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## **THE MARXIST**

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# **Genius of Revolution**

## **A TRIBUTE TO LENIN BY J V STALIN**

Theoreticians and leaders of parties, men who are acquainted with the history of nations and who have studied the history of revolutions from beginning to end, are sometimes afflicted with a shameful disease. This disease is called fear of the masses, disbelief in the creative power of the masses. This sometimes gives rise in the leaders to a kind of aristocratic attitude towards the masses, who, although not versed in the history of revolutions, are destined to destroy the old order and build the new. This kind of aristocratic attitude is due to a fear that the elements may break loose, that the masses may 'destroy too much'; it is due to a desire to play the part of a mentor who tries to teach the masses from books, but who is averse to learning from the masses.

Lenin was the very antithesis of such leaders. I do not know of any other revolutionary who had so profound a faith in the creative power of the proletariat and in the revolutionary efficacy of its class instinct as Lenin. I do not know of any other revolutionary who could scourge the smug critics of the 'chaos of revolution' and the 'riot of unauthorised actions of the masses' so ruthlessly as Lenin. I recall that when in the course of a conversation one comrade said that 'the revolution should be followed by the normal order of things' Lenin sarcastically remarked: 'It is a pity that people who want to be revolutionaries forget that the most normal order of things in history is the revolutionary order of things'.

Hence, Lenin's contempt for all who superciliously looked down on the masses and tried to teach them from books. And hence, Lenin's constant precept: learn from the masses, try to comprehend their actions, carefully study the practical experience of the struggle of the masses.

Faith in the creative power of the masses — this was the feature of Lenin's activities which enabled him to comprehend the spontaneous process and to direct its movement into the channel of the proletarian revolution.

## GENIUS OF REVOLUTION

Lenin was born for revolution. He was, in truth, the genius of revolutionary outbreaks and the greatest master of the art of revolutionary leadership. Never did he feel so free and happy as in a time of revolutionary upheavals. I do not mean by this that Lenin approved equally of all revolutionary upheavals, or that he was in favour of revolutionary outbreaks at all times and under all circumstances. Not at all. What I do mean is that never was the genius of Lenin's insight displayed so fully and distinctly as in a time of revolutionary outbreaks. In times of revolution he literally blossomed forth, became a seer, divined the movement of classes and the probable zigzags of the revolution, seeing them as if they lay in the palm of his hand. It was with good reason that it used to be said in our Party circles: 'Lenin swims in the tide of revolution like a fish in water.'

... The insight of genius, the ability rapidly to grasp and divine the inner meaning of impending events, this was the quality of Lenin which enabled him to lay down the correct strategy and a clear line of conduct at turning points of the revolutionary movement.

**J V Stalin: from a speech delivered at a Memorial Meeting of the Kremlin Military School, January 28, 1924.**

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## Comment

by Tom Hill

THE CONCERN of the so called left in relation to the reactivation of Part Two of the Prices and Incomes Act was yet another example of the parliamentary cretinism which still affects many who may be genuinely moved to be on the side of the working class. Nevertheless, viewed in an objective manner, it was an attempt to get the wages issue back into the legal-parliamentary arena.

It is understandable that these lefts, particularly those in the trade unions, should be concerned to restore their legal rights. They allow themselves to be confined within the framework of legality and are now facing the unwelcome prospect of increasingly being outflanked by militant workers and their rank and file leaders who have no such inhibitions.

The steelworkers, dustmen and others have punched holes in the incomes policy, and other workers are in the process of drawing the correct conclusions and doing likewise.

The question of whether it was Wilson or his opponents who scored the parliamentary victory is

only the shadow; the real substance is the character of the struggle at the point of production.

It would be unwise to assume that the ruling class are unaware of the true situation. Parliamentary tactics are for the politically naive, and this they are certainly not.

Their immediate hopes are placed on the role they have mapped out for the trade union leaders in controlling the membership in the interests of the employers.

The Donovan Report made the point that for this to be accomplished it would be necessary to establish a greater control over the membership than they have at the present time, and they were also clear on the steps to be taken to achieve this aim, namely more and better paid officials.

The proposals put forward by the Executive Council of the AEF for consideration and decision by its Rules Revision Committee need to be seen in this light. They propose increases in salary for the president from his present £2,150 to £3,500, the general secretary from his present salary of

£2,150 to £3,000 and for executive councilmen an increase from their present salary of £1,810 to £3,000.

This is a part of the process of taking the leaders outside the ranks of the working class in order that they may become a more pliable instrument of ruling class policy.

In order to finance these and other measures it is also proposed that membership contributions shall be increased by between threepence and a shilling a week, depending upon the section.

These proposals, where they are known, are arousing resentment and the more widely they are known, the more resentment there will be, and rightly so.

It should be the task of all Marxist-Leninists to encourage this resentment and to encourage and mobilise opposition to these proposals in a correct political manner.

We suggest that the following should be the main lines of policy in this respect;

- 1 Explain the aims of the ruling class in relation to the trade unions.
- 2 That people standing for official positions in the union must be motivated by concern for the working class and not with the hope of personal financial gain or advancement.
- 3 The election of officials and leading committees by the membership and at regular intervals. (No life peerages in the movement.)
- 4 The salaries of the officials to be in relation to the wages of those they represent.
- 5 Greater emphasis on rank and file control of all levels of leadership.
- 6 The submission of all major agreements to rank and file scrutiny and endorsement.

#### **Mutual Security — For Whom?**

The manoeuvring between members of the NATO and Warsaw blocks are being presented by capitalist and revisionist alike as negotiations for the safeguards of peace in Europe.

The question is, if a European security pact is necessary, who is it to be directed against. Who, outside these powers is likely to start a war in Europe — Luxemburg?

The NATO alliance was formed for the purpose of opposing the growth of Soviet power in Europe, primarily from a military standpoint, but also as a mutual security pact of the ruling classes for the purpose of rendering mutual assistance to each other against their respective peoples.

The Warsaw Pact was formed for the purpose of resisting attempts by the capitalist powers to change the 1945 frontiers by armed force but also as a mutual security pact of the socialist states against counter revolution from within.

With the growth of revisionism in Eastern European countries and the development of social imperialism in the Soviet Union, the class differences between the objectives of the NATO and Warsaw Pacts diminished. Whereas previously the two military blocks reflected a class contradiction, this is now not the case. The Soviet Government is using the Warsaw Pact as the military arm of its policy of subjugating its 'partners' in Eastern Europe.

In NATO the contradiction between the US ruling class and those of its European allies is still developing. The contradiction between the respective European ruling classes is likewise developing, but the new feature is the rising tide of revolt of the working classes in the capitalist states. This is compelling the ruling classes to direct more attention to the question of internal security than to that of external security, and it is being made possible because growing opposition to the revisionist cliques in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe is also compelling them to do the same thing in order to attempt to preserve their own privileged position.

#### **Rival imperialism**

To sum up, it can be said that the contradiction now expressed between the two blocks is of a rival imperialist nature. In conditions of rising discontent and mounting class struggles in the countries of both blocks the respective ruling classes are being compelled to attempt to moderate their differences in order to defend themselves against their own people.

Thus this mutual security is the mutual security of the exploiting classes and will be mutually directed against the interests of the mass of the people in both East and Western Europe.

The preparatory stage of this mutual security pact was evident at the time of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia when it became evident that there was a tacit agreement between the two blocks regarding spheres of influence.

It should also be noted that the advocacy of the peaceful transition to socialism by the revisionist parties of Western Europe is complementary to the overall strategic needs of the Soviet ruling clique because if it is successful it will obviate the need for them to have to pay lip service to genuine revolutionary struggles abroad in order to maintain their image as a revolutionary power, whilst at the same time oppressing their people at home.

It should also be remembered that although they pose as the champions of all those who oppose US imperialism, they are actively engaged in trying to organise a Far Eastern Mutual security pact directed against China and the growing national liberation movement.

### **US atrocities in Viet Nam**

'The Viets are not regarded as human beings by anyone serving in Viet Nam.'

This remark by a US soldier expresses the fascist outlook of contempt for people which, for the imperialists, is a necessary condition for the prosecution of the war.

The mass involvement that characterises a peoples war must inevitably generate this mentality in all those who oppose it.

The people of the US are told that the war is being waged for freedom, democracy, and the

rights of humanity, therefore anyone opposing them must be sub-human.

The massacres perpetrated by US soldiers are not merely the acts of battle-weary soldiers but the direct result of fascist indoctrination by the ruling class.

The exposure of these atrocities is undoubtedly exposing and destroying the image of a benevolent Uncle Sam so assiduously spread by the imperialists, and will contribute to the mobilisation of world opinion against US aggression in Viet Nam. More important however in the long term, it is facing people up with the ideological consequences of Kennedy's policy of opposing all wars of national liberation.

As Marxist-Leninists we need to consistently contrast the fascist attitude towards people with that of our own which is well expressed in the words of Mao 'Our duty is to hold ourselves responsible to the people. Every word, every act and every policy must conform to the peoples interests, and if mistakes occur, they must be corrected — that is what being responsible to the people means.'

