive.

## The Transitional programme for the Comintern and for us

The conception of a transitional programme and transitional demands was the product of the great Marxist renaissance and lessons drawn from the terrible collapse in 1914.

Certainly it was part of a world view that saw the struggle for socialism as immediate. But the conception itself, the criticism of the theory and practice of the Second International out of which it came, was a major conquest in understanding the relationship of the daily struggles of the working class to the struggle for socialism, even if the possibility of struggle for socialism were not quite immediate. The Communist International seriously began to discuss transitional demands at about the same time as it accepted that capitalism had survived the post-world war 1 earthquake and reached temporary stabilisation.

Fighting against the ultra-left conceptions of many within its own ranks that because, in an epochal sense, revolution was on the agenda after 1914, a permanent revolutionary 'offensive' by the party was necessary, it declared: "The alternative offered by the Communist International in place of the minimum programme of the reformists and centrists is: — the struggle for the concrete needs of the proletariat, for demands which in their application undermine the power of the bourgeoisie, which organise the proletariat, and which form the transition to the proletarian dictatorship, even if certain groups of the masses have not yet grasped the meaning of such proletarian dictatorship" (3rd Congress, 1921).

### Using transitional demands

Above all, the conception of a transitional programme represented a break with the elitist, bureaucratic, evolutionary socialism, to which its central core, mass mobilisation in class struggle, is the very antithesis.

The essence of transitional demands is not that they cannot be realised under capitalism. Rather, as Trotsky put it, "'Realisability' or 'unrealisability' is in the last instance a question of the relationship of forces, which can be decided only by the struggle".

If demands from a transitional programme are conceded without the bourgeoisie being overthrown, they will either be taken back by the bourg-

eoise once the moment of danger is passed, or they will be robbed of their revolutionary content and neutralised within the structure of capitalist society. Even workers' councils can be neutralised this way: after the failure of the working class to seize power in the German Revolution of 1918, the councils were given a legal position as organs of 'codetermination' within the framework of normal factory life.

The revolutionary significance of transitional demands lies in their interaction and their interlinking with mass mobilisations of the working class.

### The United Front

The concept of transitional demands was closely and logically linked with that of the united front. In the fight for partial demands, communists struggle for the involvement in united action of the broadest sections of the labour movement; and, unavoidably, so long as reformist and bureaucratic leaderships survive, this will involve even those leaderships. Broader and more extensive mobilisation both corresponds to the immediate need for maximum strength in the struggle, and opens the way for more radical demands and mobilisations and thus for the verification by the workers, through their own experience, of the ideas of the communist programme.

In the fight for and in the united front, the communists prove themselves as steadfast fighters for the workers' interests. The class-collaborationism of the reformist leaders is made clear to the masses by their

desertion from the united struggle — whether it comes at an earlier or a later stage — on condition that the communists have at all times maintained strict political independence in their agitation and propaganda. 'March separately, strike together' is the watchword of the united front.

Essential to the concept of transitional demands and of the united front is an orientation to the logic of class struggle and the potentialities of mass direct action, as opposed to all conceptions which offer the working class no role other than to join the organisation which will see to their liberation.

Nominal adherence to the method of transitional demands of the Communist International or of the 'Transitional Programme' written by Trotsky in 1938 is no **guarantee** against Second Internationalist conceptions. There are no such guarantees. Within nominal adherence, there has been a general reversion in the Trotskyist movement to the level of the Second International. One can even find 'Trotskyists' for whom transitional demands are clever devices to manipulate the working class, to con them into socialism; others for whom they are only lists of measures to demand of this or that government; others, again, for whom they are merely propaganda formulas for the literary 'exposure' of the reformists; some, indeed, for whom they are semi-religious talismans.

But in history the idea of transitional demands summed up the break with the evolutionary, bureaucratic, elitist conception of socialism. That is what it means for the International-Communist League.

---

## The Labour Government and the Question of Transitional Demands

### Is the Labour government a workers' government?

It depends for its strength and ability to govern on the class vote of the working class and the support of working class organisations. But from that working class base it derives its usefulness to capitalism. It is a **capitalist** government based on the organisations of the working class.

It is, indeed, often, the best government the ruling class has — because of its working class base.

A Labour Government can be strong or weak. It can be a strong government when, together with the trade union bureaucracy, it induces workers to patiently bear the cost of capitalism's problems. Or it can be a weak government for capitalism when, as with 'In Place of Strife', its working class base rises up against it.

We must make it weak. If workers' struggles make a Labour government weak, the ruling class will attack without mercy, using their own openly

identified parties, the House of Lords, the Monarchy, or even the Army of fascist bands. In that event the working class should resist the imposition of a government more to the ruling class 'taste' with every weapon from general strike to guns, even if that resistance means the defence of a Wilson/Callaghan-type government.

Not even that case, however, should militant workers fail to fight a capitalist Labour government and its measures to serve capitalism. We change the **form** of our struggle against the reformist leaders, without in the least relaxing our hostility to them or giving them any confidence.

For now, the present Labour Government has no need of working class defence against anyone. The fact that many workers do give it support is what makes it a strong government for capitalism.

### **Demands — not pleas**

We make demands on the government that it should act in the working class interest and strike at the capitalists. We urge workers to mobilise to enforce those demands.

**Demands — not pleas.** We say openly that the Labour Government will not serve the working class seriously when it would mean breaking with the capitalists. Any pro-working class measures it does carry out must be forced on it by the pressure and intimidation of the rank and file. And if, in a situation like Britain today, the Labour Government is forced by the working class into major concessions, then especially it is necessary to be on guard for double-dealing by the government, or for a right-wing ruling class counter-attack.

To force serious reforms through mass struggle and then to fail to go forward to **revolutionary** mobilisation is to court backlash and disaster — on the model of Chile.

Yet without the struggle for reforms the working class cannot learn to struggle for revolution. We issue no ultimatums to workers who are willing to fight for this or that limited demand, or series of demands. We do not say: **first** accept our overall view, our analysis, our appraisal of the Labour Government; **then** fight. We say: fight alongside us for limited demands, and we will convince you in the course of the struggle.

We make demands, not as an exercise in literary 'exposure' of the government, but because the working class **needs** what we demand. We make demands in order to mobilise, to focus that mobilisation, and to educate.

### **No strings**

We make demands — but we accept no responsibility, no strings dictated by the government or by the capitalists they serve. We offer the government no loyalty except practical defence should any pro-working class acts it carries out lead to right wing attempts to oust it.

We should not fear to aid the Tories by militant action or demands which weaken the government. Labour often carries out capitalist policy more effectively than the Tories could. The ruling class knows and appreciates this: The ruling class and its openly acknowledged parties (Tories and Liberals) will aid the Labour Government to resist workers' demands. They will only turn on it if it proves unable to resist workers' demands or to control working class mobilisation.

Choking back the mobilisation might extend the life of the Labour government for a while. But it would disorient, demoralise, and disorganise the working class; and when that disorientation had proceeded far enough, then the Tories or other right-wing forces would push the Labour government aside easily enough.

For the I-CL, indeed, the **cardinal** aim is to fight for a workers' answer to the crisis, to advance the struggle to a point where Labour **can't** control the situation for the capitalists. We assert the absolute primacy of the interests of the working class over any other interests — including those of the governing Labour Party.

Direct action supplemented and focused by imperious demands — that is the way forward. We demand that Labour break with the bourgeoisie and carry out measures in the interest of the working class.

We do not spread the illusion that it will do so, or can do so, except episodically, exceptionally, and as part of a general policy of class deceit. We mobilise against the Labour government, to fight it and its capitalist backers.

**A socialist programme — of action,  
not recommendations to Parliament**

We reject demands such as "Labour to power with socialist policies" or "Labour adopt a socialist programme". A socialist **programme** is not just a social blueprint which might itemise firms for nationalisation. It must include an account of Labour itself, of the bourgeois state, etc. Socialism, or a socialist programme, can only mean the **self**-liberation of the working class through its own independent activity, throwing off all bourgeois and bureaucratic bonds. It cannot be a programme carried through **for** the working class by a well-meaning government.

The "**Militant**" tendency now peddles the idea that the Labour government could pass an 'Enabling Act' to introduce socialism — an idea originating in the early 1930s with Clement Attlee and his circle, and closely related to the American social-democratic notion of achieving socialism through amendments to the American bourgeois constitution. We leave such nonsense to reactionary utopian dreamers. To strive to attribute a general, full 'socialist' programme to the Labour government can only spread confusion on what a socialist programme is, and illusions in Labour.

Neither abstract 'socialist' propaganda, not lauding spontaneous militancy as self-sufficient, is the way forward, whether the government be Labour or Tory. A socialist programme of action becomes an arsenal for battle by revolutionaries against reformism, when it is put forward not as a vapid abstract summary, but in an interconnected chain of demands which revolutionaries can use to mobilise. Each demand, to the extent that revolutionaries can really mobilise for that demand, is linked to more advanced demands, ever more clearly directed against the very foundations of the capitalist order.

The programme of action will include demands relating to the state, worked out according to a communist view of the class nature of the state; it will have a cutting edge taking account of the communist view of the nature of Labourism.

'Labour to power on a socialist programme' is pernicious because of the bland abstraction 'socialist programme'. The **elements** of a socialist programme, concretised and used intelligently by communists, can help cut the throat of Labourism and of capitalism, by mobilising workers, educating them in action, and here and now giving political focus to their struggle against the conservative Labour Government.

# THE ACTION PROGRAMME

## The Sliding Scale of Wages & Hours

The most basic right the working class must fight for under capitalism is the right to work. Unemployment is at 1½ million already. We have bounding inflation, falling living standards and massive social service cuts at just the point where ever more working class families depend on social security.

The stories of capitalist difficulties, and the appeals to respect the national interest, offer neither work, nor adequate wages, nor even adequate dole.

The only certain result for British workers would be to increase the cost of living.

The working class needs automatic wage increases to keep pace with the cost of living — the real cost of living. This means increases big enough to keep pace with prices even after the tax deduction, and a cost of living index worked out by price-watch committees of workers and housewives. There must be a guaranteed **sliding scale of wages**. Each new wage agreement must have a built-in escalator linked to prices.

Workers in separate industries should demand that their employers concede the sliding scale — which, with serious inflation, is no more than granting a wage that does not immediately begin to diminish. We also demand immediate government legislation to guarantee this sliding scale backdated to take account of the actual fall in the standard of living in the last few years.

The government should also guarantee the **national minimum wage** so frequently demanded, but never

levelled against any form of inflation. That national minimum should apply also to all benefits, pensions, and grants, without means-testing or other conditions. The national minimum wage, together with all benefits, pensions and grants, must also be automatically protected against inflation.

At the same time we oppose any wage limitations under capitalism. The working class remains immensely strong and able to fight for wage **increases**. Under no circumstances should the demands for a sliding scale and a national minimum wage be seen as substitutes for such a fight, under no circumstances should any bargain be made which grants threshold agreements (zero threshold or otherwise) with strings against fighting for a wage rise.

We demand the rising scale as a **right**, and on top of that rising scale we shall fight for real **increases**.

## Price control

Reformists, especially left reformists, raise the demand that the Government should control prices.

This only reflects their refusal to fight for the necessary degree of working class control over wages — that is, a sliding scale of wages to counter inflation.

Prices are largely determined by the world market and a national government could exert only limited control. A government managing a capitalist economy also faces the fact that prices do regulate profits and investment, which are central to the mechanics of the capitalist market system. It cannot seriously regulate prices without disrupting that system. Price controls — as in 1974 — are



therefore marginal, paid for from revenues, and used to cement deals with the trade union bureaucrats.

The price control demand **either** means demanding the Labour Government implement, as a policy within the existing capitalist system, a measure which is possible only after that system has been overthrown — thus, a **mystified** call for the Labour Government to overthrow capitalism; or, a demand for a totalitarian 'war economy'.

The only control over prices is to insist on keeping wages at least level with them. That is something the working class can start fighting for now. Let the bosses pay for the crisis of their own system.

### Unemployment

Unemployment is a crime against the working class — and against humanity, for production is tailored to the profit system and not to need. Yet even the spurious optimism of the government does not offer any hope of much drop in unemployment. It will go on rising above its present outrageous level, the highest for a third of a century.

The era of 'normal' high unemployment is back, in which millions of workers will serve as a reserve army for capitalism. Capitalism will keep its account books 'healthy' — and working class families in dire need. Hundreds of thousands of women are being forced back into the home.

Meanwhile millions of other workers are forced to work overtime to earn a living wage.

The growth of unemployment must be halted by a **sliding scale of hours**. Wherever redundancy or short time is threatened, the workers should **compute** the hours of work available, divide it by the number of workers, and **act** unilaterally to cut the working week, under workers' control. No loss of pay can be tolerated.

This slogan, to the extent that it is generalised into a class-wide slogan, embodies the response of working-class solidarity to the ravages of capitalist crisis.

The threat, or the use, of the occupation tactic, can compel employers, be they the bourgeois state or private employers, to agree. Concerted action, class-wide solidarity, can ensure that isolation does not lead to

defeat. We must sound the alarm and fight back now before unemployment vitiates the strength of the working class.

The unions should demand a 35-hour week, fighting both to impose it on individual employers and to have it instituted by government legislation. Immediately the unions should implement a ban on overtime — fighting against any loss of pay.

We cannot allow those already unemployed to become split off from the working class movement. We fight for the unity of the employed and unemployed, and for full trade union rights for the unemployed.

In case of lay-offs or short time, we demand 100% pay. We reject, however, the general slogan "Work or Full Pay" against redundancies, a slogan which condones unemployment while labelling it more or less evil according to the pay-off.

We fight against the demand for import controls. The aim of this nationalist slogan amounts to no more than **exporting unemployment** to workers in other countries. And it is doubtful whether it would even achieve that aim.

The general decline in world trade resulting from import controls would tend to increase unemployment everywhere. The only certain result for British workers of import controls would be increases in prices, closer ties of class collaboration — and a barrier set up against unity with workers of other nations.

### Social Services

The working class needs decent education, housing, transport and health services; and should claim them as a right. We reject the idea that these services must be cut to help solve the capitalists' crisis.

We demand that the Labour government guarantee that the social services which underpin working class living standards be maintained. The funds of those services should be automatically increased to keep pace with price rises.

