

Workers of the world unite!

Dedicated to
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**In the
ENEMY
CAMP**

Using parliament for revolution

NOVEMBER PUBLICATIONS LTD

Published by November Publications Ltd

BCM Box 928. London WC1N 3XX

© 1993 November Publications Ltd

ISBN 1 874123 04 7

British Library Cataloguing-In-Publication Data: A catalogue
record for this book is available from the British Library

Typeset by November Publications Ltd

Printed by The Book Factory. London N7 7AH

First edition 1993

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Preface

The world is in the midst of a period of reaction and Britain is not in the midst of revolution. Nevertheless, as Jack Conrad explains, this does not mean that when it comes to elections we must limit ourselves to choosing between bourgeois parties, choosing which appears to be the lesser evil. To suggest we must is to follow consciously or unconsciously in the footsteps of the Mensheviks; they imagined that in Russia the party of liberal capitalism, the Cadets, was the key to progress. Our comrade tellingly shows that today the opportunist left in Britain has assigned that role to the Labour Party.

The organisations of the opportunist left in Britain have one main overriding priority — getting the Tories out. For them that can only be done by supporting the Labour Party. So when it came to the April 1992 general election they turned a blind eye to Labour's rotten anti-working class record, its open and unashamed commitment to run capitalism, and loyally acted as Kinnock's footsoldiers.

Genuine Marxists do not foster illusions in Labourism. What Britain needs is socialism. To get that means fighting for *independent* working class politics, and that means reforging the Communist Party of Great Britain, winning for it — not the Labour Party — the position of the natural party of the working class. It was with that aim we entered the April 1992 general election. Our campaign represented a highly significant and necessary stage in the struggle to reforge the CPGB; it provided an invaluable opportunity to challenge Labourism and present, in a truly mass way, the case for communism. Details of all of this, above all the theoretical and historical background to communist work in parliament and parliamentary elections, will be found in comrade Jack Conrad's pamphlet. Given the present ideological confusion on the left, we believe it will act as a breath of fresh, revitalising air.

Provisional Central Committee
Communist Party of Great Britain
December 1992

Introduction

For communists, that is real as opposed to official' or fake communists, elections to the bourgeois parliament are a secondary question. We do not consider elections the motor of history, the driving force behind the political movement of nations and peoples. As Marx and Engels made clear in the *Communist Manifesto*, it is class struggles", up to and including revolution, which are the motor of history.¹

That does not mean we are indifferent to elections. As long as important sections of the working population entertain illusions in the possibilities of parliament, we "consider it obligatory for the Communist Party" to stand candidates "because we want to use *every* avenue to propagate the ideas of communism."²

It has to be said that many on the left in Britain only pay lip service, *if* that, to the Marxist-Leninist approach to elections. This is very significant. Indeed, in the conditions which pertain today the 'election question' delineates the main divisions within the working class movement in our country. The attitude towards elections not only defines the *revolutionary* and *reformist* poles of our working class movement; in a different way it also defines the soggy 'Menshevik' centre, which exists and vacillates between them.

To understand why this is the case, why we consider it necessary to stand communist candidates, including in competition with those of the Labour Party. why we put reforging the Communist Party and the consciousness of advanced workers before the question of who administers Britain, why we do not give a hoot about the 'you'll split the vote' outrage of centrists, we can do no better than begin by examining parliament and elections in the light of both Marxist theory and communist history.

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It has to be said that while some boast about their disdainful attitude towards theory and history, we take a different view. Without Marxist theory there can be no Marxist movement. That is a dictum most would accept. But what of history? It goes without saying that we are not interested in creating a rosy image of the past. No, for us historical experience is our movement's teacher. Understanding history is learning from past advances and setbacks, in order to guide us towards our final self liberation. As the great Franz Mehring³ once said: "The proletariat has the advantage over all other parties of being able to constantly draw new strength from the history of its own past, the better to wage its present-day struggles and attain the new world of the future."

By examining the history of our movement's attitude towards and utilisation of parliament and elections in this pamphlet, we seek to draw new strength for the battles to come.

JC

1. Parliament

We can best begin our discussion on the 'election question' with parliament itself. Like the French *états-generaux*, Sweden's *rigsdag*, the *landstande* of Germany and the Spanish *cortes*, the English parliament had its origins in feudalism's endemic contradiction between what was later called the "divine right" of kings and the barons' "right of resistance".⁴ During the 13th century this "right of resistance" grew to the point where baronial magnates could, through concerted rebellion or collective pressure, require "their kings to promulgate acts of self-limitation".⁵ The Charter of Ottokar in Syria, England's Great Charter, the Golden Bull in Hungary, the Pact of Koszye in Poland all had the common purpose of 'restoring' the supposed 'ancient freedoms' of the nobles, and thus a greater share of the meagre surplus squeezed out of the downtrodden peasants.

Dual power, though sealed and sanctified in meticulously drafted charters, proved inherently unstable. Between the irresistible barons and the immovable king there ran the ever present threat of civil war. Both sets of heavily armoured thieves therefore had a pressing interest in courting the nascent merchant and guild class. The wealth and power of these parvenus had grown such that they deemed contributions to state coffers "aid that they had conceded rather than a tax imposed upon them".⁶ This swelling self confidence fully explains the famous decision in 1265 by Simon de Montfort's baronial party to summon to council for the first time representatives from the cities, boroughs and cinque ports, namely "the more upright and discreet citizens or burgesses".⁷

Ironically the passive entry of the burgesses into the political arena worked to the eventual advantage of the "strictly individual aspect of the state".⁸ With central power, with the profane reins of

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diplomacy, treasury and mint in his heavenly appointed hands, the king was able to offer a more reliable and magisterial social contract than could any selfish baronial outfit — especially after their leading families fought each other to the point of mutual exhaustion in the Wars of the Roses.

Constitutionally, integrating the burgesses into the state and broadening the political ‘class’, had immediate consequences. Crucially it meant the bifurcation of the king’s council. One branch consolidated around itself executive functions through a permanent salaried staff, meeting in Star Chamber. The other evolved as a broad, usually annual, two house parliament: the upper chamber of peers, the lower of commoners.⁹

It hardly needs saying that this last named house was a plutocratic affair. A world removed from one person, one vote, the commons consisted of and represented the rich and well connected, those organised in highly oligarchic and exclusive corporations. The labourers and peasants did not get a look in.¹⁰ Lord and guild master alike considered our ancestors fit only for toil, tithes and, if need be, the gibbet.

Despite its narrow social base in the propertied classes, it will be understood that the feudal parliament had no right to direct policy, let alone the power to transform society. Criticism was tolerated. At least if it was of the cringing variety. But the granting of swingeing taxes was expected — they were invariably squandered in royal wars, debauchery and marriage bed alliances. So the invention of parliament in medieval times was not the beginning of democracy many modern historians would have us believe. This parliament, as Adam Smith himself pointed out, had nothing to do with popular sovereignty, everything to do with the manoeuvring between crown and barons.

Parliament has changed since then in both external and internal functions, of course. Externally — the widely accepted claim that through parliament popular rule *is* exercised enables it to serve as a dense thicket of ideological mystification behind which the *capitalist* reality of the present day state in Britain can be concealed. Parliament and parliamentary ejections are used in this way to gain *popular consent* for the exploitation of the many by the few. Internally — though the power of transnationals, prime minister, cabinet, senior civil servants and MI5 far outweigh those of any backbench MP, because of its own internal contradictions the

bourgeoisie considers parliament a vital forum where its various factions and groupings can haggle for power, patronage and popularity.

Today it meets under vaulting roofs of gothic splendour, amidst delicate filigree and staring gargoyles. Proceedings are encrusted with feudal relics, from morning prayers to hereditary peers. Yet parliament is a thoroughly *bourgeois* institution.¹¹ Because of this easily discernible, but fundamental and defining fact, we say if the bourgeoisie long ago exhausted the progressive potential it once possessed, so has parliament (as will be seen, this statement is based on far more than inductive reasoning).

Though parliament is a form of the capitalist state — therefore not something that can be carried through to communism, which knows neither classes nor the state — the self-proclaimed ‘sensible’ left in our country refuse to recognise the reactionary nature of parliament. On the contrary, they worship parliament and are quite prepared, like latterday Aztecs, to rip the heart out of independent working class politics in order to placate their adopted god. Thus, for them, parliament is not a bourgeois institution, but “the product of past baffles for democracy,”¹² a body which “expresses the “sovereignty of the people,”¹³ which if “backed by the mobilised power of the labour movement” can bring about “socialism”.¹⁴

We do not bow before this or any other bourgeois shrine. Parliament is no temple of liberation. It is first and foremost a sham. Understandably then, William Morris thought a fitting fate for Charles Barry’s rather fine building would be to serve as a “dung market”.¹⁵ No, as we have just said above, parliament provides the democratic mystification which hides the *reality of power* in Britain. For though people take quite a deal of interest in elections to its lower chamber and even in the gladiatorial exchanges which characterise its set-piece debates, parliament does not empower the masses. Frankly, who “owns and controls the means of production is worth any number of general elections”.¹⁶ Marx was absolutely right when he said bourgeois democracy gives the mass of people the opportunity to decide “once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to misrepresent” them in parliament.¹⁷

This, not the arrival of genuine democracy’, the ‘Integration of trade unions into the state’ and the transformation of workers from subjects into citizens’, is the significance of the steady extension of the parliamentary franchise since parliament was opened up to

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the bourgeoisie with the Reform Act of 1832. Yes, It is true that from 1928, when women were finally given the vote at the age of 21, something like 96% of those legally defined as adults have had the vote. But while this gives the appearance of majority rule, the *essence* of parliamentary democracy is no different from any other form of the bourgeois state, such as apartheid, fascist totalitarianism or military junta.

The essence of the state is not the extraneous functions of providing social security or welfare, let alone “the actuality of the ethical idea” as Hegel imagined.¹⁸ The state is, as Marx showed, an organ of class rule, consisting of “special” bodies of people, ie the armed forces, prisons, bureaucracy. It exists for the *suppression* of one class by another and operates through legalising, moderating and organising the struggle of one class against another. Arising when and insofar as class antagonisms cannot be reconciled, the very existence of the state proves that class antagonisms are irreconcilable.

Before and after universal franchise, the history of Britain shows there has existed a permanent undeclared and incipient civil war in this country. For example, following the French revolution, soldiers were barracked in every strategic industrial city and town. They were there not to save them from possible invasion, but to guard against possible insurrection. One hundred and fifty years later Field Marshall Lord Carver owned up, in a rare act of official honesty, that until just before World War II the “army saw its main function as being to maintain law and order at home and regarded the fighting of foreign wars as its secondary role”.¹⁹

Brigadier Frank Kitson’s 1971 opus on civil unrest shows that little has changed. Written against a background of rising industrial militancy, economic stagnation and revolutionary situation in the Six Counties, Kitson’s infamous *Low intensity operations* to all intents and purposes popularises the army’s counterrevolutionary plans.²⁰ The whole thrust and tone of his book is designed to garner middle class public support for army action against “subversion”. Revealingly, by subversion he means “all illegal measures short of the use of armed force”, “political and economic pressure. Strikes, protest marches, and propaganda”, “taken by one section of the people of a country to overthrow those governing the country at the time, or to force them to do things which they do not want to do.”²¹

Between the army, as line of last resort, and parliament, as first

line of defence, the bourgeoisie has a minefield of other establishment institutions, laws and traditions in place to protect its privileges. The courts, the two party system, the civil service, the Bank of England, the House of Lords, the police and the mass media are all available to 'check and balance' any democratic right. Moreover, the unwritten British constitution gives it the perfect *legal* device to quickly change form. Using its powers of prerogative, the crown can dismiss any government and dissolve any House of Commons, at any time.²² After all, Britain is not *officially* a parliamentary democracy. It is a monarchy.²³ Cabinet ministers, MPs, members of the armed forces, the police, the judiciary all swear oaths of loyalty to the crown rather than the elected government or people. That is why cabinet ministers constitutionally derive their authority from being appointed to the crown's Privy Council, not from being leaders of the majority party in the House of Commons.

Of course, the form through which the bourgeoisie chooses or is forced to rule is not crucial. What concerns us is the fact that because of capitalism the mass of the population, being wage slaves, live in constant fear of poverty, while a tiny minority rules and grows rich through the exploitation of their labour power. So we communists have no illusions in the bourgeois parliament, no holy mission to improve it by joining the constitutional reform crusade for PR, abolition of the House of Lords and election of a president. As with the lie that the relationship between the capitalist and the worker is equal, that there is no exploitation involved. If the capitalist gives a "fair day's pay for a fair day's work", our task is to rip away all the veils of democracy behind which the bourgeoisie hides its rule. We must open the eyes of the masses to the reality of the bourgeois state, in preparation for the "critical moment, the decisive combat".²⁴ That is exactly what our electoral work is designed to facilitate.

For although in our society the ideas of the ruling class are the ruling ideas, this does not mean that there is no discontent. There most certainly is. Even in 'normal' times, times not characterised by economic and political crisis, huge numbers, if not the majority, are unhappy with their lives. National and sexual discrimination, low pay, sackings, pollution, price rises, new tax burdens, the drive to war, all provoke movements which have the potential of breaking through the Integument of bourgeois legality.

This is where the two party system, with its ever present

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alternative party of government ready in the wings, comes in,²⁵ As Lord Balfour, Tory prime minister over the years 1902-6, noted in his introduction to Walter Bagehot's much quoted 1867 classic, *The English Constitution*:

“Our alternating cabinets, though belonging to different parties, have never differed about the foundations of society. And It Is evident that our whole political machinery presupposes a people so fundamentally at one that they can safely afford to bicker; and so sure of their own moderation that they are not dangerously disturbed by the never ending din of political conflict.”²⁶

Through the two party system, discontent can be safely syphoned off through the hope and maybe the reality of putting the alternative party into office. When that party forms a government, it does not, of course, mean the overthrow of the system and an end to its evils. All that happens is that the ideological veil changes colour, the capitalist reality remains as before, as does the *inevitable*, ever present danger of war and slump.

The emergence of the Labour Party changed nothing. Nor did its replacement of the Liberal Party as the alternative party of government. In spite of the bickering and “never ending din of political conflict” between them, Labour and Tory are no different when it comes to defence of British imperialism and the *capitalist* “foundations of society”. The reason for Labour's seemingly strange behaviour — ‘strange’ given its base in the working class and its trade union affiliates — is entirely explained by its political programme, leadership and organisational forms, all of which go to make it a reactionary *bourgeois* workers' party.

The 1992 general election ‘debate’ between the Labour Party and the Tory Party was a perfect example of the two party system's role. According to Kinnock the early 1990s downward oscillation in the economy had nothing to do with the capitalist system itself and the fact that Britain is intermeshed with the world economy, primarily represented by the United States, the EC and Japan.

All blame was heaped upon one individual. That there were 3 million unemployed, that Britain had an unprecedented trade gap, that its long term decline continued unabated, was all his fault. Get rid of him, said Neil Kinnock, and everything will change. It might be thought that this person must have been some sort of a superhuman devil. But no. Not surprisingly the man turned out

to be the epitome of establishment greyness and Ineffectiveness, John Major. It works both ways. We know that if Kinnock had got himself into No 10, and predictably the economy did not experience a historic metamorphosis, the Tories would have spun exactly the same line.

In 'normal' times large sections of the 'discontented' fall for this guff. Their minds are befuddled by the warping effects of bourgeois ideology and consequently for most of their lives they do not think deeply, if at all, about politics. It is only in 'abnormal' times, eg in revolutionary situations, that the "contract" between the rulers and ruled "falls to the ground" and the majority of the population, through their own self movement, begin to search out an alternative to capitalism and all its politics.²⁷

What this demands from communists, the "shock force" of the proletariat, is a swift shift in tactics from parliamentary "skirmishes" to "decisive" action.²⁸ The masses' anger and fighting determination must be turned with full revolutionary force against the bourgeois state, parliament included. Marx and Engels long ago came to this conclusion: "the working class," they said, "cannot lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes".²⁹

Put another way, communism can never be legislated in by a "transformed" bourgeois parliament. Obviously, revolutionary situations and general elections do not easily coincide. More than that, it cannot be stressed too strongly that revolutionary situations are life and death moments. To hesitate, because of bourgeois democratic niceties, is to die. Parliament as both part and form of the bourgeois state will have to be smashed through revolution, the real midwife of socialism. That is why we say plans for a parliamentary British road to socialism peddled by the 'official communists', Campaign Group Labourites and Militant alike, are not only doomed to come to nought, they represent a barrier which must be overcome if we are to avoid the counterrevolutionary terror which is inevitable given a failure to consummate the fleeting moment of a revolutionary situation.

Not unexpectedly, in defence of their rotten politics the ladies and gentlemen of opportunism demand that we tell them what will replace their utopian plans for parliament? No problem. Life itself has given the answer. As "proved" to Marx and Engels by "practical experience", above all the Paris Commune of 1871, the *smashed* bourgeois state will be superseded by the *dictatorship of the*

proletariat, or in other words the “proletariat organised as the ruling class”.

Marx greeted the Paris Commune, “that sphinx so tantalizing to the bourgeois mind”, as the “glorious harbinger of a new society”.³⁰ As Lenin noted in his *State and Revolution*, the Commune was a case of “quantity becoming transformed into quality”. This was because democracy had been introduced as fully and consistently as is at all conceivable, is transformed from bourgeois into proletarian democracy; from the state (= a special force for the suppression of a particular class) into something which is no longer the state proper”.³¹ This “positive form” of the proletarian state arose from the flames of the class struggle, not the pens of ivory tower theorists, nor the votes of superannuated parliamentary legislators. It was out of the cauldron of a profound revolutionary situation that the Commune was forged, a weapon used by the masses as an organ of their struggle and their rule.

Needless to say, with its origins in a proletarian takeover of Paris, the Commune was a complete anathema and a “direct antithesis” to the sham and hypocrisy of the bourgeois parliament. The Commune was a semi-state which rested on the *active support* of the “armed people”, not atomised *passive consent*; “its first act was the suppression of the standing army, and the substitution for it of the armed people”.³²

The Commune “was a working, not a parliamentary, body”. It neither separated legislative and executive state functions nor did it have professional politicians who sponged off the people. The Commune was made up of elected delegates on average workers’ pay, delegates who were subject to instant recall. This made it a 19th century anticipation of 21st century communism, an anticipation which cast its brilliant light over the whole Intermediate century. As is well known, Paris was not alone. In Russia, both in 1905 and February 1917, similar bodies, the soviets, burst into life. In October 1917 they came to be the state power in the land. Not a local nor national event, this was incontestably the *direct product* of a world storm. Italy, Austria and Finland produced their own versions of soviets. Hungary and Germany actually had short lived soviet republics. Even in ‘conservative’ Britain the councils of action of 1920 and 1926 had distinct soviet-like features.

Here, given that merely for the sake of a £100 BBC cheque, official communist’ leaders are prepared to tell all and sundry that

revolutions and soviets are outdated phenomena of the long gone past, it is worth recalling the 1984-5 miners' Great Strike and its support groups. Organised in just about every city and town, the miners' support groups united within them almost the whole of the advanced section of our class, as well as specific representatives of left groups and parties, militant trade union branches and other workers' organisations.

We, for our part, did everything we could to encourage what was embryonic to go to full development. Of course, it did not happen. But then the same can be said of the 1920 and 1926 councils of action, to which even the petty bourgeois left, such as the Socialist Workers Party, give great weight. Unfortunately the 20:20 vision of such groups only applies to the distant past. When it comes to the present, let alone the future, myopia reigns. The miners' support groups pointed to what will come, as does the child to the adult. In that light, although the miners were defeated, nothing should or can be taken away from their support groups. Being a real step forward in the class struggle and a real herald of the future, they were worth more than all the plans for a peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism put together.

The miners and their supporters showed yet again that it is the masses, not 'great men', who are the makers of history. During periods of intense class struggle – such as the miners' Great Strike – ordinary people perform creative miracles that leave so-called creative 'Marxists' standing.

Genuine communists learn from the masses. Marx and Engels did. Lenin did, and so has the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB. As we said in the book *Which Road?*, "when asked what the dictatorship of the proletariat in Britain will look like, we say: look at the miners' Great Strike. Although it had many of the features of past industrial struggles, it will one day be 'celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society'."³³

In this spirit we make no apology whatsoever about arguing and fighting for the death of parliament and the birth of 'soviets' in Britain. If we want to see a classless society there really is no other way. Not just because soviets are infinitely more democratic. But because only through such *transitional* bodies can the working class carry through its historic mission of realising communism, which by definition leaves behind the state, an alienated body which stands above society.

2. Working in the enemy camp

Because it is part of the bourgeois state, communists have never concealed their aim of smashing parliament. Nevertheless, from the time of the First International (1864-1876) our comrades have successfully participated in parliamentary elections and the bourgeois parliament. It is only to 'voting never changed anything' anarchists and 'all change comes through parliament' philistines that this seems an impossible Catch 22. There is no paradox in reality. The communists seek not to work constructively in, reform or lay hold of parliament. We use parliament purely for agitational purposes"³⁴ It hardly needs saying that this agitation is designed to multiply the forces of revolution. In that way, if only in that way, parliamentary elections can be considered an Instrument for emancipation, and parliament "ceases to be a mere tool in the hands of the bourgeoisie"³⁵

Though it might enrage some latterday 'revolutionary communist' boycottists, Engels was also of this view.³⁶ He considered communist electoral work an excellent thing. Indeed in his introduction to Marx's *Civil War in France* he praised in the highest terms the "astonishing growth" in the votes gained by the revolutionary workers' party in Germany, the Social Democratic Party, after universal male suffrage was conceded by Bismarck in 1866. Bourgeois democracy might be a sham; however, so successful was the SDP's electoral work that "the bourgeoisie and the government came to be much more afraid of the legal than of the illegal action of the workers' party, of the results of elections than those of rebellion."³⁷ Thus, for Engels, the way the SDP had made use of universal suffrage to steadily increase its strength had "supplied their comrades in all countries with a new weapon, and one of the sharpest" at that.³⁸

Elections for Engels were an avenue for agitation, which enabled

communists to get “in touch with the mass of the people”.³⁹ They were therefore a gauge of revolutionary maturity, if our votes are low, this should act as a warning against precipitate action. Put another way, if the masses are not prepared to vote for us they will not be prepared to make the revolution with us. If on the other hand the vote is high, this should spur us on to the “decisive battle”. In Engels’ own elegant words, contesting elections “accurately informs us concerning our own strength and that of all hostile parties, and thereby provides us with a measure of proportion for our action second to none, safeguarding us from untimely timidity as much as from untimely foolhardiness”.⁴⁰

In Germany working class MPs like Wilhelm Liebknecht⁴¹ and August Bebel⁴² were brilliantly effective. As parliamentary thugs they put Dennis Skinner to shame. They skilfully and energetically used parliament against the bourgeoisie, used it as a platform from which to agitate against the bourgeoisie and to rally the forces of revolution (despite parliamentary ‘immunity’, opposition to the Franco-Prussian war landed them two years imprisonment). Yet, as we know, there was another side to the story. No effort was spared by the rich and powerful to turn working class representatives. And at the end of the day money, flattery, genteel soirees, parliamentary routine and flimflam succeeded where anti-socialist laws failed.

Eduard Bernstein became spokesman for the labour bureaucracy and the revisionist cancer that steadily ate away at the revolutionary programme of German social democracy.⁴³ Starting with an ‘open minded’ criticism of the Marxist theory of crisis, doubts about the inevitability of war under capitalism and the relative pauperisation of the masses, Bernstein went on, in the name of “winning the battle for democracy .to reject the necessity of revolution and the “dictatorship of the proletariat”.⁴⁴ As with our modern day parliamentary roadists, Bernstein considered that bourgeois democracy did “not need to be destroyed but only to be further developed”.⁴⁵ Universal suffrage could be more than “the right to choose the ‘butcher’”.⁴⁶ It provided the possibility of slowly converting “the representatives of the people from masters into real servants of the people”.⁴⁷

There was a logic in this revisionism which claimed the “movement was everything” and the maximum programme “nothing”. The logic was betrayal. In August 1914 the parliamentary fraction of the

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Social Democratic Party voted for the Kaiser's war budget, and in the name of defending the 'fatherland' it urged the working class of Germany to the slaughter of World War I. The opportunist MPs duplicated this treachery throughout the 'civilised' world; in Britain, France and Russia, everywhere, they sold themselves to the main enemy – which was at home, not abroad.

In the aftermath some concluded the debacle of 1914 meant that in order to avoid the same fate communists should boycott parliament. elections included. That was the position maintained by the likes of Sylvia Pankhurst in Britain, the KAPD in Germany, Bordiga in Italy and Gorter and Pannekoek in the Netherlands – 'left' communists who briefly came to prominence in the very early years of the Third International.⁴⁸ Needless to say, their determination to have nothing to do with parliament because it might corrupt them was to throw out the possibility of using parliament for revolutionary agitation along with the opportunist bathwater. The correctness of using parliament did not come to an end with the collapse of the Second International. In fact if we look at the Bolsheviks in Russia, who were part of the left wing of the Second International. We can see that the revolutionary use of parliament greatly contributed to the October Revolution.

3. Bolsheviks and Mensheviks

Russia had unique features. That was natural and not to be surprised at. However it also had features that were general. More, we can say that within Russia the contradictions of imperialism found their *highest expression*. Fortunately the Bolsheviks were able to match their theory, strategy and tactics to the testing and challenging objective situation. It is here that we find the universal significance of the Bolshevik experience, not least their use of parliamentary elections and parliament. So what were the electoral politics of the Bolsheviks? To answer we must briefly examine the dialectics of the Russian revolution.

What separated the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks was far more than the dispute over soft or hard membership criteria which precipitated the 1903 split between these once united partisans of *Iskra*.⁴⁹ The cleavage at the 2nd Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party – where Bolsheviks (majorityists) and Mensheviks (minorityists) came into existence – stemmed from two very different strategic approaches to revolution in Russia. Both wings of the Party agreed that what was required and was in the offing was in essence the same as England in 1648. America in 1776 and France in 1789; ie a bourgeois revolution. This was a perfectly orthodox position. Do not forget, Russia was ruled by an autocratic Tsar and a clique of priests and nobles. Capitalist development was still comparatively feeble and the working class consequently small.