It is because we hold this view that we oppose the bourgeois pacifism which equates the victim with the aggressor and calls for a cessation of struggle on the part of the national liberation forces.

## **Comment on the Congress of CPGB**

**by Mike Cooley**

THOSE COMRADES who remain in the CPGB in the erroneous belief that its disastrous 'British Road' can be changed from within, must have had their hopes finally crushed at the 31st Congress.

With the betrayal of social democracy becoming clearer every day, the Congress met at a time of growing radicalism amongst increasing sections of the working class. This radicalism is gradually providing the objective circumstances in which a Marxist Leninist Party could give a decisive lead. Yet far from providing such a lead the CPGB is feverishly peddling its 'Unity of the Left'. In the

vacuum this creates the influence and numerical strength of the Trotskyist groups such as IS and the SLL grows. The circulation and frequency of their publications are increasing with the inevitable consequence of long term disillusionment of large sections of the working class.

The general 'leftward' movement towards militancy now extends even to teachers and nurses and the youth and student movement has reached new levels of radicalism. In spite of the opportunities these concrete situations present the influence and membership of the CPGB continues to decline.

The membership is down to 30,000 (in practice only a fraction of these could be said to be active), the fall off in dues payment is from 55.7 per cent to 51 per cent and membership of the YCL has declined by about 30 per cent.

As the Party increasingly rejects class politics so the class nature and composition of its branches reflects this. The industrial branches are replaced by irrelevant 'constituency' or 'ward' ones to speed the day when a 'Communist-Left Labour majority in Parliament' will vote the ruling class out of existence. The Party claims 1,100 branches but there are only 180 industrial branches, and of these only about 25 are actual factory branches.

The *'Morning Star'* in spite of its 'pop' image, with Pin-ups, feature articles for motorists, fishermen, footballers, indeed for everyone but the serious working class militant, has continued to decline. In June 1967 its circulation was 57,000, it is now about 52,000. The sales of the Party's discussion journal *'Comment'* has dropped by nearly 20 per cent in the same period.

Even industrial questions of immense importance to those who day by day face the class enemy at the point of production, were glossed over by the Congress. Productivity deals could not be sharply and openly attacked since the 'Unity of the Left' encompasses some of their most ardent advocates like Jones, Scanlon, Daly and Jenkins.

The 31st Congress confirmed the gradual demise of the Party. This is the inevitable consequence of the reformist policies which have dominated it for so long. The decline will continue for there is only room for one reformist parliamentary party of the 'Left', and in Britain at the moment that is the Labour Party.

Those anti-revisionists at the Congress who sought to challenge the disastrous policies of the leadership eventually lined up with pro-Soviet revisionists like Dutt and French on the invasion of Czechoslovakia issue. No clear challenge to revisionism was mounted and the 'British Road' cannot be defeated by supporting Soviet revisionism.

Those Marxists who still remain in the CPGB must now recognise that it is a reformist parliamentary party, which by its very nature cannot be transformed into a vanguard party of the working class as envisaged by Lenin. They must face the reality, however difficult, that the task confronting them is the formation of a genuine Marxist Leninist Party.

This great task can now only be embarked upon outside the CPGB.

## BE MODERATE

by James Connolly

Some men, faint-hearted, ever seek  
Our programme to retouch,  
And will insist, when'er they speak,  
That we demand too much.  
'Tis passing strange, yet I declare  
Such statements cause me mirth,  
For our demands most modest are,  
We only want THE EARTH.

'Be moderate,' the trimmers cry,  
Who dread the tyrant's thunder,  
'You ask too much and people fly  
From you aghast in wonder.'  
'Tis passing strange, for I declare  
Such statements give me mirth,  
For our demands most modest are,  
We only want THE EARTH.

Our masters all, a godly crew,  
Whose hearts throb for the poor,  
Their sympathies assure us, too,  
If our demands were fewer.  
Most generous souls! But please observe,  
What they enjoy from birth  
Is all we ever had the nerve  
To ask, that is, THE EARTH.

The 'Labour Fakir,' full of guile,  
Base doctrine ever preaches,  
And while he bleeds the rank and file  
Tame moderation teaches.  
Yet in his despite, we'll see the day  
When with sword in its girth,  
Labour shall march in war array  
To seize its own, THE EARTH

For Labour long, with sighs and tears  
To its oppressors knelt,  
But never yet, to aught save fears,  
Did heart of tyrant melt,  
We need not kneel, our cause is high  
Of true men there's no dearth,  
And our victorious rallying cry  
Shall be 'WE WANT THE EARTH.'

# 'As a rope supports a hanging man . . .'

## DICK JONES PUTS HIS VIEW

ANYONE with an elementary knowledge of the works of Lenin will recognise the above heading as a summary of the type of support he advised the embryonic British Communist Party to give the Labour Party in an election. He based his judgment on the reasoning that notwithstanding the fact that the Labour Party was incapable of leading the fight for socialism and would inevitably betray its rank and file supporters, it did enjoy the support of vast sections of the working class. He argued that with a Labour Government in office the task of exposing social democracy as a tool of the employing class, and so winning the masses' support for a revolutionary party would be aided. This, of course assumed that the revolutionary party itself was capable of taking advantage of the position and was equipped to analyse and act in the prevailing conditions. For a full account of the arguments see *Left Wing Communism an Infantile Disorder*.

The problem facing Marxist-Leninists, militant class conscious workers, or indeed anyone who accepts the objective character of any Labour Government, is whether Lenin's analysis was correct in 1920, and if was correct then, is it still correct today? Or have conditions and attitudes in the bulk of the working class so changed as to make his reasoning no longer valid?

I believe that the general position advocated by Lenin in 1920 was abundantly correct, and to state that social democracy is the prime obstacle to the development of a revolutionary consciousness amongst the working class, is an irrefutable fact. The grip that social democracy, and its twin parliamentarianism, has upon workers in any advanced capitalist country is nowhere better illustrated than in the history of the British working class. This can be seen through the aims of the Chartist movement of the nineteenth Century, all of whose demands were based upon a reform of the parliamentary system (nearly all of which have been achieved) and through the struggles in the trade union movement to create a *parliamentary* political party. This background federally linked with other constitutional political expressions such as the Fabians and Co-operative

movement, led to the formation of the Labour Party in 1906. Any Marxist analysis even then would have shown that the Labour Party was objectively an agent of the ruling class, implanted in the working class movement. Yet in spite of this by 1920 it had sufficient support from the masses for it to be a serious contender in the 'Parliamentary Stakes'. (In 1924 in coalition with the Liberals the first Labour Government was formed). This briefly was the background upon which Lenin based his judgment and on which he gave his already mentioned advice to the CPGB.

Many comrades will argue that Lenin was indeed correct in 1920, but that the position in Britain has so changed that it no longer matters whether a Labour or Tory Government is in Westminster. They go on to argue that we have now had the experience of six Labour Governments (in 1924,29, 45,50,64,66) and the records of these Governments is proof enough to demonstrate that the Labour Party is incapable of bringing socialism and will always serve the interests of monopoly capitalism. They will cite examples of the treachery of successive Labour administrations; the sell out to the Liberals by the 1924 Government, the introduction of the Means Test in the early 30's, the wage freeze policies of the 1945,64 and 66 Governments, the sell out to US imperialism, highlighted today by the despicable and subservient role of the Wilson Government in its relations to the US and its war in Vietnam. Also of course this present Government has gone further than any previous labour legislation in its use of State forces to attack the rights and conditions of organised labour through the various Prices and Incomes Acts. All of these, and many more examples of the class character of any Labour Government, must constantly be used by any Marxist-Leninist organisation in its propaganda work. But to conclude from this that the basic position as seen by Lenin has changed, is to completely misinterpret the arguments he posed. Lenin was under no illusion (and at that time neither was Pankhurst nor Gallacher) about the role of the Labour Party. Apart from its origins, and therefore its inherent inability to provide the

leadership of a vanguard party of the working class, it had already provided concrete examples of its real role, by its refusal to give political direction to the tremendous industrial struggles of the 1910-1914 period, and its complete sell out of working class interests in its support for the jingoism of British imperialism in the 1914-1918 war. The position of Lenin was determined by the fact that the Labour Party had the support (expressed electorally) of the large majority of the politically aware British workers.

'We would take part in the election campaign, distribute leaflets advocating Communism, and in all constituencies when we have no candidates urge the electors to vote for the Labour candidate against the bourgeois candidate. Comrades Sylvia Pankhurst and Gallacher are mistaken in thinking that this is a betrayal of Communism, the abandonment of the struggle against the social-traitors. On the contrary, the Communist revolution undoubtedly stands to gain by it.' (My emphasis).