While the government remains determined to push through the cuts required by the capitalist class, Labour councils should refuse to implement those cuts. On the contrary, the example of the ex-Clay Cross

council, which 'overpaid' and 'overmanned' its departments, as part of its work for those who elected it, must be the model that we fight for.

Every Labour council should refuse to implement the cuts, should refuse to make the interest payments to money lenders which absorb a tremendous proportion of council expenditure, and should demand that the Labour government remove that interest burden by nationalising the banks and other financial institutions.

But we do not confine our struggle to defending the present miserable standards of social provision. We fight to mould the social services to the needs of the working class.

The government should nationalise all building land, and launch a crash housing programme, based on a nationalised building and building materials industry and expanded council direct works, under workers' control. There cannot be any excuses for a single workers remaining unemployed as long as this has not been done! Councils should also requisition all empty housing. On this basis decent housing can be assured for all, at low fixed rents.

Both the health and the education services must be freed for leeching, by the nationalisation of the drug and educational supply industries, and by the abolition of private practice and of the 'public' schools. A massive injection of funds into the health service, administered under workers' control, must lay the basis for completely free and readily available medical care for all.

The education system, likewise, must be provided with funds so that new educational methods can be introduced with all the necessary back-up facilities, instead of botched, skimped and at the expense of the teachers.

Education should be freely available to all, in a completely unified comprehensive system which also encompasses higher and further education, with extended facilities for day release and grants for all wishing to pursue their education after the age of 16.

There must be an end to authoritarian regimentation justified only by the need to train children for the work-discipline of Capital, and an end to selection procedures which inevitably distort education and are class-

biased. Examinations and formal assessment should be imposed only when necessary to ascertain technical qualifications.

The same capitalist system which spends millions on meretricious car model changes, cannot even maintain public transport at its present level, as witness the massive rail cuts. We demand an integrated nationalised transport service, providing reliable transport for all, at low fares, and free for local services.



The working class needs adequate wages, jobs, social services. Yet capitalism offers us declining real wages, massive unemployment, cuts. The working class is organised into tolerating this — for now — by the whole machinery of class collaboration, by the work of the bureaucracies of the trade unions and Labour Party as 'labour lieutenants of Capital'. That class collaboration is given tighter organisational form by schemes of 'participation' (Ryder, Bullock etc) and arbitration (ACAS and the various tribunal procedures established under anti-discrimination laws).

We oppose any working-class 'participation' in managing our own exploitation. — We are against limited 'control' that makes workers responsible for bailing out capitalism. We call for direct action, rather than appeals to tribunals, on cases of discrimination, using the tribunals only in cases of weakly-organised sections of workers for whom immediate powerful direct action is not possible. Even when we are forced to use the tribunals, the fight there must be seen as a stage in the organisation of those workers, a basis for future class battles.



Against class-collaboration, we fight to establish the political independence of the working class in action. This means a fight for workers' control, for the expropriation of the capitalists, and for the renovation of the labour movement.

# Workers' Control and nationalisation

The Government alone — using taxpayers' money, including money siphoned from the working class — in Britain today capable of financing the regeneration of big industry. This was recognised and made into the policy of the Industrial Reorganisation Commission by the Labour Government in the '60s. It was finally recognised by the Heath Tory government. It is recognised by the present Labour Government in the form of lavish handouts to the employers.

If **nationalisation without compensation** has long been a demand used by socialists — massive compensation without nationalisation is now Labour policy. The state-capitalist left agree. The unions, and most workers, think it is better than closures and increased unemployment.

The experiences in bureaucratically nationalised industries, under the capitalist state, has made the demand for nationalisation appear irrelevant. State capitalist enterprise does not seem a meaningful objective for workers.

Yet nationalisation remains a valid and necessary demand in exposing the senility and bankruptcy of capitalism, and underlining the fact that it is over-ripe for replacement by socialised and democratically-planned working class economy. It must be counterposed as the practical alternative to the compensation without nationalisation policy with which the Labour government is **paying** the capitalist bankrupts for their work in engendering one and a half million unemployed.

Who owns is still the key question. In state capitalist industry, where the state remains a tool of the bourgeoisie, this question is concretised as **who controls**. The struggle for nationalisation linked with the struggle for workers' control, is a struggle here and now to break the hypnotism and the alibis of the **capitalist system, as a system**.

## Workers' control

The struggle for workers' control,

both positively and as veto on capitalist control, in every sphere, is a school of essential self-education, where the working class becomes conscious of its real strength. It is a vital factor in renovating and revitalising the organisations of the labour movement, and remoulding them to serve the needs of aggressive working class action.

It is a struggle that goes on daily now up to and including factory seizures: the struggle to extend and develop elements of control over own lives and working conditions. The question of who owns and who has power presents itself in embryonic form now as the struggle for **control**.

We demand the opening of all meetings, accounts, files and business of the employers and the state to delegated workers' representatives, who should be fully accountable to mass meetings. Such breaking of business secrecy is vital to arm workers to fight for control. To demands for government, 'impartial', or 'tripartite' inquiries into particular industries, firms or workplaces, we counterpose the demand for a workers inquiry.

Such inquiries must carry their investigations into all the financial and state connections. Workers are not interested in whether this or that exploiter is in fact bankrupt, but in uncovering the mechanisms of the whole system of exploitation.

The working class must extend its control over work conditions, hiring, firing, extent of the working week, safety; it must aim for full and conscious control of society. Communists must fight to extend control to the point of a real working-class supervision and veto over every aspect of the detailed running of industry — to break the power and control over his property of the capitalists whether he be a private capitalist or an agent of the capitalist state.

In modern capitalism, there is a very high degree of state capitalist intervention, and state ownership or supervision of the means of production. Workers' control is a central component of the self-mobilising, self-liberating socialism of the working class, as opposed to all brands of bureaucratic bonds — it **cannot** be a programme carried through for

the working class by a well-meaning government.

### Control and the economy

We fight for workers' control over the whole economy. But that control, on any stable basis, is possible only with a **different** economic structure than that of capitalism — that is, with the expropriation by a workers' state of the principal means of production. The notion of widespread workers' control over a capitalist economy — except as a brief phase preparatory to the seizure of state power — inevitably leads in practice to control **over the workers** by the laws of motion of the capitalist economy.

In situations of acute economic dislocation, governmental crisis, and dual power (or the potential rapid emergence of dual power), generalised slogans along the lines of "a workers' plan for production" can be vital in the mobilisation of the working class to struggle for a workers' government and for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Portugal in 1975, and Russia in 1917, were such situations. Especially where the economic dislocation reflects the depredations of imperialism in the domestic economy (as in Portugal), the slogan of 'a state monopoly of foreign trade' will also figure in the fight for a workers' government.

With a relatively stable capitalist state, however, as in Britain now, slogans like 'a workers' economic plan' or 'a socialist plan for production' have no revolutionary validity.

Either they are confused abstract propaganda for socialism; or they appeal to the Labour Party and/or TUC to prepare that "workers' plan", i.e. they simply reproduce the slogan "a Labour government with a socialist programme"; or, if applied only to single sectors of the economy or single firms (for example, Lucas) they have a dangerous sectional and class-collaborationist dynamic.

The slogan of "a state monopoly of foreign trade" simply serves as cover for the chauvinist programme of import controls.

The connected slogan of a government **public works programme** with trade union rates of pay can focus the struggle for the right to work in a situation where unemployment has reached the level of a permanent, massive army out of work.

In current conditions in Britain,

however, where direct action to deal with unemployment through overtime bans, work-sharing and cuts in the working week could be effective, the general 'public works' slogan tends to be diversionary and irrelevant.

### Occupations: from workers' control to nationalisation

The demand for nationalisation is also a necessary way to avoid the blind alleys which factory occupations have run into.

Unfortunately, factory occupation is used most typically as a last-ditch defence mechanism, and the workers are then **weaned** by the capitalist system and reformist parties (including the CP) into either accepting the role of policing themselves into being docile and devoted wage-slaves to a new 'kinder' master (UCS); or else, into undertaking the creation of co-operatives (Meriden, Scottish Daily News).

There is no more woeful example of the grip of reformism on the working class, because here the most powerful direct action, starkly thrusting the question of class power and ownership to centre stage, leads to a **localised** answer. Even when the local workers assume ownership, this solves nothing, and splutters out in working class docility (UCS) and/or demoralisation (Meriden and others).

Islands of socialism cannot be built within capitalism. The working class cannot become the owner of industry piecemeal. What was true for Robert Owen is true now!

Nationalisation under workers' control and without compensation is the answer, with the government assuming responsibility for keeping the industry afloat. Direct action, or the threat of it, must be used to enforce this demand, instead of being harnessed to utopian schemes that owe more the socialism of Louis Blanc and P J Proudhon than to that of Marx and Lenin.

### Nationalisation and working-class mobilisation

Acts of nationalisation, expropriations of separate groups of capitalists, are valuable to the degree that

they are under the control of the working class, mobilised to demand and impose expropriation **without** compensation for the capitalists. In those conditions it is a blow at the stability of capitalism — a forcible, though limited, expression of the necessary logic of the centralisation process at the heart of capitalism — **against** the capitalists.

From day to day, in the course of struggle, we advance demands for nationalisation. We clearly distinguish such demands from the overall programme of working-class emancipation; we argue against state-capitalist and Stalinist 'models' of socialism. As the Transitional Programme already said in 1938:

"The difference between these (i.e. revolutionary) demands and the muddle-headed reformist slogan of 'nationalisation' lies in the following: (1) we reject indemnification; (2) we warn the masses against demagogues of the People's Front who, giving lip-service to nationalisation, remain in reality agents of capital; (3) we call upon the masses to rely only upon their own revolutionary strength, (4) we link up the question of expropriation with that of the seizure of power by the workers and farmers"

We recognise that struggle for nationalisations, even if motivated on state-capitalist lines, can — given revolutionary intervention — serve to mobilise workers to assert their interests against the capitalists, and thus advance the struggle for socialism.

We criticise the illusions of the state capitalist reformists. We criticise, however, not in the spirit of giving pseudo-theoretical justifications for purist passivity, but in the spirit of striving to deepen the struggle while fighting alongside reformist workers for limited demands. We reject the illusions; we share the struggle.

## Renovate the labour movement!

For a quarter of a century, as capitalism expanded, gains came easy to the British working class. There were struggles, but they were usually localised, intermittently embittered, and rarely with the working class on the

defensive.

Now we are on the defensive before the effects of mass unemployment and the slump. Not only the leadership of the unions is inadequate to the task, the very structure of the labour movement needs to be adjusted, reorganised, and renovated.

In engineering, for years, high wages were gained and maintained through short, local strikes, with certain militant plants setting the pace. Now workers have found themselves members of a union that is a feeble giant, unable to deploy its limbs in any national strategy — sectionalised, divided, impotent.

Projects for streamlining and rationalising the trade unions, for the creation of industrial unions, are again assuming tremendous importance. The dominance of the trade union bureaucracy means, however, that detailed schemes for such reform will only have importance and meaning as possessions of a serious mass rank and file movement. They will be worked out on the basis of the problems and experience of that movement.

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. Here and now we begin from where we are. We must address ourselves to a series of serious tasks to renovate and prepare the labour movement.

Those tasks of renovation will proceed hand in hand with the struggle for **workers' control**. A fight for control will require revived, democratic forms of organisation to exercise that control; and it will generate that revival, from the experience of the struggle itself.

### Factory committees

We need to develop and strengthen the factory committees that exist in very many plants, and to fight for their creation where they do not exist.

Stewards must be elected at mass meetings held in the factory in company time. A joint shop stewards' committee, representing all unions in the plant, must be created.

The white collar workers must be an integral part of those committees

where they are unionised; where they are not, the committee should insist on organisation and 100% trade unionism.

During strike action, strike committees must be elected from (and subject to recall by) mass meetings. In that way, workers who previously have not been prominent as militants, but who have come to the fore in struggle, can be drawn into a fresh, combative leadership. Communists must fight especially to involve women workers and rouse them into militant action.

### **Union branches**

Especially for women workers, union meetings must be held in company time and during work hours. Union branches can then be transformed from empty shells into real democratic organs of the working class, thus giving the demand for industrial unionism a proletarian-democratic rather than a bureaucratic character.

Where branches are organised on a geographical basis, and this can't be readily changed, regular factory meetings can and should be held under the auspices of the stewards. The union organisation, often a dried husk, can be filled with life.

Will this strengthen the right wing, with the votes of previously uninvolved backward sections? Sometimes it will, certainly. So did women's suffrage often strengthen the right. The **potential**, however, of masses of workers roused into struggle or into discussion, massively outweighs any disadvantages.

And it is a futile, senseless, anti-communist, empty and illusory 'left-wing' influence, control of positions, etc, that depends on the non-involvement of the workers most concerned! It can only be a crippling limitation in real battles — and in those battles the backward workers of yesterday can outstrip today's militants.

### **Combine committees**

Around 200 monopolies rule Britain today. They have more real power than the government.

As the crisis has hit the motor, steel, and other industries, we have seen the terrible spectacle of workers attempting to argue why **their** local

plant should survive, get subsidies, etc, rather than some other plant in the same industry. Reduced to such beggary before the predators of Capital and the government, the cause of such workers is doomed. **Unity**, a common front, is needed.

The differences in rates throughout the country, and inability to get unity in action, have for long signalled the need for **combine committees**. The suicide of workers scrambling for 'favours' from the capitalist state at each other's expense tells us that unity within the monopolies is a matter of life and death.

**Industry-wide** committees, like the National Port Shop Stewards Committee, are also important.

A network of combine committees covering only the couple of hundred monopolies would be a mighty counter-power to the capitalists and their government. A meeting of delegates from committees for the major combines and industries would represent immensely more than the existing Parliament.

The fight for such combine committees is now the fight against suicidal disunity. It is simultaneously the fight to create, here and now, a framework within capitalism for working class control and running of industry in a future workers' state.

### **International links**

**International** combine committees are not less important, to end the idiocy of workers exploited by the same international corporation competing at each other's expense. Only such committees can eliminate that competition and bring the collective strength of the working class to bear against their exploiters.

Unity of the workers inside the Common Market is an immediate practical task. The few tentative contacts between workers in Fords and in Dunlop/Pirelli point the way ahead.