Taking this as their starting point and with a seemingly faultless appeal to the ‘classics’, the Mensheviks argued that the job of Marxists was to win the working class to support the bourgeoisie. The working class had to push, persuade and encourage the bourgeoisie to make the bourgeois revolution against Tsarism.

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Above all, the working class should not do anything ‘adventurous’. That would scare off the bourgeoisie and as a result lessen the sweep of the bourgeois revolution. Only when the bourgeoisie was safely ensconced in power would the prospect of socialism be viable. It was then, only *after* the victory of the bourgeoisie, *after* bourgeois rule had been consolidated in a parliamentary democracy, and *after* capitalist development had proletarianised the mass of the population, could the working class begin to set its sights on the prospect of taking power in its own right. Until the bourgeoisie had done its predetermined bit, working class hegemony was decidedly off the agenda. In the words of the Mensheviks’ conference, unless “the revolution spread to Western Europe ... social democracy should aim not to seize power or to share it in a provisional government, but should remain a party of extreme revolutionary opposition.”⁵⁰

The Bolsheviks considered such a stagist strategy hopelessly lifeless, artificial, conservative, mechanical and ahistorical. In other words, it had nothing to do with genuine Marxism. The Russian bourgeoisie was a spineless creature compared with its once-revolutionary English, American and French kin. These epigones were incapable of making revolution. The masses would move into action because of their own demands and grievances. When they did, the bourgeoisie would not rush to put themselves at their head, but fearfully fall into the arms of Tsar and reaction.

The Bolshevik analysis was far from negative. What was *immediately* possible in Russia was something infinitely more valuable to the proletariat of Russia and the world than a weak, pale and unstable bourgeois democracy. The working class could do much better than support the unsupportable and passively bide its time as a Menshevik “party of extreme revolutionary opposition”.

The objective interests of the popular classes in Russia made it possible for the working class to seize the banner of democracy and *the initiative*. With single-minded leadership, daring and imagination the working class could win to its side the peasant masses and take the lead in overthrowing Tsarism (that is why the Bolsheviks wanted a highly disciplined and centralised party). If the workers became the hegemon of the revolution, instead of meekly handing power to the bourgeoisie as urged by the Mensheviks, the popular classes *should seize power* and keep it *for as long as possible* in the form of a revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat

and peasantry.

Such a dictatorship, the state, was inherently fluid and, if Russia was left in isolation, impossible to sustain. The Bolsheviks, it should be said, were confident that it would not be isolated. They considered the advanced capitalist countries objectively ripe for socialism. This was no longer the epoch of the bourgeoisie. The 20th century was the dawn of the worldwide transition from capitalism to socialism. It was in this context that the Bolsheviks placed their strategy for revolution. Revolution in Russia not only could, but had to, act as a spark for the coming European revolution. Without the European revolution, they would go under; but with it they could proceed *uninterruptedly* — that is without the need for a second, specifically proletarian revolution — to the tasks of socialism.

How did things turn out? Well, according to the Mensheviks themselves, things turned out much closer to the perspectives of the Bolsheviks than their own. And not only in the great year of 1917, but in 1905, the great dress rehearsal as well. Long tottering on the precipice of destruction, Tsarism very nearly went down as a result of the popular outrage against the turmoil, senseless loss of life and material hardships that resulted from the 1905 Russo-Japanese war.

Against it, and because of it, discontent burst out in the countryside in the form of peasant revolts, in the army and navy as mutiny and in the cities as political strikes and mass demonstrations. Here was a profound revolutionary situation which mercilessly tested the theories, programmes and expectations of all working class parties, groups and factions. To their credit, and in their own words, in 1905 the Mensheviks “acted like Bolsheviks”.⁵¹ Confronted with the reality of a cowering and servile bourgeoisie and the heroism and determination of the working class, the Mensheviks momentarily put aside their programme and let themselves be swept along in the excitement of the revolutionary swell.⁵² Under such hopeful circumstances, Lenin had no thought of scoring cheap ‘told you so’ polemical points. The revolution came first. He welcomed the Mensheviks as comrades-in-arms and did his utmost to re-cement Party unity. Quite right too. Practice speaks louder than past polemics.

Revolutions must be resolved positively. If not, they are resolved negatively. Either revolution or counterrevolution will win the day.

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That is why the Bolsheviks were determined to push what possibilities there were for success in 1905 to their limits. Nothing, but nothing, should be allowed to divert or blunt the determination of the masses to see things through to the finish. Of course, revolutions are not one way affairs. Initiative and tactical manoeuvre are not the sole prerogative of the popular forces. Those above, even though split, confused and panicked by revolutionary developments they can never really understand, still have resources, finance and the experience necessary to offer well chosen sops. Hence when the Tsar's Cossacks and police failed to terrorise the masses and force them into submission, he turned to bourgeois democracy. To save his regime, his throne and his head, Tsar Nicholas II suddenly discovered the virtues of the *duma* or parliament.

How did the Bolsheviks respond to this sop? With the great bulk of advanced workers fully behind them, with utter conviction, with a refusal to be diverted from the real prize, the Bolsheviks called for a boycott of the *duma* elections. That did not mean the Bolsheviks were saying workers should adopt anarchist style moralism. The call to boycott the *duma* elections was a call to action, a call to make revolution. This had nothing to do with impotence. The boycott was a bold frontal challenge to Tsarism, and was brilliantly successful. The Bolshevik-led boycott exposed the irrelevance of the Tsar's sham democracy, and the true worth of bourgeois liberalism.

The revolution reached its height in December 1905, in Moscow, where the Bolsheviks had their greatest influence. Mass demonstrations became general strike, and general strike became insurrection. With the active help of its million strong population, less than a thousand guerillas were able to fight from behind street barricades, keep 10,000 troops at bay and break the grip of Tsarism for nine days.

The events of 1905 and the nine splendid days of insurrectionary Moscow were of global significance and impact. They showed that revolution was not dead, a thing of the past, but an inspiring reality and a real promise for the future. This is highly relevant for our own times. There are many similarities and resonances between the pre-1905 period and the present day. Remember the world pre1905.

To the mass of social democrats — that is what the communists then called themselves — revolution was at best a distant memory. The well grubbed mole of revolution had not surfaced since Paris in

1871. From that point onwards capitalism had been stable, the working class quiet — fertile ground Indeed for revisionists and bourgeois propagandists alike to claim that 1871 was an aberration, that revolution was outdated, the proletariat Integrated and no longer alienated. In nine days Moscow brought all that carefully constructed, generously publicised and widely believed theorising crashing down.

Sops are given. Sops are taken. As Insurrectionary Moscow was murdered and hundreds of revolutionaries were buried in secret graves, the Tsar was already diluting Tsarist democracy. New restrictions were placed on who could organise election meetings, what was allowed to be said and who was allowed to vote. This was part and parcel of the reactionary spiral towards full blown counterrevolution. Under these conditions, difficult though they were, there was every reason to believe that not all was lost. Certainly the Bolsheviks were determined to keep the flickering flame of living revolution alight. Thus, when in December 1905 Nicholas Romanov announced new duma elections, they called for another boycott. Yet when elections came in 1906, it failed. The duma met and the revolutionary tide continued to lose momentum.

In spite of the slanders and stupidities of present day academic ‘Marxists’, reformists and ‘official communists’, Lenin was no dogmatist. Turning to his famous pamphlet, *Left wing communism*, we find the following assessment:

“The boycott of the Witte Duma was... a mistake, although a small and easily remediable one... What applies to individuals applies — with necessary modifications — to politics and parties. Not he is wise who makes no mistakes. There are no such men nor can there be. He is wise who makes not very serious mistakes and who knows how to correct them easily and quickly.”⁵³

Yes, the second boycott was a mistake. Nevertheless it was, as Lenin said, a small one, small *because* it was quickly and imaginatively rectified. Within the year boycott gave way to full, effective and revolutionary participation in the Tsar’s elections. Bolshevik participation in what was a travesty even of bourgeois democracy did not, however, mean an end to debate between themselves and the Mensheviks. In fact debate continued and reached new heights (with the Unity Congress in 1906 this took place in the context of a reunited RSDLP; the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks constituted

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respectively the left and right wings till 1912, when the Menshevik liquidators were expelled from the Party).

Given the underlying *strategic differences*, though this time filtered through the softer prism of electoral tactics, not the harsh immediacies of making revolution, two distinct views again emerged. From the very beginning they crystallised the universal differences between opportunism and genuine Marxism. That is why it is more than worthwhile concentrating on the 1906-7 election campaign and the debates around it.

Let us begin by outlining the parties and party groupings. On the extreme right there was the bloc of parties — the League of the Russian People, the monarchists, the Council of the United Nobility — known as the Black Hundreds. These were counterrevolutionary, Tsarist parties. Parties that wanted to maintain the status quo, parties of the landlords, which organised and paid for anti-Jewish pogroms.

To the left of the Black Hundreds stood the not quite so right wing Octobrists, a bourgeois party. But the main party of the bourgeoisie was the Constitutional Democrats or Cadets. The Cadets wanted reform, wanted a constitutional monarchy, and to get it they were prepared to threaten the Tsar with revolution. What they were not prepared to do though, was to make revolution. Revolution was seen as a *danger* that the Tsar's stubborn intransigence brought nearer. The Cadets were themselves horrified at the thought of revolution. It was definitely something to be avoided. Only an energetic programme of liberal reform could do that, they slavishly pleaded to the Tsar. Attempts by the Cadets to gain hegemony over the peasant movement therefore had to be blocked and their hypocritical, false democracy uncompromisingly exposed.

“To apply the term ‘democratic’” to the Cadets, wrote Lenin, “to a *monarchist* party, to a party which accepts an upper chamber, proposed repressive laws against public meetings and the press and deleted from the reply to the address from the throne the demand for direct and equal suffrage by secret ballot, to a party which opposed the formation of land committees elected by the whole people — means *deceiving the people*. This is a very strong expression, but it is just”.⁵⁴ It should be said that those who did “apply the term” democratic to the Cadets were none other than the Mensheviks. The Cadets were the very people Menshevism looked

to as the *leadership* of the revolution. That is why its leaders made endless proposals for joint action with the Cadets and an equal number of excuses for their refusals and acts of cowardice.

Anyway, to the left of the Cadets was the Trudovik grouping which claimed to be for socialism and was supported by the peasant masses. The Trudoviks Included non-party people, but in effect served as a vehicle for the Socialist Revolutionary Party and the Popular Socialist Party: the latter being closer In spirit to the Cadets, closer in spirit to the bourgeoisie than the Socialist Revolutionaries, who were the more genuine revolutionary organisation.

It was in relationship to these parties and the classes they varyingly represented that the revolutionary and opportunist wings of the RSDLP argued and positioned themselves. There were two main prongs to the Menshevik approach. First, the necessity of keeping out the Black Hundreds; they were the biggest evil. Second, as we mentioned above, making the bourgeoisie, le the Cadets, fight.

The Bolsheviks had very different perspectives. Their view of politics was not determined by who was more evil and who was less evil. Their view of politics was shaped by the needs of the working class and who was not revolutionary and who was. The landlords and the bourgeoisie were not revolutionary, within strict historic limits the peasants were. Hence, while the Bolsheviks wanted to beat both the Black Hundreds and the Cadets, they wanted to get to the peasants, and not only through the Trudoviks.

While the Mensheviks had gone along with proletarian insurrection, barricade fighting and soviets in 1905, as the revolutionary wave dipped in 1906 they returned to type and “reverted to the old conception of the bourgeois character of the Russian revolution”.⁵⁵ The Tsar’s announcement on July 21 1906 that he was going to dissolve the First Duma made the Mensheviks’ backtracking plain to see.

In a desperate effort to defend the Tsar’s 1905 parliament against the Tsar’s 1906 parliament, the Mensheviks issued the slogan “a дума with real powers” and called for a general strike and demonstrations. For the Bolsheviks, defence of any sort of Tsarist дума was a diversion. They mocked the Mensheviks’ дума cretinism, and went to the factories and working class districts agitating *against* a general strike and demonstrations.

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Workers were urged not to take precipitate action. With the revolution on the defensive but still not defeated, with the December uprising still fresh in everyone's minds, the Bolsheviks argued that what was needed was a constituent assembly born of revolution, not a Tsarist "duma with full powers". Instead of placing their hopes on an instant general strike and the fighting capabilities of the Cadets, the Bolsheviks looked to the soviets, as "organs of the uprising".⁵⁶

Yet to prepare the ground for this, to "enlighten and educate" the masses on the need for revolution, Lenin and the Bolsheviks were now prepared to participate in the Tsar's new election.⁵⁷

It is particularly useful to concentrate on the Bolsheviks' intervention in this election campaign for the Second Duma (which lasted until 1907) because they broadly applied the same approach to all subsequent, what we might call 'bourgeois' elections, right up to 1918, when in conditions of soviet power they took part in elections to the Constituent Assembly.⁵⁸ The first thing that strikes one is the fundamentally different attitudes of the Party's two wings towards electoral blocs and agreements.

The Mensheviks proposed that the Party enter into an electoral bloc with the Cadets. If the Party did not do that the masses would never forgive them. The Tsar had weighted the whole electoral system to favour the propertied class. So when it came to forming a government it was going to be either the Cadets or the Black Hundreds, and the Mensheviks had no hesitation about stating their preference between these two evils. The reader will not be surprised to hear that the Bolsheviks were quick to disagree. They insisted that working class independence was the main question. Our "main task is to develop the class consciousness and independent class organisation of the proletariat", wrote Lenin. Only that class can lead "a victorious bourgeois-democratic revolution. Therefore, class independence throughout the election and duma campaigns is our most important general task."⁵⁹

The Bolsheviks did not apply this approach only to the Cadets. It was applied to the Trudoviks, the Popular Socialists and the Socialist Revolutionary Party as well. Lenin insisted that:

'The argument about the proletarian-peasant character of our revolution does not entitle us to conclude that we must enter into agreements with this or that democratic peasant party at this or that stage of the

elections to the Second Duma. It is not even a sufficient argument for limiting the class Independence of the proletariat during the elections, let alone for renouncing this independence.”⁶⁰

Hence in the cities, where the working class population was concentrated, Lenin said that the Party:

“must never, *except in case of extreme necessity*, refrain from putting up absolutely Independent social democratic candidates. And there is no such urgent necessity. A few Cadets or Trudoviks more or less (especially of the Popular Socialist type!) are of no serious political Importance, for the Duma itself can, at best, play only a subsidiary, secondary role.”⁶¹

Bolshevik stress on working class political independence and presenting independent candidates to the working class was a matter of principle. That is why in 1912 they refused to countenance even a bloc of working class parties.⁶² When their final split with the Mensheviks had been sealed, in effect by kicking them out, the Bolsheviks decided to go into the Duma elections independently. This is how one of the successful Bolshevik candidates later wrote about it:

“The Bolsheviks thought it necessary to put up candidates in the workers’ curia and would not tolerate any agreements with other parties or groups, including the Menshevik-liquidators. They also considered it necessary to put up candidates in the so-called ‘second curia of city electors’ ... and in the elections in the villages, because of the great agitational attitude of the campaign.”⁶³

Putting forward independent Party candidates, refusing to enter blocs, did not mean the Bolsheviks were oblivious to the advantages of “partial agreements”. To appreciate what was meant by this it is necessary to say something about the Tsar’s convoluted electoral law. The Tsar’s Duma was not elected directly. The Tsar thought it would be safer to divide the population into ‘curias’ or ‘estates’. Each had its own weighting (the popular classes far less than their actual numbers), and with their differentiated voting power each curia would then elect ‘electors’, who would finally elect the actual deputies.

In the distribution of seats by these intermediate elected ‘electors’, the Bolsheviks considered “partial agreements” perfectly

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permissible.⁶⁴ Lenin used the following hypothetical example to illustrate how they would work. If in the countryside there were 100 electors and “49 are Black Hundreds, 40 are Cadets and 11 are social democrats” then a “partial agreement between the social democrats and the Cadets is necessary in order to secure the election in full of a joint list of duma candidates, on the basis, of course, of a proportional distribution of duma seats according to the number of electors.”⁶⁵ Thus, in this case, if there were five seats up for grabs, the Bolsheviks saw every reason to completely exclude the Black Hundreds — that is, as long as the Cadets were prepared to give them, the social democrats, one of the seats.

This would be facilitated by making it clear to the masses what arrangements were on offer and being negotiated. Who were the Cadet electors going to make a deal with? With the revolutionary communists or the counterrevolutionary Black Hundreds? In this way the RSDLP could force the 40 Cadets to do a deal with the 11 social democrats and leave the Black Hundreds out in the cold. Naturally, if the balance was different, if it was more favourable, the same treatment would be meted out to the Cadets if there was a possibility of doing a deal with electors inclined to support the Socialist Revolutionary Party; and, in turn, if the arithmetic was favourable, every effort would be made to split away genuine revolutionary elements from this party.

Of course, not least in the cities, seats in the Tsar’s duma were secondary. Here the ‘importance of the elections is *not at all* determined by the number of deputies to be sent into the duma, but by the opportunities for the social democrats to address the widest and most concentrated sections of the population, which are the most social democratic’ in virtue of their whole position.”⁶⁶ Thus in the cities there should be ‘no agreements whatsoever at the lower stage, when agitation is carried on among the masses: at the higher stages all efforts must be directed towards defeating the Cadets during the distribution of seats by means of a partial agreement between the social democrats and Trudoviks, and towards defeating the Popular Socialists by means of a partial agreement between the social democrats and the Socialist Revolutionaries.’⁶⁷

As was bound to be the case the Bolsheviks and Lenin were confronted with what we know as the ‘lesser of two evils theory’, a theory that is used against us, and is effectively meant to outlaw any independent communist activity in the electoral field. This

rotten theory was, as it turns out, the main argument the Cadets used to recommend themselves. As Lenin noted:

“the whole of the Cadet’s election campaign is directed to frightening the masses with the Black Hundred danger and the danger from the extreme left parties, to adapting themselves to the philistinism, cowardice and flabbiness of the petty bourgeois and to persuading him that the Cadets are the safest, the most modest, the most moderate and the most well behaved of people. “~

In other words the Cadets went to the electorate as the *lesser evil*, and said ‘vote for tinkering reforms, vote for safety’. They threatened the middle classes with what they thought were the greater evils, the danger, on the one hand, of letting in the Black Hundred pogromists, and on the other, Lenin and those terrible people who caused’ all the bloodshed and disruption In Moscow In the dark days of December 1905.

Those who believed the Cadets progressive were in their turn forced to adapt to, and even adopt, their method. The Mensheviks did not want the working class to do anything that might upset the Cadets. Nothing must be done that might push them into the camp of the biggest evil, the Black Hundreds. To encourage the Cadets along the road that led to the bourgeois revolution, they wanted to support them with offers of joint lists, blocs and alliances. It was either that, said the Mensheviks, or the Black Hundreds.

Here is how Lenin summarised the Menshevik platform:

“Let the social democrats criticise the Cadets before the masses as much as they like, but let them add: yet they are better than the Black Hundreds, and therefore we have agreed upon a joint list.”

And here is how Lenin countered it:

‘The arguments against are as follows: a joint list would be in crying contradiction to the whole independent class policy of the Social Democratic Party. By recommending a joint list of Cadets and social democrats to the masses we would be bound to cause hopeless confusion of class and political divisions. We would undermine the principles and the general revolutionary significance of our campaign for the sake of gaining a seat In the дума for a liberal! We would be subordinating class policy to parliamentarism instead of subordinating parliamentarism to class policy. We would deprive ourselves of the

opportunity to gain an estimate of our forces. We would lose what is lasting and durable in all elections — the development of the class consciousness and solidarity of the socialist proletariat. We would gain what is transient, relative and untrue — superiority of the Cadet over the Octobrist.”⁶⁹

Lenin was not frightened by Menshevik warnings that independent communist electoral work would let in the Black Hundreds. As we can see, he treated such arguments with the contempt they deserve:

‘The ... flaw in this stock argument is that it means that the social democrats tacitly surrender hegemony in the democratic struggle to the Cadets. In the event of a split vote that secures the victory of a Black Hundred, why should *we* be blamed for not having voted for the Cadet, and not the *Cadets* for not having voted for us?

‘We are in a minority’, answer the Mensheviks, in a spirit of Christian humility. The Cadets are more numerous. You cannot expect the Cadets to declare themselves revolutionaries’.

‘Yes! But that is no reason why social democrats should declare themselves Cadets. The social democrats have not had, and could not have had, a majority over the bourgeois democrats anywhere in the world where the outcome of the bourgeois revolution was indecisive. But *everywhere*, in all countries, the *first* independent entry of the social democrats in an election campaign has been met by the howling and barking of the liberals, *accusing the socialists* of wanting to *let the Black Hundreds in*.

‘We are therefore quite undisturbed by the usual Menshevik cries that the Bolsheviks are letting the Black Hundreds in. *All* liberals have shouted this to *all* socialists. By refusing to fight the Cadets you are leaving under the ideological influence of the Cadets masses of proletarians and semi-proletarians who are capable of following the lead of the social democrats. Now or later, unless you cease to be socialists, you will have to fight independently. In spite of the Black Hundred danger. And it is easier and more necessary to take the right step now than it will be later on. In the elections to the Third Duma [I think it was actually elections to the Second Duma: because of boycotts and dissolutions, at the time, numbering was rather uncertain. The Second Duma lasted from February to July 1907 and the Third from 1907-12 — JC] ... you will be still more entangled in unnatural relations with the betrayers of the revolution. But the *real* Black Hundred danger, we repeat, lies not in the Black Hundreds obtaining seats in the duma, but in pogroms and military courts: and you are making It more difficult for the people to

fight this real danger by putting Cadet blinkers on their eyes.”⁷⁰

In a nutshell, the differences between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks amounted to the fact that where the Bolsheviks wanted “complete independence in the election campaign”, the Mensheviks wanted a solid Cadet дума “with a large number of social democrats elected as semi-Cadets!”.

Where the Mensheviks were prepared to sacrifice their political independence for the electoral defeat of the greater evil — the Black Hundreds — the Bolsheviks fought and worked for revolution. In pursuit of this it was better to have a дума consisting of “200 Black Hundreds, 280 Cadets and 20 social democrats” independent from the Cadets, than a дума consisting of “400 Cadets and 100 social democrats” elected as semi-Cadets. And Lenin defiantly declared:

“We prefer the first type, and we think it is childish to imagine that the elimination of the Black Hundreds from the дума means the elimination of the Black Hundred danger.”⁷¹

To back up their position the Bolshevik publishing house produced Russian editions of works by their German comrades Karl Kautsky and Wilhelm Liebknecht. For Instance, in *The Driving Forces of the Russian Revolution and its Prospects*, the highly influential Kautsky was full of praise for the 1905 revolution and the barricade tactics of the Bolsheviks, and dismissive of the revolutionary potential of the Russian bourgeois.⁷² Wonderful anti Menshevik ammunition, and used to good effect. Liebknecht’s pamphlet *No compromises, no electoral agreements* was if anything even more useful. We can get a taste of what it had to say from the preface Lenin wrote, which we might say turned the ‘lesser of two evils theory’ on to its feet. Here is a short excerpt:

“The class consciousness of the masses is not corrupted by violence and draconian laws: it is corrupted by the *false friends* of the workers, the liberal bourgeois, who *divert* the masses from the real struggle with empty phrases about a struggle. Our Mensheviks and Plekhanov fail to understand that the fight against the Cadets is a fight to free the minds of the working masses from false Cadet Ideas and prejudices about combining popular freedom with the old regime.

“Liebknecht laid so much emphasis on the point that false friends are more dangerous than open enemies that he said: ‘the introduction of a new anti-socialist law would be a lesser evil than the obscuring of class antagonisms and party boundary lines by electoral agreements.’

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Translate this sentence of Liebknecht's into terms of Russian politics at the end of 1906: 'A Black Hundred Duma would be a lesser evil than the obscuring of class antagonisms and party boundary lines by electoral agreements with the Cadets' ... Only bad social democrats can make light of the harm done to the working masses by the liberal betrayers of the cause of the people's liberty who Ingratiate themselves with them by means of electoral agreements.'⁷⁹

Not only did the Bolshevik approach win the day at the RSDLP's 1907 congress in London. it went on to inform and characterise the tactics and strategy adopted and powerfully put into effect by the Third (Communist) International after it was formed in 1919.

4. Third International

On March 4 1919, within the Kremlin walls where the Tsars of old Russ once lived, the Third International was formed as a world party of revolution. Organised within the “framework of one international proletarian organisation”. it united revolutionaries across the world “on a common ideological platform”.⁷⁴ This “common ideological platform”, formalised in the resolutions and theses of its congresses and executive committee, in effect amounted to the generalisation and global application of the principles, strategy and tactics of Bolshevism, not least on the terrain of parliament and parliamentary elections.

Comintern’s main *internal* problem during its very early years was not right opportunism; that found primary expression in the *external* so-called Two-and-a-half International and the rump Second International. No, the main internal problem of the early world communist movement was leftism. Disgusted by official social democracy’s corruption and venality, which culminated in the great betrayal of August 1914, there was, as we have seen, a widespread and deeply held belief that to avoid the same fate it was vital to stay clear of the modern day Sodom, the bourgeois parliament, and the Gomorrah of bourgeois elections. This boycottist sermonising was born of genuine fear, and not only characterised the ‘left’ communists, but also the influential International Workers of the World in the US, and other syndicalists, including many in the workers’ committee movement in Britain.

A deal of patient effort was expended by Comintern in the attempt to wean inexperienced comrades away from the seemingly safe abstractions and certainties of ‘left’ communism and to create unity in action and a constructive dialogue with the syndicalists. This had nothing to do with establishing some sort of a doctrine of

Moscow infallibility. Lenin's famous '*Left wing' communism - an infantile disorder*⁷⁵ and the Comintern resolutions directed against leftism were designed to unite *in the most effective way* the forces of revolution for revolution against the bourgeois state, "the bourgeois parliamentary system" included.⁷⁶ The Leninists leading Comintern well knew that we can never overthrow the bourgeois state and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat through bible-like claims to righteousness and purity. That would amount to the communist movement turning itself into a useless, albeit unsullied, pillar of salt".⁷⁷ Illusions in parliamentarism among the masses had to be overcome using parliamentarism. This was made explicit at the 2nd Congress of Comintern, which met from July 20-August 6 1920. Its resolution on parliament, 'The Communist Party and Parliament' is a masterly document.⁷⁸ More, though inevitably dated in this or that aspect, it retains its power and applicability.