#### *Left Wing Communism.*

Similar arguments as those above, are used by comrades to justify a total dismissal of any participation in campaigns that revolve around parliament. Again it is stated that the last fifty years have demonstrated that parliament is the creation and tool of the ruling class and irrelevant to any struggles involving workers in the fight for socialism. Again I would answer that the role of parliament was as clear to Lenin and other Marxists of that era, as it is today, but he was extremely clear about the absolute necessity for a revolutionary party to participate in parliamentary struggles.

It is true that activities in and around the parliamentary system will not bring socialism to Britain. This is accepted by anyone with a rudimentary understanding of Marxism, but unfortunately the vast majority of the British working class have not achieved this elementary political position, and the job of Marxist-Leninists is to lead and develop struggles that will help to bring about this necessary understanding.

'But we shall break with the opportunists; and the entire class-conscious proletariat will be with us in the fight — not to "shift the relation of forces", but to overthrow the bourgeoisie, to destroy bourgeois parliamentarianism, for a democratic republic after the type of the Commune, or a republic of Soviets of Workers and Soldiers' Deputies, for the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat'.

*Lenin. State and Revolution. Kautsky's controversy with Pannekoek.*

'... If you are a Marxist you must admit that there is a close connection between the relations of classes in capitalist society and the relations of parties. I repeat: how will you prove all this if you are not members of Parliament, if you repudiate parliamentary action? The history of the Russian revolution has proved that the broad masses of the working class, of the peasantry, and of the minor office employees, cannot be convinced by arguments if they are not convinced by their own experience.'

*Lenin. Speech on Parliamentarianism 2nd Congress Communist International 1920.*

Surely any comrade who repudiates parliamentary activity completely, and at the same time claims to be a Marxist-Leninist, must consider that Lenin was guilty of great inconsistencies.

The struggles to expose parliament and social democracy are one and the same fight. Parliamentarianism and the Labour Party are synonymous. Through all the twists and turns of the Labour Party's progress in Britain, its complete adherence to parliament and the parliamentary system has been its only consistent feature. Extra parliamentary activities, and the linking of industrial and political actions have always been vehemently opposed by the controlling sections of the Labour Party. The roles of parliament and the Labour Party have not altered in any fundamental way since Lenin's day. Yet fifty years later, it is a fact no matter how unpalatable to some comrades, that the vast majority of the British working class still do not accept that the 'October Road' is the way forward, still do not accept the revolutionary path to socialism. This vast section will demonstrate its faith in parliament and the Labour Party, no matter how cynically some may do it, by turning out in their millions in the coming general election.

Based on the historical experiences of workers' and peasants' revolutionary struggles throughout the world, and particularly on the experiences of the Russian Bolsheviks and the Chinese Communist Party, Marxist-Leninists can have no doubts about their strategic position in regard to the taking of power by the British working class. It is imperative that the infant Marxist-Leninist movement in Britain consistently and clearly explains that the working class will have to develop its own organisations and methods of work to overthrow monopoly capitalism and its institutions. It will have to explain the necessity of developing a vanguard party of the working class to lead forward the struggles of the present era and to develop the dictatorship of the proletariat in Britain. The acceptance and understanding of this perspective by large sections of



the working class will not be achieved unless it is placed in the forefront of all propaganda, and is related to all struggles of workers in opposition to monopoly capital. *However this conception will not be achieved until bourgeois democracy and all of its aspects have been thoroughly exposed in a practical and demonstrative way.*

Nearly all comrades would accept that British imperialism is in a state of ever deepening crisis, and that in spite of all its efforts it will not be able to extricate itself before its inevitable crash. This crisis is reflecting itself in the economic base and is shown by the accelerated development of larger monopolies accompanied by the resulting effect upon the working class in the forms of sackings, speed ups and legislation against organised workers. However this crisis has not yet reached the pitch where it is reflected in the necessary parliamentary crisis required for large scale advances in the revolutionary understanding of the working class. This is not to ignore, or underestimate the importance of the recent struggles of the miners, dustmen, dockers, car workers, teachers and steel workers, nor is it to denigrate the importance of the involvement of thousands of people in the Vietnam, Springbok and anti-racist demonstrations. All of these things are very heartening and should act as a spur to Marxist-Leninists, but to interpret these events as a pre-revolutionary situation or as an expression by large sections of the working class of their rejection of parliament and the Labour Party would be both naive and opportunist. The task of Marxist-Leninists is to hasten the reflection of the economic crisis in its political superstructure. This will not be achieved by ignoring the existence of parliament and the Labour Party, but only by diligently using every opportunity to pressurise and expose them.

'Comrade Bordiga admitted that historical experience is not created artificially. He has only just told us that the struggles must be carried to other spheres. Does he not know that every revolutionary crisis was accompanied by a parliamentary crisis? True he said that the struggle must be carried into other spheres, into the Soviets; but he himself has admitted that the Soviets cannot be created artificially.'

*Lenin. Speech on Parliamentarianism 1920.*

Throughout its history the revolutionary movement in Britain has been faced with the dilemma of how to combat social democracy. The problem is accentuated during the period of a general election, and once again in Britain attitudes are being taken that because of over simplified expressions are grossly misunderstood. The art of producing slogans that can be easily understood by the masses

and yet are politically correct, is not one that is easily learned. However the task of Marxist-Leninists is not confined to themselves achieving a correct political perspective, but is also of translating that perspective into a form that can be understood, and into a form that is capable of developing struggles in a coherent political fashion.

If it is accepted that the prime tasks of the Marxist-Leninist movement are the exposure and smashing of social democracy in order to achieve a revolutionary understanding amongst the masses, then the question has to be posed, and answered in the parliamentary aspect of the exposure; can it best be achieved with a Labour or Tory Government in Westminster? Similarly in the parallel struggle against social democracy in the trade union movement the question is whether it is easier to demonstrate the character of this ruling class implant in the workers' movement, when social democrats of the 'Left' or 'Right' variety are in positions of leadership? The answers to these questions must surely be that the most advantageous situation for revolutionaries to demonstrate the inadequacies and consequences of social-democratic class collaboration is when the Labour Government is in office and when the 'Lefts', such as Jones, Scanlon and Daly are in the leadership of the trade unions.

It was more difficult to demonstrate the role of the Labour Party during the 'thirteen years of Tory rule' than it has been since 1964. Opportunities exist with a Labour Government in office to demonstrate both the role of social democracy and of parliament in every major strike, in a much more clearly defined way, than when the simple slogan, and all it implies of "Kick the Tories Out" was the dominant political theme.

So the position today for Marxist-Leninists is to advocate the return of a Labour Government, in order that the process of exposure and destruction can continue. *This does not mean that we satisfy ourselves with the slogan of 'Vote Labour'. That would indeed be an act of criminal opportunism.* It will be necessary for us to fully explain our perspective for socialist revolution, and within the confines of that, explain why we would advocate the return of a Labour Government. That task will not be simple, and will tax the full resources of the movement to demonstrate our stand in a non-ambiguous way. The job of Marxist-Leninist organisations has never been easy, whether they have been large or small, but the feeling of inadequacy that we may have regarding the complexity of the task, cannot be a reason for ignoring the fact that over 25 million British workers are going to vote in the election and will be making a political decision, no matter at what level we may

think it to be. Where else but from the Marxist-Leninist movement will a political analysis of the election come? And surely it would be extreme folly having made the analysis and having presented it to the masses, either to ignore the question of how to vote or call for an abstention. The only result of this would be, if we were successful, the certain return of a Tory Government and for this result we would be rightly judged by history and the working class of the world, as being left opportunist and infantile.

‘. . . ; but — and this is the whole point — we must *not* regard that which is obsolete *for us* as obsolete *for the class*, as obsolete *for the masses*. It is precisely here that we see that the ‘Lefts’ do not know how to reason, do not know how to conduct themselves as a party of the *class* as a party of the *masses*. You must not sink to the level of the masses, to the level of the backward strata of the class. That is incontestable. You must tell them the bitter truth. You must call their bourgeois-democratic and parliamentary prejudices — prejudices. But at the same time you must *soberly* observe the *actual* state of class consciousness and preparedness of the *whole* class (not only of the Communist vanguard), of *all* the toiling *masses* (not only of its advanced elements).

*Lenin. Left Wing Communism.*

Comrades who argue that to follow the tactic of ‘Voting Labour to Smash Labour’ is too sophisticated, too subtle and too devious, are really expressing their own fears about their abilities to express themselves. But these modest feelings, no matter how laudable in some aspects of our work, can be no excuse for not attempting to project a correct mass line. Confidence in the masses and confidence in ourselves has been the method of all revolutionary movements that have made positive strides. Surely this is what is meant by Mao Tse-tung when he states ‘From the masses and to the masses’.

‘That is why, I think, you do not want to admit that it is precisely the weakness of very many of the new Communist Parties that compels them to repudiate parliamentary action’.