This too is a matter of survival — and proof of the criminality of those in the labour and socialist movements who prattle about Britain's 'independence' from the Common Market when we must seek international working class unity against the exploitation of British and international capitalism.

## Trades Councils

As well as industry-wide, combine, and international sinews, unity of the labour movement in the localities becomes essential. The Trades Councils today are, too often, as unrepresentative as trade union branches with hundreds or thousands on the books and a dozen regular attenders at meetings.

Yet the Trades Councils still have power, strength, and influence. A relatively powerful and representative Trades Council like Liverpool (sluggish though it is, as a result of 'Militant' and CP influence) can call tens of thousands of workers to a mass lobby of Parliament against unemployment.

We must struggle to ensure representation, including representation from shop stewards' committees; to gain attendance, resolutions, report-backs at factory meetings; to draw the Trades Council into every local event. Thus we can knit the sinews of the local labour movement into a network which focuses and deploys the strength of the working class.

This united working-class force will become increasingly conscious of its own power in the battles for wages, against the cuts, against unemployment, against racism and fascism.

We favour Trades Councils being organised — as they still are in some areas — as Trades and Labour Councils, with representatives from the Labour Party. This Labour representation can be used as a lever to draw the local Labour Party into struggle, on the workers' side, and to carry forward the fight to make the Labour Party **accountable** to the workers' movement.

## Workers' councils

We have reviewed the forms of the existing labour movement, which, in Britain, is among the best organised and most powerful in the world. The forms will be restored, repaired, improved, and regenerated to the degree that the surging force of working class struggle comes through them.

And that force, at its highest level of intensity and power, which will first manifest itself within or on the fringes of the existing movement,

will generate qualitatively different and higher forms of organisation — Workers' Councils (Soviets).

Soviets will differ radically from even the most representative of existing Trades Councils. They will guarantee immediate right of recall of delegates. They will draw in not only the organised, but also the unorganised; not only the workers, but the unemployed; not only women workers, but housewives.

In countries and situations as widely separate as Russia in 1905 and Hungary in 1956, or even a few rural areas of Ireland in 1920, the working class has thrown up Soviets. With its feasibility, democracy, contact with the very pores of the daily life of the working class masses, the Soviet is undoubtedly the historic form of rule by the working class. To the working class in power, or struggling for power, it is what Parliament was to the democratic bourgeoisie. It has been counterposed by revolutionary workers both to capitalism and to bureaucratic Stalinist rule in a deformed workers' state.

Soviets are characteristic of a period of massive upsurge. Popular energy, generated by the struggle, either overflows the banks of existing organisations and radically transforms them, or improvises new forms for working class struggle and administration.

In Britain, the former variant is far more likely, given the almost uniquely high level of organisation of the working class. Workers' Councils would probably be created through expansion (and, through expansion, qualitative change) in the functions of bodies like Trades Councils, stewards' committees, etc. They would link up with, amalgamate with, absorb or create housewives' committees and tenants' committees.

Had any of the series of confrontations between 1972 and 1974 led to a general strike, the immediate creation of workers' councils would have been possible. Indeed, it would have been necessary for the struggle, to allow the working class to ensure food and other supplies, and to defend itself.

In the stormy period of class struggle ahead (a period that may be measured in a number of years) such possibilities will recur. It is the duty of revolutionaries to prepare, propag-

andise, explain.

The renovation of the labour movement must culminate in a renovation and revolutionising of society, under the rule of a labour movement which has qualitatively transcended its forms and conditions of existence under capitalism. That task we cannot achieve at will, nor in steady step-by-step instalments.

What we can do now is **prepare**, patiently explain the revolutionary conception of the democracy of workers' councils; and apply ourselves to democratising and reviving the organisations of the labour movement in line with the immediate tasks they face.

## **Militancy, Direct Action, Pickets, Methods of Struggle, General Strike**

Where a powerful revolutionary party is absent, and where its opposite, a bureaucratic, accommodationist Stalinist or Social Democratic party, has hegemony in the working class, then the rhythms and pulse-beats of capitalism itself regulate blindly the level of militancy of the working class. Whole arsenals of weapons of struggle can be forgotten and then rediscovered spontaneously when needed.

But the masses of the working class themselves, and not any elite, have been the great inventors of the methods of struggle they need — from the flying picket to the Soviet (Workers' Council). The revolutionary party learns from the class, and codifies and systematises its experience in a scientific Marxist way. Over time it is the custodian of the lessons of working class experience, and of a view of tactics and methods of struggle linked to the goal of working class liberation.

### **Strikes**

The strike is the first positive form of working class action. It is the first elementary form of action by the working class as a class for itself,

even though its goals may be locked firmly within capitalism. Generalised militancy can, by rousing workers and setting in motion self-controlling action, take workers beyond the initial goals of their initial mobilisation.

The picket is the rudimentary organised body for the self-protection of the class and the coercion of scabs. Immensely potent even in its most primitive form, it is the embryo of a working class force to smash the bourgeois state.

The flying picket can transform a situation of local or single-industry trench warfare, where the gigantic advantages of the bosses wear down the workers involved, into a class-wide mobilisation, drawing in other sections of the class in solidarity action. The miners used it thus in 1972.

The general strike (meaning by this an all-out strike, fighting to win, not demonstration or protest strikes) is the immediate and total confrontation of the working class and the bourgeoisie. Given a revolutionary working class party in a position of leadership, it is the prelude to armed insurrection, with a conscious goal of seizing power. Very often it leads to armed confrontation anyway.

In the modern period of domination of the working class movement by Social Democratic and Stalinist bureaucracies, the **spontaneous** general strike has emerged as the elemental form of self-assertion and reconquest of self-confidence by the working class. As in France, May 1968, it is aimed as much against the bureaucracies as against the bosses.

The occupation strike, localised, in an industry, or generalised as in France in 1968, challenges the very basis of the capitalist class's position in society — its right to dispose of its own property. On a mass scale, it is the most developed form of challenge to the ruling class short of an armed uprising to take, and hold, control of the whole of industry and society.

### **Lessons of struggle**

In 1969-74 in Britain the working class responded to attacks on it with a tremendous wave of militancy. It included mass pickets, flying pickets, occupations, and went right to the edge of a general strike.



Studying and assimilating the lessons of that experience, preparing to fuse them with future struggles — that task is for British revolutionaries what the analysis of the 1905 Revolution was for the Russian revolutionaries who achieved victory in 1917.

The answer to police intimidation of picket lines of six or seven is not retreat, but picket lines of six or seven hundred, prepared for self-defence.

No site, factory, pit or industry should accept its own isolation in struggle. Flying pickets, reaching out for support, can transform the struggle into general class struggle and ensure victory.

Seizures of factories have shown their effectiveness even when the factory in question is seen by the employers as no more than equipment to be sold off. Seizure of 'viable' plants can smash the employers' will to resist limited demands, and minimise the cost of victory to the workers involved.

### General Strike

General strike action may arise logically from the dialectic of class struggle even when the revolutionaries are still weak and cannot link it with a plan for armed insurrection. In conditions where the working class is militant and combative, and is faced with a sharp issue of immediate concern to the whole class, which leads to a high level of confrontation with the ruling class, the general strike can be the logical weapon just as strike action in a factory is logical for workplace grievances.

A general strike can win limited victories, without necessarily being an Armageddon. Only sectarians and faint-hearts will refuse to campaign boldly for a general strike when that is obviously the next step in the logic of class confrontation, a step to be evaded only on pain of ceding to the ruling class. Only pedants will lecture the working class: learn before you act; acquire clear revolutionary consciousness before you use revolutionary tactics.

The general strike is, however, a weapon qualitatively different from others. It may start from limited demands. But once in train it involves far higher stakes. An all-out general strike poses the question of power in

society. Once started, the escalation creates problems of self-administration, security of supplies, etc, which can quickly generate a working class network of social control, objectively counterposed to the semi-paralysed bourgeois state network.

Revolutionaries should not play light-mindedly with the general strike slogan. They should not abuse 'general strike' calls so that they become empty phrases counterposed to immediate action. They should not ignore the terrible results that can be produced by an ill-prepared and defeated general strike.

Nor should they tie a general strike call to parliamentary politics in a way that fails to grasp the revolutionary logic of a general strike (freak events like the Ulster Workers' Council strike of 1974 excluded).

Revolutionaries can initiate a general strike call on limited demands, but only on condition that they do not thereby cut across the future revolutionary logic of the general strike.

In a general strike, revolutionaries must lend their whole weight to making **conscious** the objective counterposition of workers' control to bourgeois control in society which the strike produces. They should promote working class action to develop that opposition to the point of open rupture and organised conflict — in which the organisation of the working class strives to suppress the bourgeois state. Even if that general strike is not the decisive showdown, we must strive to use it to the utmost for the revolutionary self-education of the working class.

In a general strike, the call for an election to 'settle the question' would be used by all reformists and reactionaries. Belief in parliamentary democracy, still very widespread, would give power to such a call. Revolutionaries who have tied their call for a general strike to petty demands (petty in relation to the scope of a general strike) linked to Parliamentary politics, would find their propaganda helping the right wing.

Governmental slogans linked to a general strike must be given a clear **extra-parliamentary** character, or they become fetters on class mobilisation.

Thus the calls for a 'general strike to bring down the Tories' in the 1971-74 period would have lined up those making the call with those trying to

sabotage the potentially revolutionary development of a general strike.

## The Trade Unions

The worker in capitalist society sells his or her labour power. In bargaining on wages and conditions, the industrial capitalist gains a monstrous advantage from his ownership of the means of production. To counter this, the workers, having only their labour power and its sale to ensure their means of survival, have **combined** in trade unions to bring their collective weight into the balance.

The resultant trade unions are the elemental organisations of the working class. Yet the working class can only liberate itself and fully ensure its conditions of life by transcending and overthrowing capitalism; whereas the trade unions are rooted in the conditions of existence of the working class **within** capitalist society.

The trade unions are, nevertheless, in advanced bourgeois-democratic capitalist societies, the bedrock organisations of the working class, indispensable for the defence of workers' interests. That is why any control or regulation of the unions by the bosses' state must be fought.

The I-CL will fight for the independence of the trade unions from **any** control by the bourgeois state, under any pretext whatsoever or under any government whatsoever. Experience of Stalinism has also made clear that the trade unions must remain independent of control by the **workers** state, except in cases of dire counter-revolutionary danger.

### The trade union bureaucracy

However, the unions, rooted in the daily conditions of the working class under capitalism, are permeated not only with the capitalist spirit of bargaining within the system, but also by more or less conscious agents of the capitalists — the full time official trade union bureaucracy.

The working class does not develop power and wealth organically, as part of a society it is destined to supplant and outgrow. Its nearest **organic** equivalent to the intellectual and political representatives which the pre-revolutionary

bourgeoisie threw up is the trade union bureaucrats.

But these bureaucrats (like all workers who have not made a conscious break to communist politics) are dominated by bourgeois ideas: indeed, they are a major channel for the consolidation of bourgeois ideas in the working class.

In addition, they normally earn considerably more than the average in the trade. They adopt a different, petty-bourgeois, mode of life, and they grow away from the conditions of life of the working class. Over the decades they have formed a distinct caste or stratum.

That caste lacks a direct, necessary allegiance to working class interests, and has no fundamental interests of its own. Consequently its general tendency is to work with the ruling class and the bosses' state against the working class, helping to run capitalism. Britain today is adequate illustration of that fact.

### Trade unions and the state

Long ago Leon Trotsky pointed out how the bourgeois state itself can to a large degree rest upon the trade unions which the working class threw up for self-defence.

"From the example of England, one sees very clearly how absurd it is to counterpose... the trade union organisation and the state organisation. In England more than anywhere else, the state rests upon the back of the working class... The mechanism is such that the bureaucracy is based directly on the workers, and the state indirectly, through the intermediary of the trade union bureaucracy".

Never was the relationship more transparent than now — and it is vital for capitalism. Faced with a challenge from Heath's government, which only followed the lead Wilson gave in 1969, the trade unions were a massive destabilising factor for capitalism.

They were led by men who adopted the convenient 'leftist' camouflage and were followed by masses of workers who felt a need to fight back.

The militant workers in their great majority did not understand that their direct action needed different politics from those of Jones, Scanlon, and

Expans  
poss  
Further

Refer to  
see the  
below

?

Benn. And there was no sizeable revolutionary organisation to convince them of that need. Now the unions which toppled Heath are the stoutest props of the very forces that Heath served to the best of his ability.

Yet a central lesson from the period of the struggles against 'In Place of Strife', the Industrial Relations Bill, and the Industrial Relations Act, was the importance of the official labour movement. Its ability to mobilise massively overshadowed any initiatives taken outside its channels. Even the 'spontaneous' eruption when the five dockers were jailed in 1972 would not have occurred without the involuntary preparatory work of the official movement. While not fetishising either the forms or the legalities of the official movement, we fight also the ultra-left dismissal of that movement.

The unions are merely the organised expression of the fact that so long as the working class bargains within the capitalist system it can at best exercise a negative veto. Because their horizons are restricted to bargaining, they cannot **overthrow**, supplant, supersede capitalism.

Their 'Sunday sermon', 'moral uplift' talk of socialism has no practical weight whatsoever (except to divert workers who might otherwise choose a more effective road to socialism). Their practical activity is bound by capitalism and its possibilities, its crises, and **its** — not the working class's — solutions.

### A Rank and File movement

There is an irreconcilable antagonism between the functioning of the trade union bureaucracy as a distinct stratum, and the interests of the working class. Revolutionaries long ago recognised this, and set out to build a mass rank and file movement to fight the bureaucracy and to make the unions serve as instruments of the working class.

Only such a movement can link the various struggles, and guided by revolutionary Marxist ideas, turn the trade unions into reliable instruments of working class interests, independent of the bosses' state.

Only a battle by revolutionary Marxists within the unions can create such a rank and file movement on

a solid basis.

The official Labour Party is symbiotically entwined with the trade union bureaucracy. The Communist Party gave up the struggle for rank and file organisation against the bureaucracy 40 years ago, having wrecked the great Minority Movement. They opted instead for attempts to gain positions within the bureaucracy. Where they have got positions, they have either become bureaucratic scabs (in the NUM and the ETU in the 1950s) or prisoners of the bureaucratic machine.