The resolution insisted that the "state form" of socialism had to be the proletarian dictatorship and the "soviet republic".⁷⁹ That this could never come about peacefully through the bourgeois parliament was taken as axiomatic. The task of the working class was to shatter the bourgeois state. Incidentally, for those who might still entertain a certain fondness for GLC-style municipal socialism,⁸⁰ it is worth adding that Comintern wanted to "*destroy*" the local capitalist state as well, and replace it with "local soviets of workers' deputies".⁸¹

None of this raised 'left' communist objections or hackles. This was not the case though with the generalisation of Bolshevik parliamentary experience — from the 1906-7 дума elections to the 1918 Constituent Assembly — as a model for the world communist movement as a whole. It was "*obligatory*", said the Comintern resolution, for the leading Party of the proletariat to use every legal position open to it, not least parliament. In fact it should be used as an "auxiliary centre" in the Party's revolutionary work.⁸² Parliament, as the Bolsheviks had shown, provided an excellent platform to disseminate revolutionary ideas, and to *overcome parliamentary illusions* among the masses.

Therefore Comintern was absolutely opposed to the 'left' communist minority which wanted to boycott parliamentary elections because of moral scruple and supposed principle. Such a "position" was naive and childish" and "does not stand up to criticism"⁸³ Primarily, only when "conditions are ripe for an immediate move to armed

struggle for power” would a boycott be “permissible”.⁸⁴

Unlike our parliamentary roadists, the 2nd Congress of Comintern was firmly of the view that parliament was of “comparative unimportance”. The “struggle for power lies outside parliament”,⁸⁵ The present day unity monger, whether of the ‘official communist’ or SWP sort, would do well to note that because of this, Comintern stated that the “unity of all communist elements” should not be determined by parliamentary tactics, rather the acceptance of the principle of armed struggle for the proletarian dictatorship”⁸⁶

Self evidently, that did not mean communist parliamentarism was of no worth. It was. And in order that communist parliamentarism developed along correct lines and had the maximum impact, Comintern laid down 12 points that “should be observed”.⁸⁷ In our view these points retain their validity. They should still be “observed” by communist organisations, their MPs and candidates. We can summarise them thus:

1. The Central Committee and the Communist Party must systematically inspect” the quality and organisational abilities of its parliamentary fraction.
2. Candidates and MPs should have proven loyalty to the Party.
3. Communist MPs must accept the discipline and decisions of the Central Committee.
4. Communist MPs must combine legal with illegal work.
5. Communist MPs must “subordinate all their parliamentary work to the extra-parliamentary work of their Party.” The purpose” of communist parliamentary work is “propaganda, agitation and organisation.”
6. Communist MPs must play a leading role in mass street demonstrations and other revolutionary activity initiated by the working class.
- 7, Communist MPs must not behave like social democrats and “build up business connections with their electors.”
8. Communist MPs are not “legislators” seeking agreement with other legislators. They are Party agitators in the “enemy camp”. Communist MPs are “responsible, not to the atomised mass of voters, but to the Communist Party”.
9. Communist MPs must make speeches intelligible to the average worker.
10. Working class communist MPs must not be intimidated by parliament, they must speak, even if it is “straight from notes”.

11. Communist MPs must not only expose the bourgeoisie, they must also expose reformists and centrists.

12. Communist MPs only deserve the name communist if they “show ceaseless hostility to the bourgeois system and its social patriotic lackeys.”

The 3rd Congress of Comintern set itself the task of winning the majority of workers for communism. Because the revolutionary wave ushered in by the October Revolution had begun to ebb this could no longer be done through a direct challenge to the misleaders of social democracy and the “traitors in the trade union bureaucracy”. Manoeuvre was needed, namely the “united proletarian front” tactic.⁸⁸ What was meant by this was communist parties putting forward and taking the *lead* in fighting for a programme of immediate demands which would answer the pressing needs of the mass of workers. Through such an approach a united front “from below” could be created which would erode and break down the hesitations, reservations and prejudices of the mass of workers concerning the communists.

At the 4th Congress of Comintern Zinoviev — president of the International — noted that the “retreat of the proletariat has not yet come to a stop”.⁸⁹ What this meant was that the workers’ united front, outlined in skeletal form at the 3rd Congress, “is now more relevant than ever”.⁹⁰ The united front from below was therefore complemented with a “united front from above”. To further the struggle for the united front from below, in other words to open up the mass of workers to the influence of communism, it was legitimate “to negotiate with the scab leaders of the social democrats”, to propose a united front between leaderships.⁹¹

Yet in spite of the fact that the resolution on Comintern tactics stated that “the united front tactic has nothing to do with the so-called ‘electoral combinations’ of leaders in pursuit of one or another parliamentary aim”, the possibility of communists using their parliamentary strength in order to form what was called a workers’ government was considered.⁹² Frankly, this formula was a product of frustrating times, times of growing retreat from what had been thought the verge of worldwide victory. Certainly it was a rather ambiguous formula. Even according to its authors it had “dangers”.⁹³ And it has to be said that it was later used by opportunists for reformist ends. However there is no mystery about

what Comintern was out to achieve.

The workers' government would have to be supported by "combative workers' organisations" and even a "purely" parliamentary arrangement "must lead to a bitter struggle with the bourgeoisie or even to civil war".⁹⁴ The "complete" dictatorship of the proletariat could "only" be achieved if it was under the leadership of the Communist Party. Nevertheless a workers' and peasants' government or a social democratic-communist coalition government — whose most elementary tasks — must be to arm the proletariat, disarm the bourgeois counterrevolutionary organisations, bring in control over production, shift the main burden of taxation on to the propertied classes and break the resistance of the counterrevolutionary bourgeoisie⁹⁵ — could represent a "starting point" for the socialist state.⁹⁶ That would definitely not be the case, resolved Comintern, with a Labourite "liberal workers' government" or a social democratic "workers' government".⁹⁷

5. British ‘exceptionalism’

Leftism is invariably the result of revolutionary impatience. Hence, in general, we should have a tolerant attitude towards those who suffer from it. That was certainly the case with Lenin, as evidenced by his pamphlet *‘Left wing’ communism, an infantile disorder*.

Now strange though it may seem, we occasionally come across the right opportunist hack who tells us to read this work of Lenin’s, it goes without saying that we have read it, and learnt much from it. The funny thing is, though, that I expect few of our opportunist critics have read it and if they did they would definitely not like it. After all, from beginning to end it is imbued with a singleminded, they would say fanatical, commitment to orthodox Marxism. Why then their uncharacteristic enthusiasm for Lenin?

This particular work, or at least its title, is used by them to fend off discussion and debate. Every time one of these parliamentary roadists meets one of our paper sellers they put their eyes to the ground, quicken their pace and desperately chant its name as if they were quoting holy script to Count Dracula. Mere mention of it is meant to reduce us to speechlessness, perhaps even dust. Claiming Lenin’s authority for their wretched, dispirited and hopelessly confused politics, they stupidly imagine everything to the left of their *rightism* was the butt of Lenin’s polemic. As the philosophers would say, *ignorentio elenchi!* (the argument refutes something not asserted). The ‘left’ communists Lenin was arguing against were characterised by their refusal, as a matter of principle, to put forward candidates for the bourgeois parliament (and often a refusal to take part in ‘reactionary’ trade unions). Hardly something we are guilty of,

Thank goodness for small mercies! There are slightly better informed critics — those to our right who have actually read Lenin’s

'Left wing' communism. What they quote against us is not the title of Lenin's pamphlet. Nor do they try to claim the general thrust of his polemic. What they want to eternalise are Lenin's *specific* tactics, which in fact applied to Britain and Britain alone; namely the attitude communists in 1920 should have had towards the Labour Party.

In other countries the task Comintern set itself was to *immediately* split militants from social democracy. There are though, so the proverb goes, many ways to skin a cat. Basically what Lenin proposed for Britain was that the Communist Party should seek *affiliation* to the Labour Party and help bring about the election of a Labour government⁹⁸ What made Britain "an exception" in this respect?"⁹⁹ It does not take long to tell the story.

In the late 19th century, compared to the rest of Europe, Britain represented something of a puzzle. Its industry remained the most advanced, and its trade unions the biggest and best organised. Yet politically the working class operated as little more than the tail of the bourgeois Liberal Party. The Germans, French and Italians were building mass parties, but the powerful workers' movement in Britain was suffering from "an apparent bourgeois infection", was paralysed by the fear that any moves toward political independence would let in the Tories, the biggest evil.¹⁰⁰

Anything that ended the paralysis of one of the world proletariat's most important detachments was therefore something to be encouraged by Marxists. That is why Engels welcomed the formation of the Independent Labour Party,¹⁰¹ Whatever its limitations:

"The first great step in a country which enters the movement for the first time is to constitute the workers as an independent Labour party, no matter in what way, so long as it is a distinct Labour party ... as long as it is their own movement -- the workers] will be driven forward by their own mistakes, and acquire wisdom by their failures."¹⁰²

Lenin took exactly the same view when the recently formed Labour Party applied for affiliation to the Second International in 1908. Against opposition from some French delegates (followers of Guesde), the Russian Socialist Revolutionaries, the revolutionary, 'narrow', wing of Bulgarian socialism and the British Social Democratic Federation, Lenin spoke for Labour Party affiliation, in this he went along with Kautsky. But while Kautsky (and the majority) were prepared to admit the Labour Party because they believed that "In

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practice” it conducted “the class struggle”, Lenin (unsuccessfully) proposed an amendment which stated that the Labour Party be accepted because it “represents the first step on the part of the really proletarian organisations of Britain towards a conscious class policy and towards a *socialist* workers’ party”.¹⁰³

Lenin was convinced that “*in practice*” the Labour Party was “not a party really independent of the Liberals, and does not pursue a fully independent class policy”.¹⁰⁴ Something confirmed and reinforced on countless occasions by the statements and actions of its leaders. Nonetheless, arguing against the fierce opposition of Henry Hyndman, leader of the Social Democratic Federation, Lenin condemned those who turned Marxism into a dogma and acted as sectarians. The job of communists was to work actively “*right in the midst* of the proletarian masses”.¹⁰⁵ With the trade unions taking the lead in forming the Labour Party, there now existed such a possibility. Though the British trade unions were “insular, aristocratic, philistinely selfish, and hostile to socialism”, they had begun “*moving towards* socialism”, albeit “awkwardly, Inconsistently” and in “zigzag fashion”.¹⁰⁶

It was impossible to present facts to contradict Hyndman when he slated the Labour Party because it was semi-liberal, that it was committed neither to socialism nor the class war. Despite this, Lenin, as will have been gathered, fervently believed the momentum of political events would drive workers In Britain towards recognising the necessity of a revolutionary party. Today the closest parallel would be the US. There the organised working class has no mass party and tails the Democratic Party in order to keep the Republicans out. If the US equivalent of the TUG, the AFL-CIO, decided to break from this rotten tradition it would be a qualitative development. Whatever its inevitable faults, programmatic shortcomings and lack of scientific theory, such a move should be encouraged. It would, no doubt, be the result of rank and file pressure from below, and could well represent a stepping stone towards a real proletarian party. For Lenin in 1908 the Labour Party represented such a stepping stone.

None of this blinded Lenin to the actual, rather than the hoped for, political evolution of the Labour Party. Its role as a recruiting sergeant in World War I, cooperation in maintaining social peace during the ensuing slaughter, service in the war cabinet and applause for the execution of James Connolly definitely exposed it

as a “thoroughly bourgeois party ... which exists to systematically dupe the workers”.¹⁰⁷ As with other opportunist parties of the Second International, it had joined the camp of the bourgeoisie. That is why Lenin asserted that the Labour Party could not simply be judged in terms of its class base (see Appendix III). To Judge it one must begin with the *politics* of its leaders, who, as he said, were “the worst kind of reactionaries”.¹⁰⁸

So why did Lenin want the CPGB to affiliate to this party and help it into office? Labour had the support of the majority of organised workers. They financed the Labour Party through the political levy and voted for it at election times. Moreover, because of the horrors of World War I and the example of the Russian revolution, the workers were rapidly moving to the left. To contain them, to keep their loyalty, Labour adopted Clause 4 and brought back the social pacifist, Ramsay MacDonald, as its leader. Hence Labour pretended to have undergone a socialist conversion. Just how far Labour posed to the left can be gleaned from MacDonald's support, at the Leeds Convention of June 1917, for a resolution calling for the formation of workers' and soldiers' soviets “in every town, urban and rural district”.¹⁰⁹ MacDonald claimed that Britain could emulate Russia's socialism, only without violence, terror and civil war. A parliamentary election will give us all the power that Lenin had to get by a revolution”, he wrote in his 1919 apology for reformism, *Parliament and Revolution*.¹¹⁰

Lenin believed that the communists, who “very often find it hard even to approach the masses” could gain a “hearing from them”, gain a wider platform for their ideas, by helping this left posing Labour Party into office and by being able to freely operate inside it: as had the British Socialist Party which provided the main body of members for the newly formed CPGB.¹¹¹ Unfortunately that is just about all our critics remember about Lenin's writings on the Labour Party.

The fact of the matter is that while Lenin argued that the fight to affiliate was a useful tactic, it was not a strategic question. Indeed, Lenin thought it would be no bad thing if Labour *rejected* CPGB affiliation (again see Appendix III). That would show its true nature. And if the CPGB managed to gain affiliation it would, of course, “be highly erroneous” for it to try to do “everything possible” to remain in the Labour Party.¹¹² The Labour leaders might expel the communists, but for Lenin that would have “an excellent effect

upon the mass of the British workers".¹¹³

The same defiant spirit underpinned the idea of putting Labour into office. After all it had never really been tested, it had never formed a government. By giving "these gentlemen a certain amount of parliamentary support",¹¹⁴ by helping the Labour Party into office, the communists would, said Lenin, be supporting Labour "as the rope supports a hanged man".¹¹⁵ The communists would *not* be entering into "a bloc" with Labour because it was a lesser evil compared to the Tories and Liberals.¹¹⁶ Labour in office would be exposed, attacked and undermined by the Communist Party,

Thus when the Labour Party formed a government on January 23 1924 the CPGB welcomed it because it represented the hopes of the working class and an opportunity for class conscious workers to see with their own eyes whether the parliamentary road to socialism was the right road or a dead end. All this took place against the background of Britain's economic and political decline, particularly the carnage and costs of World War I. Not surprisingly then, Labour's entry into the highest offices of state was not due to its own stubborn, vigorous and consistent work but the inability of the old parties to rule in the old way. MacDonald's government was a minority government that relied on the Liberals, who because of the upsurge of working class expectations in the wake of the war found it expedient to *put* Labour into government rather than form a coalition of the traditional bourgeois parties. So while the communists knew full well that the working class cannot free itself from economic slavery and political subjugation without the defeat of the bourgeoisie in revolutionary struggle, the actual experience of a Labour government would give the working class in Britain the "experience which will test the value of bourgeois democracy" (Executive Committee of the Communist International resolution on The British Labour government and the Communist Party of Great Britain').¹¹⁷

The communists were under no illusions concerning the Labour government. It was *not* a government of proletarian class struggle; on the contrary, they insisted, it "aspires to strengthen the bourgeois state system by reforms and class peace."¹¹⁸ Therefore it was *expected* that the Labour government *would betray* the interests of the working class. Yet this was no bad thing. It would go towards curing the working class in Britain of its "illusions" in "capitalist democracy" and so "immensely accelerate the movement of the

working class towards a revolutionary position.”¹¹⁹ To facilitate this the Communist International instructed the CPGB to “exert pressure on the Labour government and the Labour Party to engage in serious struggle against the capitalist class” so as to convince workers through their “own experience” of the “utter unfitness” of the Labour Party leaders, their “treacherous character” and the “inevitability of their bankruptcy”.¹²⁰

The immediate task was to launch mass campaigns to test the Labour Party leaders and mobilise the working class in joint action. For this purpose the following demands on the Labour government were put forward. It must:

1. Deal with unemployment by effective taxation of the capitalists, and by taking over, under state and workers' control, enterprises shut down by the capitalists.
2. Nationalise the railways and mines; these to be administered in conjunction with the workers' organisations.
3. Take energetic steps to liberate the peasants and workers of Ireland, India and Egypt from the yoke of imperialism.
4. Actively fight the war danger in Europe and conclude an alliance with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

While putting forward these demands, the CPGB was expected to “preserve its ideological, tactical and organisational independence”. This was a prerequisite for it becoming an “influential revolutionary mass party”.¹²¹

Quite clearly these tactics were very much of their time. They were not dogma then, and they should not be treated as such now. In 1924 the Labour government “as a faithful servant of his majesty the king of the empire of capitalists” operated fully in line with bourgeois interests. It did nothing to combat unemployment, it would have nothing to do with workers' control. It left industry in private hands, it maintained Britain's imperialist empire, and its relations with the Soviet Union were not proletarian but typically bourgeois.¹²² More than that, Labour had rejected CPGB affiliation in 1923 and then did so time after time. In 1946 it finally changed its rules so as to put a stop to any more attempts.

Labour has now been in office on many occasions since 1924. On each occasion it has been in essence indistinguishable from the Tories and has over the last decade steadily moved to the pro-EC, pro-market, pro-bomb, pro-war right. No wonder workers nowadays do not have *socialist* illusions in it. They might consider it a lesser

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evil than the Tories. But that is another story which we will tell below. Above all though, today, we must take into account the fact that our Communist Party has been subjected to a concerted campaign by the revisionists to close it down. All of that does not mean the tactics advocated by Lenin and Comintern will never be relevant again. Just that they are not applicable now.

6. The logic of opportunism

No one could have failed to notice that the official' world communist movement has collapsed. It has to be emphasised that this was not the collapse of communism. Rather, as with the Second International, it was the collapse of opportunism.

That is why the high Tory journal *The Economist* expressed its regret about the state of the left — without a well organised reformist labour movement social explosions could prove to be uncontrollable. It concluded a recent lead article with the following observation:

“A new left wing is badly needed. The end of communism has left the world standing, as it were, on one leg. The forward march cannot be resumed until the other leg is back in healthy operation.”¹²³

An assessment echoed by the Pentagon's *Problems of Communism*:

“The weakening of communist parties is not necessarily a good thing for western democracies.” it says. “They channelled social discontent into electoral and party politics and into trade union action ... the downfall of communist parties in the 1980s and 1990s eliminates these responsible advocates of the discontented. We may yet come to regret the passing from the political scene of the tame communist parties of the 1970s and 1980s that were able to absorb the direct social unrest into productive modes of action”¹²⁴

Unlike the Second International, the collapse of 'official communist' opportunism did not happen at one historic moment, ie August 1914. The collapse of official communism' was a long drawn out process, a death by a thousand cuts. That does not mean we cannot locate qualitatively important turning points. We can — a particularly crucial one being formalised by the 7th Congress of Comintern.¹²⁵

‘Official communism’ always regarded this, the last congress of Comintern in 1935, as a veritable peak of achievement.¹²⁶ Suffice to say, in reality, it marked the Menshevisation of ‘official communism’. Faced with the growing menace of Germany, since 1933 led by the openly redivisionist and bellicose Hitler, a frightened Stalin in effect ordered communist parties in the capitalist countries to subordinate their strategy to defending the Soviet Union. Even if it had become more a matter of rhetoric rather than reality, hitherto defence of the Soviet Union had always been firmly linked with the theory of proletarian internationalism and to furthering world revolution. From 1935 it became a thing in itself and necessitated a preservation of the international status quo. Thus, instead of fighting to overthrow one’s own ruling class, the communist parties came to regard their prime duty being to shift the existing capitalist political system towards alliance and accommodation with the Soviet Union.

The Mensheviks wanted to bloc with the liberals in order to keep the Black Hundreds out. After 1935 ‘official communist’ parties adopted the same method (it has to be said, for those who blame Stalin for everything, that they did so with an enthusiasm all of their own). The goal of revolution was consigned to an ever more distant future, the virtues of parliament¹²⁷ were discovered and with the fascist danger justifying every step to the right¹²⁷ the communist parties sought to cement a popular front, first with Labourites, then Liberals and finally ‘progressive’ Tories such as the Duchess of Atholl.¹²⁸ As Lenin warned the Mensheviks, such politics not only blunted the revolutionary consciousness of the working class. It obscured the true source of counterrevolution.

Fascism in the 1920s and 30s was growing. not simply as a result of the redivisionist designs of “the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital”.¹²⁹ It was growing because of the crisis and decomposition of the capitalist system *as a whole*. Fascism represents the “organisation” of its decay. Naturally, it can take any number of forms, military, monarchical, religious, not only a mass movement that mobilises the middle classes, as the Trotskyite dogmatists would have it. However its quiddity, its role always remains resolving the revolutionary situation, brought about by the decay of capitalism. negatively. In other words, the use of naked terror against the working class and the replacement of bourgeois democracy and

pluralism by totalitarianism in order to crush those below and overcome splits and divisions in the ruling class.¹³⁰ So to really root out the fascist danger there is no choice about it. The working class had to carry on the work begun by the Bolsheviks in October 1917, not reinvent Menshevism.

Of course, having reinvented Menshevism, official communism' found itself on a slippery slope at the bottom of which lay the reformist programme, the *British Road to Socialism*, and the organisational liquidationism of the Democratic Left. With fascism temporarily out of the way, because of the defeat of the Axis powers in 1945 and the redivision of the world by dynamic US super-imperialism, one new Black Hundred type evil after another had to be found which enabled the opportunists to keep socialism off the top of the working class agenda. In the 1950s and 60s it was the US, in the 70s the European Community and in the 80s Thatcherism; the last named phenomenon actually being openly painted in semi-fascist colours. By so doing the Eurocommunists could invoke the name of Dimitrov and the 7th Congress, and propose a bishops to brickies' alliance with the SDP and anti-Thatcher Tories. In 1992 the same people set themselves up as a niggardly advice centre on tactical voting. Such sorry results are inevitable if a working class party ceases to subordinate itself to the task of making revolution and becomes, instead, infatuated with the bourgeois art of the possible and the opportunist theory of the greater evil.

As the Democratic Left no longer operates within the compass of working class politics it is easy to dismiss it and not bother studying the history of its 'official communist' disintegration. This is a big mistake. The fact of the matter is that most of the left in Britain suffers from the same opportunism. Admittedly, in most cases it is nowhere near as developed. Nevertheless, if it is allowed to go unchallenged, allowed to spread, to gain influence over the minds of advanced workers, it will have similar consequences.

7. Nature of Britain's revolution

Before turning to the election question in Britain today as such, we have to deal with the tasks of our working class (in the same way as we did with those of the Russian workers in the previous chapter). As will be recalled, according to the pre-1917 Bolsheviks, Russia was presented with the necessity of a bourgeois, or in other words a democratic, revolution. Given the timidity of bourgeois politics, this had to be led by the proletariat in alliance with the peasantry – a social revolution which, because it took the form of a *people's* revolution, carried with it the possibility, if the balance of class forces nationally and internationally were favourable, of going *uninterruptedly* to socialism. From this strategy, Bolshevik tactics, organisation and style organically grew and eventually flowered.

What of Britain? Our road is broader and more direct. Not least due to the efforts of Oliver Cromwell and the steam engine, we long ago completed our bourgeois revolution. Proletarian revolution looks in at us through every window. With only a couple of odd-ball exceptions, the groups, factions and sects that make up the revolutionary left would formally agree with this. Even those who, because of origin and continued pretension, want us to believe, despite their *reformist* programmes, that they are revolutionaries, would also say that capitalism has no future, that socialism is the long overdue answer.¹³¹

For us, the fact that the main strategic task before us is proletarian revolution does not mean we suffer from the delusion that revolution ie insurrection, is immediately in prospect.¹³² The *revolutionary* fight for reforms is the order of the day. So we do not sleep with our boots on. At the time of writing there is not yet a revolutionary situation in Britain. And no, we are not in a position

to say *exactly when* such a situation will develop, only that it will, The Marxist method we use and defend is no crystal ball. Nevertheless, in terms of our programme, in terms of historical necessity, what lies before us is far more certain than any fortuneteller's divination. Because the primary contradiction in Britain is between the private nature of expropriation and the social nature of production, because that contradiction has reached the point of maturity, if not overmaturity, the task we must do everything to carry through is *smashing* the bourgeois state. Only in this way can we usher in the socialist order, the first stage of communism, and resolve the contradictions of capitalism, which if left unresolved threaten the very survival of our species.

The movement towards revolution will, as is always the case, involve a whole skein of accidental and chance events. But to ensure that they serve and complement the main aim it is essential that we do not allow ourselves to be diverted by those who would, for their own reasons, impose on the rolling movement of events an *artificial stage* that we have to aim for, prior to putting socialism at the top of our agenda. Quite the reverse. Every demand for reform, every slogan, every action, every tactic and strategy, everything must be *subordinate* to achieving socialism through a revolutionary leap.

Far from leading to sterile dogmatism, the Bolsheviks showed that this firmness of principle allows and demands flexibility. Naturally, such an approach only remains flexible if it takes place in the context and under the guidance of the revolutionary programme. If what might be a legitimate tactic becomes seen as a thing in itself, the result can only be loss of direction, in other words opportunism. Programmatically linking day to day practice with the main, *determining* aim of socialism prevents us from being swept away or seduced by the excitements, routine and fickle popularity of this or that strike, movement or campaign.

This is where most of the left organisations – either in theory, or most certainly in practice – would depart from us. Excusing themselves with a barrage of cant and prattle about practicality and realism, the reformist left objectively puts all sorts of barriers in front of the working class and the practical and realistic attempt to give it socialist consciousness. Not so many years ago it was *de rigueur* for them to insist that before even considering the question of state power we first had to persuade a Labour government to

commit itself to what was called the Alternative Economic Strategy, a hybrid of semi-Keynesian dreams of economic autarchy and a trade unionist shopping list of proposed legislation.¹³³ Given the defeats of the last decade, reformist sights are now set even lower. However, the recipe for disarming the working class, robbing it of its sense of historic mission, is the same. Nowadays, before anything else can be done, we are told, we must be rid of the Tories' parliamentary majority. So where for communists the main enemy is monopoly capitalism and the main task is revolution, for reformists the main enemy is the Tories (this was even narrowed to the Thatcherites) and keeping them out of government is the main task. Such is the difference between the bourgeois art of the possible and the communist science of necessity, and from these two different methods must flow politics which stand in opposition and even antagonism (we are definitely not dealing with two means to the same end).