*Lenin. Speech on Parliamentarianism 1920.*

The Marxist-Leninist movement in Britain is not at the stage where it can influence millions or even thousands of workers, but again recognition of this fact cannot be used as an excuse for not projecting a mass line. This is true whether we are involved in trade union work, tenants movements, solidarity with national liberation struggles or in the fight to smash parliamentarianism and social

democracy. The correctness of our analysis and style of work can only be determined by injecting them into the melting pot of the working class. Without submitting our programme and tactics to the test of action and struggle, we will never know if we are working correctly, and we will never be in a position of influencing thousands and millions of workers.

Some comrades appear to shy away from parliamentary work because of the examples and style adopted by the CPGB, whose founders were after all the recipients of Lenin’s advice. An examination of the ‘*British Road to Socialism*’ and the specific activities of the CPGB around elections will quickly show that the failure of the CPGB to capitalise upon a Labour Government in Westminster, does not lay at Lenin’s door but is the responsibility of the social democratic programme and methods of work adopted. Lenin never advocated the ‘Transforming of Parliament into an instrument of the peoples’ will’, neither did he envisage an alliance of Communist and Left Labour MP’s bringing in Socialism. Nor of course should the Marxist-Leninist movement. When we advocate that people should vote Labour we do so in a Communist way and take time to explain that a Labour vote is in fact a vote against social democracy and is a vote against parliamentarianism.

‘The Communists of Great Britain should constantly, unremittingly and undeviatingly utilize parliamentary elections and all the vicissitudes of the Irish Colonial and World Imperialist policy of the British Government, and all other fields, spheres and facets of public life, and work in all of them in a new way, in a Communist way, in the spirit of the Third, and not of the Second, International.’

*Lenin. Left Wing Communism*

If only the CPGB had adopted that advice, then perhaps the argument that it is no longer valid would have some merit because the task might have been completed!

It would be incorrect in an article of this sort however not to stress the point that parliamentary activity should never be considered as the only, or even the main plank of the Marxist-Leninist movement. The movement has to ensure that it is ‘shod on all four feet’. The involvement of workers in strikes and demonstrations, which, if we work correctly, will demonstrate the nature of our society, the role of the arms of the state and the methods that workers will have to adopt if they are to advance, will in practically every instance, be of more value than any parliamentary activity. Comrades will be aware of the frantic efforts of social

Continued on back cover

# Apartheid— by-product of imperialist oppression

BY DAVID MAPHUMZANO SIBEKO

head of the Pan Africanist Congress in Europe and the Americas

TOWARDS THE END OF 1969 and at the beginning of 1970 progressive groups all over Britain staged sensational demonstrations against a racist team of Springbok rugby players. These demonstrations successfully exposed the selection of teams along racial lines in South Africa and in their own way highlighted the continuing plight of over fifteen million Black people in that country.

The demonstrators who participated in these campaigns deserve full praise for their roles. Not only did they defy natural conditions of bad weather, bitter rains and icy winds, they also stood up to some of the worst police brutality ever witnessed in this country. The irony of a country that prides itself of its democracy dipping deep into its resources in defence of racial bigotry was not lost to thinking mankind, least of all to those of us who are daily engaged in the struggle against the inhuman system.

However, it does seem that in organising campaigns against the racial policies of the South African regime there are people who continuously lose sight of the main objective of the struggle against the doctrine of apartheid. Apartheid is a by-product of the economic exploitation of the African people of South Africa. And for the simple reason that it is the monopoly capitalists of the West, particularly Britain, the United States of America, France and West Germany, that draw the cream of the benefits from the oppression and exploitation of Africans the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, is indivisible from the struggle against Anglo-American led imperialism.

The mainstays of South Africa's economy are the mining industry and foreign investments, which all fall under the monopoly of western capitalism. The largest mining company is the Anglo-American Corporation which controls the country's greatest single money spinner, gold. The name of the corporation speaks for itself. According to a comprehensive review made by United Nations experts foreign investments in South Africa amounted to 5,313 million dollars at the end of 1966. This figure was said to represent a ten per cent increase over the 4,845 million dollars in foreign capital that had been

clocked the previous year. The UN experts categorically stated that 'British holdings in South African private enterprise as a whole exceeded by far those of any other foreign creditors'. Accumulated British investments in that year were put at 3,042 million dollars. Trade between the two countries has maintained a steady growth: the '65-'66 ten per cent can safely be taken as the standard and when the end of the 1960s 'recovery' of the pound is diagnosed it will be found that the apartheid dose contributed strongly.

According to the same UN survey US investments stood, in 1966, at 697 million dollars. France had 279 million dollars, West Germany, 160 million, Belgium and Luxemburg, 58 million and other countries, including Japan, 635 million dollars.

Capitalism was born out of the exploitation of man by man and it thrives best where this system is exercised with impunity. Cheap labour in South Africa is the main attraction for foreign investors. The statistics on the exploitation of cheap black labour in South Africa read like the horror story that they are to all men of conscience; to the exploiters they read like a dream come true.

Discriminatory laws in South Africa have brought about this strange parity in wages for white and black workers:

Average white wages in general:	R* 962 per year
Average African wages in general:	R 47 per year
Average in Mining Industry (W):	R 2,562 per year
Average in Mining Industry (A):	R 152 per year
Average in Manufacturing (W):	R 2,058 per year
Averaging in Manufacture (A):	R 422 per year

\*R stands for Rand, which is the South African currency. One rand equals 10 shillings British sterling before devaluation.

The low ceiling for African wages is entrenched in many discriminatory laws such as the Mines and Works Act of 1911 which officially 'prohibit' Africans from taking on skilled employment which fetches higher wages. Yet in practice the jobs that are done by Africans in mines, factories and other industries are no different to those of their white

counterparts who are more often than not mere supervisors.

These arrangements suit the capitalists who after they have ripped their large profits push the crumbs to the begging hands of their local lackeys, South Africa's apartheid administrators.

As I have already said, only when we attack the root causes of the evil system of apartheid can we successfully demolish racial discrimination in South Africa. By concentrating our best efforts on selected targets, such as discrimination in sport etc, we miss the whole point. The inclusion of Black athletes in South African teams will not alleviate the plight of a malnourished peasant child whose father can at best earn only thirty shillings per month.

In fact, to oppose apartheid without opposing imperialism panders to the strategy of the capitalists and it carries the danger of lumping us together with the oppressors, the capitalists. Harry Oppenheimer, chairman of the Anglo-American Corporation, is a 'staunch' opponent of apartheid in South Africa; he backs a so-called multi-racialist party, the Progressive Party. At the same time South Africa's mining industry, of which he is the kingpin, thrives on the discriminatory wages which we see above.

The capitalist press in Britain and all western countries is fond of making high sounding noises about the 'injustices' of apartheid whilst in the same columns we find flashy advertisements publicising South African goods and so forth. When the chips are down it is not difficult to see on whose side the Oppenheimers and the capitalist monopolist press are. Genuine opponents of apartheid, who must necessarily be genuine opponents of imperialism, cannot afford to be found on the same side as these double-dealers.

What must be done to create a genuine and authentic anti-apartheid movement? First and foremost progressive forces in Britain must recognise that the liberation movement in Azania, the name by which South Africa will be known after liberation, is poised against a formidable combination of forces namely, Anglo-American led imperialism whose agents are the apartheid clique currently holding on to state power in that country. The next stage would be the establishment of a powerful movement whose tactics and strategy in supporting the Azanian liberation movement must be anti-imperialist in character.

Such a movement must accept the universal truth that it is only protracted armed struggle, in the tradition of people's war, which will finally topple apartheid oppression and imperialist exploitation in Azania. Further, that such a war can be waged only by the Azanian people themselves. This being

the concrete situation vis-a-vis the Azanian struggle priority must be given to augmenting the self-reliant efforts of the freedom fighters that are spearheading the struggle against apartheid fascist rule.

Actions of demonstrating solidarity with the Azanian liberation struggle must be spread to cover all establishments that support or are in any way connected with South African apartheid policies including sports, arts and, most important of all, industry.

Over the past few years the movement in support of the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese people in the western countries has demonstrated the might of the people in supporting anti-imperialist wars, particularly in the cradle of the main aggressor in Vietnam — in the United States. British imperialism is and has always been the main prop for apartheid oppression in South Africa. If the consciousness of the British working people, who are class brothers of the oppressed masses of Azania, is heightened and their militant support against South Africa is brought into play, the Azanian struggle stands to gain immensely from such support.

The overthrow of the South African racist regime and its replacement by a people's democracy in Azania, which is the object of the liberation movement in that country, will certainly hasten the collapse of reactionary regimes in the West which have thrived on the exploitation of Azanians. Our struggles are therefore complementary. This emphasises the urgency of closer co-operation between anti-imperialist forces in Azania and the West, particularly Britain, because of the well-known relations between reactionaries in these countries.

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## THOSE WHO TAKE MEAT FROM THE TABLE

Teach contentment

Those for whom the taxes are destined

Demand sacrifice

Those who eat their fill speak to the hungry

Of wonderful times to come

Those who lead the country into the abyss

Call ruling too difficult

For ordinary men

Bertolt Brecht

# MASS WORK

## a practical example

by Shirley Cooley

IT IS A MISTAKE to expect that all struggles in which Marxist-Leninists play a lead can be conducted in the same manner and at the same rate as they could be were the participants comprised of revolutionaries and advanced elements of the working class.