We do not advocate **breakaway unions**. But we will not shirk a break with the bureaucracy should we be strong enough to push them to a break. The Transitional Programme of 1938 summed up the experience so adequately that nothing can be usefully added, except to say that concrete analysis must determine our course of action in any given situation.

"Therefore, the sections of the Fourth International should always strive, not only to renew the top leadership of the trade unions, boldly and resolutely in critical moments advancing new militant leaders in place of routine functionaries and careerists, but also to create in all possible instances independent militant organisations corresponding more closely to the tasks of mass struggle against bourgeois society; and, if necessary, not flinching even in the face of a direct break with the conservative apparatus of the trade unions.

"If it be criminal to turn one's back on mass organisations for the sake of fostering sectarian fictions, it is no less so passively to tolerate subordination of the revolutionary mass movement to the control of openly reactionary or disguised conservative ('progressive') bureaucratic cliques.

"Trade unions are not ends in themselves; they are but means along the road to proletarian revolution".

We do not advocate the creation of factionally exclusive pseudo-rank and file movements which are no more than adjuncts of sects, such as the WRP (All Trade Union Alliance) and SWP-IS (Rank and File Organising Committee). We advocate the creation of militant fractions which can eventually link up into a national rank and file movement.

Each such fraction will elaborate policies for its specific industry. They must, on all past experience, include the following **general** guidelines.

[a] Total independence from the capitalist state.

[b] A programme of complete democratisation for each union, ranging from the already relatively democratic AUEW to the semi-police-state ETU.

We oppose postal balloting, and counterpose, not voting in poorly-attended branch meetings, but workplace voting.

[c] Full-time officials should receive the average wage; should be elected and open to fast and easy recall; and should at all times be instantly accountable to the members.

No secret negotiations.

[d] A fight for the creation of industrial unions, and for the renovation of the trade union organisation within the factories, through factory committees and rejuvenated trades councils

## The Labour Party

The central task of communists in the whole period up the seizure of power is the transformation of the labour movement from a reformist to a revolutionary movement. The British political party of reformism is the Labour Party.

The official Parliamentary Left of the Labour Party is as much part of the bourgeois political machine as the openly liberal-Labour Right. Completely unprepared to act independently from the labour bureaucracy, it is thereby firmly encased in reformism. The I-CL rejects all analyses locating the roots of Labour reformism with right-wing petty bourgeois politicians at the top of the party.

The Labour Party, as a political party — i.e. in its programme, its practice, its political record in government, and the class allegiance of its controlling leadership — must be defined as a bourgeois party, albeit one organically linked to the organised working class. The various theories that it is a 'bourgeois workers party', in the sense of having two equal and parallel class natures, involve theoretical eclecticism and evasion, and polit-

ical opportunism.

The Labour Party is best described as a lever extended by the reformist trade unions into the bourgeois Parliament, under the pressure of ruling class attacks. It has never risen above bourgeois politics. Its fundamental business is bargaining of a trade-union type on a society-wide scale. In Government it acts as a loyal steward of the capitalist system.

Over 70 years it has consolidated as a political machine of the bourgeoisie, conditioning, indoctrinating, and miseducating the working class. Yet it remains tightly tied to the working class.

In organisation it is **usually** a withered, old, feeble sect, yet influential out of all proportion to its active members, backed and nourished as it is by the organs of bourgeois society.

Social-democratic parties such as the Labour Party depend on inertia. One of the central purposes of demanding that the Labour Party act contrary to its nature, but in accordance with the felt needs of millions of workers, is to cut through this inertia and undermine one of the props of capitalist society.

The Labour Party is a party which serves capitalism, but which can only do so because it is based on the organised working class movement, many elements of which want to bury capitalism. In that contradiction lies the potential of transcending Labourism.

The 'open valve' connection between the Labour Party and the Unions allows for the possibility of large scale working class participation in the party.

### The Labour Party and the renovation of the labour movement

We relate to the Labour Party, not simply by denouncing it, but by attempting to advance the working class towards outgrowing and breaking through the particular stage in its development represented by Labourism.

We defend the right of all varieties of socialist thought to exist and organise within the Labour Party without bans or proscriptions.

To imagine a wholesale 'taking over' of the Labour Party by a roused working class would be utopian,

and might be diversionary. The reformists know the value of holding a monopoly for their ideas within the mass party based on the trade unions, and are attempting to reimpose such a monopoly by abrogating Labour Party democracy. However, the working class and its bedrock organisations, the trade unions, are far from powerless to affect the Labour Party from within.

The Constituency Labour Parties are partly based on affiliated unions. Workers should demand that they be made accountable to the working class, that their resources, premises, clerical facilities, be made available to striking workers, that Labour councillors should not be a law unto themselves, and should be replaced if they insist on being so.

Labour Party organisations should be turned outwards, extending beyond electoralism, to give their aid and participation to every working class battle, to mould their activities to the needs and the tempo of the class struggle.

In certain areas of the country, parts of Wales, perhaps parts of Scotland, such ties exist between the Party and the working class that the CLPs can be really 'taken over' and transformed into genuine organs of working class struggle.

To extrapolate from this the idea of a wholesale 'take-over' or develop a national tactic aimed at that goal, would be to fall into illusions. No less crippling, however, is to fail to see the Labour Party as it is, in many respects far from clearly delineated from the trade unions, linked to the unions, a central part of the whole labour movement which we must set ourselves the task of reorganising and regenerating.

### **Direct action and reformism**

The political battle against reformism involves also following it into the organisational lair it has created for itself in the Labour Party. The recent experience of sects like the SWP(IS), believing that spontaneous militancy would bypass the Labour Party, shows, yet again that the Labour Party cannot be ignored.

The Labour Party generally depends on and fosters passivity in the working class; nevertheless it has

historically shown a remarkable resilience, a remarkable ability to appear as the 'political' complement of industrial direct action and thus to 'absorb' it.

The political condition of Labourism must be transcended, and that process will certainly include the flooding of the CLPs with aroused trade union delegates, and a struggle within them.

Very often the bedrock struggle in the unions has as its logical extension the taking of the struggle into the CLPs. Only sectarian purists and formalists will hesitate to take it there, when conditions or opportunities demand it or allow it.

### **Accountability**

In the Labour Party as in the trade unions, the fight for accountability and recallability can have a tremendous impact. CLPs should establish the right to force their MPs or councillors to resign; they should have a real and serious re-selection before each election; they should fight against material privileges for incumbent MPs or councillors.

They should support demands which open up the 'top' of the Labour Party to greater accountability to the rank and file (PLP to be accountable to Conference, Conference to elect Party leader, etc.) without becoming ensnared in illusions of democratic control of the bourgeois state through democratic Labour Party control of a Labour Government.

A battle in the CLP, drawing in delegates from the affiliated trade unions, to force Labour-controlled councils to side with labour over cuts, over housing, over employment and wages policy, can have a tremendous revolutionising effect. In a period of sharp struggle, a reformist worker who takes the defence of workers' conditions seriously can be educated in a major way by being drawn into struggle within the reformist organisation — that is, out of the political inertia and passivity that is so essential an element in maintaining reformism.



# For working-class solidarity!

Unity of all workers, irrespective of age, race, sex, national origin or creed is essential for maximum effectiveness in struggle; and the battle against all forms of reactionary oppression and discrimination is a necessary precondition for the working class to make itself fit to rule in society, and to draw to its side the best elements of the non-proletarian oppressed layers.

Prejudice or discrimination against blacks and women, toleration of exceptional exploitation for young workers — these not only disrupt working class struggle, but are the worst marks of the crippling backwardness which capitalism and its conditions of life stamp on sections of workers.

## The Emancipation of Women

In making the working class pay the cost of its crisis, the bourgeoisie directs double blows against the **women** of the working class. The first to be thrown out of their jobs, they are also forced back into the home to take the responsibility of caring for the young, the old, and the sick which the state imposes on them through the social service cuts.

The modest advances in **formal** equality, through anti-discrimination laws, are completely outweighed by these attacks. Evasion, prevarication, and obstruction in the implementation of these laws, regulated as it is by capitalist state tribunals, reduces their value still further.

But working class women are beginning to fight, not only for the limited equality supposedly guaranteed by the law, but also for **full** equality for working class women — and thus for women of all classes.

The real emancipation of women means not only formal equality, but also, most fundamentally, enabling women to free themselves from the oppressive limitations imposed by the family. It thus requires the **socialisation of housework**.

Women's oppression pre-dates capitalism, reaching back to the beginnings of private property and class society; and it will not disappear on the

morrow of the proletarian revolution. But capitalism has integrated the age-old subjugation of women into its own specific methods of oppression and exploitation; and the 'free association of producers', with collective ownership of the means of production, is the necessary **material basis** for women's liberation. Equally, the active participation of working-class women, fighting against both their own specific oppression and the general oppression of their class, is an essential precondition for the proletarian revolution. The role of women industrial workers in that double fight is massively underlined by the big increase in their numbers during and after world war 2.

The I-CL fights for full equality for women in the right to work, in pay and opportunity, in law, and within the labour movement. It demands legal and financial independence for women, and complete freedom of divorce. It supports positive discrimination to redress the social oppression of women. It fights for free contraception and abortion on demand. It demands free 24-hour nurseries, state financed and community-controlled, good-quality communal canteens, laundries, and cleaning services.

And the I-CL fights to draw women in as full and equal participants in working class struggle. To this end, it supports women's autonomous organisation against their own special oppression, especially in women's caucuses in the trade unions.

The I-CL fights within the women's movement and within the labour movement for a mass working-class based women's movement — and within the process of building that movement, it fights for communist ideas, so that this working-class based women's movement should also have working-class **politics**. Our perspective is of a communist women's movement, politically led by but organisationally autonomous from a communist party.

To build that movement, also necessary is sharp political struggle against bourgeois and petty-bourgeois feminism, which preach the sisterhood of women of all classes and attempt to subordinate the class questions to questions of women's subjective oppression and utopian/reformist schemes for ending that oppression without resort to the class struggle.

## Youth

Young workers are especially vulnerable under capitalism. Within the family they are often stifled. The education system is an obstacle race, grading them to fit the stratifications of capitalist society — irrespective of interests, abilities, desires.

In periods of recession masses of youth go straight from school to the dole. Those who get apprenticeships work at a pittance for years longer than necessary for the learning process, as the capitalist extracts an extra period of cheap labour.

Most trade unions make no provisions for recruiting youth into active membership. The dull and sluggish routine repels most youth, and stifles others.

The British labour movement, sluggish and conservative as it is, has failed again and again to build a youth movement. Youth attracted to socialism in the various Labour youth movements over the last 50 years have naturally been serious, combative, self-sacrificing, and, to the degree they want socialism, full of ardour to fight for it. Movement after movement has been balked by the bureaucracy and/or exploited and misled by the Stalinists or by pseudo-Trotskyist sects.

A mass youth movement must be built. We stand for:

Full trade union rights for young workers, including the right to strike. Special provisions for youth in the trade unions. Creation of junior workers' committees. The right for young workers, unemployed since leaving school to join the unions and to receive unemployment benefit at the adult rate.

Further education opportunities for all young workers. Unlimited access to further education. An end to the use of apprentices as cheap labour. Ban on all work for apprentices not connected with the apprenticeship; reduced periods of apprenticeship. Trade union committees with youth representation to supervise apprentice training.

Full pay at 16.

A democratic Labour youth movement — free from the bureaucracy and the dead hand of the pseudo-marxists. Down with the bureaucratic control of Transport House

and the pseudo-democratic centralist regime in the Labour Party Young Socialists maintained by the 'Militant'.

## Gay oppression

Communism does not oppose individual liberty. In fact, by rationally regulating economic conditions, it seeks to ensure the widest possible personal freedom for the great majority.

Discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or preference is therefore as repugnant to communist morality as it is to elementary democratic morality. The I-CL is totally opposed to, and will fight against, discrimination against homosexuals and homosexuality in employment, in law, in the labour movement, in education (especially sex education), and in all spheres of society. We say that neither the State, nor the Church, nor the education system, nor even the labour movement, has any right to dictate to people on their sexual needs and habits.

The practical logic of struggle can convince workers of the need to put aside sexual, religious, racial and other discrimination in our ranks in the interest of the common battle against the capitalists. Yet discrimination 'set aside' can re-surface; and there are unfortunately few grounds for supporting that this logic can generate a strong class fight against gay oppression. Indeed, discrimination by workmates is often a greater problem for gay workers than discrimination by employers.

Although rational and unprejudiced social attitudes to sexuality will only be developed with the decay of the stifling framework of the family; although prejudices against gays certainly interconnect closely with the 'sex roles' ideology which is linked in with the family; the struggle to end discrimination on grounds of sexual preference is not sustained by a powerful anti-capitalist dynamic such as there is in the women's movement. In revolt against the social and economic subjugation of half of humanity. Indeed, specifically gay movements tend almost inexorably either to bourgeois pressure-group politics ('Campaign for Homosexual Equality') or to 'life-style' politics ('Gay

Liberation Front').

All the more necessary, therefore, for communists to conduct persistent and uncompromising propaganda 'against the grain' on this question.

### Against racism

Capitalism, which revived slavery on a mass scale in the 'New World', and confined it to blacks, created modern racism.

The exploitation of Black Africa and India, and the collusion of the working class of the advanced countries in that exploitation and in the back-up work of bloody repression, underpinned it. A combination of large-scale immigration of black and Indian workers into Britain during the boom, creating a scapegoat target for racism, and the permanent uncertainty which capitalism imposes on the white working class, perpetuates it.

It is the most foul, anti-socialist and degrading scar which capitalism and imperialism have inflicted on the consciousness of the native working class — truly the mark of Cain.

It must be fought, without quarter and without any concession to the septic 'tender spots' of white workers.

We must explain that it is in the white workers' own interest to fight for working class unity, and that racism is now the breeding ground for a fascism that could ultimately threaten the whole labour movement.

But there can be no restraint in denouncing racism **as such**. We cannot **confine** ourselves to presenting the anti-racist case in crude self-interest terms. In the short term it may not seem to be in the self-interest of white workers to defend blacks.

When, as has happened, whites scab against black strikers, the trade union body or socialist organisation that does not side unequivocally with the blacks is itself scabbing and betraying — and guilty of racism.