Now we hardly need say that the reformist left is far from alone in adhering to this stagist approach. In terms of political practice much of the revolutionary left suffers from exactly the same *bourgeois* infection, a casebook example being the SWP. In its propaganda, the SWP calls for socialism, that is true. Not surprisingly though for an organisation which as a matter of principle shuns the very idea of producing and committing itself to a programme, when it comes to practice the SWP is unable to make the link. As a result it is mesmerised by the chance course of events which exist on the surface, and are not guided by the underlying working out of necessity. Because of this, like the reformist left, the SWP is always fighting battles but with no idea of actually winning the war. Thus, as evidenced by countless *Socialist Worker* headlines, the *ruling* SWP slogan of the 1980s (carried on in the 90s) has been Tories out ...and Labour in!

If monopoly capitalism is our main enemy and socialism is our main task, then it follows that we in Britain must – as the Bolsheviks did in relation to their task of democratic revolution – consider, judge and assess the various classes and their parties in that light. Let us begin on the right with the Tory Party. While it is undeniable that in terms of its voting base it is not a party of monopoly capital, when it comes to politics, which is the real criterion, there can be no doubt that the Tory Party is a party of

monopoly capital, a counterrevolutionary party, a party of reaction. The same goes for the Liberal Democrats: the direct inheritor of the 19th century Whig Party, which was, till the emergence of the Labour Party, *the* party of industrial capitalism. Though it might be slightly less overt than the present day Tories, it is committed body and soul to the existing system and the ruling monopoly capitalist class. Here are our Black Hundreds and Octobrists.

Apart from marginal groupings like the Green Party and the Democratic Left, the middle classes in our country have no real, direct political expression or existence. In all likelihood that will not change. Certainly at the moment middle class votes and identification are spread between the two traditional bourgeois parties and the Labour Party.

This, therefore, straightaway brings us to the working class and the Labour Party. Despite all claims to the contrary, Britain is not heading in the direction of middle class 'classlessness'. In terms of population it is highly proletarianised, and ever more so. After all, although the number of manual workers has steadily declined – a decline set to continue – those who have nothing to live on except the ability to sell their labour power have grown inexorably. Furthermore, jobs which in the past were considered the height of middle class attainment have now been thoroughly proletarianised: nurses, teachers and secretaries, to name just three. Yet though Britain is impressively working class sociologically, when it comes to ideology there exists a massive gulf.

The Labour Party might have been “born out of the bowels of the TUC” (Ernest Bevin), but politically it has proved deeply reactionary. When it comes to government, to all intents and purposes it has been no different from the Tories, and when in opposition it gives friendly criticism and technical advice (as the Tories do when the position is reversed). Labour loyally served British imperialism in two inter-imperialist world wars and numerous colonial wars, not least in Ireland. Labour never organised one strike in its entire history, but it has stabbed many in the back, crucially the miners Great Strike of 1984-5. The Labour Party must therefore be defined as a workers' party of the monopoly bourgeoisie. In terms of the role Labour has played, and should be expected to play, it is a party of counterrevolution, which if lined up alongside *our* political spectrum can be seen to occupy the same very-cool-pink wavelength as the Cadets did in pre-1917 Russia.

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Here is not the place to go into the ins and outs of how the monopoly capitalist class, which all in all consists of no more than 1% of the population, is able to so dominate politics and society in Britain. For the moment let us just say that as an *imperialist* class which exploits the world as well as Britain, it can make up with wealth, power, connections and hegemonic ideas what it lacks in numbers.

Taking this outline of Britain's classes and their politics as our starting point, what can we say about the strategic tasks of communists? Our task is not to present the Tories as an unimaginable evil, which must be got out of office by putting in a lesser evil. Nor is it our task to reinforce existing illusions in the working class that Labour is that lesser evil, let alone bust our guts in the *belief* that it *can* be made to fight. First and foremost we must build a mass revolutionary working class party, that is to say we must reforge our Communist Party. Without this Party, nothing serious can be done or achieved. To make progress towards revolution, the CPGB must replace Labour as the natural party of the working class and organise the advanced section of the working class. Then, and only then, can the working class begin to act as a class for itself, detach sections of the middle class from monopoly capital and exploit splits within the ruling class – all of which is necessary if we are to make revolution.

8. Election 92

To draw together the historical and theoretical strands that have so far made up our discussion, we now turn to the 1992 general election. Just as with the 1906-7 election in Russia, it highlights the differences between Leninism and opportunism.

The April 9 1992 general election was the first ‘normal’ election Britain has seen for about a decade. What I mean by this is that British politics definitely returned to the two party mould of the 1950s and 60s that was disrupted by the contradictory effects of the upsurge in the class struggle of the late 1960s and 1970s. In the late 1960s Labour’s ‘In place of strife’ proposals were blocked by communist-led working class action. Heath’s Industrial Relations Act was sent the same way in the early 1970s, which also saw the freeing of the Pentonville 5 and two successful miners’ strikes, culminating in a general election, which began with Edward Heath going to the country asking ‘Who rules Britain?’ and ended with him *not* getting the answer he wanted. No wonder there were rumours of coups and editorials in *The Times* bemoaning that Britain had become ungovernable.¹³⁴

In spite of the heroism of miners, printers, seafarers, steelworkers, and other working class core sections, the Thatcher years saw victory in the class war go to the bourgeoisie. Our leaders proved weak, lacked vision, were completely unable to break from the confines of capitalist politics. Above all, the revisionists had done their best to wreck our Communist Party. As we know, with the failure of the poll tax, and with her retro attitude towards the EC, the ‘Iron Lady’ became a problem for the Tory elite. Yet the fact that under Thatcher the ruling class shifted the balance of class forces in its direction created the conditions for Kinnock’s ‘new realist’

campaign, which moved the Labour Party ‘forwards’, back to its 1945-79 position as the *safe* alternative party of government.

Whatever the unlamented *Marxism Today* and its *Living Marxism* alter ego claimed, the Labour Party never died. The SDP split was responsible for Thatcher’s huge parliamentary majorities — not the decline in manual workers, nor an epoch-making shift in popular attitudes. To repeat, after its wobble to the reformist left in the early 1980s, Labour *returned* to the mainstream of bourgeois politics. The differences between it and the Tories were again ones of nuance, not substance. Labour did not even pretend any longer that it would bring full employment, junk nuclear weapons and introduce socialism. That is why the masses’ (as opposed to the opportunists’) only illusion in the Labour Party was that it could be no worse than the Tories.

For us, therefore, the 1992 general election campaign represented a highly significant and necessary stage in the struggle to reforge the CPGB, an invaluable opportunity to challenge Labourism and present, in a mass way, the case for working class political independence from all bourgeois influence. The opportunists had an altogether different agenda. Getting the Tories out was the main thing, and that, for most of them at least, could only be done by getting Labour in.¹³⁵ Those who consider the Tories the main problem obviously regard the Labour Party as part of the answer. Given its rotten anti-working class record in government, Kinnock’s open and unashamed commitment to run capitalism and, not surprisingly, an unconvinced and deeply sceptical audience, the propagandists of opportunism were forced to use almost every argument under the sun to justify the call for a Labour vote. The result was invariably an eclectic jumble and a complete lack of consistency. Our purpose here, however, is not to concentrate on particular groups, rather to expose the opportunist left as a whole. That is why we can best proceed by dealing with the ‘Why vote Labour?’ arguments themselves rather than single out the sorry results when they were given organisational form.

We can list the basic arguments put forward by the opportunist left for supporting and voting Labour under the following seven *deadly* headings:

1. Only through the Labour Party will we get socialism. Kinnock and Co were, of course, not even promising socialism. Nor will Smith and Co. So during the 1992 general election the argument

that Labour will introduce socialism could only exist as a reformist maggot, ie, “We want a socialist Labour government.”¹³⁶ Reliance of socialism on returning a Labour government is the leitmotiv of the ‘official communist’ *British Road to Socialism* programme and, to all intents and purposes. Militant’s *What we stand for*. The Kim Ii Sungist New Communist Party is almost equally besotted with Labour’s possibilities. It dreams of the day when It can undo the work of the Third International and Lenin, “heal the split between the revolutionary and social democratic wings in the working class movement” and become a federated component of the Labour Party.¹³⁷ We say let them build their castles in the sky, real communists will never surrender to Labourism.

2. Although Labour promises very little, something can not only be better than nothing, it can even be great! Workers “would benefit greatly and directly from the replacement of the Tories by even the present Labour Party.”¹³⁸ There are “good things in Labour’s programme.... Labour is committed to removing some of the worst features of the anti-trade union laws. It has promised an immediate improvement in pensions and child benefit, and to restore the link between pensions and wages. It will introduce a parliament in Scotland.”¹³⁹ Here we have a case of telling the working class to be satisfied with *promises* of crumbs when we should be fighting for the whole bakery.

3. Labour will not prove so effective in attacking the working class as the Tories. “The working class will be better able to defend itself against a Labour government linked to the trade unions.”¹⁴⁰ “A Labour government is more responsive to pressure from the people.” ...In other words we are meant to choose the more ‘humane’ oppressor. That we will not do.

4. Getting rid of the Tories is the most important thing, and that can only be done by getting Labour in. “Vote Labour today. There is no other way to sweep the Tories aside and open the door to radical changes in British politics. That can only be done with a Labour government ,.. a vote for anything else is a wasted vote.”⁴² It was true that Labour was the only realistic alternative party of government for capitalism in April 1992. As to there being “no other way” to open the door to radical change”. that is clearly untrue.

5. Working class morale will be improved by a Labour victory. The “defeat of Major and the Tories will help revive the self-confidence of millions of workers who are now too disheartened to fight directly

for their own interests If we beat the Tories in the election, strikes and industrial militancy will revive. Open class struggle will revive.”¹⁴³ The “election of a Labour government will create the best conditions for the struggle to get Kinnock and the reformists as a whole, together with the Stalinists, off the backs of the working class and to build a revolutionary leadership.”¹⁴⁴ “If Labour wins the election the working class will have its confidence boosted. They [*Sic*] will be encouraged to make demands for the repeal of the cursed anti-trade union legislation. The working class will also move on to the counter-offensive around demands for increased wages, better working conditions and a shorter working week.”¹⁴⁵

6. Working class morale will be further eroded by a Tory victory. “A Tory victory will increase demoralisation among all those people who long for change.”¹⁴⁶ “If the Tories are returned to office they will claim to have a mandate to unleash a further union-bashing offensive.”¹⁴⁷ A month later the working class in *Christian Democrat, ie Tory* Germany answered this nonsense with the biggest strike wave that country had seen since 1933. And eight months later in Tory Britain the *main* subject of debate was the general strike question (see Chapter 9).

7. Vote Labour because most workers vote Labour. As “long as millions of workers place their hopes in a Labour government we say: Vote Labour, but organise to fight!”¹⁴⁸ And these people call themselves leaders. They are not. They are bubbled cheer-leaders who automatically, without thought, with reference to neither the past nor the future, line up behind Labour. Objectively these types help foster illusions in Labourism, just as their political ancestors did in the Liberal Party a century ago.

With these *excuses* acting as an opportunist glue, when it came to April 9 those of the usually bickering opportunist hue were able to unite as one in Menshevik support of Kinnock: “nothing must be allowed to stand in the way of a Labour victory,” said its perfect representative, *Morning Star* editor Tony Chater.¹⁴⁹ Naturally, those who like to consider themselves to the left of Chater introduced this or that caveat, but at the end of the day it came to the same thing tailing Kinnock: “Vote Labour ... but build a socialist alternative”;¹⁵⁰ “Vote Labour .. prepare the fight ahead!”;¹⁵¹ “Vote Labour ... and fight for socialist policies!”;¹⁵² “Vote Labour ... but reject Kinnock’s cowardly policies.”¹⁵³

Of the bunch it was the SWP which was perhaps the least

sanguine about what a Labour government would bring: “Every socialist should ... vote Labour without the slightest illusion that a Kinnock government would be any better than the Tories A Tory victory will increase demoralisation among all those people who long for change. A Labour victory will make change seem just a bit more possible, even though Labour really promises no change at all.”¹⁵⁴

Judging by Labour’s record there is no reason whatsoever to believe a Kinnock-led government would have benefited the working class. Indeed there is every reason to believe that a government committed to running capitalism, a decaying, rotting system that relies on the ruthless exploitation of the workers, would do everything in its power to weaken and undermine the combativity of the working class.

Showing its own confusion and tendency towards irrationality, the SWP found itself making this very point while at the same time calling upon people to vote Labour (though, adding to the contradiction, it refused to canvass or actually work to bring this about). Surveying the recent scattering of Labour-type governments in the world — France, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Australia, New Zealand — the SWP reported a tale of woe. In France, Spain and Portugal they have broken strikes: New Zealand’s Labour government, until it was defeated in 1990, “outdid Thatcher in flogging off state industries to the rich”. Unemployment grew by 12% and, with the help of the trade union bureaucracy, real wages declined. Union membership plummeted from 60% to just under 25% of the workforce. Yet it is Australia which the SWP reckons “is the best example”. This would seem to be so:

“Labour has presided over the fastest growing gap between rich and poor in Australian history ... Their economic policy was the same free market capitalism championed by Thatcher ... Workers have been demobilised and Labour has imposed defeats which are the envy of British Tories.”¹⁵⁵

Surely, taking into account the fact that Kinnock’s Labour Party was not promising anything, definitely not socialism, it would have carried out the same reactionary and demoralising programme as its Australian brother party. It is therefore more than naive to imagine it would “benefit” workers, let alone “demand Labour acts to protect the rights and living standards of working class people.”¹⁵⁶

Only the working class can fight for and defend the working class. While the opportunist left was convinced that a Labour victory in April 1992 would shift the balance of class forces against the ruling class, the fact of the matter was that the more coolheaded sections of the bourgeoisie were not at all worried by the prospect of a Kinnock government. Take the *Financial Times*. Here we have a paper of the bourgeoisie which talks to the bourgeoisie. It has no time for the anti-Labour hysterics and crudities of that part of the bourgeois press which talks *down* to the masses. While the *Financial Times* said Labour did not deserve to win, it came out against the Tories, because they deserved to lose. As shown by the miserable John Major — their biggest asset! — and his charters, they have completely run Out of ideas, they have become corrupt and shopsoiled. Perhaps it was time to bring in a new team, suggested the pink'un.

Surprising though it was, there can be no doubt about the extent of Labour's defeat on April 9 1992. The Tory majority of 21 was small compared with last time. That cannot be denied. However, it was their fourth consecutive win, and their majority is quite sufficient to last Major a full parliamentary term, ie four or five years. Labour did gain 40 seats but its new leadership knows full well that it still has a mountain to climb if it is to secure a majority at the next general election. The 1995 boundary commission will see to that (it is expected to 'give' the Tories 12 to 20 extra seats). Moreover, it has to be said that, economically and politically, Major found himself boxed into a tight corner: he was forced to fight under the worst possible conditions. Britain was in a double dip recession. Millions blamed the Tories for unemployment, house repossession, mortgage hikes and industrial decline.

So why did Labour lose? It had nothing to do with the 'attractive' nature of John Major's personality. Hardly. His ineffective high tech/low sincerity Val Doonican shows and his silly soapbox exchanges with members of the SWP (for the benefit of TV cameras) exposed him as the second rate politician he is. On the other hand, neither did power slip through Labour's hands because of Neil Kinnock's supposed triumphalism' in Sheffield. Nor was it, as he claims, the poisonous influence of the Tory press. Labour lost because, with the partial exception of Scotland, there was no real movement in society seeking *radical* change.

Hence, despite a drawn Out recession, the Conservative Party

managed to keep intact the 40% plus of the vote it has enjoyed since 1979 — a mass social base which consists not only of the middle classes, who felt threatened by John Smith's tax proposals, but a wide section of the working class, in particular its upper, skilled, stratum, the so-called C2s.¹⁵⁷ They might not have been enthused by the Tories, but they saw no need to defect to Labour. That, and the continued existence of a sizeable Liberal Democratic residue from the “mould breaking” Liberal/SDP Alliance means that the ruling class in Britain can continue to rule through its *preferred* party of government.

Does that mean the 1992 election was without significance? No, its most notable feature was the serious challenge represented by the Labour Party. Labour made a considerable recovery compared with the 1983 debacle. Then gripped by a deep internal crisis and the SDP breakaway, which at a stroke robbed It of millions of votes, it secured a mere 27.6% of the poll.¹⁵⁸ There were good reasons then to believe that the Tories were about to establish themselves as the *dominant* party in Britain along the lines of the Liberal Democrats in Japan and the Christian Democrats in Italy.

That never meant the Labour Party was “dead”. It meant, as we said, Labour had been reduced “from being the alternative party of government, as It was in the 1950s, 60s and 70s, to being a party of crisis — a role it performed during the 1920s and 30s”¹⁵⁹ So we certainly did not go along with the daft notion entertained by academia that at root Labour's crisis was the decline in the number of manual workers and an interlinked Thatcherite bourgeois cultural revolution.

There never will be, and never was, any direct correlation between the number of manual workers and Labour's vote. Nor was there anything permanent, let alone hegemonic, about Thatcher and Thatcherism. In spite of this, the conclusion is again being drawn that Labour can never, by itself, win a general election.¹⁶⁰ Interestingly, the loudest voices are not bourgeois pundits but those who imagine themselves leading components of the new, new, new ‘free thinking’ left; ie the Democratic Left's *New Times*, Robin Blackburn in his *New Left Review* and the *New Statesman and Society*.

If there was ever a case of the old parading itself as the new, here it is. Theirs is not a disinterested assessment. It is the polemical device needed by petty bourgeois advocates of Charter 88 type PR

and a Lib-Lab coalition to further their *modernising* constitutional projects. Forgetting all their own predictions of a Labour victory, or at least Labour emerging as the biggest party in a hung parliament, these so-called representatives of the ‘new’ disinterred the discredited “declinist thesis”, a version of 1930s Mondism and 1950s embourgeoisified working class, reinvented by the pinko professor Eric Hobsbawm in the aftermath of Thatcher’s election successes in 1979 and 1983.

Well, how do things really stand? In spite of the continued changing composition of the working class — which is inevitable and progressive — Labour is again the *alternative* party of government. Labour’s 271 MPs came as a result of winning 34.2% of the vote —still some way behind the Tories. But if anything is in decline it is the Liberal Democrats. The two main parties of the British political system are now again approaching similar social and parliamentary weights.

In terms of politics too there was a drawing together. Major’s post-election ministerial reshuffle marked the end to the Thatcherite crusade and an attempt to step back towards class consensus. In truth though, Labour moved to an even greater degree, not least in its adoption of a whole tranche of Tory policies: anti-trade union laws, privatisation, the criminalisation of squatting, nuclear arms, etc. So for all the recent claims to the contrary, there was no tectonic ideological clash between the Tories and Labour in the 1992 general election campaign.¹⁶¹ Indeed, it can hardly be denied that for many voters the only difference between the two parties was that the Tories were the devil they knew.

Given this, and the likelihood that under John Smith Labour will be steered even further to the right, it cannot be emphasised too strongly that it was not the working class that suffered defeat on April 9 1992. To state what is ABC for all class conscious workers, elections are the object, not the subject of history. Everything the real subject of history, the working class, has ever gained is due entirely to its own strength, not because of the coloration of this or that *capitalist* government. There was no change in the balance of class forces between April 8 and April 10 1992. The organisations of the working class remained as they were.

The Menshevik groupings and press in Britain painted a very different picture. According to Tony Chater’s so-called Communist Party of Britain, the general election was a “disaster”.¹⁶² *Socialist*

Worker used exactly the same expression,¹⁶³ and so did the Trotskyite paper *Socialist*¹⁶⁴ All these, and many more, were agreed that Labour would have won if it had not been for the ‘new realist’ policies of Kinnock, Smith, Gould, Edmonds, Laird *et al* The CPB’s version of John Major again spoke for the lot when he said: “The general election has shown that it is this [watering down of Labour’s programme] which makes Labour unelectable.”¹⁶⁵

This is pathetic self delusion. In Britain bourgeois ideas are the dominant ideas. Labour made itself *electable* precisely through Kinnock’s policy reviews, purge of Militant, etc. But there is more to it than that. The wailing and weeping over Labour’s defeat, the unsolicited advice and tender concern for its fortunes expose the *main problem* for the left in Britain in all its abject theoretical poverty and philistinism — a deep seated, though completely unwarranted, faith in the progressive nature and potential of Labour in government. Surely the door is open for these organisations to constitute themselves the left wing of the bourgeoisie, as the Mensheviks did in 1917. All that is missing is the headmaster-like call from the bourgeoisie to ‘enter’. To use Lenin’s phrase, “This is a very strong expression, but it is just.”⁵⁴

Those who really believe monopoly capital is the main enemy do not have a descending checklist of parties *of monopoly capital* We do not approach bourgeois elections supporting the bourgeois party which “the capitalists least want to see in office” against the bourgeois party which is the capitalists’ first choice.¹⁶⁶ This perilous method, if really applied, *should* lead its advocates to vote BNP not LP. Britain was not gripped by a revolutionary situation, there might have been no immediate prospect of socialism. That does not mean we had to choose between varieties of bourgeois parties. To suggest we must is to consciously or unconsciously tread in the footsteps of Menshevism, to let our priorities be determined by the Tory danger on the one side and the attempt to get Labour to fight on the other. No, our priority, as it was for the Bolsheviks, is to make *independent* working class politics a reality, independence from Labour included.

What that means is not an ill defined, semi-reformist, SWP style socialist alternative”. We need a real alternative to the Labour Party. We need a mass revolutionary party firmly based on democratic centralism and Marxism-Leninism, which is capable of organising

the working class as a class for itself and leading it to the conquest of state power — ie the reformed Communist Party. That is what the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB is committed to build and it was with that aim firmly in mind that we entered the April 1992 general election.

Unlike the opportunist swamp we had no fear of saying that the main enemy of the working class is not the Tories. To suggest that it is, is not to see the wood for the trees. The main enemy is the capitalist system, its state and *all* its political parties, including the monopoly capitalist party of the working class, the Labour Party. That does not mean we consider the Tories and Labourites constitute one solid reactionary mass. The advanced section of the working class must move towards the position where it has a politics of its *own*, through which it can take advantage of the conflicts between the Tories and the Labourites. To reach that point, the task of communists in this country was not, and is not, to tail the existing consciousness of the working class. Our task on the contrary is to challenge the supposed automatic right of the Labour Party to militant working class votes and fight for the reformed Communist Party that will replace Labour as the *natural* party of the working class. That meant fielding communist candidates.

Predictably, many on the opportunist left objected to our decision to stand candidates. Just like Kinnock and Co. they invoked the call for unity and said the most important thing, after 13 years of Toryism, was to get rid of Major and his crew. In the form of the *Morning Star's* CPB, this surrender to the *bourgeois* influence of Labourism was disgracefully done in the name of communism. "Every vote not cast for Labour will assist parties further to the right", said John Roster, its Scottish secretary.¹⁶⁷ This was not an April fools day joke. It was a betrayal of all previous communist electoral activity, not least a betrayal of John L'Estrange Malone, Shapurji Saklatvala, Willie Gallacher, J T Walton Newbold and Phil Piratin when they were communist MPs. The fact of the matter is that the working class will never be united "unless a line of demarcation is drawn and a ruthless struggle is waged against those who serve to spread bourgeois influence among the proletariat."¹⁶⁸ That *precondition* for working class unity is exactly what we have been fighting for since the Leninist forces of the CPGB began open ideological struggle in 1981. So we welcomed the April 1992 general election because it enabled us to draw an even more

distinct “line of demarcation” between opportunism and revolutionary communism.

During the general election campaigns of 1983 and 1987 the Tories thought it would be really clever to reprint key points of the manifesto of the Communist Party in a series of newspaper advertisements. It was not that the preferred representatives of the capitalist class had suddenly changed colour. Thatcher and her party were determined on the ‘final’ death of communism at home and abroad. No, what the Tories were out to do was to compare the manifesto of the Communist Party with the manifesto of the Labour Party. And having reproduced them side by side they wanted the electorate to draw the conclusion that the Labour Party had moved dramatically to the left, so much so that it was to all intents and purposes indistinguishable from the communists. There was a truth here.

The Labourism of Michael Foot, Tony Benn and Eric Heifer and the ‘official communism’ of Gordon McLennan, Tony Chater and Nina Temple had converged around a similar politics. Yes, the Labour Party had moved to the left. After the debacle of the Wilson/Callaghan government the trade union tops and Labour parliamentary grandees decided on a shift to the left in order to keep the loyalty of labour movement activists and militants. ‘Official communism’ too had shifted. Yet while the Labour Party never moved from its traditional territory of the working within capitalism politics of the trade union movement, the same cannot be said of ‘official communism’. The reason Labour had become indistinguishable from ‘official communism’ was not that the Labour Party had undergone a conversion to communism — that will never happen. It was that ‘official communism’ was entering the final stage of its disintegration and collapse. Its espousal of left reformism showed that it had long ago deserted genuine communism, the revolutionary theory and practice of Marx, Engels and Lenin. The ‘official communists’ were communists in name only, were embracing Labourism, were moving towards the politics of open pro-capitalism.

Through the work, not least the election campaign, conducted by the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB, the name of our Party was dissociated from these elements. Now a Communist Party member is defined as one who accepts our discipline and fights to reforge our Party in conformity with the principles outlined

by the conferences of the Leninists of the CPGB. notably the 4th Conference. Everyone else, the Chaterites, NCPers, Straight Leftists and Democratic Lefters have been exposed as charlatans, renegades and liquidators. The red flag of the Communist Party is no longer corrupted, stained and obscured by their filthy Labourite politics. That is why in 1992 neither the Tory loyal press nor the Tory Party itself could claim that the Labour Party was no different from the Communist Party. For all partisans of the working class this is great news and cause for real celebration.

