

WHERE WE STAND !

MANIFESTO OF THE COMMUNIST LEAGUE

(Adopted December 1975)

We live in a capitalist society in which economic anarchy, arising from the profit motive, creates hardship and havoc in the lives of the majority of the people -- a society in which the great majority produce the wealth while a small minority reap the principal benefit, in which a small number of extremely powerful countries dominate and exploit the rest of the world and independence has to be fought for and maintained with blood. In the western capitalist countries the working class faces unemployment, wage restraint and inflation and is expected to bear the main burden of economic depression.

Very few organisations calling themselves "socialist" would disagree about the pernicious characteristics of capitalism, but there are basic differences among such organisations on the concept of the socialist future and the way in which it can be won. Some feel that these differences have no importance, that all that is needed to establish socialism is "unity". But to have any meaning, such "unity" must be based on agreement on certain basic principles of the road to socialism. Without such agreement there can, in fact, be only dis-unity, making all significant social advance impossible.

Socialism

By socialism we mean, not minor reforms in capitalist society (as the term is used, for example, by the leaders of the Labour Party) but its replacement by a new society, in which

- 1) the means of production (land, factories, etc.) are collectively owned by the working people;
- 2) political power is in the hands of the working class through a socialist state which they control; and
- 3) production is no longer regulated by the profit motive, but is consciously planned with the aim of satisfying, to the maximum possible extent, the requirements of the working people.

Under socialism, work is done on the basis of the principle: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his work". But the aim of a socialist society is so to develop production and the outlook of the working people that socialism may, as speedily as circumstances will allow, be transformed into communism, in which work is done on the basis of the principle: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs".

The Road to Socialism

But how is this socialism to be won?

Will the capitalist class surrender when they realise that the majority of the people want socialism? Will they hand over their property, factories, land and profits for the benefit of the majority? Clearly, it is ridiculous to expect them to give up these things -- which they have been reared to associate with "civilisation" itself -- unless compelled to do so, especially when they have a whole state apparatus, with its armed forces and police, ready to defend them. Nevertheless, this is the essence of the position now put forward by the "communist" parties of Western Europe -- that the socialist revolution can be carried through by peaceful, parliamentary means!

Naturally, all socialists desire that socialism be brought about with the minimum of bloodshed, but unfortunately the capitalist class has no such scruples. History shows that it will use its state apparatus of force -- the police and armed forces -- against any threat to its "rights" of property and exploitation, so that the only way for the working class to obtain political power is to build up an equally strong revolutionary army led by its own general staff. The stronger this working class army, the greater is the likelihood of a bloodless revolution -- as happened in Finland after World War I, when the ruling class of this newly-independent state had not yet been able to build up its own state machinery of force and so was compelled to surrender power to the working class without a struggle. The opposite situation offers a recent example of the danger of spreading the illusion of a peaceful, parliamentary road leaving the state machine in the hands of the ruling class: Chile was no academic exercise -- the progressive forces were massacred!

The difference which Marxist-Leninists have with the present "communist" parties is not mere rhetoric: not only lives, but the possibility of socialism itself, depend on the issue of the correct road to socialism. The Communist Party of Great Britain, which has long abandoned the Marxist-Leninists principles on which it once based its policies, declares that the "long-established democratic traditions" of Britain can be used to bring about the transition to socialism.

But what is the real character of this "democracy"?

"Parliamentary Democracy"

"Parliamentary democracy" is by no means the rule of the will of the people, as it is presented. It is no more than a false facade which conceals the real character of the state as, essentially, a machinery of force in the hands of the ruling capitalist class. The House of Commons has no real power, and is little more than a talking-shop; all its legislation is subject to approval by the queen, most to approval by the House of Lords, and neither the monarchy nor the Lords has anything in common with democracy. Furthermore, all Commons legislation is subject to interpretation by judges, and to execution by the heads of the civil service -- and these elements are not elected, but drawn from the upper class. Ministers, in fact, are little more than spokesmen for the higher civil servants who play the main role in framing government policy.