We demand:

- No discrimination at work or within the unions (including social clubs).
- Campaigns to recruit immigrant workers to trade unions (using leaflets in the immigrants' own languages); and the removal of all barriers (e.g. discriminatory regulations for shop stewards such as the 2-year

rule) to the fullest participation of immigrant workers in the trade unions (including the production of foreign language union papers).

Full equality in pay, conditions, status, grading, training, and further education, access to skilled jobs and promotion opportunities;

Support for any demands which black or immigrant workers make for educational and special religious rights (holy day paid leave, religious dress, the wearing of turbans etc.);

Support for black caucuses within unions and factories (recognising particularly the importance of the specially close relationship between black and immigrant workers and their communities);

Against all immigration laws and controls or discriminatory legislation;

Opposition to the offshoots of such laws — the contract labour system, voucher system, and deportation;

For the physical defence of black workers under attack, and labour movement support for black self-defence;

For the automatic endorsement of industrial action by black and immigrant workers whether they are in the majority or not.

Removal of open racists from positions in the labour movement;

We oppose racism wherever it is practised — e.g. housing, education, the media — and argue for labour movement involvement in campaigns against racism in other areas than employment and the labour movement itself.

We fight for the closest solidarity in struggle of black advanced workers and white advanced workers, and oppose any reliance on the bourgeois state 'race relations' strategy, directed at managing racial discrimination at a level acceptable for the bourgeoisie and at consolidating a conservative collaborationist leadership in the black communities.

### Migrant workers

The development of capitalism has led to changes in the structure and recruitment of the labour force in western Europe and partly in the USA.

Migrant workers from less developed countries and regions are recruited on contract to do the more menial and worse-paid work; these workers thus



serve as a reserve pool of labour. This dispensable labour suffers not only from racial discrimination but also from discrimination due to laws on immigration, citizenship, nationality, social security, etc. This legal insecurity makes them prey to employers, racketeers, slum landlords and the police. It is made worse by the indifference and even hostility of the trade unions and the reformist parties to the plight of migrant workers.

We must stand for full civil rights for migrant workers, including the automatic right to stay at will and the right to vote. We must combat trade union opposition to migrant workers, e.g. the TUC's call to cut work permits in the catering industry. We must counterpose trade union aid for migrant workers in the form of language courses, foreign language papers, welfare schemes etc. We support interim measures which will alleviate the insecurity and oppression of migrant workers, making clear that the measures themselves are not sufficient. Thus we support the call for workers designated as 'aliens' to receive the same welfare rights as EEC migrant workers.

We stand for the free movement of peoples and oppose all laws which hinder and prevent this.

### **Fascism**

Fascism is a mass movement, chiefly of the petty bourgeoisie and lumpen-proletariat, mobilised on a pseudo-radical, nationalist, and, usually, racist programme which, though invariably an irrational and therefore unrealisable mish-mash, is **practically** directed against the independently-organised working class.

Fascism has been used by the ruling class as an auxiliary to the forces of the state, to club down the independent movement of the working class, and to establish a totalitarian state.

It is not a weapon the ruling class resorts to readily — but its last resort against the working class. It becomes a force and is given serious ruling-class support only after the working class has attempted to take power and failed or been betrayed; or, as in Germany, where any — even the most servile — organised labour movement stands in the way of drastic

measures the desperate ruling class needs.

Fascism in Britain today is only in its incubation stage. Yet it would be foolish to ignore it. At present it grows mainly on the dung-heap of anti-black racism, and partly on anti-IRA (sometimes anti-Irish) feeling. Nevertheless its growth in the last five years, and especially the last year, has been more spectacular than the growth of the revolutionary left.

Fascism is not a matter for debate but for struggle and action. Its growth is only possible at the cost of a threat to the life of the labour movement; its triumph would spell destruction for our whole movement.

Here and now its existence means organised violence against racial minorities, Irish immigrants, and sections of the Left.

Fascists must be denied 'free speech', the right to meet, the right to publish, the right to work — the right to exist! They must be driven out of the trade unions. Mass working class mobilisation must meet their rallies. They must be driven off the streets wherever possible. Selected and trained squads of militants must be organised to disperse and rout the fascists.

Direct action is the necessary response, not the diversionary and illusory demand for the bourgeois state to ban the fascists.

Side by side with this, a propaganda battle against racism, and against the usual prejudices against the IRA within the labour movement, is crucial if we are to clear away the dung-heap which nourishes the nascent fascist movement.

### **Nationalism in Britain**

The weakening of British capitalism, and the failures of the official labour movement, have generated a number of nationalisms within Britain: Scottish, Welsh. These differ fundamentally from the nationalism of the Catholic population of North-East Ireland, because throughout modern history these sectors, unlike Ireland, have been more or less equal partners in the British capitalist state, in its colonial and imperial phases. The new sub-nationalisms are reactionary, like British nationalism as a whole.

Rooted not in legitimate grievances

of oppressed nations, but in a general frustration, to which they respond with a petty-bourgeois spirit of particularism, parochialism, and the mean and narrow search for sectional advantages (North Sea Oil!) — such views have nothing in common with a working class outlook.

They have nothing to contribute to drawing together the workers of England, Scotland, and Wales, in real fraternal unity.

They are a disruption of the labour movement, a drive to divide and segment the real unity, necessary to Scottish, Welsh and English workers, which now exists. Their logic is regional fragmentation of the organised labour movement, from the trade unions to the Labour Party.

These sub-nationalisms are pernicious, not only in their openly right-wing expressions, but also where they find influence in the left, for example in the Scottish Labour Party and the IMG's adaptation to Scottish nationalism.

'Left' Scottish nationalism looks to John Maclean. Maclean was a great martyr and fighter against capitalism, the British Karl Liebknecht. But his lapse into the belief that a fusion of a Scottish independence movement with communism could be a lever for disrupting the British Empire was a tragic and **entirely** negative experience of early British communism.

We endorse the **general** democratic right of self-determination, and oppose the Tories and Tribunites who would deny that right to Scotland, for example, by rigged referendums. A referendum on the future of Scotland (or Wales) should be conducted in Scotland (or Wales), and not also include English voters. That denial, rooted in conservative Great British nationalism, will help, not hinder, the spreading of the nationalist poison.

But within Britain the I-CL puts all its emphasis on opposition to nationalism and particularism. At present we oppose secession and separation; when and if there is an expressed majority in Scotland (or Wales) for separation, we support their right to separate.

### **The Socialist United States of Europe, the EEC, and Comecon**

In the advanced capitalist countries the nation state has long been an

anachronism. The gigantic modern development of the forces of production requires far broader arenas for operation than the nation states. The restrictions of different national tariffs, state regulations and legal systems, are a hindrance to the development of industries which can operate efficiently only on a continental or world scale. Already the international corporations reach out of and across the borders of the nation state, creation of capitalism's yesterday and a roadblock to the socialist tomorrow.

Nowhere has the retrograde character of the nation state been so incontrovertibly demonstrated as in Europe. The competition of Europe's major states has twice this century sparked a world imperialist conflagration.

The nation-state structures in Europe have survived long beyond their natural historic time only because of the successive defeats of the working class.

The capitalist states of Western Europe have in the last decades taken hesitant but definite steps, through the European Economic Community, to loosen the strangling cords of the nation state.

However, under capitalism these attempts come up against definite limits. This is clearly the case with the EEC: competition between national capitals has not ceased but has been carried into a new arena.

The uneven development of the capitalist states within the EEC has led it into a serious crisis. The stronger economies within the EEC are no longer prepared to subsidise the weaker ones, such as Italy and Britain, through the EEC budget, and at the same time the agricultural policy is leading to ever greater tensions. The original aim of economic and monetary union by 1980 now appears quite unrealisable.

The Socialist United States of Europe is our answer, both to the reactionary nationalisms of the major European powers, and to the EEC, their hesitant and inadequate step away from political and economic national limitations. The proletariat must unite Europe in a free socialist federation — all Europe, East as well as West.

The reactionary character of Stalinism is shown also in its failure to organise a federation of the East Euro-

pean states, in their nationalism and semi-autarchic economic policies.

The working class of every state, forced to fight within the borders of "its own" nation on a day to day basis, must inscribe on its banner the slogan of the Socialist United States of Europe.

While recognising that the class struggle still takes place largely within national arenas; while striving to make the revolution in "its own" arena; while rejecting any interpretation of the Socialist United States slogan as meaning revolution should wait until an all-Europe simultaneous workers' revolution — the working class must educate itself to think as an internationalist class.

It must, now, forge trade union and political links throughout Europe.

Such links are, and will increasingly become, necessary for the self-defence of the working class. So backward is the British working class movement and especially its official left wing, that the bourgeoisie and their right-wing social-democratic lackeys have closer and more binding links with their counterparts in the EEC than the working class has with its European sisters and brothers.

The campaign against British membership of the EEC was a massive diversion within the British labour movement, the self-injection with more chauvinist poison by a movement already sick with insularism.

The working class has no interest in vain attempts to establish British national independence or autarchy. British nationalism is **anti-working class**, a seed-bed of reactionary ideas. It nourishes racism, and also the lynch pin idea of British reformism — the illusion of British parliamentary exceptionalism.

All the most backward aspects of the British labour movement found their concentrated expression in the left-reformist 'alternative to the EEC': a siege economy with import controls. And the opportunism of the revolutionary left found its epitome in their accommodation to such ideas.

Nowhere has a light-minded, opportunist, and irresponsible attitude to serious revolutionary principles been so glaringly manifested as in the prostitution of the slogan of the Socialist United States of Europe by the revolutionary left. They used

the banner of internationalism to cover over the chauvinist mire in which they waded, and still wade.

The International-Communist League fights to reclaim that banner for its true purpose:

Against British insularity and nationalism!

Against the feeble federalism of the 'Little Europe' of the capitalist EEC!

Against the continued Balkanisation and national disunity of the states of Stalinist Europe!

For the Socialist United States of all Europe!

## Ireland: For self- determination

Ireland has a 'British problem'. She has had it in differing forms for 800 years of pillage, genocide, tyrannous rule, deliberate economic spoliation, unrelenting interference, and attempted domination.

Failing in a drive to exterminate the native population and replace them with colons, as the American Indians were to be exterminated, Britain and her Protestant Ascendancy caste in Ireland for a century imposed a regime on the natives which was the 'apartheid' of the 18th century (the Penal Laws) — against Catholics as Catholics rather than, as in South Africa, against blacks as blacks.

### Partition

Failing ultimately to quell the incessant revolts of the nationalist majority, Britain mobilised, organised and armed the descendants of the colons of the 17th century in the one small area of Ireland where they were a majority of the population — the north-east. Mobilised, roused, supported by the British Tory Party and backed by a mutiny — of officers — in the British Army, they were used first in an attempt to prevent independence for any part of Ireland. When that proved impossible, the fact of their mobilisation and militancy was used to justify partitioning Ireland —

thus serving Britain's interest in maintaining a stranglehold on Ireland and the military bases which were then (1920) vital to protect Britain's flank from the sea.

It was not a partition that clearly separated 'green' and 'orange' Ireland, allowing each to develop independently. The given population distribution made that impossible, then and now.

In the south, it created a state that rapidly degenerated into a Catholic, priest-ridden, conservative mockery of the Republic of Tone, the Fenians, Pearse, Mellows, and Connolly.

In the North it created a sectarian Protestant state, entirely autonomous in its internal affairs until 1969 or even 1972. Entirely artificial in its boundaries, which were carved out by the British administration in Ireland, the Six County state imprisoned against their will 40% of its population, the Catholic/nationalist section. A smaller unit, despite the advantage of less Catholics, was deemed non-viable.

### Orangeism

Virulent sectarianism, the brutal beating down of the large nationalist minority by the Orange pogromists, with the aid of the British Army, was the central core of this state, and the precondition for its coming into existence. For 50 years it was to be the cement that held together the majority, workers, capitalists and landlords, in a bloc against the minority and against the rest of Ireland — against the vast majority of the Irish people.

Economic competition, first on the land and then also in industry, had been the profane and vulgar bedrock underpinning the religious and political disputes in North East Ireland. The Orange working class bore the same relation to the Catholics as the labour aristocracy in other advanced capitalist countries to the most oppressed workers. The Orange Order organised and embodied the self-serving Freemason-type bonds of the Protestant population. Marginal privileges, especially amidst economic stagnation, almost permanent depression, and general poverty, served to bind Orange workers to the ruling class and to make them see their

Catholic fellow workers as competitors and a threat. Within the ground-rules of sectarian and communal competition sometimes they were a threat.

The establishment of the Six County state put a malevolent instrument of patronage, manipulation and oppression into the hands of 'Loyalism' and the Orange Order. For 50 years half a million Catholics were imprisoned as second class citizens within that state.

### The Six County State

British colonialism had created two distinct types of colony within the island of Ireland. In the North East a heavy concentration of colonists established a planter society embracing all classes, on the model of the white settlements on the North American continent. In the rest of Ireland, colonists were a very thin, exploitative, administrative, landlord stratum.

Partition cut the island into two states roughly corresponding to the two types of colony — very roughly, for the north-eastern colonists had never fully exterminated the 'natives' who, over the centuries, moved back from the heartlands, even into Belfast itself. In Northern Ireland, partition created a state — albeit a subsection of the British ('United Kingdom') state — best understood as a settler state. (And such states, however artificial, tend to have a remarkable durability, once created).

Despite the length of time that the Protestants have existed in north east Ireland, the Orange state has had the structure, the internal communal relations, and the right wing and racist political dynamic of states such as South Africa, 'Rhodesia' (Zimbabwe), and 'Israel'.

### The Alternatives

The situation within the Six County state is best described as one of chronic communal antagonism, with the hostile communities so enmeshed and intertwined geographically that only three relations are remotely possible. **Either** Orange hegemony; **or** open conflict and war; **or** a loosening of the situation and an end to Orange Ascendancy by integr-

ating the area into the wider context of the whole of Ireland.

Integration with Britain will solve nothing.

Partition has created what James Connolly said it would, north and south of the Border — "a carnival of reaction".

Britain's attempt, in the interest of normal relations with the Southern bourgeoisie, to desectarianise the Northern state, has produced a revolt by its 'Loyalists'. In its political and social essence, this is no different from the revolt of the 'Rhodesian' whites.