True. Gary Bushell of *The Sun*, and once of the SWP, penned a silly story trying to smear Kinnock because he was the “comrades’ choice”.¹⁶⁹ It did not wash. The “comrades” Bushell referred to were not as claimed “Britain’s hard-line reds”, not the Provo CPGB. Far from it, those “who can’t wait for a Labour victory” were the predictable publications of the Menshevik left, such as *Workers Power*, *Militant*, *Socialist Worker* and *Workers News*, which have throughout their parasitic existence fed in and around the Labour Party pond.

While these types advocated that workers vote Labour because it was the ‘lesser evil’ the Provisional Central Committee was able to conduct a campaign in the name of the Communist Party which presented our class with a real choice. Our communist manifesto was a clear statement of communist principle (see Appendix V). It was firmly and unapologetically based on what the working class needs at our stage in world history, not what the capitalist system considers it can afford.

Inevitably the opportunist left greeted our campaign with a howl of protest, accusations that we would let in the Tories, demands that we should stand down in favour of Labour, even that our manifesto was not revolutionary.⁷⁰ Obviously we ignored their slanders, did not follow their advice, or take their defence of revolutionary purity with anything other than a wry smile. We were determined to use the general election to make propaganda for communism and revolution, to test our strength and build our organisation. To have forgone that for the sake of helping the Labour Party “would be subordinating class policy to parliamentarism instead of subordinating parliamentarism to class policy.”¹⁷¹

As to the accusation that we would let in the Tories, this is, of course, exactly the same sort of charge levelled against Lenin and the Bolsheviks. They were supposed to be letting in the Black

Hundreds with their electoral activity. However we, like the Bolsheviks, had no intention of leaving hegemony over the working class to the forces of liberalism or opportunism. In the event of a split vote which secured the victory of a Tory, we saw no reason why *we* should be blamed for not having voted for the Labourite, and not the Labourite for not having voted for us. Like the Mensheviks before them our opportunists insisted that we could not expect the Labourites to declare themselves revolutionaries. But like the Bolsheviks before us, our reply was simple. We could see no reason why the communists should declare themselves Labourites.¹⁷²

Obviously candidates who stood on our communist manifesto deserved support from real partisans of the working class. But we also put forward a minimum platform of working class defence: against the poll tax, against immigration controls, against anti-gay and lesbian discrimination, for a minimum wage of £250 a week, for work or full benefit, for state pensions equal to the minimum wage, for free abortion, for free 24 hour creche facilities, for unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland, for the right of self determination for Scotland and Wales. If the candidates of *other* parties and organisations, including those of the Labour Party supported it. we said they deserved support too. Where no candidate was prepared to put their name to it, we said voters should write communist' across their ballot paper. There should be no vote for those who refuse to fight capitalism, who can only misrepresent and oppress the working class. By doing this we were mainly appealing "to people who, we know In advance, will not go along with us."¹⁷³ The Labour left did not go along with us, but it did show its true nature. Labour leftists like Ken Livingstone refused even to mention socialism in their election addresses, let alone promise to stand on a platform whose logic is revolutionary. Such types deserved and got no support from the communists. What of the candidates of Militant?

Our organisation actively supported Lesley Mahmood in the Walton by-election in 1991. Why? Because we wanted Militant to break organisationally and politically from Labourism. We supported Mahmood "like a rope supports the hanged man". Outside the Labour Party Militant would be easier to subject to communist propaganda and open communist polemic. Militant's organisational break from the Labour Party has to all intents been achieved. What has to be tackled now is its politics. We could *not* do this by giving

it automatic support. On the contrary we had to challenge it. We did so with our platform of working class defence. As it turned out it too showed its true nature. Militant might have cut itself loose from the Labour Party organisationally. It has not cut itself loose politically. The politics of its candidates were no different from left Labourism, therefore we said they should not be supported.

We made no apology that for us the main thing was the fight to reforge the CPGB. That is why we stood candidates on April 9. If that meant some pale pink reformist losing their parliamentary seat, that would be a price worth paying. The election of even one communist would have done far more for the working class than 50 Labour MPs. Indeed if it came to a choice we would *prefer* four communist MPs and 10,000 unofficial communist votes even though this might mean, in first past the post parliamentary arithmetic, a Tory government (we consciously echo Lenin). Such a Tory victory would not mean “demoralisation” as *Socialist Worker* tells its readers. It would mean that the working class is ready to fight, ready to go on to greater and better things. After all what workers in Britain need in order to turn discontent into conscious action is their Communist Party. The fight for this Party therefore comes before the fight around wages, against fascism, the poll tax or getting Britain out of Ireland. Far from this being sectarian, damaging the prospects of such campaigns, we must recognise that without its Communist Party the working class is headless. Without its Communist Party, the working class is simply reduced to a slave class, with no prospects except momentarily lessening the *degree* of exploitation, not the fact that it is exploited.

Our organisation did not approach the general election campaign by totting up what spare resources we had. That is an approach typical of opportunism. We took necessity as our starting point, chose four candidates and launched a Scotland, England and Wales campaign around our uncompromising revolutionary manifesto. We were told by leftists supporting the Labour Party that this would alienate us from the mass of the working class. We can judge them by their own results. The same people who expressed such touching concern that our independent politics might isolate us, made no independent impact. In fact they made no impact whatsoever. The whole Labour Party campaign was run from above, from Walworth Road, run on TV and for TV. The ‘official communists’,

Trotskyites and left Labourites were irrelevant to everyone except themselves (and even that is debatable).

In the name of the Communist Party we, on the other hand, were able to address millions of working class people and not only confront the Labour leadership, but also the Labour left. Ken Livingstone (£750 a week *Sum* columnist and one time contender for Labour leader) for one. Through our Brent East candidate, Anne Murphy, we exposed Livingstone's posturing, not least when it came to Ireland. Where we put forward the necessity of workers in Britain demanding troops out now and siding with the forces of national liberation, Livingstone called for the withdrawal of troops in the lifetime of one Labour parliament. In other words, at imperialism's leisure. Where we want to see Britain *defeated*, forced out of Ireland as the US was forced out of Vietnam, Livingstone recommends a reformist settlement within the framework of imperialism, whereby Britain gradually and peacefully disengages.

We stated right from the start that our intervention was designed to use the bourgeois election for our propaganda: to use their newspapers, radio and television to spread the news that communism lives. Our votes were modest: Tam Burn (Glasgow Central), 106; Mark Fischer (Rhondda), 245; Stan Kelsey (Bethnal Green and Stepney), 156, and Anne Murphy (Brent East), 96. Then we never expected a big vote for communism under the conditions of April 1992. What we wanted was to achieve maximum publicity and show there is a fighting answer to capitalism, that communism did not go down with the Berlin Wall. Those who mock the communist vote only display their reformism and parliamentarism. Communists in Britain are weak in terms of popular support. But we must begin from reality, from where we are, not where we would like to be ... and in terms of impact, propaganda and developing our strength we made a good beginning.

Our manifesto launch was widely reported, most notably by *The Independent* in a quarter page photo feature, the *Daily Star*, BBC Radio 4 and World Service news broadcasts. The decision to ensure that every individual elector got our manifesto — all 250,000 of them — proved more than worthwhile. During the campaign we regularly came across people who said, "I've read your manifesto and I..." agree or disagree; the point being that they had read it. For the first time for years, in most cases ever, they had read a piece of revolutionary communist election propaganda.

We also gained local media coverage for our candidates. For example, in the *Willesden and Brent Chronicle* Brent East CPGB candidate Anne Murphy was introduced to the electorate under the title of “Defending the working class” and on Greater London Radio she debated again the Issue of Ireland with Livingstone. On Capital Radio Stan Kelsey, Bethnal Green and Stepney candidate, also explained to listeners the communist position on Ireland. We took part in numerous public meetings organised by community groups, residents associations, etc. where our candidates were asked questions on everything from parking restrictions to unemployment and housing! In one such meeting In Brent East, BBC TV’s ‘Newsroom South East’ screened Livingstone’s absurd display of paranoia when he accused Communist Party members of being MI5 agents! We had no need to trade in such filth, we had a far better weapon, the truth. Not least the truth that communism is the answer and Labour is a pro-imperialist bosses’ party. Indeed Labour’s true relationship to the state was fully exposed in Scotland where communist candidate Tam Dean Burn was physically removed from Roy Hattersley’s public meeting after this usually garrulous windbag refused to discuss the war In Ireland. Our candidate was filmed by BBC Scotland being man-handled out of the meeting by police and Labour heavies and still demanding that Hattersley answer for Labour’s crimes In Ireland.

Not that we relied solely on using their media for our propaganda. Alongside the general election edition of our Party’s central organ, *The Leninist*, we carried out a trial relaunch of the *Daily Worker*. Some viewed this with a jaundiced eye. Tony Chater and his *Morning Star* threatened to haul our comrades before the bosses courts because we had not asked for their imprimatur. They claimed that the *Daily Worker* title was their private property and demanded in the name of bourgeois right that we shut up shop (see Appendix VI). As real communists would, we called their bluff and continued publication.¹⁷⁴ The *Daily Worker* proved an Invaluable agitational weapon for our campaign. It gave our politics an immediacy which the fortnightly *The Leninist* could not provide.

All in all our 1992 general election campaign drew a distinct line between opportunism and Leninism and brought nearer the day when at last our class has the mass Communist Party It needs. Drawing from the rich heritage of the past, our April 1992 general election campaign pointed to the future.

9. By way of a conclusion

The April 1992 general election took place in conditions of uninspiring social peace and disorientating political reaction. On the trade union front, we remained in the shadow of 1984-5 and the defeat of the miners' Great Strike. Class collaboration plumbed new depths. Even among the broad left, sweetheart deals became accepted practice. Government strike statistics showed the number of days 'lost' in 1991 were the lowest on record.

On the political front, adding to the gloom, most still considered the democratic counterrevolutions in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union victories for peoples' power. Students hacking away at the Berlin Wall, tours of Elena Ceausescu's supposedly luxurious bedroom, Yeltsin atop a dissident tank — these were the dominant images. Ironically, to make matters worse It was beginning to appear to many that so-called people's power had opened a Pandora's box: that in some way it was bureaucratic socialism, not the restoration of capitalism, that should be held primarily responsible for the resulting mass unemployment, religious revival, chauvinist murders, nationalist wars, crime, neo-fascists, prostitution and other forms of social regression.

Not surprisingly, as the master class warmed its decadent ideology on the dying embers of socialism and claimed that the market system was the people's choice, *independent working* class politics seemed to the philistine an unobtainably far away idea, an idea fit only for cranks, loonies and Leninists.

By putting their hopes and efforts into electing Kinnock's party — which was riding high in opinion polls — the opportunists believed the harsh climate could be moderated. The voters did not oblige. The general election result was a richly deserved double whammy for pollsters and pro-Labour left alike. Gallup and Mon

went back to their computers. British Menshevism plunged into another bout of self-imposed demoralisation.

Nevertheless, as it will, life moved on. Leapfrogging mortgage rates, unemployment, management speed up and a universal shrivelling of expectations meant social strains were becoming more intense. Labour, with its watered down Tory programme and conservative new leader, offered no outlet for popular anger. But what outlets there were, were few and far between, and in the main negative. At bus stop and railway station, 'customers' grumbled. Scotland United persuaded thousands to wave the saltire and blame the English, and provided ministers of the kirk with their biggest ever congregations. In works canteens redundancy packages were the subject of demoralised calculation. And every weekend brought tut-tutting reports of alienated youth joyriding, vandalising property and doing the local fuzz after a night on the booze.

Six months later everything had changed. Not because of any election, not because of any shift in the Labour Party NEC, but because of the dynamic antagonism between rulers and ruled, otherwise known as the class struggle.

Government and royal scandals, ERM, Maastricht and blind worship of laissez faire, all in the midst of a stubborn recession, created ruling class splits which at last gave the masses a positive outlet for their anger. First into the breach were the miners. The callous and anti-social proposal to close 31 of the country's pits and sack 30,000 miners outraged the NUM and a wide cross section of 'public opinion', including bastions of the Tory establishment. Where before others resigned themselves to their fate, the miners said no!

Within the week of October 18-25 1992, London saw 40,000 and then 200,000 — according to police figures — take to the streets in support of them. Countless regional demonstrations followed. Up and down the country, miners' support groups sprung into existence and a national network was formed to give a wider political perspective. As we relaunched the *Daily Worker* and put our organisation on a war footing, media gurus began openly to voice worries about a winter or spring of discontent. What they feared was not so much a re-run of the miners' 1984-5 Great Strike, but a huge general upsurge of the sort that swept away Callaghan's miserable wage-cutting social contract in 1978-9.

There were good reasons to believe this could happen, and more.

After all, what motivated the hundreds of thousands who rallied to the miners' cause was not patronising middle class sympathy, it was working class solidarity rooted in working class self interest. Car, local government, engineering, postal, steel, ship building, broadcasting, hospital, London underground, railway and numerous other sections of the working class faced vicious sackings, cuts in real pay and deteriorating conditions. Even without coordination it was clear that there existed the potential for a social explosion. With coordination there existed the potential to make up all ground lost to the Tory government over a decade of defeats and shift the balance of class forces in Britain away from the bosses, decisively in favour of the working class.

Not surprisingly then, by November 1992 the main topic of contention, thought, debate and planning among class conscious workers was the possibility of a general strike. True, certain organisations, most notably the SWP, put forward the general strike slogan purely to be seen on the left of the primed mass movement; a sectarian posture designed to gain recruits and outbid perceived left opponents in terms of rhetoric.¹⁷⁵

Yet there can be no doubt about it, the idea of a general strike belonged to the class as a whole. It was an idea whose time had come. The mood below had an impulse of its own and quickly found reflection above. Arthur Scargill argued at the Doncaster TUC for a "day of action" (a 24 hour "stayaway" which is 'cleverly phrased' in order to circumvent the Tories' anti-trade union laws). Aslefs Derek Fullick went further and said that a series of one day general strikes was needed. And in terms of trade union leaders, Neil Greatrex, Roy Lynk's replacement as UDM president, topped the lot by straightforwardly calling for a general strike against pit closures.

My intention here is not to show that defeat of the Labour Party *did* not result in hopeless working class defeatism. That is something life has answered, and will at best only modify the 'lesser evil' refrain the opportunists use to excuse their congenital attachment to Labourism. Nor do I want to *directly* deal with the prospects and problems of working class politics at this moment in time (these lines are written in the first week of December 1992). No, I shall use what we know of and understand by the correct relationship between parliamentary elections and revolutionary tactics to show how we can avoid a potential revolution in Britain being sold short or misled to complete disaster.

To do this I will engage in an exercise. An exercise which involves freely extrapolating from the present in order to imagine for ourselves a possible revolutionary near future. Naturally this has nothing to do with astrology, clairvoyance or government economic forecasting. We are not making a prediction, simply imagining a political fiction' in order to cast light on the present from an unconventional, but useful, angle. It is true that the future we fight for is inevitable (a communist future characterised by generalised freedom). But that does not mean we think it is predetermined. Only that it is progressive in terms of social development. Our strategy combines this with a concrete analysis of the concrete situation. So we make no claims to know at what pace, let alone exactly how 'future history' will unfold. Whether 1993, 1994 or 1995 will bring a class stand off, compromise or decisive confrontation is impossible to say. Nevertheless it should be said that our possible future is not only broadly possible, in the sense that sooner or later Britain will be faced with a revolutionary situation, but it flows from the immediate struggles of the working class which are redolent with big changes.

To provide a springboard for our imagined future we will critically discuss what *Militant* says could result from its 24 hour general strike call. Having criticised, we will again use what it says, this time as the substantive raw material to construct our Imagined future. This is best done through 'interrogating' the *Why a 24 hour general strike?* article in *Militant* by its editor, Peter Taaffe.¹⁷⁶ Given that it is the most substantial left group in Britain at the moment, this has undeniable polemical advantages. There is another advantage. Taaffe's article is not only authoritative, it marks a significant left turn.

Previously *Militant* has championed its own version of the parliamentary road to socialism, enshrined in the periodically reissued programmatic pamphlet, *Militant: What we stand for*, authored by none other than Taaffe himself.¹⁷⁷ In *Why a 24 hour general strike?* he does not make socialism reliant on a socialist parliamentary majority. Indeed he does not even mention parliament. Instead he argues that a TUC-called 24 hour general strike *could*, as the appetite grows with the eating", lay the basis for dual power and finally socialism, through transforming organs of working class struggle into organs of working class state power.

Before continuing, it has to be said that the method of Taaffe and

Militant is highly schematic. In the *Daily Worker* we argued that the retreat imposed on the government by the miners, should be used to *prepare* for a general strike that unites sectional struggles, welding all into one around the fight to smash the Tories' anti-trade union laws.¹⁷⁸ In contrast, Militant doggedly stuck to its one-stage-at-a-time call for a 24 hour general strike. Taaffe admits that such a 24 hour general strike was unlikely in itself to stop the government in its tracks or force a reversal of its pit closure programme. He also admits the danger that the TUC would "sanction" a 24 hour general strike only "as a means of the working class letting off steam".¹⁷⁹

So Taaffe needs some deft centrist footwork to justify the claim that the "best slogan to prepare the working class for further battles is a 24 hour general strike." Self evidently a 24 hour general strike could only be a protest action. What begins on midnight and says it will end on the following midnight lacks any internal dynamic. But Taaffe will have none of it. Undaunted by his own warnings, he skips around the facts. It would be a "political earthquake" after which things would never be "the same again".¹⁸⁰ More, he promises his followers that a successful 24 hour general strike would be "a powerful warning", and "could fuse the working class together in opposition not just to the government but to capitalism itself".¹⁸¹ A big claim for an unofficial one day holiday. But on with the dance:

"Failure to retreat on the part of the government and ruling class would lay the ground for more decisive action." First, it would seem, a *series* of 24 hour general strikes, finally though, "an all out general strike" which "poses the issue of the working class taking power".¹⁸²

As can be seen, Taaffe treats a living working class movement, up to and including "taking power", as a series of punishments we will inflict upon the government if it refuses to back down. This is torture technique, not class politics. Such an approach runs through the gamut of Militant's politics, which puts what appears practical before what is necessary.

Hence Militant's case against a general strike is founded on the claim that it will "not at this stage be supported by the great mass of the working class".¹⁸³ That may well be true. But then surely, it is almost certainly the case that a 24 hour general strike would, "not at this stage" be supported by the *great mass* of the working class. Militant's method, if it were consistent, should see further moderation, to the point where its slogans meet the great mass.

That would lead it to bourgeois acceptability and absurdity: a one hour strike, a one minute strike? With Militant's practice in mind, we are compelled to ask when did the great mass of the working class refuse to pay the poll tax? Yet Militant's slogan was don't pay! When did the great mass indicate willingness to vote for unofficial Labour parliamentary candidates? In the April 1992 election all three Militant supporters, including two sitting MPs, lost. Do the great mass of the working class support socialism? Unfortunately not. That has never stopped Militant advocating socialism, albeit usually of a reformist variety.

Real Marxists base their slogans on the concrete. By that though, we do not mean acquiescence. On the contrary, we fight for what needs to be. That involves actively linking the present with the future, the now with the necessary. Of course, we enquire, through agitation, what the "great mass of the working class" think "at this stage". We do that, however, not to meekly accept the popular verdict, but to develop a robust, challenging, kinetic dialogue which, given the right conditions, can grow into a mass movement, so as to make what is necessary into a material force.

Clearly revolutionaries are the vital mediating agent. With correct theory they can organise those with advanced consciousness into a vanguard party, a party committed to winning the great mass for communism. Without correct theory they pander to the existing consciousness of the great mass, which is today overwhelmingly made up of workers with a backward or average class consciousness. With correct theory they can honestly say what is needed to achieve the needs of the great mass. Without correct theory they impose stages on the class struggle of the great mass when such stages do not exist. After all, there is no law which says before a general strike there must be a 24 hour general strike, or even a series of 24 hour general strikes. If, and Taaffe more or less admits it, a 24 hour general strike will not be enough to achieve even the most minimal objectives, then by definition it is an incorrect slogan in our conditions. Quite the opposite, the alignment of forces and events in the closing months of 1992 posed not an instant general strike, nor an instant 24 hour general strike. It posed preparation for what was needed to defeat the government: a general strike with or without the TUC.

Both Militant and we communists considered a general strike possible. And though Taaffe vastly exaggerates the impact of his 24

hour general strike, he cannot deny the genuine inner logic of an indefinite general strike. The “very essence” of a general strike, he says, “poses the issue of the working class taking power, establishing its own democratic workers’ government and state and organising a socialist planned economy”.¹⁸⁴

That is right. An indefinite general strike is diametrically opposite to a Grand Old Duke of York affair, where the TUG safely marches us from the Embankment to Hyde Park. Government ministers could not shrug it off. Nor could the stock exchange and currency dealers view developments with equanimity. A 24 hour general strike declares from the beginning its intention to surrender; that the day after will be the same as the day before. An indefinite general strike would on day one send stocks and shares plummeting, the pound nosediving and the government into panic over whether to compromise or go for broke with a repressive clampdown.

By its very nature the TUG would do everything in its power to keep things within the well established conduits of protest politics and through to a quick compromise. Yet a general strike would unleash a deluge of self activity from below. Workers learn in a single day of a general strike more than in ten normal years. With every day that passes, the greater the chance of a general strike bursting free, taking an independent course and engulfing the whole of bourgeois society. So let us imagine how the momentum of a general strike could reach ours and Taaffe’s dual power and pose the “issue of the working class taking power”.¹⁸⁵

Day one. At the end of its agreed moratorium on pit closures Gillian Shephard, president of the Board of Trade, announces to a stormy House of Commons, that the government can no longer continue the Michael (now Lord) Heseltine subsidy of the coal industry. Economic crash and the survival of Britain demands sacrifice from all sections of the community. Either miners accept pay cuts and seven day working, or they accept mass redundancies. Bound by its Wembley special congress resolution on pit closures and the government’s anti-union laws, with a strike wave of one million workers already affecting local government. Honda car plants and BT, TUC general secretary David Lea reluctantly announces “what he has long feared”, the general strike. The archbishop of Canterbury appears on the James Whale TV show, brands government un-Christian and pleads for toleration.

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Day two. Despite TUG instructions and their official leadership, railway and London underground workers come out. Hospitals are taken under workers' control in many towns and cities. Four million workers on strike. Up and down the country miners support groups provide the nucleus for councils of action. Consisting of recallable delegates from trade union branches, shop stewards committees, CLPs, left parties and groups, and a wide variety of other workers' organisations, they elect a National Council of Action at a conference in Leeds. At local level they begin to exercise a degree of power; in Glasgow, Newcastle, Liverpool, Birmingham, Cardiff, Swansea, Doncaster, Sheffield, Gravesend and many other localities councils of action issue orders on what essential services will continue, what moves, what is produced. Police attack picket lines. Two die in Glasgow.

Day three. After a wave of revulsion at the deaths, more workers spontaneously join strike. Pound reaches parity with the dollar. Armed group of patriots led by Lt Col Mad Max Mitchell wreck Congress House in London. Looting of supermarkets becomes widespread. One hundred thousand demonstrate in Glasgow's George Square; police and workers clash.

Day four. Printers at Wapping refuse to run *The Sun's* 'gotcha TUC' lead. The paper comes out, but with a blank front page. To protect picket lines, discipline and workers' presses and local radio stations, many councils of action set up defence corps. County Hall is taken over by anarchists, they rename it Freedom Hall and run up the black flag. Student occupations sweep the country's universities, John Smith appeals for calm. Ken Livingstone calls for a general election.

Day five. Jacques Delors warns that the EC cannot be indifferent about Britain's slide into chaos. Pound trades at \$0.87. Wapping under workers' control. Security guards forcibly ejected. Gary Bushell, editor of *The Sun*, is smeared with ink, paraded round plant in a wheelbarrow and put under arrest in a broom cupboard. Tariq Ali elected editor by mass meeting. ITV management locked out. Highlight of the first day of free broadcasting is the classic film *Spartacus*. Bomb kills 20 in Birmingham's Bull Ring. Police blame revolutionary fanatics".

Day six. London Hilton seized by homeless. ITV broadcasts jammed. John Major sends in army to maintain order, run transport system and guard key installations. Power workers threaten to join strike

unless they are withdrawn. National Council of Action issues don't shoot' appeal to troops.

Day seven. Government offers TUC negotiations. In Dublin the IRA claims three British soldiers have joined its ranks. Tariq Ali voted out as editor of *The Sun*. Paul Foot elected to replace him. In Berlin, Istanbul, Rome, Paris, Madrid and Lisbon demonstrations organised "in solidarity with the British revolution".

Day eight. Government/TUC negotiations begin. National Council of Action says TUC has forfeited all legitimacy. Huge march in London demands end of negotiations and government's resignation. Rumours of unrest among troops. On road blocks, many are seen sporting red carnations.

Day nine. Government/TUC negotiations break down. Blaming a heart condition. John Smith steps down as Labour leader. His replacement Ken Livingstone says the Tories have brought Britain to the point of collapse. Army chiefs in Northern Ireland issue ultimatum, Either John Major acts or they will. Prince Charles proclaims on Sky TV stations his sponsorship of a National Salvation Movement, its supreme council consists of Jonathan Porritt, Lt Col Max Mitchell, Bryan Gould and Patrick Harrington.

Day ten. Despite being fronted by Ken Livingstone, a 700,000 demonstration in London is dominated by revolutionary left. Widely supported communist slogan 'All power to Councils of Action'. Masked representatives of soldiers' committees read messages of support. Although rumoured to be suffering from senile dementia and privately diagnosed as a vegetable, Elizabeth Windsor annuls parliament, calls for class reconciliation and sets date for new election.

Our ten days are pure fiction. They do though, I trust, give the flavour of how a general strike could develop, so quickly indeed that within ten days it poses the question of power. Militant and other left organisations would be posed with that very question too. What would they do? Declare victory celebrations because the government had fallen and demands for a general election won. Would they then back Ken Livingstone's Labour Party in the belief that it was a step in the direction of socialism, that the "great mass" of the working class would not yet support anything more, that it is either Livingstone or the army?