All the political parties which exist in Britain at the present time serve in reality, whatever they may say, the interests of the capitalist class. The Communist Party, which claims to be a "socialist" party, has repudiated mobilisation of the working class for socialist revolution in favour of "electoral struggle", and so forms part of the machinery of deception of the working people which is the essence of "parliamentary democracy".

The Communist Party is not the only party claiming to be "left-wing" and "socialist" which preaches faith in "parliamentary democracy". Many trotskyite groups present the Labour Party as potentially a "revolutionary party" which can be transformed by subterfuge from within. In fact, the whole structure of the Labour Party is designed to prevent left-wing rank-and-file members from diverting the leadership from serving the interests of Big Business, just as the Conservative and Liberal Parties do.

The working class will be unable to make any significant social advances, much less abolish capitalism and construct a socialist society, until it has built up its own political party, a party which genuinely represents its interests, a party which has repudiated all illusions about "parliamentary democracy" and bases itself on the revolutionary guidelines of Marx and Lenin.

Fascism: The Face of Capitalism Laid Bare

The hollowness of "parliamentary democracy" is clearly demonstrated by the historical fact that, wherever this form of state power ceases to operate in the interests of Big Business, the ruling capitalist class strives to replace "parliamentary democracy" by the type of open, terrorist dictatorship which we call fascism. Fascist parties enjoy the protection of the "parliamentary democratic" state, but it is when Big Business decides to give one of these parties its support -- financial and otherwise -- that the decisive step towards a fascist state is made.

Despite its uselessness to change the social order, under "parliamentary democracy" workers possess certain valuable rights and liberties which are abolished under fascism -- rights and liberties which facilitate the building of a movement of socialist revolution. Socialists -- and, indeed, the entire working people -- thus have a vital interest in resisting fascism. Some organisations calling themselves "anti-fascist", especially those declaring allegiance to trotskyism, would limit the organised anti-fascist movement to professed socialists, thus narrowing and weakening the anti-fascist struggle and making the victory of fascism virtually inevitable. But the socialist movement and the anti-fascist movement are distinct -- representing movements of different levels of political consciousness. To resist fascism successfully it is essential to build the broadest possible anti-fascist movement, embracing all opposed to fascism no matter what their views on other questions.

Corporatism

One of the democratic rights which workers possess under capitalist "parliamentary democracy" is the right of collective bargaining on wages and working conditions, in which the workers can exert their organised trade union strength to secure the best possible terms.

In the present period, when capitalism is in decay, collective bargaining has become increasingly disliked by the capitalists, who are seeking to limit it in various ways, even within "parliamentary democracy". In this they have the support of the right-wing leaders of the trade union movement and the Labour Party, who seek to impose wage restraint on the workers and to damp down any militancy which arises.

A "corporation", in the political sense of the term, is a body embracing both employers' representatives and "workers' representatives", who are expected to "collaborate" in the cause of some imaginary "common interest". Such corporations form part of the structure of a fascist state, under which genuine workers' organisations are illegal.

Even under "parliamentary democracy", however, measures of corporatism are being pressed. The proposal to bring "workers' representatives" on to the boards of companies -- a proposal supported by some elements calling themselves "left-wing" under the slogan of "workers' control" -- is designed to give workers the illusion that they are "partners" in capitalism, the illusion that, in the interests of "their" company, they have an interest in damping down class struggle. But, of course, genuine workers' control of production can be established, not by class collaboration within capitalism, but only by working class power and the construction of socialism.

The Soviet Union and China

We can look to history for numerous examples of fascist dictatorships -- to Italy, Germany and Spain -- but can we look to the present-day Soviet Union and to the People's Republic of China, which describe themselves as "socialist" states, as models of the socialism we wish to build?

The Soviet Union was, but is no longer, a socialist country. Capitalism has been restored, and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is no longer a party basing itself on Marxism-Leninism and representing the interests of the working class. The socialist economy, based on the planning of production to promote the maximum well-being of the working people, has been replaced by a market economy based on the profit motive. The directors of the "state" enterprises have been given autonomy to compete among themselves and to receive the lion's share of the profits made by the enterprises; monopoly has developed far beyond the level attained in Britain or the United States.