Britain's commitment to maintaining the Six County state has inexorably led it, despite an initial honeymoon with the Catholic population in 1969, into attempting to beat down the Catholics — for the logic of the situation is such that any serious political initiatives of the Catholics, even for civil rights, challenges the Six County state and Partition. Within the Partition structure there is **no solution**.

Even should power-sharing be established and violence be quelled or fade-away, the result would only be institutionalised sectarianism; details modified, the essence unchanged. Sectarianism was programmed into the Northern Ireland state at conception; it will remain its predominant feature until that state is destroyed and the repeatedly expressed demand of the vast majority of the Irish people as a whole for a united Ireland is realised.

Britain is not playing a classic imperialist or colonial role in Northern Ireland — it is playing out only a grim parody of its imperial past. In a quite deliberate and fully-understood use of the situation in Northern Ireland to train the British Army in techniques of civilian control and military rule, the British ruling class is consciously rehearsing one option for its future relations with the British working class.

The revolt in Northern Ireland is of a minority of that state's population, confronting the one million Orange population and the might of the British Army, and with little support and much official harassment from the 26 Counties. As a purely nationalist struggle, it faces severe limits. The tragedy of the Northern Ireland

situation is that the supremacism of the Orange working class has made inevitable the limited nationalist character of the struggle.

The Republican Movement wants unity; in its politics it is radical-populist. The small possibility of a revolutionary reunification of Ireland, other than as part of a communist revolution, is not the fault of the Six County minority. Nor is it a reason for British socialists to refuse to support the struggle of the IRA. Posing the destruction of the Six County state, it is a progressive struggle.

Those who need to pretend it is a classical imperialist situation, or who ignore the shift in the relationship between Britain and the 26 Counties — a relatively advanced capitalist country, formally the equal of Britain within the EEC, and likely to take the opposite side on conflicts such as over the Common Agricultural Policy — are not Marxist revolutionaries but unstable poseurs and demagogues.

Nevertheless, Britain is not in 'Northern Ireland' as a 'peacekeeper'. Its fundamental role is to maintain the pernicious Partition 'settlement'. To do that it has even fostered the sectarian Orange para-military force, the UDA, which is the major force threatening a sectarian blood-bath and much else besides. Every step it takes in building the British Army reserve force in Northern Ireland, the UDR, is a strengthening of sectarianism, for the UDR is a Protestant sectarian body.

### **Troops Out Now!**

Britain never did any good in Ireland — on the contrary, some of the worst atrocities in the vile history of colonialism and imperialism were committed by her there. She is doing no good now. Britain created and perpetuated most of the problems the government claim to be trying to solve. The Irish people, and the Irish people only, can solve their own problems, and British interference is still one of their main problems.

The International-Communist League fights for:

- Self-determination for Ireland as a whole.
- Unconditional and immediate withdrawal of the British Army from Ireland.

□ Support of the Republicans fighting to drive the British Army out, and support of their right to strike at military targets in Ireland or Britain.

□ The Republican prisoners in Britain and the Six Counties to be treated as prisoners of war.

□ Massive indemnities from the British state to a united Irish state.

The I-CL also seeks the closest possible links and active collaboration — politically and ideologically — with those fighting for a **workers' republic** in Ireland — that is, for the total independence of Ireland from British and international capitalism, and its native Irish counterparts and agents.

## The Bourgeois State

### State and Revolution

The State is the monopoly of permanently organised violence, exercised through armed and unarmed bodies of men and women, the enactment and enforcement of laws, and a monopoly of armaments and places of detention.

In every society in which serious class antagonisms exist, the state is a weapon of the rulers to repress the ruled, in greater or lesser degree, openly or covertly, gently or with savage brutality.

The working class must smash the state power of the bourgeoisie, dismantling and destroying it, and replace it by a workers' state: a regime of workers' councils, with frequent elections and the right of speedy recall of delegates.

The act of the disarming of the bourgeoisie and its agents, and the assumption of power by the working class, will not be done gradually or peacefully.

Whatever degree of decrepitude the bourgeois state may reach before revolution, the process will finish with a sharp qualitative break — and inevitably there will be violent resistance, of greater or lesser extent, by the ruling class. At all times revolutionaries must fight the crippling myth

of the neutrality of the bourgeois state.

### The Abolition of the Standing Army

The Fabians and the Stalinists retail illusions in a gradual transformation of the bourgeois state and its peaceful seizure. They speak of 'Seizure', or of 'assuming control democratically through a Parliamentary majority', rather than destroying the bourgeois state, because they do not understand the qualitative difference in the workers' state or the specific feature of that state, workers' councils.

We denounce such illusions. But revolutionaries do put forward specific demands which have an immediate meaning for the problems of our class now, and which, to the degree that some of them can be realised in struggle, will weaken the ruling class and prepare to make the final conflict as bloodless as possible.

We demand the abolition of the standing army, navy and air force, and their replacement by a workers' militia controlled by the trade unions, with training facilities and finance provided by the government.

The labour movement cannot afford to ignore the lessons of countries like Chile or Greece. The Army is a weapon in the hands of the ruling class.

In Chile, despite decades of a uniquely non-political and constitutional aloofness, the army has done the same work for the ruling class as Hitler's fascists did for the German ruling class.

In Britain, sections of the Army openly discuss involvement in politics, and anticipate a future 'call' to save the day for the ruling class. In the North of Ireland the Army is already running a whole province as a military dictatorship.

Nor would there be any grounds for complacency if the Army were a conscript army and not an army of mercenaries. The Army which organised the Greek coup in 1967 was a conscript army. The Army which did such bloody work for French imperialism in Indochina and Algeria was a conscript army, as was the British army of occupation in many colonies.

In any revolutionary situation the discipline of the bourgeois state

forces will begin to break up. In France in 1968 even the specially-trained anti-strike para-military force, the CRS, declared itself unwilling to be used against the strikers.

Yet no-one could be more foolish than the revolutionary who would allow such facts to divert us from the goal of the independent arming of the workers and the total break-up of the existing armed forces.

In Portugal in 1975, the bourgeoisie to a large extent lost control over the army. Many of the officers declared themselves for the socialist revolution — and not always insincerely. Soldiers' assemblies gave orders to the officers, rather than vice versa.

Yet the military hierarchy remained in place, even though it was for the moment largely 'inoperable'; and when the time came the bourgeoisie was able to tighten the strings of discipline and purge the recalcitrant regiments.

### **Democratic rights for soldiers**

While making the central demand the replacement of the standing army by a militia, we also demand here and now full democratic rights for soldiers within the existing army, including 'trade union' rights, the dissolution of officers' privileges, the election of officers, etc.

The Army is made up of workers in uniform, many genuine 'economic conscripts'. We are concerned with destructuring and disrupting its command structure, with breaking the automatic hold of the officers, with making the Army as little as possible a pliant tool in the hands of the ruling class.

If 'the bayonets begin to think', to demand, to question, the ruling class is in trouble. For example, democratic and trade union rights for soldiers would probably lead to mass refusals to accept postings in Northern Ireland

### **The Police**

The labour movement must demand the disbandment of the Special Patrol Groups, the political police in the Special Branch, and the police detachments trained in anti-picket or para-military techniques. This is only attainable by disbanding the whole police force, for **any** capitalist

police could quickly be trained in special anti-working class techniques.

There would still be the sort of police work which the media presents as the whole of police activity — 'crime prevention', crowd and traffic control. The British government advocated community policing in the former no-go areas in Northern Ireland when they couldn't get in. An excellent idea — for Britain!

While the police force still exists, we must demand trade union rights within it. The police force, like the Army, is not a section of the labour movement. For the ruling class, however, every such right it is forced to concede is a surrender of its prerogatives, a weakening of its control, and potential disruption of one of its weapons.

It would be suicidal to rely on the eventual neutralisation or good will of any section of the armed services or police force, or on anything other than working class strength — but foolish not to utilise every weapon or contradiction against the ruling class.

We demand that the Labour Government immediately ban the various 'Securitor'-type private armies which are ready-made nests for breeding future fascist forces. At present they are often used as gangsters against squatters. The trade union movement must black the personnel of these organisations.

These proposals would virtually cripple the state. Can such demands be met? Struggle will decide.

### **Workers' defence**

The ruling class studies and learns from its experiences. For the ruling class, like the working class, the years 1969 to 1974 and especially 1972-3 contain crucial experiences to be digested and understood.

The ruling class is preparing; so must we prepare — practically where possible, ideologically at least. 1972-3 saw mass picketing and flying pickets paralyse the state; finally the Tory government was rendered unable to govern. The ruling class responded by using the conspiracy laws and by organising and training gangs of police thugs for use against picket squads.

The ousting of the Heath government and the success of the Labour

government in temporarily slackening the tempo, interrupted the confrontation.

A new upsurge of working class struggle will immediately be faced with a police force that has used the present lull to digest experience and prepare.

Revolutionaries must boldly proclaim the right of self-defence of striking workers against scabs or scab-herding policemen. We **know** now that effective picketing will be met with a level of force unseen in 1972, backed by the power of the courts and the jails. Either we bow to violence, or break the violence of the ruling class by superior working class violence.

Flying pickets must be prepared to defend themselves, and organised for the task. Whoever contemplates mass picketing is taking on the full force of the state — that's the message they spell out by jailing the Shrewsbury building workers. Instead of being terrorised, we must be forewarned and prepare.

**Now** the task is to make propaganda for self-defence against the hypnosis of the 'majesty of the Law' — which is neither majestic, impartial, nor even just! In situations like Northern Ireland it is not even 'lawful' except in the sense that force is law, and superior force can rip up or make up law as it goes along. We must explain that a thug who attacks a picket line is a scab and should be treated as such, whether or not he wears a police uniform.

We must explain that it is **inevitable** that struggles will become increasingly violent as the ruling class is driven to desperation. **Working class** casualties, jailed pickets or worse, are no less inevitable. The only alternative to fighting back and accepting such consequences, is knuckling under.

The working class will not knuckle under, but it has still to understand that there is no middle course in any future struggles which are seen as a threat by the ruling class.

### **Democratic rights**

The working class's only sure weapon to defend its rights is its own power, arms in hand if necessary. But we are not indifferent to formal democr-

acy **within** the bourgeois state.

The working class needs the maximum of democratic rights, the most consistent democracy, in order to pursue its struggle and in order to educate itself in preparation for self-rule. The more democratic, the more transparent and 'fair' all dealings are under capitalism, the more transparently fraudulent will appear the claims of the bourgeoisie that their system can represent liberty, equality, or fraternity, in real human and social, as opposed to formal legal terms.

In Britain many pre-capitalist barnacles survive and serve capitalism. The House of Lords is not only monstrous from the point of view of formal democracy — it is a serious reserve weapon in the hands of the bourgeoisie. We should demand its immediate abolition and the substitution of a single chamber Parliament.

The Monarchy is a degrading fossil — a permanent insult to ideas of human equality and dignity. It is an outrage against those in poverty or homeless, with its ostentatious and vulgarly flaunted parasitism.

More, however. Its allegedly fictitious reserve powers, its 'mere ceremonial function' in state affairs, its 'nominal and empty investment with the trappings and pomp of power' — these can take on a real weight and importance for the bourgeoisie in certain circumstances of political crisis.

We demand the immediate abolition of the monarchy and the setting up of a republic.

Formal Parliamentary elections allow the workers to decide who should oversee their exploitation by Capital for a number of years.

But it is not a matter of indifference which government is in power. It is grossly undemocratic, even in strictly bourgeois terms, that elections are held only every five or so years and that they government in power can manipulate the date of elections.

We demand annual elections on a fixed date.

The British electoral system is grossly unfair. No matter how large its total of votes, a party cannot gain representation unless it achieves a majority in one of 635 geographical units. Thus even extremely large, wealthy, and well-connected minorities such as



the Liberal Party are grossly discriminated against. Artificial political blocs and an artificial political stability are kept in being. Real democratic discussion, differentiation, and the formation of an educated 'public opinion' are hindered.

We demand: Proportional Representation; an end to legal penalties for contesting and losing elections; free and equal access to the media for all political parties, excepting only fascists.

Parliament, MPs and Ministers

are in the hands of the permanent civil service. To propose political changes without democratising the civil service is to propose controlling the glove puppet and not the hand within it. We demand: election of senior civil servants and local government officials, and of judges and magistrates; abolition of the Official Secrets Act; opening of the books of public expenditure and the files of the civil service departments to public scrutiny.

---

# The Workers Government

The entire logic of the slogans, the demands and the methods of struggle we advocate is to go beyond any stable form of capitalist rule, to disrupt and destructure the capitalist state. At the peak of working class mobilisation, the demands of an Action Programme can link and escalate in a chain reaction, building up to a direct revolutionary struggle in which the question of state power is objectively posed.

What form of government would correspond to such a situation of limbo in society, of dual power, of struggle to decide definitely who rules, proletariat or bourgeoisie? What slogan summarises, in relation to the government of society, these demands?

The International-Communist League fights for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Yes, but that is a formula that defines the political regime of the victorious proletariat in more or less secure possession of state power. Such a regime is virtually inconceivable, unless a revolutionary communist party already leads a majority of the working class — certainly inconceivable as a stable consolidated regime, rather than a Paris Commune type experience.

Such a party does not exist: it must be created. Yet deep social and political crises of the bourgeois order, and revolutionary working class mobilisations, can well erupt before there is a revolutionary party in a

position to lead the majority of the working class to the seizure of power.

In Britain, with its resilient and deep-rooted established labour movement, it is doubly probable that the working class will enter the struggle for power, not neatly united behind a Marxist party, but, on the contrary, dragging along with it all manner of reformist and bureaucratic elements.

Do we refrain from putting forward a government slogan until we can form the government? But the logic of the whole chain of demands leads inexorably to the question of the form of government that will tolerate, carry out or endorse the various demands. We need an 'algebraic' government formula

In the event of a deep crisis, shaking both the bourgeois state and the established labour movement, revolutionaries will not retreat into sectarian pedantry, advising workers to hold back until they recognise revolutionary leadership. Nor will they simply propose the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' — thus evading the problem of the immediate next steps in struggle.

Revolutionaries will fight for a "Workers' Government".