Interestingly, in Taaffe's *Why a 24 hour general strike?* article,

from which I have already quoted extensively, nowhere is the *idea* of insurrection mentioned. The necessity of the workers arming themselves, the inevitability of violence is completely ignored. Hardly unimportant when you are writing about the workers taking power. This is a contradiction, but it is no oversight. In the programmatic *Militant: What we stand for*, Taaffe dismisses the “cry” that Militant “would establish a socialist Britain by violence” as a “red herring”.¹⁸⁶ According to him “it is the capitalists, not the working class or the Marxists, who have always attempted by violence to overturn the results of elections that threaten their position”.¹⁸⁷

The fact of the matter is that the October 1992 *Why a 24 hour general strike?* was not about junking the parliamentary cretinism of the 1990 *Militant: What we stand for*. What took place in 1992 was a left turn within the *framework* of centrism. We have no difficulty whatsoever in proving this. One week, *one edition* after Taaffe was waxing lyrical about workers’ councils being a “new potential government power”, his paper’s “message to the Tories” was “general election now!”¹⁸⁸ Soon its slogan “For a 24 hour general strike” was being given equal prominence to the slogan “Force a general election”.¹⁸⁹ Without doubt, if the general strike Militant says it wanted actually occurred and actually proceeded to the point of dual power, then any left organisation calling for a general election would, in terms of working class politics, be committing a criminal act. As in our imagined future, the ruling class might well turn to a general election in a desperate effort to stop, not just a general strike, but a revolution. They would be relying on the atomised backward, non-activated sections of the population outnumbering those who have arrived at revolutionary consciousness and conclusions.

Quite possibly, under such circumstances a general election would land them with a Ken Livingstone as prime minister. Livingstone would not be their first choice. But needs must. If he was not there he would have to be invented. Only someone with ‘hard left’ credentials could *democratically* save the system. An extreme left Labour government would confuse the forces of the working class and give the bourgeoisie time to regroup and prepare. True, sweeping social reforms and all sorts of other expensive concessions would have to be given. Yet when the masses had been deactivated and their revolutionary ardour cooled, the time would

be right for the crisis in society to be resolved negatively. That means fascism.

Not a mushrooming of the BNP, whose lumpen members occasionally follow left wing demonstrations carrying the union flag shouting sieg hell. Not a recreation of German Nazism, the Italian Fascisti, there can only be *a fascismo Britannica*. Draping itself in the traditions and trappings of Britain, its mythological king Arthur, its World War II finest hour, maybe its royalty and church, such a capitalist anti-body would carry through a bloody terror. Death squads. concentration camps, torture and the imposition of a totalitarian regime would momentarily overcome divisions above and smash opposition below. That is the price we would pay for *not making revolution*.

So a revolutionary situation is not a choice between a John Major and a Ken Livingstone. It is a choice between revolution and counterrevolution, between the workers' state and the fascist state, between life and death. That is why, if the bourgeoisie announced elections in the throes of a revolutionary situation, counterrevolutionary elections in conditions of dual power, we communists would almost certainly call for a boycott. Our efforts would be directed to armed insurrection, our slogan would be "All power to Councils of Action".

Those left forces which put their faith in a Livingstone Labour Party and then a Livingstone government (perhaps they would earn themselves seats in the cabinet) would see the political balance in a fully democratic and recallable National Council of Action begin to slip away from them towards us and other consistent revolutionary forces. If conditions were really revolutionary an energetic boycott campaign would rob parliament, no matter what the coloration of its largest party, of all authority. The laws, appeals and gestures of the government would be to the wind and prove instantly ineffective. Revolution, and the day when we can send a proletarian guard into the House of Commons to announce its abolition, then would only be a matter of timing.

It is towards making revolution a reality that we dedicate all our efforts, including our efforts during normal' bourgeois elections.

Appendix I: CPGB's 1st Congress and parliament

Both the British Socialist Party and the Communist Unity Group —the main groups participating in the 1st Congress of the CPGB over July 31-August 11920 — were committed to standing parliamentary candidates as a form of revolutionary agitation. The congress resolution on parliamentary action had been included on the agenda mainly to facilitate merger with Sylvia Pankhurst's Workers Socialist Federation, illegitimately called the Communist Party (British Section of the Third International), which was against revolutionary parliamentarism as a matter of principle.¹⁹⁰ Despite the fact that it had, for the moment dropped out of the fusion process represented by the Communist Unity Convention — later known as the 1st Congress of the CPGB — there existed a considerable degree of confusion among delegates, even ideological opportunism. This mainly reflected the political immaturity of revolutionaries in Britain and the fact that the writings of Lenin and other Bolsheviks in Russia on their work in the Tsarist Duma were still largely unknown here and untranslated.

The resolution on parliament submitted by the Joint Provisional Committee of the CPGB by implication represented a repudiation and a challenge to the left' communist anti-parliamentarism of Sylvia Pankhurst and others. It helped clarify' the position of communists in Britain and laid the basis for highly effective parliamentary interventions during the early 1920s.

The resolution read as follows:

'The Communist Party repudiates the reformist view that a social revolution can be achieved by the ordinary methods of parliamentary democracy, but regards parliamentary and electoral action generally

as providing a valuable means of propaganda and agitation towards the revolution. The tactics to be employed by representatives of the Party elected to Parliament or local bodies must be laid down by the Party itself according to the national or local circumstances. In all cases such representatives must be considered as holding a mandate from the Party, and not from the particular constituency for which they happen to sit.”

The resolution was moved by comrade Tom Bell for the Joint Provisional Committee.¹⁹¹ This is how the official congress account of the congress reported Bell's speech:

So far as the Joint Provisional Committee were concerned, the Communist Unity Group and the BSP were in complete agreement upon the need for and the advisability of taking parliamentary action, but the present resolution had arisen in the course of negotiations with the WSF and had been held very important at the time. After the defection of the WSF, the resolution might have been cleared off, since there was no point of difference between the remaining groups that made up the Unity Committee; but as there was still a considerable amount of hesitancy in many groups on the question of parliamentary action, for and against, it had been thought better to allow the question to be ventilated at the conference, that being the safest and simplest way to make the position clear, so far as Parliamentary action was concerned. It would be seen that the resolution from the very first repudiated the reformist idea that a sound revolution could be achieved by the ordinary methods of parliamentary democracy.

In this respect its point of view was common to communist parties internationally at the present time. He and those who agreed with him did not believe that it was possible to effect a peaceful transformation in the parliamentary bourgeois democracy as understood today, and thereby to work out the emancipation of the working class; they believed that the parliamentary institution as it existed today, the constituency in itself, was entirely foreign to the purpose of the communist state of society they had in mind. Consequently, in preference to the parliamentary constituency, they rather looked to the more direct method of representation as expressed through the workers' committees whether in industrial or social life.

With regard to parliamentary and electoral action as providing a

valuable means of propaganda and agitation towards the revolution, while they did not place any faith in the parliamentary institution in itself, and did not believe it was capable of fitting into the scheme of things that they as communists had in mind, nevertheless they thought it of considerable value to revolutionary propaganda not to shut the door on any avenue whatsoever that was going to liberate the minds of the masses from their superstitious faith in parliamentary democracy. He thought the best policy to adopt towards that particular objective was to demonstrate inside the House of Commons that, so far as the working class were concerned, there was nothing to be hoped for in that chamber.

By breaking the parliamentary precedents and conventionalities which played so large a part in shaping the minds of the workers, we could do a great deal to break down the reverence for parliamentary institutions that so many of our fellow workers had. This was a bone of contention, he knew; the contention arising because it was thought by some that by going into the House of Commons we were sacrificing some great principle.

The first argument brought against participating in parliamentary action was that before sitting in the House of Commons it was necessary to take the oath of allegiance. Speaking for the Provisional Committee, they had no doubt on this point.

It was laid down in the resolution that the representatives of the Communist Party must be considered as holding a mandate from the Party executive, and that they would be at all times under the control, management, and supervision of the Executive Committee — that was what it amounted to.

If, in the course of our agitation, the executive thought it advisable that members should be in the House of Commons, the oath should not stand in the way; it was a question of deciding in relation to the expediency of the moment, whether for our agitational purposes it was more valuable to refuse to take the oath, or to take the oath in order to gain some other objective more valuable for our revolutionary agitation. And so on with reference to all the questions as to precedents and conventionalities inside the house.

He suggested that communist candidates only had allegiance to the principles of communism and the movement now organised in the Third International. Our ethic and morality had to be drawn from our fundamental principles of communism. In reference to action inside the House of Commons, our policy all the time was a

critical, destructive one, exposing the fraudulent character of our modern parliamentary democracy — which was not a free institution at all, but was an institution controlled by high finance.

That being so, he suggested that It was the business of the Communist Party inside the House of Commons, In order to liberate the minds of the masses with regard to capitalist fetishes, critically to examine every situation that arose, and to criticise the points of view put forward by our opponents, whether bourgeois, semi-radical or anything else, and generally speaking help to focus the attention of the working class upon the vital interests so far as the communist agitation was concerned.

As to the clause, “In all cases such representatives must be considered as holding a mandate from the Party, and not from the particular constituency for which they happen to sit”, those of us who had been identified with the political labour movement for any length of time knew the hackneyed phrase used by the politicians of all shades of opinion, that once they went inside the House of Commons they ceased to have any connection with their particular organisation and represented the interests of all sections of the community. This was a pretence, it was impossible — and this was the inherent weakness of the parliamentary constituency — for any representative to express the desires and wills of all the conflicting class elements that made up a constituency.

By this resolution we sought to make It emphatic that the candidate sent up by the Communist Party would contest his seat under the surveillance of the Communist Party Executive, and would go to the House of Commons with a mandate from the Party — that he would not draw his mandate from the constituency. This was the point of view sought to be brought out in the resolution —that we must have discipline to the Communist Executive from all members, whether outside or inside the House of Commons.

The resolution was put to a card vote. Cards to the number of 186, and representing 4,650 votes, were shown in its favour, while 19 cards, representing 475 votes, were against it.

Appendix II: Affiliation: for and against

On the second day of the Communist Unity Convention, business turned to relations between the new Communist Party and the Labour Party. Where the vote for using parliament as a platform for revolutionary propaganda was a foregone conclusion, affiliation was a far more controversial issue because it divided the British Socialist Party and the Communist Unity Group.

Two alternative propositions were put:

- A. That the Communist Party shall be affiliated to the Labour Party.
- B. That the Communist Party shall not be affiliated to the Labour Party.

These propositions were submitted in this form so that there should be no ambiguity. If the convention decided to go into the Labour Party, delegates could then discuss how far we should go in and what we should do when we got there.

Proposition A was moved by comrade JF Hodgson of Grimsby BSP and a Provisional Executive Committee member. The following is an edited version of his speech:

Mr Chairman and comrades, after the exhausting proceedings through which we have just passed, it is my very pleasant duty to introduce you to the real bone of contention, and I would like to say before I commence to speak on behalf of the BSP, which was and is not, that from the first in these unity proceedings and conferences, which have been almost as exhausting as our proceedings this morning, we have always maintained the point of view that the Party itself, when formed, should be allowed to decide on this very important matter.

We have never budged from that position, and when at last it was

decided — as the executive's or party's delegates could not agree — it was decided to put the matter to the vote of a rank and file convention, it was on our proposal that that was done. Our friends on the other side accepted the proposal readily.

Now I say that because I want to add that, as far as we are concerned, we are very keen on this matter, but that whichever way the vote shall go, it is our intention, even though it be against us, it shall not be the means of reducing one jot the enthusiasm and energy which we intend to put into this new Party. I call for that spirit from those who differ from us, and I want to remind you that unless we have that spirit present among us in all our proceedings as a Party in the future, we are born to impotence and are likely to enter into disaster quite soon.

I hope that we shall settle this matter of the Labour Party... settle it one way or the other. It has been said that it is perfectly easy talking here about the Labour Party itself, because most of the delegates have come to this conference with a mandate. Well, it applies to most of us: but at any rate I take this view, that we have had these discussions ad nauseam, and I suggest that we should try to steer clear of the old cut and dried arguments, and to see if we can strike out on a new line. We shall be assisted in that effort by certain things that have transpired quite lately.

For instance, there is Lenin's book on the *Infant disorders of the left communists*, an interesting work which sheds a flood of light upon the whole question. Also we have had — and I want to refer to this matter first — we have had from the left communists a clear declaration that their policy with regard to the Labour Party is distinct from their policy towards the trade unions. It appears that we are not to join the Labour Party because it is led by trade union leaders, who have a bourgeois outlook and whose mentality is that of the middle class. Therefore we are to have nothing to do with the Labour Party.

That is clear and distinct, and with regard to these same Labour leaders I would say more than that — I would say that these men are destined to play the part of your Scheidemanns and Noskes,¹⁹² and the time will come when we shall have to deal with them in a no uncertain way. Not by voting, I say that. But, comrades and friends, this same declaration proceeds to say that it shall be the duty of the branches to form communist groups in trade union branches, and to work inside the trade union movement in the

same way. Now I confess that I cannot understand that. It seems to me to be a high example of confusion. Here you meet on the industrial field in the trade union certain trade union leaders.

You are fully aware that, whether or not through sheer rascality, duplicity and corruption, they are misleading the working class. You meet them there with the intention of destroying their influence, and of winning the confidence and trust of the rank and file to that end. That is exactly the kind of tactic that I believe in. But may I remind you that you meet these same people in the Labour Party, and that you meet them on a much larger field than you do in the trade unions? We are a political Party. We meet these same trade union leaders in the Labour Party on the wider and far more important political field. That is the view I take, comrades.

Many of our comrades have done important work inside the trade unions by staffing unofficial committees and reform movements. This was extremely important. They have done good work in that way, but those are the very comrades who refuse to say that you could act in exactly the same way inside the political movement of the workers, which is the Labour Party.

If you are going to have your communist groups inside trade union branches, why not inside the branches of the Labour Party? If you are going to operate inside the trade union movement, why not inside the Labour Party at its annual conferences? And why not try to help in such a way that when we go to the annual conferences we shall not find ourselves, as we did at Scarborough, a little group of a dozen — and the rest reactionists, or moderates, or blind men, because the best elements in the trade union movement had not sought to get elected as delegates to the Labour Party conference. I know there are objections to this policy. We are told, for example, that if you affiliate to the Labour Party, and work inside the Labour Party, you become identified with the policy of the Labour Party. I deny that. I believe the best way you can illustrate the fact that you are not with the general body of opinion inside the Labour Party is to get in there and illustrate it from inside.

I say that our comrades who work with the unofficial movement have done more in that way to illustrate the fact that they have a point of view which is entirely different from that of the official elements than they could possibly have done outside. You do not become identified with the policy of the Labour Party by becoming affiliated to it or working inside. On the contrary. But the most

difficult argument to understand, to my mind, is the objection that by and by the Labour Party is going to take office; and that when it does, you will be identified with all the ruin that is going to come upon the Party once it takes office and assumes responsibilities which it cannot possibly fulfil.

I do not know whether the delegates are aware of it, but this matter has been dealt with by Lenin in his latest work of his. I say this because I know that those who will oppose this resolution from the point of view I am putting forward, have been accustomed in the past to refer to the example of the Bolsheviks, and always to quote Lenin as their apostle and bludgeon us in that way. We are entitled to use the same kind of bludgeon, and I would remind you that Lenin considers this kind of objection to Labour Party affiliation as one of the "infant disorders of the left communists". We had a talk yesterday about parliamentary action. It is surprising to know that Lenin advises that we should take part in parliamentary action, that we should get our members into parliament, and that when they are in parliament they should support the Labour Party in downing Lloyd George¹⁹³ and Churchill,¹⁹⁴ and should try to get the Labour Party into office.

You should give them such support as the rope gives to the executed person. I mean to say that, after all, we have to be realists in this matter, not to live in a realm of theory but to get right down to the reality. Surely we understand that the British working class has not yet passed through the experience of having a Kerensky or a Scheidemann, and that the sooner it goes through that experience the better. We cannot assist it to go through that experience by a policy of aloofness from the working class movement. A realistic sizing up of the situation means that we must be in and out of the Labour movement all the time. But, of course, if you want to get a reputation for real revolutionary fervour, you must use words like these: "Let us march straight forward, turning neither to the right nor to the left, but keeping our revolutionary principles clear and unsullied."

That is the way you become a left communist because you leave your comrades behind. I make my plea this morning, in connection with the new Party, that it shall not indulge in such antics. After all, something important has happened in the world during the last few years, and that is the Russian revolution, and the experience of a proletarian revolution which you get from that; and we know that

the Bolsheviks would never have won through to the triumph they have achieved by the policy of aloofness, dogmatism, and so forth which is at rock bottom the inspiration of the antagonism to affiliation to the Labour Party. A week or two before the outbreak of the October Revolution the Bolsheviks were getting ready their list of candidates for the duma. A fortnight, or it might have been three weeks or a month after, they abolished the duma. That is the way to be flexible. That is the way to adapt yourself to circumstances. That is the way to fight scientifically. That is the way to use strategy and tactics in order to win through.

Of course I am talking like a Labour fakir! “The only way in which you can win is by a frontal attack, never mind what kind of support you have got; if the battalions are small don’t hesitate, go right in.” I don’t believe in that kind of thing; I think that the longest way round is sometimes the nearest way home. I know we are working against an enemy who is very insidious in his methods. He does not use frontal attacks but flanking movements of all kinds to undermine our position. I want us to use the same kind of thing. Now, comrades, we had from comrade Bell yesterday what, to my mind, was an extremely lucid exposition of the arguments for revolutionary parliamentary action. They were also very powerful and cogent arguments for affiliation to the Labour Party. Comrade Bell told us, and I thoroughly agree with it, that all spheres of life where working class opinion can be influenced are important. With that I steadfastly agree, but to say that, and with the next breath to advocate that we should keep outside the Labour Party, seems to me a contradiction.

Inside the Labour Party we can Influence working class opinion. Inside the Labour Party we can use a lever by which we can ultimately destroy the influence of the treacherous leaders of the trade union movement on the political field.

William Paul — a leading member of the Socialist Labour Party and also a member of the Provisional Executive Committee of the CPGB — then spoke for Proposition B. This is an edited version of his speech:

Mr Chairman and comrades, we hope that we shall be able to emulate the good spirit that Hodgson has put into the debate, and we will assure him that we do not intend to use Lenin as a bludgeon. We will meet our comrade with argument.

Taking the case of Lenin, it is quite true that Lenin has written a book entitled *Infant disorders of left wing communists*, and I think if our comrade were to hear some of the arguments put forward by some of our moderate friends, he might be tempted to write another book on the disorders of the senile decay elements. Let that pass. There is not one in the audience to whom I yield in admiration for Lenin, but, as we said yesterday, Lenin is no pope or god.

The point is that, so far as we are concerned, on international tactics we will take our international position from Moscow, where they can be verified internationally; but on local circumstances, where we are on the spot, we are the people to decide. Not only so, but our comrade Lenin would not have us slavishly accept everything which he utters in Moscow. The very warp and woof of our propaganda is criticism, and as we believe in criticism we are not above criticising Lenin. Wherever we find our comrade Lenin speaking on points regarding the Labour Party, we should remember what our delegates from the BSP said a few weeks ago in *The Call*¹⁹⁵ They had to admit so far as the Labour Party and its structure was concerned, Lenin was a little vague. No doubt that is why they are able to quote him this morning as they have done.

What comrades who are in favour of Labour Party affiliation have to prove is their argument, no matter who says it. What is the position?

Capitalism is collapsing in every one of its institutions. It is collapsing most conspicuously in the parliamentary institution, and yesterday we passed a resolution in favour of parliamentary action; but not in the spirit that our comrade Hodgson would have us imply. When we declared for parliamentary action yesterday, this conference put behind every argument in favour of participating in parliamentary action, this fact — that we believe in parliamentary action for the express and decisive purpose of destructive and agitational work.

The Labour Party does not believe in that conception of parliamentary action; the Labour Party believes in parliamentary action as a constructive weapon in the working class movement, and in so far as the two functions are diametrically opposed they cannot be mixed, and he who will mix them is going to place himself in the delightful position of the acrobat who tries to stand on horses running in different directions. Not only are the two functions diametrically opposed in regard to parliamentary action, but it is

not two functions only; it is two principles. It is the principle of the Second International, to which it is logically affiliated, which is the principle of the Labour Party; whereas we stand on the other side in favour of the Third International; who use the parliamentary weapon for destructive and agitational purposes.

Hodgson made a good point. He said that we have got to understand that we are dealing with an enemy who is keen, that this enemy has only two methods of trying to beat us down; that he tries to meet us with a brutal frontal attack, which he does not care to begin on just at once, until he has exhausted another method. That other method is the method of compromise, the flank movement or camouflage. Where do we stand? We find that the British ruling class in this country, above all classes, has made its inroads, has opposed every movement of revolt in this country, not by a fair frontal attack, but by the insidious and slimy method of trying to get underneath it, and thereby to eradicate it.

We have to realise that the capitalist class, economically living by swindling, also hopes to live and maintain its class rule by politically swindling us. Jeremy Diddlers alike on the economic and political fields, the capitalist class internationally — in every country where there has been a crisis — the position has been that confronted with the crisis they did not first of all try to smash the revolutionary class, but tried to gather the moderate elements, to compromise with them and to throw the responsibility of diddling the working class upon these elements.

Therefore you find that in Russia — and Hodgson admitted that he hoped for it very quickly here — when the crisis took place it automatically produced Kerensky,¹⁹⁶ and, when Kerensky could not solve the problem, Kornilov.¹⁹⁷ The same thing applied in Germany. With the crisis Scheidemann and Noske were called into being, and behind that came the assassination of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. In France, during the period of crisis, there were brought into being the Albert Thomases,¹⁹⁸ Briands,¹⁹⁹ Millerands.²⁰⁰ We find the same thing in Italy. The middle class look to this party which will mislead the working class. So, in America, your Spargos and Hillquits²⁰¹ were called statesmen while Eugene Debs²⁰² was put into gaol.

Come to Britain. We find here that the crisis is going to produce exactly the same results. We can go back to 1914, and what was it that the capitalist class was afraid of in 1914 when they declared

their war? It was the working class. It was this working class political expression; and it was this Parliamentary Labour Party that let the working class treacherously down. Our friends say you can easily explain this.

You can if you are trained in the subtle method which our friends revel in, but the working class do not possess the subtle method. They judge us by the company we keep, and in the moment of crisis, when the indignant masses rise to sweep the Labour Party away, we may be swept away too. We shall be swept away too; because, when we tell the working class that we knew this all the time, but that we were playing a long game called tactics, the working class will not understand these methods of dissimulation.

The working class will say, "If you knew and did not tell us, you ought to be damned thirty times over." We find that in 1914, when the crisis took place, it was the Labour Party that let the working class down. Even when they wanted some slimy individual to come along and diddle the soldiers out of their pensions, the Labour Party produced Mr John Hodge³⁰³ That is why to our friends of the anti-parliamentary group yesterday, when they told us the fight was ineffectual in Gorton, we said it was not ineffectual in so far as it helped to expose Hodge. If this vote for affiliation to the Labour Party is carried we shall not be able to fight and expose Hodge. We shall be tied down.

The same thing is true in regard to food control. Food control has become the capitalist class method of blockading the working class during a strike. When the South Wales miners exposed Rhondda to whom did the capitalist class look? Was it not to JR Clynes?²⁰⁴ Now we are at the point of success in this country so far as building up a left wing revolutionary movement is concerned, we shall find that the capitalist class will become ever more intent in trying to diddle us, ever more intent to try to win us into the Labour Party, in order to try and disarm us.

Our friend tells us we ought to be in the Labour Party because that is where the working class is, but if our friend goes to antisocialist demonstrations or conferences, these claim to represent the working class, and every argument he can put forward to show why we ought to be affiliated to the Labour Party can be applied to joining the Salvation Army. You will find then that we have got to build up our own organisation, that we have got to set out our own code of tactics, and that we have got to develop these — not that we

shall be so much left that the battalions will be left behind. What battalions will be left behind?

When the crisis comes the battalions to be left behind will be the Labour Party, and the further we are away from the Labour Party, then the better for us. Comrade Hodgson, In the argument he was putting forward was impelled to say, despite himself, the way the fight can be fought by us, when he inadvertently admitted that it was in the workshop; and, although we believe in parliamentary action, we have shown that its function is of a destructive character, and, if you like, we can point out when the crisis comes, and the Labour Party is exposed, and the vortex of revolution, instead of sweeping us into the Labour Party and drowning us — at that moment we can tell the working class we were opposed to these people, and that in every demand for higher wages we were in every one of these struggles.

Therefore the working class will be compelled to look to us, and will come our way, because they will see that right through all the struggles we were the people who stood with the weapon clean in the hand of the Communist Party, and refused to violate fundamental principles by joining the Labour Party and Indirectly joining the Second International.

In this fight our friends may imagine, if this demand is carried, to attract certain elements to the Communist Party. But we tell you that the elements attracted by passing the Labour Party affiliation clause will repel the people we want...

We have realised during the past that all the great vigour and enthusiasm of our movement has been throttled by compromise. Let us throttle that spirit now. Let us build up the Communist Party and carry on its own work, merging in all the struggles of the masses. In that way we can reach the working class — but not by hauling our colours down and joining hands with Thomas and Co. who will ultimately betray us.

It was clear from the following debate that when the vote was taken it would be a close run thing. As it turned out there was a slim 100 to 85 majority for affiliation — by prior agreement all delegates were bound by majority decisions.

Appendix III: Lenin on Labour

Though the main speaker against affiliation at the foundation congress, William Paul was appointed to the important post of CPGB delegate to the Third International, and was able to discuss with Lenin how the Party could best take on and expose the Labour Party. His account of their meeting was published on December 2 1920 in *The Communist*, the Party's weekly paper:

Lenin ... proceeded to discuss the attitude of the Communist Party towards the Labour Party in view of the much talked of forthcoming general election. His views on the subject showed that he abhors the type of revolutionary who has a canalised, or single track mind. Lenin looks upon every weapon as necessary in the conflict with capitalism. To him, as a good student of old Dietzgen,²⁰⁵ every weapon, every policy and every problem must be examined in terms of its relations to the needs of the moment and the means at our disposal. This explains why he does not go out of his way to extol one particular weapon. He clearly realises the value of revolutionary parliamentary action, but he also understands its limitations as a constructive power in the creation of a workers' industrial republic. To Lenin the test of the real revolutionary communist is to know when to use a given weapon and when to discard it.