The Soviet industrial managers now form a class of state capitalists who exploit the working class of the Soviet Union, and the most powerful of them dominate the leadership of the state and the single political party legally permitted. Thus, the Soviet Union has become a major imperialist country, with its own semi-colonial spheres of influence, in fundamental competition with other major imperialist states, notably the USA.

China, on the other hand, was never a socialist country. The revolution which established the People's Republic of China in 1949 was, as Mao Tse-tung correctly described it at the time, a form of national-democratic revolution which placed in power an alliance of national capitalists and comprador capitalists tied to US imperialism and which permitted capitalist exploitation to continue.

For a time the national capitalist faction, headed by Liu Shao-chi, was dominant within the Communist Party, but the "cultural revolution" -- far from being "socialist" in character -- was a counter-revolution by the pro-US comprador capitalists, led by Mao Tse-tung, which established a repressive dictatorship. This situation was reflected in the rapprochement with US imperialism and the moves by the Chinese government against national liberation movements in various parts of the world.

We believe it to be an essential task of Marxist-Leninists to examine in detail the manner in which the socialist society in the Soviet Union and the international communist movement came to be destroyed. The history of modern revisionism (that is, the revision of Marxist-Leninist principles to provide a pseudo-socialist ideology serving the interests of the capitalist class) must be studied thoroughly and objectively in order that the new Marxist-Leninist International which must be built is free of its infection.

Albania

Of the states in which socialism had been, or was being, constructed after World War II, there remains only the People's Republic of Albania. Here the working class remains in power and is continuing a socialist transformation at a remarkable pace.

The Albanian Party of Labour has remained faithful to Marxist-Leninist principles in relation to the internal economic development of the country, and played a notable role in the exposure of revisionism in the Soviet Union and the international communist movement.

Nevertheless, the cardinal error of the leadership of the APL in presenting China as a "socialist" state and in supporting maoist groups in various countries as "Marxist-Leninist" has seriously retarded the urgent task of building a new Marxist-Leninist International and, if not corrected, must lead to the internal degeneration of Albania's socialist society.

National Liberation

Marxist-Leninists stand for the right of all nations to self-determination, and support their struggle for genuine independence against foreign imperialist domination; this includes, of course, the struggle of the Irish nation for unity and independence from British imperialism.

The revolutionary process in a colonial-type country, however, differs from that in a developed capitalist country in that the former must be carried through in two stages: first, the stage of national-democratic revolution and, second, the stage of socialist revolution. Marxist-Leninists completely reject the trotskyite notion of "national liberation", which refuses to distinguish between the two stages and calls, in colonial-type countries, for "Socialism now!". This policy can only disrupt the revolutionary process in such countries and, in fact, prevent their progress towards socialism.

In the face of the strong resistance of imperialism to national liberation, some sections of the latter movement have turned to tactics of individual terrorism. We reject such tactics, which alienate the masses from the movement and are counter-productive. Successful national liberation requires the organisation of properly-led mass struggle, both political and military.

The Struggle against Discrimination

Within a capitalist society, not all sections of the working people are exploited and oppressed equally. Marxist-Leninists support all struggles against the discrimination practised, for example, against black people and women. Such struggles are important not only in themselves, but as part of the overall struggle for the unity of the working class which is essential for the success of the socialist revolution. For this reason, the struggles against discrimination must be part of, and not separate from, the working class movement; all attempts to isolate the struggles against discrimination by, for example, seeking to exclude white people or men from them, are divisive and can only hinder the fight against oppression.

Conclusion

The most urgent need of the British working class at the present time is for a political party which really represents its interests. This need is no less great because only a small fraction of British workers as yet recognises this need.

The guiding lines for such a party are laid out in the work of Lenin which, together with the principles of Marxism, form the basic world outlook for a revolutionary party of the working class -- a party which is revolutionary in deed, not merely in words, as are the revisionist "communist" parties of Western Europe.

It is the aim of the COMMUNIST LEAGUE to build such a party.

If or when you recognise the vital importance of this task, and wish to take part in it, we should be very pleased to hear from you.

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