A Marxist-Leninist party will have to conduct itself as a party of the class and in leading a people's fight will have to observe the degree of class consciousness present and advance it from that point.

It is accepted by Marxists that mass work is essential, but not always accepted that a mass line on the issue is also essential. Imposing an interpretation which the people involved are not ready to accept, or a line of action they are not prepared to take is destructive. It is not advancing their class interests or their class consciousness.

It should be said at the outset that the kind of activity this article reports is not to be regarded as an alternative to industrial action and trade union work. Local campaigns are valid inasmuch as they involve people like myself who cannot at present work in a trade union and they can develop the political understanding of a wide section of the community.

The issue which arose recently in Langley, near Slough, was one such example. Local people were incensed by the realisation that an oil depot under construction on railway land planned to put 400 movements of giant articulated tankers through narrow village streets which were quite incapable of accommodating them without very serious hazards arising, especially for children.

Sporadic protests were made over a period of one year but had no effect whatever. There was much talk about being 'fair' to Total Oil and in return Total expressed 'concern' for local residents.

Eventually, four individuals — an ex-councillor, a school governor, the chairman of the local Labour Party and myself agreed to join in calling a public meeting to launch a campaign which would aim at getting the company to build its own road on to

the motorway, which would be at the rear of the depot and would avoid the village altogether.

My three colleagues agreed I should take the chair, since it is recognised locally that my concern over the well-being of the villagers is genuine and that I have no electoral or personal ambitions. They recognised that people would accept the leadership of someone *close to the issue* and unhampered by party squabbles. They had constitutional action in mind though, and it was clear that this would probably have to be gone through first, and that villagers would have to *see* in whose interests the law acted.

A public protest meeting was called to subject the management to the mass censorship of the villagers. The management representative was exposed and ridiculed in front of 250 local people. Statements that his company 'appreciated' the difficulties, that they had diligently observed the law and that they employed 'professional' drivers were recognised as guff and greeted with shouts and guffaws.

The atmosphere was engendered by the platform's opening statement which gave the latest annual profit of the French-based multi-million combine (23.6 million) and details of its expansion rate in this country. It sought to unite tenants and owner-occupiers in the face of a common adversary and pointed out that it was part of local management's function to allay fears and quell protests. The statement made it clear that if the councillors present could not, or would not, lead a resistance to Total Oil, the platform would lead it and would act on the instructions of the meeting.

Inevitably a resolution for a deputation to be sent to the appropriate Minister was put by a liberal — the PPC candidate. This was passed with enthusiasm and the MP for Eton and Slough agreed to arrange for it to take place. Five were elected to draw up the case against Total Oil and put it to the Minister.

This 'trip' to Westminster duly came and went, amid a great flourish of press publicity. Lord Kennett (for Housing) and Mr Murray (for Transport)

spent much of the meeting trying to end it as swiftly and politely as possible — earnestly consulting their watches and promising a written reply as soon as possible.

On the committee of seven, a proposal for a second public meeting was initially thrown out — on the basis that we had nothing to tell our supporters, and that they had elected us to do the job. Eventually agreement was won for getting the guidance and support of local people at every stage and for an action group comprised of people prepared to do work for the campaign.

In the event, the second public meeting demanded the resignation of the Planning Committee for not opposing the company. It overwhelmingly supported more militant action such as harrasing the oil tankers and thirty people pledged to withhold rates at any agreed time. After this the Council allocated £6,000 of public money to improve an access, solely for the benefit of the tankers, when they had been saying for months that there was no money to improve a crossing for school children.

On November 26, a protest demonstration held in the village High Street amid snow and freezing rain drew 150 supporters. They were all local people and most of them had never been on a demonstration before. They admitted to feeling embarrassed over walking alone with a placard and a police escort, but regarded it as a duty to turn out.

Getting the people on the street involved very hard work on the part of the Committee. Over sixty individuals received a hand-written personal letter telling them which of their neighbours and friends might come, and asking them to make contact and come together bringing their families. 7,000 leaflets were delivered by the action group.

The demonstration illustrated for many people, the way the law is 'bent' by the police.

For example:

- 1 The traffic under a certain bridge could not be held up for marchers because of safety considerations (It *can* be held up for tankers).
- 2 A grass verge with a footpath on it suddenly became the public highway when we stopped for a meeting.
- 3 When a householder suggested a meeting in his garden, we were immediately offered the 'highway' instead. The members handed in a letter to the Depot manager, who smilingly appeared from behind padlocked gates. We all chanted the slogan — 'Build a road' and pledged more militant action if there was no response from Total Oil.

Our next plan for the new year is to organise our supporters in a rota system. They will report to the local police, the courts, and the Home Office the number of every tanker which crosses the double white lines (they all do). The police have said they will apply the law on this. People must see how they get out of it as of course they will. They may be 'understaffed' or they may remove the white lines!

The campaign has not reached a stage where people will break the law, although many would approve of others doing it. However, essential lessons have been learned by participants, ones they would never have learned through argument or through the imposition of a pure Marxist-Leninist line at the outset.

I would summarise these lessons as follows:—

- 1 The law will not act in favour of ordinary people against big business.
- 2 We cannot rely on officials to take action in our interests. We must take action ourselves.
- 3 Authorities will always listen and sympathise. They will not act against the business interest.
- 4 A monopoly is not affected by reason and moral argument. It can only be affected by action which interferes with its ability to make a profit.

People who would not dream of opposing monopolies as such are prepared to resist the effects of them and may ultimately accept the need to do the former.

Where was the Communist Party in all this? Arguing over the motives of owner-occupiers as opposed to tenants. However, to be 'fair', one or two members turned out for the demonstration.

\* \* \*

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# Trade Unionism

by BERNARD PIERCE, Coventry Workers' Association

ALTHOUGH the right wing of the Labour Party have suffered temporary setbacks by the Trade Union Congress, having carried resolutions contrary to the General Council's advice and Government policy, and by the TUC voting against the Governments penal clauses at Croydon, this in no way detracts from the collaboration by the TUC with the Government in adopting the 'Plan for Action', or the role of the trade union hierarchy in a capitalist society. 'Sellouts' of basic 'Democratic' rights fought for by rank and file trade unionists should not however surprise us. The whole history of social democracy, supported on all occasions by the hierarchy of the trade unions when the chips have been down, is one of attacks on the working class in consideration of 'National Interests' which are no other than the economic interests of the ruling class — the bourgeoisie.

In 1924 we had the collaboration of Labour and the TUC with the Liberals in the General Strike, which was followed by a Labour Government operating a means test. After world war two we had trade union leaders collaborating with the new Labour Government in imperialist wars of aggression against the struggle for liberation of workers and peasants in Korea and Malaya, being financed at home by the Cripps Wage Freeze and the introduction of prescription charges. Since the return of the Labour Government in 1964 we have seen a series of attacks on the working class, carried out in conjunction with the TUC-PIB, IRC, Donovan, 'In Place of Strife' and 'Plan for Action'. In fact the complete history of social democracy aided and abetted by the trade unions has been, and will continue to be, a role of the protection of the economic interests of capitalism.

It should be clearly understood by Marxists that legislation, whether it be contained in the White Paper 'In Place of Strife', the TUC 'Plan for Action' or in the form of package and productivity deals, is legislation carried out on behalf of American investment, Swiss bankers, international currency speculators and leading industrialists like Arnold Weinstock and Sir Donald Stokes. It is just as iniquitous whoever carries it out on their behalf, be they Tories, 'Labour' or TUC. It is

true that contradictions exist between 'Labour' Tory and TUC, but these contradictions are non-antagonistic and are used by the dominant class, the bourgeoisie, to divert the working class from the major antagonistic contradiction between these bodies and the rank and file trade unionist, which is in effect the primary contradiction between labour and capital.

The mistake that has been made by a good many rank and file trade unionists has been not only to view the so called penal clauses in the White Paper and 'Plan for Action', in isolation from the whole documents which propound greater state control in the affairs of trade unionists, but also to view the documents themselves in isolation from the whole historical perspective of state control — the state being the organ of the dominant class in society and used for controlling that society. As the financial and economic problems of British monopoly capitalism increase the attack on the worker intensifies and the need for greater state control increases. So much easier with this control carried out with the trade union movement an integral part of the state machine!

As Lenin pointed out in *State and Revolution*:  
'According to Marx, the state is an organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression of one class by another; it is the creation of "order", which legalises and perpetuates this oppression by moderating the conflict between the classes. In the opinion of the petty bourgeois politicians, order means precisely the reconciliation of classes, and not the oppression of one class by another; to moderate the conflict means reconciling classes and not depriving the oppressed classes of definite means and methods of struggle to overthrow the oppressors.'

and when quoting Engels in the same work:

'As the state arose from the need to hold class antagonisms in check, but as it arose, at the same time, in the midst of the conflict of these classes it is, as a rule, the state of the most powerful, economically dominant class which through the medium of the state

becomes also the politically dominant class and and thus acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class . . . the modern representative state is an instrument of exploitation of wage labour by capital . . .'