Talking on the Labour Party, Lenin said he was very glad to learn that it had refused to accept the affiliation application of the Communist Party. It was a good move to have applied for affiliation, because the refusal of the Labour Party to accept communists in its ranks showed the masses exactly where the Labour Party stood. Henderson had thus unwittingly paid a great tribute to the growing power of revolutionary communism in Britain by being afraid to have aggressive communists in his organisation; and the Labour

Party, by Its own action, in turning down the Communist Party, had plainly indicated that there was at last a fighting group in Britain which had attracted good mass fighters to its ranks. Of course, continued Lenin, we must not forget that the Communist Party in its application for affiliation to the Labour Party very frankly put forward certain conditions which would have given it full freedom of action to conduct its own policy in its own way. We must never enter into negotiations with bodies, such as the Labour Party, without demanding full freedom of action. In this respect the Communist Party's attitude in applying to the Labour Party for admission to its ranks differed, most fundamentally, from such organisations as the ILP and BSP, which formally accepted the Labour Party's constitution and policy. The strong stand taken up by the Communist Party, in seeking affiliation with the Labour Party, was no doubt arrived at as a result of the BSP policy sharpened by the militant elements expelled from the SLP.²⁰⁶ It was a good omen for the future that these two groups were able to come together. And, it was a good thing that the ex-SLP men, who were so keen against affiliation with the Labour Party, realised the value of revolutionary discipline by refusing to split the new Party because their own position had not been accepted. Likewise, when the Labour Party threw out the request for affiliation it was the BSP element that was tested and it stood firm. To have passed through two such severe trials, and to have maintained the solidarity of the organisation, was a tribute to the seriousness of the comrades who had formed the Communist Party.

Lenin passed on to review the political situation in Britain. The next general election would be of paramount importance, and the communists ought to play a most important part in it. As Lenin favoured the policy of supporting the Labour Party, in order to assist it to capture political power, this subject was thrashed out in detail. Lenin advises the communists to help the Labour Party to get a majority at the next election in order to facilitate the general decadence of the parliamentary system. Already, he reasoned, there are thousands of people in Britain who feel that the parliamentary system of social representation cannot solve the problems which history has placed before it. These people had become discontented and disillusioned regarding the parliamentary system of social control as a result of the inability of that machine to cope with the vital tasks of modern society.

In other words, the passage of events was providing a series of concrete experiences which were educating the masses regarding the general breakdown of capitalism in the sphere of social representation. The toiling masses, who had neither the time nor the inclination to examine social theories, always learnt their political lessons by undergoing concrete experiences. The task of the revolutionary communist is not only to preach his Marxist theories; he must prove that his theories are correct by compelling his opponents to act in such a way that they provide the practical lessons which enables the communist to test his theories before the eyes of the masses. The test of Marxist and communist theory is experience.

How then can the communists of England prove to the workers that the parliamentary machine has broken down and can no longer serve them or the interests of their class? Since the days of the armistice the parliamentary system in England has been on trial. During the past two years the political policy of Lloyd George had shown many workers how little they could expect from any Parliamentary form of Government manned by the capitalist class. Since the Armistice, Lloyd George, Churchill, Bonar Law and Co have had an opportunity to demonstrate what they could do, and their reign of office has been one trail of disasters so far as the workers are concerned. The Labour Party solemnly assures the masses that they could solve the problems confronting society if once they were in control of the governmental machine. So far as Henderson, Thomas, and the Labour Party are concerned, they only differ from Lloyd George in that they have never had an opportunity to control the government. Knowing, as we do, that Henderson, MacDonald, and their followers cannot solve the immediate problems confronting the masses through the parliamentary machine, we ought to prove the correctness of our theory by giving the Labour Party a chance to prove that we are correct. The return of the Labour Party to power will accelerate the inevitable collapse of the parliamentary system, and this will provide the concrete experiences which will ultimately drive the masses towards communism and the soviet solution to the modern problems.

For these reasons the communists in Britain ought to support the Labour Party at the next election in order to help it to bring on, ever faster, the crisis which will ultimately overwhelm it. At this

point, I interposed, and said that, if the Communist Party officially assisted the Labour Party to capture political power in order to precipitate a crisis, it was just possible that the indignant masses, remembering that we had urged them to vote for the Labour Party, might sweep us away too when the social crash took place. Lenin pondered over this for a moment, and said that the Communist Party, in assisting the Labour Party to capture the government, must make its own case very clear to the masses. He then advanced the following argument which he pressed forward very strongly, and which he wishes the Communist Party to discuss.

He said the Communist Party could easily help the Labour Party to power and at the same time keep its own weapon clean. At the forthcoming elections the Communist Party ought to contest as many seats as possible, but where it could not put up a candidate it ought to issue a manifesto in every constituency challenged by the Labour Party urging the workers to vote for the Labour candidate. The manifesto should frankly state that the Communist Party is most emphatically opposed to the Labour Party, but asks it to be supported in order that Henderson, MacDonald, and Co may demonstrate to the masses their sheer helplessness. Such a manifesto, such a policy, would accelerate and intensify the problem now looming up before capitalism and its parliamentary system. But, above all, such a policy would provide the concrete experiences which would teach the masses to look to the soviet method as the historically evolved institution destined to seriously grapple with the manifold problems now pressing so heavily upon humanity.

We discussed this problem for some time and viewed it from many angles. I kept raising many points against Lenin's position until at last he, no doubt scenting a good dialectical duel, challenged me to debate the whole matter in the columns of *The Communist*. I readily assented to this, and asked him when he would have his first contribution ready. He looked round sadly at the mountains of work — work involving the solution of international problems — piled up in front of him. I at once said I would write up his case for the press, as I have done above. To this suggestion he heartily agreed.

I know, said Lenin, that it may seem awful to young and inexperienced communists to have any relations with the Labour Party, whose policy of opportunism is more dangerous to the masses than that of consistent and openly avowed enemies like

Winston Churchill. But if the Communist Party intends to secure and wield power it will be compelled to come into contact with groups and organisations which are bitterly opposed to it. And it will have to learn how to negotiate and deal with them. Here In Russia we have been forced by circumstances to discuss and make arrangements with elements which would hang us If they got the chance. Have we not even entered into alliances and compacts with governments whose very hands reeked with the blood of our murdered communist comrades? Why have we entered into such contracts and adopted such a policy? It is because we are realists and not utopians. It is because, at present, International capitalism is more powerful than we are. Every move, each treaty, and all our negotiations with capitalist states, are but one side of the Russian Soviet government's policy to conserve its strength in order to consolidate its power. Learn to meet your enemies and be not afraid. It tests your strength. it creates experiences, It judges the character of your members. And you may find that your most embittered critics are not in the camp of the enemy but are the shallow doctrinaires to whom revolutionary socialism is a mere manual of phrases instead of a guide to action.

While we were talking, Lenin was continually interrupted by the arrival of cables, despatches and messages. He was frequently called to the phone. Despite these things he could return quite serenely to the point under discussion. I confess that I was slightly agitated when entering the Kremlin; bad news had arrived from the various fronts; Poland was acting strangely at the Riga Conference; France had been indulging in one of her bullying outbursts: and Finland was on the point of signing peace. All these things, I imagined, would make it impossible for Lenin to settle down and have a quiet talk on the various details of the movement upon which I was anxious to have his opinion. When I entered the room he was courteous, cool and tranquil. He eagerly entered into a discussion of many points on communist tactics, which, to some people, might have seemed almost trivial. Lenin is always anxious to hear of any new development in Marxism, and to him every aspect of the movement is important. I very timidly suggested the possible application of Marxist theory to a certain subject which had been monopolised by the anthropologists and ethnologists. He became enthusiastic over the problem, which he quickly elaborated and extended, made several important suggestions, indicated

where some good data could be found, and urged that the matter should be written and published. To Lenin, communism is a synthetic philosophy.

After having had a talk with Lenin, it is easy to understand why his quiet and humorous style fails to impress middle class intellectuals. People like Bertrand Russell are in the habit of meeting pompous bourgeois thinkers whose ideas on social theories are so incoherent and vague that they can only express themselves with great difficulty. This ponderous and floundering method of struggling to deliver an idea is, in certain quarters, mistaken for mental ability. Lenin, on the other hand, sees problems so clearly and is able to explain himself with such clarity and simplicity, that his conclusions seem to be the obvious deductions at which anyone would inevitably arrive.

Appendix IV: CPGB's first election battle

A year after the foundation congress, in August 1921, the line on parliamentary activity was tested in practice when Bob Stewart stood as the CPGB candidate in the by-election in Caerphilly, South Wales. Caerphilly was dominated by the coal mining industry, and just a few months earlier the miners had fought a bitter struggle against the government and mine owners.

On April 1 1921 over one million workers in the mining industry were locked out when they refused to accept pay cuts of up to 50%. The government declared a state of emergency and brought in the troops. The miners looked to their partners in the Triple Alliance, the transport and railway workers, for support. Solidarity strike action was planned to start on Friday April 15, but was called off by the reformist union leaders. Hence this day became known as Black Friday and, although the miners fought on for three months, eventually they were forced back on the bosses' terms. That 80 Communist Party members were imprisoned during the dispute indicates the enormous support we rendered to the miners.

In the following address printed in *The Communist* of August 13 1921, the Party urged the miners to break with the class traitors of the Labour Party and return a genuine workers' representative to the House of Commons:

To the workers of Caerphilly:

Your heroically maintained struggle against the coal bosses backed by the government has barely ended before you are called upon to declare your will at the ballot box.

What should be your will?

That struggle has left you in a deplorable situation. Bad as were

the conditions upon which the coal lock-out was terminated they have been rendered still more vile by the manner in which the masters have used, and are using, the advantage they have gained.

Being, as they are, determined upon reducing wages by progressive instalments until they have reached the great end they have set before themselves — the destruction of the minimum wage — they are using unemployment systematically as a weapon to break into pieces the solidarity which three months of stress and strain have failed to destroy.

The coal bosses are deliberately victimising the bravest and boldest spirits and the most intelligent and sturdy districts, in the hope that thus they will succeed in weeding out from the ranks of the workers in South Wales all but the faint hearted and weak kneed. They, and with them the rest of the British boss class are resolved upon pushing their advantage until they have secured *victory all along the line*.

They have shown that they will rest content with nothing short of the unchallenged dictatorship of their plutocracy. Our experience has shown that the courts of law, the machinery of the state, and the public powers of coercion are all, with parliament, used as agencies for laying you, and with you the rest of the British working class, prostrate beneath the iron heel of a triumphant capitalist tyranny. If all else fails them they can still fall back upon their ‘Black and Tans’.

What in face of this appalling situation does the Labour Party offer you? It ought to be, if its name is to be anything but a delusion and a sham, the party that seeks to rouse and rally the working class for a life and death struggle to maintain their standard of life in the teeth of boss class encroachment and to urge and lead them onward until they, the workers, are masters and controllers of their means of living. Its leaders do no such thing; nor will they do it.

They do not believe you are capable of taking over successfully the control of your lives, the management of production, the direction of industry, and the coordination of society.

They funked on Black Friday because they had no faith in your ability to rise to an emergency.

They showed the white feather then — they are not fit to be trusted with the red flag now.

They cannot or will not carry a strike or fight a lock-out to its logical conclusion — how then can they deal with such a concerted

assault as faces you now?

The Labour Party, as it stands, is what its leaders make it, and they will neither lead you into battle nor allow you to lead them.

The leaders who brought about the Triple Alliance disaster in spite of the splendid solidarity of the rank and file; the leaders who beat back the miners after a three months death grapple, and did so in contempt of the magnificent defiance embodied in your ballot vote; the leaders who in industry after industry accepted reductions and defeat in advance and with a mere pretence of consulting the rank and file — these and not the rank and file constitute the Labour Party as it stands. The best of men if he were elected under their auspices would be paralysed by their vacillation or crippled in the cogs of their controlling machine.

The clearest proof we can give of the need for a new spirit and outlook is found in the case of the miners. A fighting programme aimed (at any rate by the rank and file) at securing both their standard of life and a measure of control over the conditions of their toil was scrapped in a manner that cannot be characterised in words for an infamous agreement which ties the miner hand and foot and leaves him thus at the coal boss' mercy for a twelvemonth. It deprives the miner of his six hour day and his five day week, and in doing this has made certain the addition of unemployment, now and in the future, to all the horrors which make the miner's life a thing of terror.

Those who cannot or will not see this are not the men to use the floor of the House of Commons as an arena wherein to meet the boss class face to face with a courage as defiant as their rapacity is determined.

Remember the Labour Party already includes (to the sorrow of the working class) men — Thomas, Clynes, Brownile, Hodge. Bowerman and others — who have made themselves conspicuous by their diligent propagation of the doctrine of "increased production"; for which conduct they give the slavish excuse that thus the worker may gain an increase of crumbs fallen from the loaded tables of the gorged boss class.

We call upon you to scorn these slave doctrines. We call upon you who are unemployed to demand a man's life, and to allow no one to insult you with the offer of a puppy's portion.

We call upon you who are employed today to realise your community of interest with the unemployed and to strive side by

side with them lest the boss use their misery and your apathy as the hammer and anvil on which to weld chains of slavery for you all

The Communist Party enters this fight to force to the front the whole question of the working class and its place in the British state and society.

What is the working class today? — Nothing!

What does the Labour Party want it to be? — Something! but not ‘too much’,

What ought it to be? — *Everything*.

The Communist Party Fights on the slogan — “All power to the workers”.

The Communist Party demands for the miners (in common with the rest of the working class) an assured standard of life, and (in cooperation with the organised working class) a control over their means of living and the conditions of their toil.

The Communist Party demands for the unemployed work or maintenance at full trade union rates.

The Communist Party demands as a solution to all international complications the solidarity of the workers in all lands against the international class that thrives on their subjection and rejoices in consequence of their misery.

The Communist Party demands for Ireland independence as a means to enable the Irish worker to realise James Connolly’s dream of an Irish Workers’ Republic.

The Communist Party has faith in the working class and in its ability to work out its own destiny once it has been roused to the pitch of making the attempt.

The Communist Party therefore urges the workers to perfect their organisation, national and local, with the determination to make easy the attainment of workers’ control over alike production and distribution; and in such a fashion and spirit as will enable them to defend themselves from any pro-slavery rebellion of the master class, Its allies, or its dupes. The Communist Party urges every individual worker, man or woman, to cast his or her vote for the Communist candidate as an open declaration of a will to work in solidarity with their fellows until the victory of the workers has been won.

The standard bearer of the Communist Party is a worker —Robert Stewart. He has been dignified at the hands of agencies of boss class rule by a term of imprisonment for his courageous

battling on the side of the workers.

The Communist Party has decided that as a South Wales mining area was the scene alike of his offence and his incarceration, a South Wales mining area is entitled to the honour of sending him straight from gaol to the House of Commons as the only logical answer a self respecting working class can give when asked to express their will,

Workers! Vote for Stewart and demonstrate your confidence in your class, your defiance to the boss, and your determination to achieve all power for the workers.

The Caerphilly campaign was not without incident. The CPGB's agent was refused election documents and a copy of the electoral register by the local council clerk. Bob Stewart was still in prison for his part in a miners' demonstration, and was only released part way through the campaign. A welcome boost came when the whole local Labour Party committee in Bedlinog resigned and pledged themselves to work for the CPOB. *The Communist* of September 3 1921 carried the following account of the battle, penned by TA Jackson:

To write the story of the Caerphilly by-election is not easy. The stage is too crowded, the issues too vast, and the upshot too complex to permit a description in a few cold or flaming words. Those who viewed it from a distance will see in it nothing but an arithmetical proportion of voters, and a majority for the official Labour candidate. Those who were in it and through it will remember it for long as the Red Raid on Caerphilly — the raid which made the valleys of East Glamorgan ring with the shouts of 'Up the rebels!' and which taught the children in the streets to sing at their play 'We'll keep the Red Flag flying here!'

Having no machinery we had to take to the streets. When there was a place to hold a meeting we held one — and when the 'Boys of the Bolshie Breed' hold a meeting in a proletarian quarter the result is a foregone conclusion. Before the election campaign we had some 20 communist voters in the division, at the "show down" —after the Coalition of Liberals and Tories had carted up in their 80 cars every reactionary whom the fear of the red flag had terrified into unwanted exertion and after the Labour Party had bullied, cajoled, whined and wheedled, finishing with the frenzied SOS:

“Don’t let the Coalition in!” — we had roused and rallied 2,592 votes for communism and the slogan “All Power to the Workers”.

With a month to work in and a straight fight against either of them the Communist Party would have swept the deck clean of everything opposed to it.

When I say that we triumphed in the streets I state what is obvious in the result. The Coalition had their press, the Labour Party, the chapels and Co-op halls to make propaganda in. Except for the two Sundays over which the campaign extended — on each of which we held indoor meetings — the whole of our work was done in the open. A little canvassing was done ...necessarily very little from the size of the area to be covered and the want of the requisite number of canvassers. Those we had worked like carthorses with splendid effect: but they were swamped in the flood the Labour crowds were able to mobilise. The Coalition meanwhile conserved their strength in the bourgeois quarters.

So enthusiastic and apparently unanimous were the cheers that greeted our speakers that quite a number of proletarians conceived the notion that Bob Stewart was as good as elected. Their enthusiasm carried into the pit was contagious and our audiences swelled to enormous dimensions. And however big might be the great gun on the Labour platform when our boys had to speak in competition with them it was the rarest of rare things for our audience to be the smaller. As for the Coalition they abandoned the streets altogether so furious was the storm of proletarian contempt roused by their efforts.

While it was wrong to interpret this oratorical success as a portent of electoral triumph it would be absurd to write it off as of no importance. In point of fact it was the outstanding fact of the election. That Bolshevik’ speakers would venture into the open at all was sensation enough. That they should without waiting to be accused boldly adopt the title as a badge of honour and go on to hold their own with anything and everything in the nature of argument, opposition and interruption was, to many, simply astounding. Crowds came first of all out of sheer curiosity: they remained from interest and returned night after night with intensifying enthusiasm. The official Labour speakers, and in a lesser degree those of the Coalition were well-known by repute. Those of the Communist Party were unknown men — except in a few cases, and those known only to a few OF the ILP. Before the election closed the

Communist Party speakers had earned on all sides the repute of the finest team of speakers ever sent into an election. And those who knew all of them intimately agreed that each one of them excelled himself - and when a team that includes, to name only a few of the better known, William Paul, William Gallacher, Helen Crawford, Joe Vaughan, Bert Joy, Walton Newbold, Harry Webb, Arthur MacManus and the candidate Bob Stewart himself — when these and others like them excel themselves only those who know them at their best can imagine the sort of meetings to which Caerphilly was treated.

I record for what it is worth the opinion of a not unfriendly journalist with whom I fraternised during a thirst spell. “Your members are too good; and they are doing their work too well. They are smashing up whatever chance the Coalition crowd had of working the patriotic stunt, and at the same time these are creating a real fear that the Coalition will slip on a split vote. You are frightening the Labour crowd into working as they had never worked before, and at the same time you are making voters whose class consciousness is just far enough roused to make the name (Labour) attractive but not enough to make them whole hog communists”. The result certainly lends plausibility to that view.

Ramsay MacDonald in the spleen of his mean soul has asserted that we conspicuously avoided any attack on the Coalition. No lie could be grosser or meaner. Harry Webb challenged a Coalition speaker who interrupted him to debate and a meeting was arranged for Abertridwr. The hour arrived but the Coalition speaker was missing. William Paul taunted a Coalition MP on his platform in Caerphilly and played with him before one of the largest crowds I have ever seen in the open. Gallacher's massacre of a group of Coalition speakers headed by Captain Gee VC, was a thing to dream about for a lifetime, and the happiest hour Bob Stewart has spent for a long time was the one during which a Coalition MP who had challenged him had to sit listening to his reply,

It is a lie to say as MacDonald says that we avoided tackling the Coalition; but there is a reason for his utterance. The only communist speech he listened to was driven into him by Sandy Ritchie, the Lanarkshire miner, whom fate had pitched alongside of him at Taffs Well. That speech was, as it had to be, about the Labour Party in general and Ramsay MacDonald in particular — it will be a long time before Mac forgets it; he will never forgive it.

Apart from open-air meetings and a little canvassing we employed the weapon of literature, First of all was *The Communist* on sale at the regular price. Then two issues of an election supplement to *The Communist*; the first sold at a penny, and the second distributed gratis. For these latter, chief credit is due to the indefatigable AE Cook. Then there was the election address consisting of an abbreviated version of the address to the workers of Caerphilly from *The Communist* of August 13. The great practical problem was the folding addresses and enveloping of this address in time for one to be posted to each elector and this was made possible by a team of as fine a band of real workers as could possibly have been gathered together. There were not many of them but they came from all the surrounding districts — from the Rhondda, from the Western Valley of Monmouthshire, from Cardiff, from Bristol, Sheffield and London and under the command of comrades Brown (of Shipley), Dai Davies (of Bargoed), Hawkins and Shaw they worked wonders. They were of all ages, all proletarians and (if truth must be told) mostly unemployed and therefore broke. They messed together in the committee rooms and a goodly number of them slept at night on the floor. To come home late, weary and hoarse from a round of meetings to find this proletarian bunch getting ready their “shake downs” for the night was like walking into a picture from John Reed’s *Ten Days that Shook Ute World*. They were a great bunch of the real fighting staff. Communism has reason to be proud of its rank and file,

Then there was the difficulty of transportation, To get from village to village in the Caerphilly division means climbing three mountains and crossing two bridges except when you cross three bridges and climb two mountains. And they’re real mountains —not “home made mountains” as Ernie Brown christened the coal-tips! Our speaking campaign would have been physically impossible but for the transport available in the form of two cars, latterly supplemented by a motor cycle and side-car. These were put at the disposal of the Party by that most enthusiastic of Bolsheviks, Jim Shand of Salford. At least half of the votes we gained were made possible by Jim Shand. You will perhaps have seen references in the press to “Bolshevik emissaries rushing through the lanes of the Caerphilly division in expensive cars” —and in a way they told the truth. They were perhaps not specially expensive cars to start but by the time they had bumped and thumped over some of the vilest

roads ever discovered with eight or ten crowded into what the maker fondly thought was space for six — the whole team keeping themselves cheerful with the Red Flag', the International' and shouts of "All Power to the Workers" or "Up the Boishies!" — they will be expensive to mend. The only thing on our side that equalled Bob Stewart on the platform was Jim Shand's driving through the dark back into Caerphilly,

And now that it is all over and the result declared what can we offer as our excuse for raiding in? We lost our deposit, we spent all the money there was, and all we had as individuals on top of it. What did we get in return?

We gained this. We went into an area in which the reaction and despair following upon the failure of the miners' struggle had left the workers hopeless and broken. We found the best men in the district loaded with debts, their jobs refused them, their homes threatened by the landlords greedy for arrears of rent (in the middle of the campaign our sub-agent Dai Davies had a judgment given against him in the county court, so that his work had to be done under the strain of fear of a distraint upon his home!).

Into this psychology of gloom and despair we carried our revolutionary slogans just when the miserable pigeon-livered Labour crew were beginning to chant their chorus of "Leave it to parliament — direct action is never any good". We raided in. First we routed the gang of whiners and then we roused the enthusiasm of those who had lost heart and hope.

We put the light back into the eyes of men who were leaden with despair; and a spring into the walk of young men. We brought a resurrection of the fighting spirit. We shamed even the Labour crew into making a show of fighting and we left behind us not only a spirit and a will but the beginnings of an organisation which will make the boss class remember with fury our Red Paid on Caerphilly,

When the poll closed at 8pm we held our meetings in aid of the Russian famine victims. After these had closed we waited in the streets or in the rooms for the figures — passing the time at a sing song presided over by the inimitable Gallacher. And on the morrow we departed in Jim Shand's car to catch the train at Newport.

And as we went through streets and lanes over the hills and down the valleys at every sixth door man, woman, or child or altogether cheered at sight of the red flag flying and answered our slogan with shouts of "Up the Red!" and "Bravo Bob Stewart!"

If we can do what we did in Caerphilly with the odds there were against us the triumph of the rebel workers is in sight.

Labour held the seat with 13,699 votes, the coalition polled 8,958 while the CPGB got off the mark with 2,592. In the general election a year later the Party scored much bigger successes, with the election of two communist MPs taking the class struggle to the heart of the bourgeois parliament.

Appendix V: Communist Manifesto

1992

Communism, we are told, is dead. Just about every paper you pick up, every news broadcast you listen to, says it was buried in the collapse of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. In the simple act of equating the corrupt bureaucracies in these states with communism itself, our rulers want us to believe that the world has seen the back of communism.

But communism is not dead.

Communism was never about the deformed socialism built by Stalin and betrayed by Gorbachev. It has its roots, not in the Kremlin, but in the real needs of workers the world over. Communism is about achieving world peace, world progress and world plenty. Communism is the answer to the problems of world capitalism which, far from going away, are intensifying day by day. Homelessness, debt, ecological ruin, unemployment, discrimination and economic crisis are all the products of this system, it is time for a change.

With the Soviet Union out of the way, conflicts between major capitalist powers are not only becoming clearer, they are becoming ever more acute. Twice this century capitalism has been responsible for world wars in which 75 million human beings died. Our dead for their profit. We cannot let them drag us into a third world war.

That is why the Communist Party is standing in this election. We want to get rid of capitalism and build a communist society: a society which through mass participation produces for need, not for profit; a society which knows neither war nor poverty, country nor race hate; a society that uses science and technology to liberate people, not to crush them and make them redundant.

Every five years we get the choice' of who will misrepresent us in the talking shop in Westminster. That is the beginning and end of

democracy under capitalism — a democracy which suits our rulers only so long as it goes their way.

Our Party makes no pretence that elections under capitalism change anything. They do not, The fact that the capitalist class owns and controls the means of production is a thousand times more significant than which party wins this election.

But the election does give us the opportunity to raise the argument for communism and allows us to rally new forces. A vote for the Communist Party is the only vote that is not a wasted vote. A vote for the Communist Party is a vote for working class resistance and solidarity.