The various slogans of the programme are either vapid propaganda or else tools in the hands of revolutionaries struggling for the leadership of

the working class. That is true whether the revolutionaries be a tiny minority or a **big** minority in the working class. The government formula corresponding to the **mobilising** transitional slogans of our programme is: "For a workers' government".

The Bolshevik Party in 1917 first used such a formula. To the parties that claimed to represent the workers and peasants — the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries — it said: Take the power. Act against the capitalists and landlords. We will support you against reaction, accept your legality, refrain from resorting to violence against you. We simply insist on, and will **defend** as necessary, our complete freedom of political propaganda and agitation.

In 1938 Trotsky summarised it thus: "Of all the parties and organisations which base themselves on the workers and peasants and speak in their name we demand that they break politically from the bourgeoisie and enter upon the road of struggle for the workers' and farmers' government. On this road we promise them full support against capitalist reaction. At the same time, we indefatigably develop agitation around those transitional demands which should in our opinion form the programme of the 'workers' and farmers' government'."

All the battles for transitional demands are linked with a struggle for united action, including united action with reformist-led workers. While constantly warning the workers about the ties which bind the reformist leaders to the bourgeoisie, we cannot assert **a priori** that it will be at this or that particular stage of struggle that each section of the reformist leaders will come out in open opposition to the workers' struggle.

The workers' government is the keystone demand of the united front — the expression on a governmental level of the approach which proposes **unity in action** to less than revolutionary working class organisations, and imperiously demands of all organisations based on the working class — break with the bourgeoisie and **act** in the interests of the working class.

In Britain, a "workers' government" could have meaning as a government based on a congress of workers' councils — probably with a Labourist majority. Or with the

Labour Party or the TUC in a state of convulsion, having shed right-wing segments, revolutionaries might call on either of those organs of the labour movement to take power, act against the capitalist state, arm the workers, ensure workers' control in the factories, and take immediate economic measures in the workers' interest.

The call for a workers' government is a bold tactical compromise which revolutionaries may **use in struggle**. We do not write that compromise into our programme, as a necessary aim.

Already at the 4th Congress of the Communist International, Zinoviev warned: "Woe to us if we ever allow the suggestion to creep up in our propaganda that the workers' government is a necessary step, to be achieved peacefully as a period of semi-organic construction which may take the place of civil war etc. If such views exist among us, we must combat them resolutely".

A non-communist workers' government would be an unstable, temporary regime. Retaining complete political independence, communists would ruthlessly expose every faltering by the government in the struggle against reaction. They would fight to make sure that when the government fell — as surely it would within a short time — it was replaced by a revolutionary government, rather than by counter-revolution.

Since World War 2, especially, there has been a considerable experience of parties based on the working class forming stable, bourgeois governments. That experience makes it doubly necessary to underline the point: the call for a workers' government has meaning only as a weapon in the hands of a party equipped with a full transitional programme, and as a concrete step in that programme.

As an immediate **slogan** it can avoid lapsing into reformist meaning only when the bourgeois state has reached a high level of destabilisation, as a result of and accompanied by mass working class action. The slogan can serve the working class only if it is an element in an advanced stage of the struggle to build and gain hegemony within the labour movement for a revolutionary communist party. The use of the slogan is linked inseparably through the struggle to build the revolutionary party in the working class to a programme that sets its goal as the creation and consolidation of a working class, soviet state. To prop-



# The I-CL's doctrine, roots, and traditions

## INTERNATIONAL-COMMUNISM

At the centre of our world view is the international proletariat. Socialism presupposes advance beyond the highest point reached by capitalism, which is a closely-intermeshed world system; it will be built on the material foundations laid by world capitalism, seized and transformed by the proletariat. The proletariat is a world revolutionary class or it is impotent; the communist programme is an international programme or it is a utopian absurdity.

The conquest of political power necessarily occurs within the existing political units, with national and regional unevennesses. But the creation of the material prerequisites for a human, that is a communist as opposed to a class society, is conceivable only on a world scale. It means using the resources of the whole world, rationally organised and planned, first by the victorious proletariat, and then, as class categories wither and cease to have meaning, by a liberated humanity.

The proletariat is a class that has no necessary national framework or interest; that has more in common with its fellows of every other nation than with its own bourgeoisie. It has necessarily to develop an international outlook. Its interests, its conquest and consolidation of power in 'its own' country and development towards communism, are necessarily linked to the same interests in every corner of the globe.

## THE WORKERS' STATE

The struggle of communists cannot run its course within the framework of the existing nation state. It sets as its strategic aim the **revolutionary overthrow** of that state.

The workers' conquest of power will not mean achieving majorities in bourgeois parliaments and installing socialist ministers to drive the existing state machinery. Workers' power necessitates the **breaking up** of the political power of the bourgeoisie by the mass action of the armed working class, and the **breaking up** of the existing state apparatus which sanctifies and defends the exploiting class.

The existing state machinery with its bourgeois-type army, led by bourgeois officers; its police, its judges, prison warders and governors; its civil service, functionaries and officials; its sham parliamentary 'democracy' — this will all be dismantled.

Workers' Power means the disarming of the bourgeoisie and their officer castes and other reactionary armed groups — and the self-arming of the proletariat organised as a Citizen Army. It means the abolition of the bourgeois laws — with their typical bias in favour of property against life — and law courts; and it means their replacement by workers' law and courts. It means the complete separation of church and state.

In short, it means the elaboration of working class organs of administration of a new type, and with this the complete, transparent democratisation of all social life, best expressed in the replacement of bourgeois parliamentarism by a regime of workers' councils, organised in a pyramid with immediate recall at each level as a guarantee of representativeness. All parties accepting the legal authority of the workers' councils would contend and debate freely.

All states before the October Revolution were organs of a ruling minority to suppress and manipulate the vast exploited majority, and therefore functioned through a permanent bureaucracy attuned to the needs of the

ruling class. The Workers' Republic is the rule of the majority, organised through Workers' Councils, without standing army or permanent bureaucracy, needing repression only against the formerly exploiting minority.

Therefore the character of this semi state of the working class is radically different. Whereas bourgeois democracy is based on a state of exploitation of the vast majority, and is only an empty, legalistic formula, masking a bourgeois dictatorship, the Workers' Republic means real democracy, the **reality** of the controlling will of the proletariat; it is democracy by and for the working people against the exploiters.

In the Workers' Republic the means of life will be social property. The factories, mines, land and means of transport and communications will be the common property of the working people, controlled democratically. Large-scale industry will be nationalised, as will the banks and insurance companies. (Nationalisation being understood as the transference of ownership to the Workers' State under the direct socialist management of the working class. The existing state-capitalist enterprises will also be transformed into social property by the workers' state).

Large estates and capitalist agricultural undertakings will be nationalised. There will be state monopoly of the wholesale trade, nationalisation for the use of the people of large houses in town and country. Small property, urban and rural, will not be expropriated, and non-exploiters will not be coerced.

On a local level workers' management will be the rule; on a national level, economic functions will be centralised in the hands of the democratically-controlled Workers' State: the central and the local will interact and mutually adjust to the other. For the first time a rational economy planned in the interests of the self-controlling working masses will be possible.

This is the dictatorship of the proletariat.

## **SOCIALISM**

As the organisation of the economy under workers' regulation is consolid-

ated in the most advanced societies, progress towards socialism, and towards its higher stage, communism, will be possible.

What the men and women of the socialist future, having freed themselves from the fetters of class society, will do with their new-found freedom, we cannot exactly predict. This much we can say: that only a man or woman sunk in hatred or despair for humanity could doubt that men and women freed of their present bondage will make a better job of their social life than class society has done.

The first bond which socialism will remove is that of poverty. The economic resources for this already exist. In China and in Cuba, already, the planned economy — despite its limitation by bureaucracy, by national limits, and by the terrible backwardness of the countries — has at least allowed everyone to eat. With the tremendous resources of the advanced countries freed from capitalist wastefulness, reasonable living standards could rapidly be assured for all. Apart from the probability of hardships during the immediate period of post-revolutionary reconstruction, socialism would mean **levelling-up**, not **levelling-down**, of living standards.

More gradually, socialism would reduce drudgery. Techniques of automation would be introduced as rapidly as possible, reducing the working week to a length where no-one would be crushed and exhausted by their work — and then continuing to reduce it, and correspondingly increasing the possibilities for free creative activity.

**Domestic** drudgery would be reduced as well as factory drudgery. High-quality communal canteens, nurseries, and laundries would enable women to free themselves from the burden of housework.

Socialism would eliminate the economic anarchy and brutishness which have dominated human life through history up to now. Everyone would be assured the necessities of life without fear, without insecurity. The economic 'war of all against all' would be ended — and with it the material foundation for the violence of individual against individual, of nation against nation, and of class against class.

With socialist regulation in **economic** life would come the maximum

expansion of the **personal** freedom of the individual. Education, expanded, improved, and linked to productive activity throughout the individual's life, would assist the maximum use of that freedom.

The state, while regulating the economy, would not regulate opinions; on the contrary, the widest possible range of views would find expression in the press, in the media, in the education system.

Aware as we are of the tremendous variety of 'human nature' in different societies, we cannot doubt that 'human nature' under socialism would be much different, much more filled with the spirit of human solidarity, than under capitalism.

As education, free time, and consciousness of human solidarity reached higher levels, the need for state authority — even the 'semi-state' of workers' democracy — would wither away, as would, eventually, the limitations imposed on human development by the division of labour.

### **STATE-CAPITALIST 'SOCIALISM', THE MIXED ECONOMY, AND MARKET SOCIALISM**

Revolutionary and internationalist socialism stands in opposition to the 'models' of socialism given currency in the workers' movement by social-democracy and Stalinism. It must also be distinguished from sectarian socialism.

Clause Four of the Labour Party constitution sums up British socialism as a 'mass' ideology.

It postulates a gradual transition to socialism, through nationalisations and welfare measures by the bourgeois Parliament. If it recognises the class struggle, it is, at best, as a separate and subordinate 'industrial' auxiliary to the 'political' struggle in Parliament.

In its world picture, the state is not a class organ, the mailed fist and the chains which the enemy uses to bludgeon and bind us. The state does not need to be smashed and replaced with our own workers' state. It is **neutral**. Indeed, almost any expansion of its economic role is seen as a step to socialism.

It does not distinguish between capitalist state ownership of industry, to be run in the **overall** interests of

the capitalists, and socialist state ownership, with overall working-class regulation of the economy. It identifies state capitalism and socialism. It confuses salvage operations increasingly necessary for capitalism with **socialist** nationalisations.

The misnamed 'Communist' (Stalinist) Party, with its adherence for the last quarter-century to a parliamentary road to socialism, and its support for the police-state bureaucratic nationalised economies of the Stalinist states, has converged with this British 'national' tradition of 'socialism from above'.

British reformist 'socialism' is also **nationalist**, indeed chauvinist — logically so, since it sees socialism arriving through the portals of the existing nation-state.

In its view, progress in the struggle for socialism is measured not by the consciousness, combativity, and international solidarity of the working class, but by laws passed through the **British** Parliament.

The British labour movement has, indeed, tragically, held on longer than the bourgeoisie to the ideas of British supremacy which flourished naturally in the hey-day of the Empire.

Accepting the continuation of the bourgeois state, reformist socialism is highly **elitist**. This is equally true for those (like the Institute for Workers' Control) who, instead of nationalisation (Clause 4), take as their recipe "Workers' control" in abstraction from the class struggle and the problem of state power; and those espousing 'market socialism' as a positive alternative to Stalinism.

Generalised workers' control must lead onward to consolidation of workers' power — or be rolled back by reaction. As a gradually-achieved 'stage' within a capitalist state, it can only have the significance of a cooption of workers into the running of the bourgeois system. The individual enterprises under 'Workers' control', if not linked together through economic planning organised by a workers' state, will in fact be controlled by the capitalist laws of the market.

In the countries of Stalinism, the social impasse of totalitarian would-be autarchic economies has led to 'Liebermanism', 'Sikism', etc — attempts to loosen the stranglehold of the

state bureaucracy by a limited return to market forces.

Trotskyists hold no brief for the blind excesses of **complete** nationalisation, often ludicrously all-encompassing, premature, and in certain backward areas simply sterilising. To the 'Liebermanites', however, we say: Political Revolution, proletarian control of the state and the economy, is the answer to the social impasse of Stalinism, not 'market socialism'. 'Market socialism' is no more than the alternative to working class democracy of a section of the bureaucracy. It is no alternative for us, nor is it an alternative in reality. In advanced economies like Czechoslovakia it is a retrograde absurdity. In place of the bureaucratic control, it proposes only the equally irrational and oppressive control of the laws of profit and competition.

None of these issues are problems of abstractly preferring one socialist blueprint to another. Our conception of the workers' state is no blueprint, but an extrapolation from the laws of class struggle and economic development under capitalism.

**Instinctively and spontaneously**, at the most intense and generalised levels of class struggle, workers seeking the next step forward turn to communist solutions. The universal of workers' councils and factory seizures proves this.

This spontaneous tendency, determined the basic socially-interconnected character of modern economy, is volatile and easily disoriented. It is not scientific communism. But it is the essential force which, interacting with a revolutionary party armed with a programme of transitional demands, gives a **scientific** basis to Marxist communism, and ensures that it is not just one more system of rationalist utopianism, doomed, like pre-Marxist socialism, to an eternal Sisyphean labour of propaganda against ruling class ideology.

Socialism not based on the potential of proletarian spontaneity is passive propagandism, essentially rationalist, utopian — a relapse into the 'Enlightenment' socialism of the Owenite superman who has (or whose party has) understood everything and has only to bring 'the word' to the class. In Britain there is no lack of sects of this essential character.

It is also possible to lose sight of the fact that only on a certain level of generalisation and intensity is the spontaneous tendency real, and that even then the work of the revolutionary party is essential to render it stable and scientific and equip it with adequate strategy.

This is the trap, implicit in the SWP (IS)'s practice, of imagining that **every** spontaneous action by workers, however limited, isolated, un-generalised, can not only make individual workers more open to revolutionary propaganda, but can actually have communist potential on a mass scale.

## THE INTERNATIONALS

The working class movement, even before the creation of scientific socialism, attempted to form international associations for a common political struggle. The 'Manifesto of the Communist Party' of 1847, written by Karl Marx, was issued by an international association, the Communist League.