Fortunately it is becoming obvious to more workers that improved wages and conditions will not be obtained through legislation carried out on behalf of big business but by the concerted utilisation of the workers industrial strength on the factory floor and in the offices (not in the central lobby at Westminster by the almost ritualistic procession to lobby MP's). The onus rests on the shop steward and lay member in this respect, not the detached hierarchy at Congress House. The struggle for socialism through the labour movement in an age of imperialism typified by British neo-colonialism in Africa and Ireland, US aggression in Vietnam and the social imperialism of the Soviet Union revisionists in Czechoslovakia, must have the industrial work led by a vanguard party of the working class operating from the correct theoretical line. (Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao Tse-Tung). A successful lead cannot come from the Labour Party and the CPGB or Trotskyite 'popular Fronts' (with slogans like 'make the left MP's fight') who operate through the institutions of the state machine of modern capitalism to the extent of conveniently forgetting the necessity to smash completely and utterly the state and distorting the role of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

Quoting again from Lenin's *State and Revolution*, a work that many so called 'Marxists' choose to ignore:—

'The reason why the omnipotence of "wealth" is better secured in a democratic republic, is that it does not depend on the faulty political shell of capitalism. A democratic republic is the best possible political shell for capitalism, and therefore, once capital has gained control of this very best shell (although the Palchinskys, Chernovs, Tseretelis and Co.) it establishes its power so securely, so firmly, that no change either of persons, of institutions or of parties in the bourgeois-democratic republic, can shake it.' and 'On the other hand, the "Kautskyite" distortion of Marxism is far more subtle. "Theoretically" it is not denied that the state is the organ of class rule, or that class antagonisms are irreconcilable. But what is lost sight of or glossed over is this: if the state is the product of class antagonisms, if it is a power standing above society and "increasingly alienating" itself from it, then it is obvious that the liberation of the oppressed class is impossible, not only without a violent revolution, but also without the destruction

of the apparatus of the state power which was created by the ruling class and which is the embodiment of this "alienation". As we shall see later Marx very definitely drew this theoretically self-evident conclusion as a result of a concrete historical analysis of the tasks of the revolution.'

The vanguard party leading the struggle as well as appreciating the role of the state must also appreciate the role of the trade unions in a capitalist society, and at the same time as recognising the role realising the necessity of carrying out industrial and political work in this arena. Lenin analysed the position on many occasions. In *Left Wing Communism — an Infantile Disorder* he said:—

'In the West the Mensheviks have acquired a much firmer footing in the Trade Unions. There the trade union 'Labour aristocracy' constitutes a much thicker stratum of narrow minded, selfish, hard-hearted, covetous, petty-bourgeois elements-imperialistically minded, bribed and corrupted by imperialism. This is incontestable . . . This struggle must be waged ruthlessly to the very end as we waged it, until all the incorrigible leaders of opportunism and social-chauvinism have been completely discredited and expelled from the trade unions.'

and he went on to say:—

'But we wage the struggle against the 'Labour aristocracy' in the name of the working masses and in order to attract the latter to our side; we wage the struggle against the opportunists and social-chauvinist leaders in order to attract the working class to our side. To forget this most elementary and self-evident truth would be stupid.' and 'To refuse to work in the reactionary Trade Unions means leaving the insufficiently developed or backward working masses under the influence of reactionary leaders, agents of the bourgeoisie, labour aristocrats, or "bourgeoisified workers" (see Engel's letter to Marx in 1852 concerning the British Workers).'

We see that the recent wave of 'unprecedented wild-cat strikes' caused concern to, the labour aristocracy:—

'The German Unions are most alarmed about their loss of authority . . . Union Leaders, long accustomed to docility in the ranks, while they leisurely work out wage pacts with employers, are talking fast to mask their bewilderment. In private they speak of the strongest blow yet to the full participation of Unions in managerial decision-making demanded by the German Labour Union Federation.'

*Observer, September 14, 1969*



It is therefore necessary to attack the 'Scanlon's' and the 'Jack Jones' not as personalities in a Trotskyite manner, but for their policies and specific attitudes to matters affecting the working class. It is tactically correct to do this, in spite of what revisionist parties may say to the contrary in the interests of 'solidarity for solidarity's sake', because it is only by exposing the incorrect political line of these people that we will win the workers to our side and raise their political consciousness, and demonstrate in whose interests these people really operate.

As Lenin said in *What is to be Done*:-

'As a matter of fact, it is possible to 'rouse the activity of the masses of the workers' only provided this activity is not restricted to 'political agitation on an economic basis'. And one of the fundamental conditions for the necessary expansion of political agitation is the organisation of *comprehensive* political exposure. The masses cannot be trained in political consciousness and revolutionary activity in any other way except by means of such exposures.'

This, together with the realisation of the role of trade unions in the present system of society must form a basis for our industrial work. To give a detailed programme of industrial work is outside the scope of this article, and to do justice to such a subject would require a volume, but here are a few brief guidelines to our industrial work as Marxist-Leninists:—

1 In our industrial work we must stress the necessity of international solidarity of the working class by supporting national liberation movements and combatting racialism. The relationship of this to our own struggles in Britain should be fully explained to our fellow workers, explaining fully the political reasons.

2 In order to sharpen the conflict between capital and labour it is necessary to uncompromisingly expose the contradictions in society at grass roots (factory floor, building site and offices), not in the isolation of university common rooms or 'armchair' theoretical cells. It is important to relate 'theory to practice.'

3 In respect of relating theory to practice it is essential that our work is carried out at 'grass roots' level. We should work in shop stewards' organisations setting up cells with our allies in various factories. Leaflets on factory gate meetings, explaining issues as they arise in factories, etc, should be produced and distributed.

4 We must work with other organisations on specific issues but never deviating from the correct Marxist-Leninist line. We must always reserve the

right to put this line on any platform on which we participate.

5 We should campaign against worker participation and explain all its dangers. We should also expose the *myth* of workers control, in any guise in a capitalist society.

6 Activity should be mobilised around the following slogans, which although economic in appearance, make profound political demands on a system, which is in an era of struggle to maintain surplus value.

*The right to work.* This is a paramount demand with strong political implications in the present environment of monopoly capitalism having to merge into larger units, and rationalise, in order to maximise profits and thus secure investment.

*Wage increases without productivity deals.* Increased productivity means increased profits at the expense of the workers who produce it in the first place.

*No outside interference with the trade unions.* A most important demand from a political point of view for the reasons outlined at the beginning of this article.

Campaigning industrially on these slogans does far more to sharpen the contradictions in society, and presents the opportunity for activists to present the political analysis than slogans like 'open the books'. Just as the workers and peasants in Russia were aroused on slogans that affected deeply their lives (Bread, Peace and Land) in the age of modern advanced capitalism the workers can be aroused on the above slogans. These too affect their lives deeply and the resulting involvement, coupled with the correct leadership, will increase the political awareness and understanding of the oppression to which they are subject.

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## CORRECTION

On page 10 of issue number 12 it was stated that the Joint Committee of Communists had adopted a constitution under which it became the Communist Federation of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist). The correct title is the Communist Federation of Britain (Marxist Leninist).

# Letter from Italy

The Marxist has received the following letter from Department of Foreign Affairs, **Unione dei Comunisti Italiani (Marxist-Leninisti)** in Rome.

AT THE MOMENT the situation in Italy is excellent. On every front the large masses of the workers, peasants, and labourers are on the attack. The bosses and their lackeys are in a tight spot and are using every means, including openly repressive measures, to hold back the growing waves of struggle. But like all reactionaries they are lifting a rock only to drop it on their own feet.

The **Unione dei Comunisti Italiani (Marxisti-Leninisti)**, putting itself at the head of the masses, is building, in the fire of class struggle, a vast and widespread network of proletarian cells.

The just Marxist-Leninist directives expressed in the programme of demands for building workers, metal workers, and chemical workers, in the Programme of the Revolutionary Government, and in the weekly organ of the Central Committee, 'Servire il Popolo' (Serve the People), have been carried to the big factories, from Pirelli to Fiat and from Alfa Romeo to Dalmine, on the building sites, and in the small businesses. Very many workers have grasped these directives firmly and proletarian cells have been built and are growing by the dozen. New proletarian blood continually

enters the **Unione dei Comunisti Italiani (Marxisti-Leninisti)**, that is strengthening itself in class struggle and has begun a huge campaign for the congress that will found the **Partito Comunista Italiano (Marxista-Leninista)** in a few months time.