There have existed in history three major proletarian internationals. The First International (1864-72) was initiated as a mutual aid association of European trade unionists, and within it Marx and Engels struggled to forge a scientific ideological basis for the developing working class movement, and to fuse it with that movement. The International was torn apart as a result of ideological conflicts and of repression.

The Second International (1889-1914) broadened and massively spread the **organisation** of the proletariat, especially in the **political** field, and disseminated, in a period of organic capitalist growth, a somewhat vulgarised, even bowdlerised, 'Marxism'. Within it were built forces like the Bolshevik Party and the Luxemburg/Jogiches current in Germany and Poland, which fought to regenerate Marxism and to resist the slow but discernible absorption and cooption of the labour movement by capitalist society. The Bolsheviks were to lead the first successful working class revolution.

In 1914 the 'International' collapsed, most of its sections lining up for fratricidal slaughter behind their own

bourgeoisies. Those who had remained constant to the ideals which the Second International had betrayed, set out to build a new International. They had to dig down to find and cut out the roots in theory and in practice of the degeneration of the Second International. In opposition to a 'Marxism' which had degenerated into a pedantic and dried-out 'orthodoxy' serving as cover and rationale for the trade union and parliamentary practice of class collaboration, they produced such fundamental re-statements of revolutionary Marxism as Lenin's "State and Revolution".

On the basis of the ideological regeneration work begun in 1914, of the working class victory in Russia in October 1917, and the bloody lessons learned by the revolutionary workers during world war 1, the Third, Communist, International was declared in Moscow in March 1919.

Its task was to reorganise and re-focus the labour movement for the conquest of power. In the storm of revolutionary crisis that swept Europe after world war 1, the working class was everywhere defeated. The work of creating a Communist International had to continue in the midst of this defeat and post-1921 capitalist re-stabilisation.

Lack of adequate parties led to defeat in the West. Defeat in the West isolated the victorious revolution in a backward country. Isolation amidst tremendous privation soon generated a self-serving bureaucracy in the Soviet Union, which usurped power in the mid-'20s and consolidated its totalitarian rule in the late '20s. In turn, the short-sighted, all too soon explicitly nationalist policies of the bureaucrats began to have a deleterious effect on the Communist International. First errors (China 1927, Britain 1926, Poland 1926); then betrayals (Germany 1933); then open organisation of counter-revolution (Spain, France).

Proclaiming 'Socialism in One Country', the Stalinists tied the workers to the national interests of the bureaucracy in the 'socialist fatherland' — and, after 1935, to the national interests of the bourgeoisies with whom the Stalinists were making deals. They criticised parliamentary democracy, not in the name of workers' democracy, but of bureaucratic

tyranny. Later they negated workers' democracy from another angle, making **themselves** the advocates of parliamentary democracy. The dictatorship of the proletariat has been identified, not with the self-regulating rule of the working class, but with the totalitarian domination of the 'leader-party', over and against the workers. Socialism has been identified with statification. The ideals of communism have been falsified, negated, and buried.

Since world war the Soviet Union has played the role of the second pillar of world reaction.

## TROTSKYISM

A world-wide army rallied to the Russian Revolution and to the Communist International and its programme. To them the Soviet Union was the vanguard of the world revolutionary struggle. Its leaders possessed immense authority.

But in 1924 the increasingly solid bureaucracy now dominating the CP of the USSR proclaimed their programme: Socialism in One Country. Logically this implied a whole epoch with no new revolutions — that is, Socialism in no other country. It rapidly led to a fundamental redefinition of socialism, and its developed stage, communism, in line with the new need to present backward — and increasingly totalitarian — Russia as capable of achieving socialism by the mid-1930s.

The bureaucracy, in process of consolidation, groping for a world outlook for itself, still enmeshed in the revolutionary traditions, did not boldly proclaim its programme as an alternative to the programme under which the Russian Revolution was made — World Revolution. It pretended there never was another conception, that Socialism in One Country was no new departure but the purest 'Leninism'.

An orthodoxy was proclaimed, with Stalin, Zinoviev, and Bukharin as its high priests: A 'Leninism' consisting not of a method of thinking, and texts and analyses which Leninists after Lenin would look at critically with Lenin's method, as Lenin had treated the written remains of his master Marx and Engels, but of text-chopp-



ing and quotation-mongering.

To this mummified Lenin was counterposed a myth — the myth of Trotskyism. All that had constituted the ideological basis of the Communist International was henceforth to be called 'Trotskyism' and thereby undercut and discredited.

In the name of 'Leninism', the principles of Lenin, and of Trotsky — who now rose to their defence, and to the defence of the working class against the privileged bureaucracy — were expunged and bowdlerised with a thoroughness, ruthlessness, speed and crudity that made the corruptions of the Second International seem feeble in comparison.

Fighting the 'permanent revolution', the bureaucracy created an ideology for itself — the negation of Leninism, though expressed in phrases associated with Leninism and communism.

It left the faction of Bolsheviks called Trotskyist as the sole defenders of the programme of the Communist International. The dividing line was initially unclear, expressed in a rather scholastic debate about Leninist orthodoxy. The Stalinist bureaucracy overthrew the revolutionary programme and usurped its banner for a different programme without alarming and alienating the revolutionary masses.

But from then onwards, 'Trotskyism' has been, and is, the basic Marxist programme of the conquest of power by the international working class. It is the unfalsified programme, method and experience of the Bolshevism of Lenin and Trotsky. It embodies the world experience of the workers' struggles, including the defence and development of Bolshevism by Trotsky and the Left Opposition in battle against the Stalinist counter-revolution. It means reliance on the self-controlling activity of the working class, which it strives to mobilise on the programme of transitional demands as a bridge to the overthrow of capitalism and the attainment of workers' power. It is the programme of the workers' revolution, organically linked with the practical struggle to aid its development. It is not only a programme, but the struggle to build a revolutionary party to fight for that programme. Its traditions are those of the Bolsheviks and the Left Opposit-

ion: workers' democracy, unremitting struggle for theoretical clarity, revolutionary activism, unbending hostility to and struggle against capitalism and those within the labour movement who stand for its continuation.

## TROTSKYISM & TROTSKY

In his famous essay, 'The Role of the Individual in History', Plekhanov presents a rigidly deterministic-materialist view of the activity of individuals and its outcome.

Napoleon dwarfs his milieu because he fills a role; but he fills it in a definite setting and for specific historic reasons. Therefore, if not Napoleon, someone else, differing in details undoubtedly, would fill the same essential role and would appear equally commanding.

For the proletariat and proletarian politics, a certain re-emphasis is necessary, to the degree that consciousness is central. The progress of the bourgeoisie to power is, at least in the countries of classic capitalism, an inexorable reflection of an organic growth process, even though it involves sharp struggles and revolutions. What is done for the bourgeoisie through the growth of capitalist economy, the proletariat must do for itself through the building of a revolutionary party based on scientific consciousness. The proletariat must rise abruptly from the condition of a slave class to seize power.

In his history of the Russian Revolution Trotsky discussed the role of Lenin in 1917 and concluded that it was **irreplaceable**, because of the re-orientation which the Bolshevik Party had to undertake. Time was limited, and had the tide not been seized, crushing defeat would have faced the proletariat.

In a different sense, a different aspect of the same phenomenon rooted in the unique nature and problems of the proletariat as a revolutionary class, Trotsky himself eventually became as crucial and irreplaceable — ultimately in the most literal and tragic sense — as Lenin had been in 1917.

Writing in 1935, Trotsky concluded that if he had been absent from St Petersburg in 1917, the revolutionary reorientation and proletarian triumph could still have been achieved —

on condition that Lenin was present and active.

But from 1929, and growing in stature until his death, Trotsky personified a whole epoch of proletarian culture, tradition, experience; this in addition to his own immense capacity for analysis, unbreakable belief in the rationalist and humanist traditions of Marxism, and his devotion to the proletariat and its tasks of revolution. Nothing other than the physical destruction of his body could weaken or destroy that.

In 1929 layers of the Opposition, the October generation, capitulated to the bureaucracy, in various ways and for various reasons, and started on the road to their doom in the cellars of the GPU. The intransigents remained locked away in the arid silence of Siberian exile. They too would be slaughtered in the later 1930s.

Outside of the USSR Trotsky looked for collaborators. He found 'gangrenous sceptics' like Souvarine and irconcilable and scattered ranks of oppositionists, Zinovievists, or Bukharinists. Their inadequacy vis-a-vis the tasks in the West and in Russia was soon established as Trotsky attempted the work of ideological demarcation and later the work of rebuilding the communist international (the Fourth International). Trotsky's work, by the early 1930s, was in conjunction with mainly raw and inexperienced forces, with only a scattering from the heroic period of the Communist International.

At the end of his life he had come to symbolise and personify revolutionary communism itself. The name of Trotsky will rank, when we have overcome the crisis of proletarian revolution, with that of Marx and semi-mythical figures like Spartacus, symbolising the elemental drive for freedom of the slaves of class society.

For the Fourth Internationalist current he was its heart, its soul, its intellectual sinews. The loss of Trotsky and of many cadres in world war 2 meant that the movement faced the titanic tasks of post-war reanalysis with decimated intellectual resources.

The Fourth International was doubly endowed, by the Communist International and by Trotsky. After 1940 and post-war, it was doubly impoverished, as it faced the permutations, including the mutant anti-

capitalist revolutions, generated by the defeats of the proletariat in the previous 20 years.

Between the 1840s and 1940-3 there was an unbroken continuity in movement and analysis. In 1943-8 it broke. Between 1914 and 1917 three years elapsed, and then six or seven to the crisis of the Communist International. Then ten to the definitive collapse of the Communist International. Then seven years of Trotsky's struggle. Then, in the 1940s, crisis. A progressively narrowing focus, narrowing forces, coupled with gigantic problems.

The living, as opposed to the archival, continuity with the Communist International was Trotsky and a few of his comrades. After the early 1940s, it had to be groped for by inexperienced or inadequate forces, faced with problems that would have taxed Trotsky himself, or, indeed, if their shades could have been conjured out of the past, the leadership of the early heroic period of the Communist International, armed as they would have been with the principles they espoused in 1919-20.

## THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL AND THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

It is essential to grasp the relation of the Fourth International to the Third, with Trotsky as the essential link, if we are to understand the Fourth International.

Until after Trotsky's death, the fundamental analysis of the world, the tactics and the strategy worked out by the Communist International remained valid. There was a mass world-wide army of revolutionary workers believing the Stalinist Comintern to be genuinely revolutionary. Trotskyism was battle against the bureaucracy as a social force; ideologically, defence and development of the programme and politics of the Communist International. Trotskyism was the rearguard, **inheriting** from the Communist International its political fundamentals. Cut off from the revolutionary army organised in the Comintern, it attempted to apply those ideas in the '30s and '40s. It was defeated.

This relation to the Third International was Trotskyism's strength — and the source of the crisis that befell it in the 1940s when new problems presented themselves. Its independent contributions were major, but development of the Communist International's work, and entirely the achievement of Trotsky.

The Fourth International, to Trotsky's death and afterwards, must be assessed as an ideological current. It was an 'appendage', the rearguard of the Third, comprising the attempts (with feeble forces) at revolutionary action and the mighty ideological work of Trotsky in analysing Stalinism, and Fascism.

The Fourth International was the only consistently Leninist tendency which survived the collapse of the Communist International and which analysed that degeneration and collapse with reference to the theory and practice of revolution. The fate of that tendency is the fate of the revolutionary communism of our epoch: with Trotsky and in a world corresponding in its main features to the analyses of the Communist International; and later, in the 1940s, attempting to renew itself, without Trotsky.

Its history is that of the only tendency equipped with the unfalsified programme of communism, in attempting to review, understand, and intervene in the major world political events of half a century of political upheaval and class struggle. It is the tendency of which we are part.

To relate to the Fourth Internationalist current is to relate to all the problems revolutionaries face in interpreting and learning from those events, and to the already-made attempts to integrate them into our theory. Even if our conclusions were to prove entirely negative, to study the Fourth International is to study revolutionary politics over the entire epoch that opened in 1917.

No other road forward for us exists. No other tradition has value beyond that of Blanqui, of Marx and Engels, of Luxemburg, of Lenin and of Trotsky. No other starting point, from here and now, is conceivable.

#### **THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL: PERSPECTIVE**

The Fourth International was based on the political codifications of the

first four, Leninist, congresses of the Communist International, buttressed by the analyses and polemics of the Marxists who fought against the CI's degeneration.

The codifications have survived as the possession of feeble organisations into an age markedly different, since the end of world war 2, without a Communist International or a Trotsky or even an educated cadre of any substance to deal with the problems of the last third of a century.

At first, after declaring the Comintern dead for the revolution, in the wake of its peaceful collapse in Germany and inability to learn even from this catastrophe, Trotsky considered that **proclaiming** the Fourth International would be an empty and impotent adventure, despite its theoretical richness. Instead he propagandised for it, expecting substantial sections of the revolutionary labour movement to rally to it, creating a force of some material importance.

By 1936 he was ready to propose that the international conference should proclaim the Fourth International. It refused to, not yet ready to make the change in the perspectives for building the new International that Trotsky had made between 1933 and 1936, still holding that the **re-conquest** of a substantial section of the revolutionary vanguard for the programme of communism was a prerequisite for **declaring** a new International.

In 1938 the Fourth International was proclaimed at a one-day conference; but in the next year we find Trotsky himself admitting, and grappling with the problem, that the **International Secretariat** doesn't function. He has **settled** into a realisation that the **Fourth International** is, and must initially be, a propaganda group — and, however powerful it is politically and ideologically, a very feeble group indeed. It was thus that Trotsky argued for the Fourth International in 1938, soberly avoiding any bluff or pretence. The work had been done — ideologically. Declaring the Fourth International, on the basis of the propaganda forces already assembled, would give the ideologically demarcated current an organisationally finished character and a clear organisational identity, in contradistinction to a wide gamut of centrist

**ERRATA.**

**PAGE 4, SECOND COLUMN.** The final sentence of the second paragraph should read: "But only the linking of proletarian-revolutionary movements in the backward countries with working class victories in the advanced capitalist countries can make possible the victory of socialism".

**PAGE 17, FIRST COLUMN.** The first sentence of the 5th paragraph should read: "Both the health and the education services must be freed from leeching..."