The highlight for us has been the National Conference, held September 12-15, and participated in by 261 delegates representing 10,600 organisations elected by Party assemblies and in great popular assemblies. For everyone the National Conference was the proof of how much the **Unione dei Comunisti Italiani (Marxisti-Leninisti)** was integrated among the masses of the people, and how just was its political line. Workers from the big factories, poor peasants, farm labourers, women revolutionaries, Red Guards, former partisans from the Stalin Groups, delegates from the intellectuals and artists at the service of the people, have brought to this historical conference that is of really fundamental importance to the Italian people the wants and needs of the different sectors of the masses, and even more these comrades drew close around the Party in an atmosphere of enthusiasm for victory and unity.

We would be very pleased if you would send us your publications and material in a regular exchange. We hope that this will create frequent and close contacts between us.

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# 'Unity'—a negative example

## from a shop steward

ONE OF THE MAIN widely accepted slogans that the revisionists and reformists make use of in order to hold back the growth of class struggle is 'United we stand, divided we fall'. Interpreted in a correct manner it can result in mustering maximum strength at a given point in order to achieve victory but used in an incorrect way it can have the opposite effect.

A tactical unity over as broad a front as possible for the purpose of obtaining a specific result is the essence of good politics, but the kind advocated by the CPGB inevitably results in a strengthening of the more reactionary forces.

They preach unity with the Labour Party on the basis of their theory that it can represent all trends in the labour movement if it were not for the bans and proscriptions imposed by the right wing. As a consequence they direct the whole of their energies in the direction of 'pushing the Labour Party and Government to the left'. Anyone who attacks the Labour Party and Government as anti-working class are condemned as splitters.

It is of course true that they have no alternative to this position as long as the CPGB is committed to the parliamentary road, and with each further step along this path of spurious unity they become ever more deeply committed to it. Because of this they have themselves become an obstacle to the development of a really mass movement centred around the working class.

### The trade unions

In the trade union movement the slogan of 'strengthen the trade unions' can be used by the reactionaries in much the same way.

In this view the trade unions are seen simply as organisations that will, because of their mass basis, always express the real views and interests of the membership. This ignores even the possibility that they can in certain circumstances be converted in organisations for oppressing the workers.

This means that we must strengthen the trade unions as organs of class struggle, but weaken them when they become, or are becoming organs of class collaboration and eventual oppression of the class.

The fear is always present that if the working class displays disunity the employing class will be able to attack it more easily.

Viewed in a mechanical way this may appear to be correct but is it so in real life?

This almost religious belief in organisational unity as a means of protecting the class from attacks by our enemies is part of our heritage of social democracy which tends us to see things in mechanical terms. It is the corollary of the idea that computers and automation will solve all problems, i.e. that technique and organisation decide everything. It ignores the fact that contradictions do exist amongst the working class and that these cannot be glossed over but must be resolved in a principled way.

### A current example

Names are not given because of the possible effect on the struggle which is still continuing.

The background is that the factory was organised during the war years when the emergency regulations were in force which made it difficult for managements to sack militants or to resist the setting up of trade union organisation in factories.

In the years immediately after the war the firm occupied a semi-monopoly position in certain fields and, as a consequence, wage increases and improved fringe benefits were fairly easily obtainable. A stoppage of only a few hours would usually result in a virtual cave-in by the management. This gave rise to a kind of militancy which appeared to be a positive development but what we did not realise was that it was only surface phenomena and that the important effects were passing unnoticed.

The easy victories actually strengthened the hold of reformist ideas over the workers because the lessons they drew from these events was that it only needed increased militancy to obtain better conditions, therefore the need to change the system was to them only an academic question with which they need not concern themselves.

Understandably this reflected itself in the attitude of the shop stewards and a spurious unity was developed amongst them.

As the economic climate changed and the financial position of the firm became more difficult, the attitude of management towards wage and other demands began to harden with the result that rifts appeared between the workers and stewards over the question of the need for increased militancy.

### **The Joint Shop Stewards Committee**

This is composed of stewards from five different unions, but the majority are from only two. The officers are elected by the whole committee irrespective of union.

On the surface this gives the appearance of a form of unity that transcends union divisions, but in reality it is nothing of the kind.

As the conditions changed and the need for struggle grew, some of the more reactionary and misguided individuals gravitated towards one particular union because its full time officials could always be relied upon to advise no action. These elements then developed the practice of making up stewards without regard to the needs of the organisation but for the express purpose of blocking any proposals for action coming from militants on the committee and for maintaining a stranglehold when it comes to the question of electing the factory convenor.

As a result of this development and our failure to find effective means of countering it, opposition to management attacks became less and less and the leading militants were pushed out of the factory by one means or another.

Although the dangers were recognised the incorrect conception of unity was so strong that we failed to launch a campaign against the majority view on the shop stewards committee in the correct manner, ie by explaining the issues involved to the membership at large, because we were afraid of being accused of causing a split. This was our major error. We failed to clarify our ideas on what we meant by unity and found ourselves swept away by a unity that was for purposes other than the advancement of the interests of the workers.

The extent to which this ideological confusion still exists is demonstrated by the attitude of the union district committee who refused to use its influence to get the stewards organised on a union basis as a first step towards remedying the position.

### **How a strike further accentuated this process of disintegration**

Because of any effective opposition to worsening conditions frustration became widespread and in response to this mood some previously right wing elements swung to the extreme left. Wage claims had been submitted by most sections without success and at a mass meeting these new 'lefts' proposed that a strike should take place as from then, and would continue until management had agreed to a new wages structure.

Apart from the fact that there was little wrong with the existing one except that wages in general were too low, this demand meant different things to different people and could not have formed the basis for an immediate settlement even if the employer had been willing.

As a consequence, although the strike was one hundred per cent solid and had the support of the local officials who did their best to achieve a settlement before the top brass moved in, the strike was a failure and deterioration of the organisation became complete except in name.

### **The present situation**

Opposition to the present set up continues to increase. Some still see the struggle in terms of a 'palace revolution' at shop steward and district committee level, but others are coming to recognise that it is only by creating a mass basis can things be changed.

The question of the correct kind of unity is very much a practical problem which is having to be solved in the concrete conditions of active struggle against the employer, and in a way that will involve large numbers of workers in the factory.

\* \* \*

**THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE** welcome comment, criticism and suggestions for future articles. We also welcome letters and communications for publication. Please write to Tom Hill, 11 Barratt Avenue, Wood Green, N22.

# 'Making comrades out of friends' a short history of the Yeovil Workers Association

by Dave Edmunds

THE ORIGINAL IDEA of forming a Workers Association came out of a conversation between three delegates to the local trades council after its meeting in December 1967. One was a Labour Party member, the other two were at that time members of the CPGB. The three were united in their concern at the tendencies towards the growth of the corporate state in Britain; in their knowledge of the limitations of trades councils; and in their incomprehension of most Marxist-Leninist articles they had read.

They agreed to book a room in a pub for the following week and to try and get some friends along for a chat over a pint, with the object of finding out what could be done in Yeovil to further the workers' cause.

On the first evening only one additional chap turned up, but a leaflet was prepared announcing the formation of the Yeovil Workers Association. It was duplicated in a union branch office and distributed amongst workmates and friends. A press statement was published in the local rag which gave us a lot of unearned but welcome publicity.

Not being sure what to do next, we called a further meeting just before the Xmas break and about ten people (all personal friends) turned up. It was agreed that to begin with we would start a campaign among local shop workers to encourage them to form committees for the purpose of demanding their share of the Xmas spending boom.

We printed a leaflet and invaded the local supermarkets on Xmas Eve in order to distribute them to the shop workers. Two of us were immediately chucked out of Tesco's and the others did not even get past the front doors. Anyway we had made a start. We were given great publicity in the local press and the writer's own workmates are still laughing at them getting slung out of the supermarket. Nevertheless, we had tasted blood.

The secretary of the trades council wrote to the TUC about our activities and we began to think that a Yeovil Soviet was on the way, but we were in for some shocks.

We were not holding regular meetings, only

when there was something to discuss. Press statements were issued knocking the 'Back Britain' Campaign and Enoch Powell but basically there were only four of us doing the work and making the decisions.

As we were all known left wingers the ordinary non-political blokes would not touch us with a barge pole because they thought, correctly, that we were not interested in people, only in sterile ideas which gave the impression that we imagined ourselves as some kind of latter day saints. Nobody turned up to the meetings, we had no funds, and we were regarded as a splinter group akin to the Jehovahs Witnesses.

We did an all-day session in the town centre collecting signatures to a petition demanding that the town council set up a watchdog committee to keep an eye on shops taking advantage of devaluation to push their prices up. We collected about one thousand signatures but the town council would not accept it and told us to send it to the PIB.

Although we did not realise it at the time, we had stumbled on the way to build up strength in Yeovil. The idea did not come from one of the latter day saints, but from an inoffensive little housewife.

About a dozen people were involved in this campaign, and many new contacts were made, but for some reason we dropped the public activity in the streets and decided to hold a series of meetings on aspects of socialism. Looking back, it seems that we deliberately took the path of least resistance, and during the winter of 1968-69 when we ran this series of meetings we accomplished nothing except to find out that public meetings are a complete bloody waste of time. Although we did make a couple of contacts that have since been very fully developed, we wasted a whole winter in fruitless activity, and as a result, public meetings are for the YWA a thing of the past.

Shortly afterwards we contacted the Britain Viet Nam Solidarity Front with a view to doing Viet Nam work in Yeovil. In the course of this we had our first, and we hope our last, experience of middle class students. A group of them in the local technical college asked us to join with them in arranging

a dance for the purpose of raising funds for the NLF. After weeks of fruitless wrangles and endless meetings they got into a mess with their parents, teachers, girl friends etc, and dropped the whole idea, leaving us wondering what had hit us.

In the summer of 1969 we invited Madam Ngyen Van Sao, a north Viet Nameese journalist, down for a social evening. We laid on food, booze, and entertainers. Sixty to seventy people turned up, all workers and their wives, and we had a damned good night. £6 was collected for the NLF and Mrs Sao enjoyed it very much, in spite of the fact that some people got very drunk. It was a genuine working mans 'do'. and Mrs Sao's speech must surely have raised the political level of everyone present.

After this we decided to take stock of our position.

We had the contacts, developed through nearly two years of limited but continuous activity, the ability to organise, and we were all good friends and comrades.

We recognised that lack of a regular meeting night was a weakness; also that we had carried out insufficient activity amongst the ordinary non-political man in the street. We decided to have a purge of old ways and ideas.

Predominance of DATA members was possibly another weakness inasmuch as manual workers are shy of non-manual workers and technicians, by their very name, tend to frighten off labourers. This must be faced honestly if it is to be overcome.

The YWA was in great need of navvies and strappers.

We put theory in the back seat and decided on a programme of grass roots struggle. Sectarian bickering had never been allowed to flourish in the YWA and this now began to pay off.

Contacts could come to meetings, say what they liked, and not be laughed at or bullied. It got around that we were not like the Jehova's Witnesses, but that the desire to put the workers on top was the motive which was driving us on. This was new. We latter day saints were changing ourselves in the course of struggle.

Yeovil is a town of about 25,000 people with the main industry being Westland Aircraft, and leather making and glove manufacture coming next in importance. The town has no record of militancy in the last hundred years and with our political views we had no base in the people whatever.

It was a contradiction that had to be resolved. If we were to take root we had to have the soil. A base had to be built.

### **From the people**

Striving to apply the concept of 'From the people, to the people', we moved into the autumn of 1969.

A member of the YWA who is a labourer at Westland Aircraft brought the information that there was a great deal of talk about the need for pedestrian crossings across two main roads in Yeovil, one near a school, the other on a main holiday route through the shopping centre. We heard of this without much interest. After all, this was small beer for revolutionaries. Luckily we gave the matter second thoughts and organised a petition at the beginning of September. We did not realise it at the time but the YWA had come out of cloud cuckoo land; we had arrived. The petitions were duplicated and contacts involved in collecting signatures. In five hours two thousand were collected. The press turned up and ordinary people were asking about this organisation that would fight for ordinary people and was not tied to any political party.

The writer of this report had been a CPGB candidate in local elections and was known as a red, as was the chairman of the YWA who is an EC member of DATA, but this did not deter people from coming forward.

The petition was presented to the mayor with the message that if they did not install the crossings, we would paint our own in. One was installed at once, with the promise that the other one would be considered in the new year.

Requests for help and suggestions for further activity began to come in. At last, after two years we had become a broad front organization.

The labourers and strappers began to come forward, a membership card was printed, and a set monthly meeting was laid on.

We now have thirty members. We do not press them to come to meetings or part with cash. We want them and their ideas; that's the most important thing, ideas. Before the pedestrian petition we were lucky to get six to our meetings, now we get fifteen or sixteen.

After much discussion we agreed on the aims of the association which are printed on our membership cards.

1. One hundred per cent trade unionism at all places of work. (This was our way of saying, organ-

ise at the place of work).

2. To form shop floor committees to protect the interests of trade unionists and their families. (This covers us for all grass roots activity because everything that happens concerns trade unionists and their families. Also the idea of shop floor committees coming out to do public work independently of political parties, is revolutionary.)

3. To fight trade union bureaucracy. (This needs no explanation, I hope.)

4. To demand the right to work. (As this right is impossible in capitalist society, it is a revolutionary demand.)

5. To support workers struggles everywhere. (This leaves the field open for anti-imperialist work and the introduction of a political line.)

Anyone who agrees with these aims can join. Labour Party, CPGB and even Enoch Powell supporters are members. The YWA is for all workers, not just left wingers; that is the whole point.

#### Defending homes

During the pedestrian crossing campaign an old age pensioner came to us with the following story. Three years ago the town council slapped a compulsory purchase order on a row of houses. Five of these, which belonged to OAP, had been condemned as unfit and as they were purchased before 1939 the law says that only site value need be paid; (in this case £175). The land is to be sold for private development and on the basis of local current prices the land on which each house stands is worth £1,200. The other houses in the street were sold at market value and are now empty. The OAP are refusing to sign anything and as we have decided to use every means to see that they get justice this means going as far as defending their homes against the bailiffs if necessary.

We now publish a regular newsletter called 'The Yeovil Worker', and the first issue is entirely about these OAP. At the time of writing, reports indicate that the thousand copies that we put into circulation are having an excellent response.

We have now dug up facts about racketeering that has started in private furnished accommodation in Yeovil, but the rent officer told a deputation that it was all perfectly legal. The facts of this scandal will make good reading in a future edition of 'The Yeovil Worker.'

In between these other activities we have shown 'in the year of the pig', a film exposing the US role

in Vietnam. We have also set up a Vietnam action committee that will probably develop into an anti-imperialist action committee.

We have a non-manual secretary and treasurer, a non-manual secretary of the Vietnam action committee, a blue collar secretary, three blue collar executive committee members plus an apprentice and an OAP. The editor of 'The Yeovil Worker' is a school teacher. Our members range from a farm worker, through dustmen and AEF men to clerks and technicians. We have only two women members which is a weakness, also the fact that we have only one farm worker although we are in the heartland of agriculture.

To sum up, we have built up through making comrades out of friends and not friends out of comrades. Constantly keeping in touch with contacts pays off, and a non-sectarian approach is essential.

In an organisation such as this the only chance of success is to fight on issues that the man in the street is concerned about. Then, when you are engaged in struggle, your political line (whatever it is) is listened to. If the YWA breaks up it will leave behind a group of people who have learned that direct action pays off. If we can survive and grow we could become the biggest thing in the politics of south Somerset. What happens depends on the leadership given in the YWA and whether we can draw the correct conclusions from our experiences. But most important of all is that all members should feel involved and important and that they should keep their ears open to the views and complaints of workmates, friends and neighbours and that the YWA should shape its policies and plans in accordance with them.

And the point of all this grass roots activity? To develop the political level of everyone we can involve in struggles, and to build a movement in south Somerset in which members will learn from their own experience that the only alternative to this corrupt and big money run society is the winning of state power by the working class itself.

#### FROM THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

The financial problems of *The Marxist* are the common experience of all publications in any capitalist society which advocates revolutionary change in that society and seeks to build the necessary forces to carry out that task. An initial period of limited circulation makes it necessary to appeal for financial support to meet the gap between production/circulation cost and income from sales. If you share our view that this journal has and can continue to serve the interests of the revolutionary forces in Britain and play a part in the development of a Marxist-Leninist Party will you assist in the following ways.

- (a) Introduce new subscribers to the journal.
- (b) Send a donation to Tom Hill,  
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## 'As a rope supports a hanging man'

Continued from page 8

democrats and revisionists to divert struggles against anti-trade union legislation, away from the point of production, and into the sterile path leading to Westminster and Downing Street. We must always remember that the ruling class is most afraid of an attack at the point of production, because when production stops, profits stop.

I feel that if we do 'shoe all feet' and constantly remember, that which is most important in our work, and at the same time develop a flexibility in our tactics without deviating from our perspective, then the twin problem of social democracy and parliamentarianism will not prove the insurmountable obstacle that it has in the past.

'Day-to-day propaganda and agitation must be of a genuinely Communist character. All press organs controlled by the parties must be edited by reliable Communists who have demonstrated their fidelity to the cause of proletarian revolution. Dictatorship of the proletariat should be discussed not simply as a set formula, but popularized in a way that will bring home its necessity to every rank and file working man and working woman, soldier and peasant. It should follow from the practical facts systematically publicized in our press. Third International supporters must use every available medium — the press, public meetings, Trade Unions, Co-operative Societies — systematically and relentlessly to expose not only the bourgeoisie, but also its abettors, the reformists of every stripe and hue.'

*Conditions for affiliation to the Third International 1920*

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An article putting an opposing view by the Brent Marxist Industrial Group will be published in a future issue. In the meantime comments from readers will be welcome.