Unlike the Tories, Liberals and Labour, our *Manifesto* has nothing to do with how to run capitalism. Neither is it a list of empty promises. It is an action programme for what workers need to fight for today.

What we fight for:

Wages: Our starting point is what people need to live a decent life, if the bosses point to their profits and say the system cannot afford it, then the system should go! Communists support all workers in their struggle for better wages and conditions. We demand:

A national minimum wage of £250 per week!

Abolition of all compulsory overtime, with no loss of pay! A maximum working week of 35 hours!

Trade unions: Over more than a decade, trade unions have been shackled. Government laws have limited the action unions can take in defence of our wages and rights. Trade union leaders have accepted this for the sake of the easy life. The Labour Party says it will keep the laws that the Tories introduced. Communists fight for class struggle unions to defend the working class against the bosses and the bureaucrats.

For rank and file democratic control of the unions! Class action to smash all anti-trade union laws!

Unemployment We hear every day that the growth of unemployment is natural, or even that the unemployed themselves are to blame. Both are lies. Unemployment occurs because capitalism cannot employ all workers profitably. So If you are unprofitable' you are thrown on the scrap-heap, then blamed for it by those who have thrown you there. The unemployed are used against employed workers by the bosses; cheap labour schemes, such as Youth Training, are just one example. We do not have to accept this.

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Through organising the unemployed alongside employed workers we can challenge capitalism.

Work at trade union rates, or benefit set at the level of the minimum wage!

Where a workplace is threatened with closure, it must be nationalised under workers' control!

No slave labour 'training' schemes! Real training under workers control!

Law and order: The Tories and Labour are both committed to strengthening the police and putting yet more people in prison. We are for getting rid of the conditions that cause crime and anti-social behaviour, To do that and to defend our communities we must build workers' defence corps — *our* class organised to *defend our* class — and undermine the bosses' armed forces.

For democracy and trade union rights in the armed forces! For the right of the population to arm Itself!

Housing: Homelessness is on the rise, while house building Is at an all time low. The streets of the large cities are still the homes' for many thousands of people. Yet there are plenty of buildings which are empty because they cannot be profitably let, Housing is a basic right. Communists do not put a price or a profit on it.

For the right to housing for all!

Organise to take over vacant properties!

Organise for defence against the threat of eviction!

Pensions: The British state treats elderly working class people as just so much excess baggage. This is because now that their working life is over, no more profit can be made from them, They are pushed away, to rot in poor housing on insulting pensions. Communists demand:

The right to stop work at 60. No compulsory retirement age!

State pensions to be set at the level of a national minimum wage of £250 per week!

NHS: Both the Tories and Labour have run down the health service. This Is because of profit: capitalism is no longer prepared to fund the NHS because it is not squeezing enough from the working class. Hospitals are being run more and more like factories. Health workers have fought to defend their service, proving that the only' people with whom the NHS is safe In their hands' are *them*. Our health should not be dependent on the capitalists' profits, We demand:

Abolish the waiting lists! State funding for the NHS on the basis of

need! Abolish all health service charges!

For workers' control of the health service!

Racism Black people are under attack, Discrimination at work Is combined with harassment by police and racist gangs. Immigration controls criminalise migrant workers. Racism divides the working class, playing one section off against another. Low wages, rising unemployment, crime and poor housing are caused by a system which functions for profit, not human need. They are not caused by black workers. Communists actively oppose racism; racism Is produced by the capitalist system to divide the working class. Communists oppose all immigration controls: no worker is illegal'. We support the right of black people to defend themselves against racist attack. But we oppose separatism. Workers unity is the only way to combat racism.

Smash all immigration controls!

For workers' defence against racist attacks! Full citizenship for all workers!

Women: Women are used by capitalist society as a reserve army' of cheap labour. In Britain today, women's take home pay Is about 65% of men's. Women have less security of employment, often in part time and non-unionised work. They also have the extra burden of childcare. Women are kept In a subordinate position to provide cheap labour and to rear the next generation of workers for the capitalist class. To maintain this situation, the state denies women many necessary rights, particularly abortion rights. Women should have control of their own bodies through effective abortion rights: as early as possible, as late as necessary. But today, even the limited existing rights are under attack. The only way to defend them is to go on the attack. Communists therefore demand:

Free abortion and contraception on demand!

Free, high quality, 24 hour child care facilities! Equal pay for equal work!

Ireland: For the unconditional, immediate withdrawal of British troops from the north of Ireland. British imperialism Is not keeping the peace', but is an oppressive occupational force, dividing the Irish people. The north of Ireland is also the British state's training ground for repression. What it learns In Ireland is turned against workers fighting in Britain: striking trade unionists, black youth, lesbians and gays — anyone who stands up for their rights against the capitalist system. So all workers in Britain have a real interest

in supporting the fight for Irish liberation. Communists support the right of Irish self-determination. We therefore support the fight for this. Workers in Britain must take sides — for the IRA, against the British army.

Troops out now!

Self determination for the Irish nation!

Scotland and Wales: Communists support the right of all nations to self determination. If the people of Scotland and Wales want independence, they must have it. But we do not advocate separation. Capitalism here has developed on an all-Britain basis and has laid the basis for potentially powerful all-Britain working class unity. Nationalism divides our class. The enemy of the working class in Scotland, England and Wales is *British* imperialism. If we are to win against it, we need maximum unity. A united working class In Britain can win its demands: divided It will lose.

For the right of self determination!

For the unity of all workers In Britain!

Lesbians and gays: Aids has been used by the state to create a moral panic. Legislation has been used in the same way. The infamous Section 28 is an attempt to depict lesbians and gays as a menace to society. Recently, there has been a number of jailings of gay men for consenting sex. ‘Queer bashing’ by bigots in and out of police uniform is becoming more common. Communists oppose all attacks on lesbians and gays, and all attempts to portray homosexuality as unnatural.

For full state funding and free health care of Aids victims! Smash all anti-lesbian and gay legislation!

For workers’ defence against the queerbashers’!

We do not believe that the system can afford to give us these rights. No parliament will grant them. But all these demands are necessary for people today. And they can be gained - by sweeping aside the capitalist system and Its institutions with the organised power of the working class. If the system cannot afford what we need, then the system must go!

The Communist Party exists to organise that fight. To build that Party we need more than votes: we need the best fighters of the working class. Join with us and fight for a future worthy of humanity.

Appendix VI: Statement — Daily Worker banned?

To the working class:

The relaunch of the *Daily Worker* on March 25 1992 by the Communist Party of Great Britain was widely welcomed. It was a great step forward for the cause of the working class and communism in Britain.

Of course, we always made clear that the paper would only be published during the course of the general election campaign. Nevertheless it was also stated that the general election *Daily Worker* was a brilliant pointer to the future — to the future communist daily paper that will serve and fully reflect the class struggles and socialist aspirations of workers In Britain.

It was therefore a shock to receive a letter dated March 30 from the solicitors of the People's Press Printing Society, the publishers of the *Morning Star*, demanding that we “desist from using the title *Daily Worker*”. Worse, It threatened to seek a court injunction against us, and to claim legal costs, If we did not ‘halt publication forthwith”.

From those who claim to be partisans of the working class, this is a disgusting move. The courts are not neutral arbiters of justice. They are an integral component part of the state — the capitalist state.

After the much publicised court-imposed sufferings of the Birmingham Six, Guildford Four and Tottenham Three, no ordinary person in Britain has any admiration for the courts, After we have seen the NUM, the National Union of Seamen and the print unions legally robbed of their funds and assets, no trade unionist Imagines they will find justice from the scarlet robed representatives of the boss class.

It is one thing to fight the bosses In the bosses' courts — of course without any illusions or expectations. It is something else entirely for one organisation In the working class movement to drag another through the courts.

The basis for the demands and threats of the *Morning Star*, a non-Party publication, rests exclusively on bourgeois property rights. Our right to use the title rests exclusively on the revolutionary politics of the propertyless.

The *Daily Worker* was first published in 1930, as the paper of the Communist Party of Great Britain. Over the next few years it developed a record of international solidarity, class struggle and militant communism second to none.

There was a price to pay. In 1930 members of the *Daily Worker's* staff were prosecuted by the Labour government's attorney general, William Jowitt, and jailed by a "bewigged puppet" for inciting mutiny. The same happened In 1931 after the Invergordon Mutiny. Later that year, five members of our Party stood for parliament from their prison cells (Including Shaukat Usmani, who was In prison In India). As can be seen from our *Daily Worker*, it is that tradition we stand on.

The *Morning Star* stands on a different tradition, the anti-Communist Party tradition of liquidationism. Despite fierce opposition, the revisionists who led our Party closed down the *Daily Worker* In 1966. Their *Morning Star*, which replaced It, claimed to "incorporate" the *Daily Worker*. In fact It was firmly orientated to the right, to reformism and the belief that socialism will come through class collaboration and the existing state.

Not surprisingly then, the *Morning Star* backed and enthused about Gorbachev and Gorbachevism. It provided no sort of a militant lead over crucial issues such as Ireland, the EC, the poll tax and the miners' Great Strike. Again not surprisingly, today it tails behind Kinnock's Labour Party and refuses to support Communist Party parliamentary candidates.

The *Morning Star* is entitled to its opinions and politics. But we too are entitled to fight them. This we will do using the tried and tested methods of the working class — centrally, open ideological struggle.

In that spirit we say it should not be a judge In the bourgeois courts who decides who has the right to the *Daily Worker* title. Let the working class decide. That was the case in Russia back in 1912.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks began publication of *Pravda*, In spite of the fact that Trotsky was already publishing a paper with the very same name. Whatever Trotsky's faults, he had no thought of taking out an injunction.

Tony Chater, Mary Rosser and other *Morning Star* hacks have no Intention of relaunching the *Daily Worker*. They want to preserve their property rights. We want to use it for the working class and the struggle for communism.

The People's Press Printing Society might have bourgeois law on its side. But on our side we have militant history and working class morality.

The *Morning Star* anti-Communist Party group can use the courts against us In the spirit of Ian MacGregor and Rupert Murdoch, they can have us fined, imprisoned for contempt. If they do so they will earn the contempt and hatred of all militant workers and socialists.

We propose that the matter of the *Daily Worker* title be settled by a panel of three or five mutually agreed judges' from the working class movement. If the *Morning Star* wants to be regarded as still being in the working class movement it must choose: either the 'justice' of the class enemy, or the justice of the working class. We await their reply.

Provisional Central Committee

Communist Party of Great Britain April 4 1992

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Introduction

1. K Maix, F Engels *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 1973, p40.
2. Jack Conrad *Which Road?*, 1991, p97.
3. Franz Mehring (1846-19 19) — wrote an outstanding biography of Karl Marx and took a leading role in the formation of the Communist Party of Germany.

1. Parliament

4. Marc Bloch *Feudal society* Vol 2, 1965, p452.
5. JC Holt *Magna Carta*, 1992, p26.
6. Ronald Butt *A history of parliament*, 1989, pill.
7. *Ibid* p110
8. GWF Hegel *Philosophy of Right*, 1967, p181.
9. Until the 12th century ‘parliament’ merely meant a ‘parley’ of anybody from kings to lovers.
10. There were a few places In Europe — Sweden, Denmark, West Friesland and the Tyrol — where the peasants did gain admittance to parliament. But even In these countries, where the traditions of primitive communism still lingered and the state was weak, “election was by a peasant elite” (AR Myers *Parliaments and estates in Europe*, 1975, p26).
11. This has been so since the middle of the last century. Engels, writing in 1845, makes the point that “so-called monarchical and aristocratic elements in the [English]

- constitution can maintain themselves only because the bourgeoisie has an interest in the continuance of their sham existence: and more than a sham existence neither possesses today” (F Engels *The condition of the working class in England.* 1972, p255).
12. *British Road to Socialism*, 1978, p37.
 13. Tony Benn *Industry, technology and democracy*, 1978, p6.
This passage is worth quoting fully: “The parliamentary democracy we have developed and established in Britain is based, not upon the sovereignty of parliament, but upon the sovereignty of the people, who, by exercising their vote, lend their sovereign powers to members of parliament, to use on their behalf for the duration of a single parliament only — powers that must be returned intact to the electorate to whom they belong, to lend again to the member of parliament they elect in each subsequent general election. Not surprisingly, Tony Benn wants “a major shift of power between government and governed through the strengthening of the role of parliament” (*Ibid* p17).
 14. Bob Sewell *Militant International Review*, autumn 1986, p11.
 15. William Morris *News from nowhere*, 1973, p257.
 16. Jack Conrad *Which Road?*, 1991, p8.
 17. Sometimes translated as who will “represent and oppress” them in parliament.
 18. GWF Hegel *Philosophy of Right*, 1967, p 155.
 19. Interview by Desmond Wilcox, ‘Profile’, BBC TV, August 14 1979, as paraphrased by Tony Benn *Arguments for democracy*, 1982. p7.
 20. Frank Kitson *Low intensity operations*, 1971, p3.
 21. See *Land operations, Vol 3 — counterrevolutionary operations*. It provides a chilling insight into the extent to which the army has been trained to deal with “civil disturbances resulting from labour disputes, racial and religious antagonism and tension of social unrest. which savour revolt or even rebellion.” In the event of uncontrollable social unrest the military would join the police and civil authorities in a “triumvirate. It would follow the following six guidelines to prevent a successful revolution.

- “a. the passing of emergency regulations to facilitate the conduct of a national campaign;
 “b. various political, social and economic measures designed to gain popular support and counter or surpass anything offered by the insurgents;
 c. the setting up of an effective organisation for joint civil and military control at all levels;
 “d. the forming of an effective, integrated and nationwide intelligence organisation without which military operations can never be successful;
 “e. the strengthening of indigenous police and armed forces so that their loyalty is beyond question and their work effective, This is often easier said than done; “f. control measures designed to isolate the insurgents from popular control” (extracts published in *Time Out*, January 10 1975).
22. In 1975 Australia’s Labour prime minister Gough Whitlam was dismissed by the queen’s representative, the governor general.
 23. Until 1977 the Central Office of Information described the UK as a “monarchical state”. That is why what is thought of as state property in this country is often in reality crown property, why Income tax demands are sent on Her Majesty’s Service”, why criminal prosecutions are made in the name of ‘The Queen”, and why there is no national flag nor anthem, only a union flag and a royal hymn (see Ivor Jennings *The queen’s government*, 1965).
 24. F Engels *Introduction to Marx’s The Class Struggle in France*, in K Marx, F Engels *Selected Works*, 1968, p666.
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ppxxiii,xxiv.
 27. K Marx, F Engels *Selected Works*, 1968, p666.

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29. These words were first used by Marx in his *The Civil War in France* and later quoted by the joint authors of the *Communist Manifesto* in their 1872 preface to the German edition (*Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 1973. p8).
30. Hal Draper (editor), K Marx, F Engels *Writings on the Paris Commune*, 1971, p97.
31. VI Lenin *CWVol 25*, 1977, p424.
32. Hal Draper (editor), K Marx, F Engels *Writings on the Paris Commune*, 1971. p73.
33. Jack Conrad *Which Road?*, 1991. p81.

2. *Working in the Enemy Camp*

34. Alan Adler (editor) *Theses, resolutions and manifestos of the first four congresses of the Third International*, 1980, p97.
35. K Kautsky *The class struggle*, 1971, p 188.
36. The main butt of Engels' polemics on this question were the anarchists, then led by Bakunin, who advocated abstention from all politics that did not have as its aim the "immediate and complete" liberation of the working class. Engels ridiculed such pseudo-revolutionary posturing. "At quiet times," he said. "when the proletariat knows beforehand that at best it can get only a few representatives to parliament and have no chance whatever of winning a parliamentary majority, the workers may sometimes be made to believe that it is a great revolutionary action to sit out the election at home, and in general, not to attack the state in which they live and which oppresses them, but to attack the state as such which exists nowhere and which accordingly cannot defend itself. This is a splendid way of behaving in a revolutionary manner, especially for people who lose heart easily" (Karl Marx, F Engels *CWVol 23*, 1988, p583).
37. K Marx, F Engels *Selected Works*, 1968, p660. Barry Hindess, a one time Marxist' and always a professional philistine, claims that the 'confusions and ambiguities of Engels' account have haunted subsequent Marxist

- discussion” (Barry Hindess *Parliamentary democracy and socialist politics*, 1983. p16). It hardly needs saying that the “confusions and ambiguities” exist entirely in the tortured mind of Hindess.
38. K Marx. F Engels *Selected Works*, 1968, p659.
 39. *Ibid* p660.
 40. *ibid* p660.
 41. Wilhelm Liebknecht (1826-1900) — came from a family of scholars and civil servants, studied theology, philosophy and philology. He became a revolutionary and took part in the 1848 Baden rising. In 1862 he returned to Berlin from his exile in London. He had by then become a “convinced follower of Marx and Engels” (Helga Grenbing *History of the German labour movement*, 1985. p45). In 1865 he was expelled from Berlin and went to Leipzig, where he was soon to become acquainted with August Bebel, In 1869 he co-founded with August Bebel the German SDP,
 42. August Bebel (1840-1913) — was a master-turner who, after some years of journeying, settled In Leipzig. In 1863 he did not join Lassalle, at that time the most popular figure in the German workers’ movement, but remained In the tradesman’s educational association, where he opposed all attempts to give the association a political character. “He went so far as to oppose universal suffrage, because he held that the workers still lacked the necessary political maturity. He still fought the followers of Lassalle in the summer of 1865, accusing them of ‘only waiting for an opportunity to raise the banner of communism with all its attendant horrors’. His conflict with Lassalle led him to Marx. and he was on the way to becoming a socialist when, in 1865, his meeting with Liebknecht took place In Leipzig. Both men professed the doctrines of Marx and Engels: both were opposed to Prussia and in favour of a unified Germany; and these shared convictions caused them to join in common political action” (Helga Grenbing *History of the German labour movement*, 1985, p46).
 43. The *real* personifications of the labour bureaucracy, Ignaz Auer, party secretary, and Karl Legien, chair of the central committee of the Free Trade Unions, initially “refused to enter into theoretical discussions and speculations about

- the future”. Undoubtedly, though, Bernstein voiced their *concealed* views. Auer revealingly chided Bernstein in the following terms in a private letter: My dear Ede, the sort of thing you ask for is not done by passing a resolution: one does it not by saying it. one does it” (quoted by Helga Grenbing *History of the German labour movement*, 1985, p82).
44. Eduard Bernstein *Evolutionary Socialism*, 1961, p146.
45. *Ibid* p143.
46. *ibid* p144.
47. *Ibid* p144.
48. Their tradition is carried on nowadays in *classic* form by such groups as the International Communist Current and the Communist Workers Organisation. We can get an idea of their childish and nihilistic position on parliament from the following quote from the CWO: “Our working class ancestors fought for nothing. Today we can best recognise this by not voting at all ... If masses of workers don’t vote it undermines the System” (*Workers Voice*, spring 1992). But as well as the classic ‘left’ communists there are other groups, which claim to have nothing to do with ‘left’ communism. Overwhelmingly the arguments of these types do not, thank god, rest on Gerry Healy style claims that Britain is in the grip of a revolutionary situation and on the verge of an armed uprising. No. what we get is anarchistic moralising. The election is unfair, the Labour Party is pro-imperialist, neither a Labourite nor a Tory government will make any difference to ordinary people. All true. All irrelevant. ‘Typical is the Revolutionary Communist Group; an organisation which had its origins in the anti-Soviet SWP and the Labour-loving Trotskyist milieu, yet ended up supporting Gorbachev. only abandoning him just before the August 1991 counterrevolution. Despite this long political journey, the RCG has maintained a consistent political immaturity which leads it, quite illogically, to link justified hatred of the Labour Party with a call for a “boycott of the election” (*Fight Racism, Fight Imperialism*, February-March 1992). Thus. In the name of breaking workers — most of whom it dismisses as pro-imperialist

labour aristocrats — from the Labour Party. it actually leaves them with only Labour as a parliamentary alternative to the Tories.

Of course, to really break workers from Labour It is necessary to reforge the CPGB and build a class-wide militant mass movement which can challenge capitalism. As the theory of Marxism-Leninism tells us, that can never be done by standing aside from the political struggle represented by the bourgeois parliament.

3. *Bolsheviks and Mensheviks*

49. *Iskra (The Spark)* — the first all-Russian Illegal Marxist paper. Founded by Lenin in 1900, it played a decisive role in the struggle to build the revolutionary party. Besides Lenin, the editorial board consisted of Plekhanov, Martov, Axelrod, Petrosov and Zaslulich. Under the influence of *Iskra*, the 2nd Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party took place in London in 1903. However, the Congress split over the resolution prepared by Lenin defining a Party member as one who works actively in, and under the discipline of, one of its organisations. The old editorial board also split, five to one. Lenin went on to lead the Bolsheviks, the others ended up divided among the various strands of Menshevism. From No52 (October 1903) *Iskra* became a vehicle for opportunism.
50. Menshevik conference resolution. April-May 1905, quoted by Neil Harding (editor) *Marxism In Russia*, 1983, p315.
51. The anon-factional' Trotsky declared in 1907, with typical flourish, that the “differences of opinion between our factions are so insignificant. so uncertain, so minute, that they seem like chance wrinkles on the great brow of the revolution” (Leopold H Haimson (editor) *The Mensheviks*, 1979. p354).
52. The Menshevik conference of May 1905 — the first separate gathering of the embryonic Menshevik party —resolved that if the revolution brought them to power they would be *obliged*, even at risk of sharing the fate of the Paris Commune, to proceed with their maximum

programme. In November of the same year the Menshevik paper *Nachalo* — Influenced by Trotsky and Parvus, but with the mainstream Dan, Martov, Martynov and Potresov as regular contributors — even began promoting the Idea of the revolution “growing over” from a bourgeois to a socialist revolution (Leopold H Haimson (editor) *The Mensheviks*, 1979, p366).

53. VI Lenin, CW Vol 31, 1977, pp35-6.

54. *Ibid* p311.

55. Leopold H Haimson (editor) *The Mensheviks*, 1979, p368.

56. *Ibid* p124.

57. Not all Bolsheviki agreed with this shift in tactics.

AA Bogdanov, Lenin’s lieutenant in 1905, became leader of the *otzovzst* [Russian for ‘recallist’] trend which, under the cover of revolutionary phrasemongering about the “Bolshevik centre” surrendering “every Bolshevik position, one after another”, demanded the liquidation of all *legal* Party work, including the recall of RSDLP deputies from the duma (Robert Daniels (editor) *A documentary history of communism*, 1985, Vol 1 p45). Another variety of boycottism was the ‘ultimatists’, who wanted to break off relations with duma deputies unless they agreed to abide by an ultimatum stipulating that they obey all the decisions of the Central Committee.

An enlarged conference of the editorial board of *Proletary*, the Bolshevik’s paper, held in Paris over June 21-30 1909. passed a resolution condemning both *otzovzsm* and ultimatism. *Otzovism* and ultimatism, it stated, “reflects the ideology of political indifferentism on the one hand and anarchistic roaming on the other. With all its revolutionary phraseology the theory of *otzovism* and ultimatism is in fact to a significant degree the reverse side of constitutional illusions All the attempts by *otzovism* and ultimatism up to now to give theory a foundation of principle inevitably led them to the denial of the foundations of revolutionary Marxism. The tactics which they have in mind lead to a complete break with the tactics of the left wing of international social democracy as applied to contemporary Russian conditions; they lead to anarchist deviations Bolshevism, as a definite trend in

the RSDLP. has nothing in common either with *otzovism* or with ultimatism ... the Bolshevik faction must conduct a most resolute struggle against these deviations from the path of revolutionary Marxism” (Ibid pp43-4).

58. Elections to the Constituent Assembly were constantly put off by a fearful provisional government after the February Revolution. The election was not held until after the October Revolution, and although the Bolsheviks participated, the assembly was forcibly dissolved In January 1918 on the orders of the Soviet government.
59. VI Lenin CWVol 11, 1977, p279.
60. *Ibid* p280.
61. *Ibid* p286.
62. See in particular the following articles by Lenin, written over 1911 and 1912: ‘The campaign for the elections to the Fourth Duma’ and ‘Fundamental problems of the election campaign’ (CW Vol 17): ‘The illegal party and legal work’ and ‘Results of the elections’ (CW Vol 18).
63. A Badayev *The Bolsheviks In the Tsarist Duma*, no date, p9.
64. VI Lenin CW Vol 11, 1977, p289.
65. *Ibid* p291.
66. *Ibid* p296.
67. *ibid* p283.
68. *Ibid* p415.
69. *Ibid* p285.
70. *Ibid* p314-5.
71. *Ibid* p315-6.
72. Neil Harding (editor) *Marxism In Russia*, 1983, pp352,372.
73. VI Lenin CWVol 11, 1977, p403.

4. *Third International*

74. G Zinoviev, ‘Paris - Bern - Moscow’, in John Riddle (editor) *Founding the Communist International*, 1987, p306.
75. Lenin’s pamphlet was written for the opening of the 2nd Congress of Comintern. Printed almost simultaneously in Russian, French, German, Italian and English, it was handed out to all delegates as they arrived in Moscow,

76. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 28, 1977, p458.
77. Genesis 19:26.
78. Drafted and introduced by Bukharin.
79. Alan Adler (editor) *Theses, resolutions, manifestos of the first four congresses of the Third International*, 1980, p99.
80. One example is the *Morning Star*'s Communist Party of Britain. Justifying its bold decision to stand *two* candidates in the May 1992 *local* council elections, its Scottish secretary, John Foster, writes as follows: "They [the CPB] argue that the councils represent the one remaining bastion of democracy" (*Morning Star*, May 5 1992).
81. Alan Adler (editor) *Theses, resolutions, manifestos of the first four congresses of the Third International*, 1980, p100.
82. *Ibid* p101.
83. *Ibid* p102.
84. *Ibid* p103.
85. *Ibid* p103.
86. *Ibid* p103.
87. *Ibid* pp103-5.
88. *Ibid* p301.
89. Quoted In EH Carr *The Bolshevik Revolution*, 1977. Vol 3 p440.
90. Alan Adler (editor) *Theses, resolutions, manifestos of the first four congresses of the Third International*, 1980, p395.
91. *Ibid* p396.
92. *Ibid* p396.
93. *Ibid* p398.
94. *Ibid* p395.
95. *Ibid* pp397-8.
96. *Ibid* p399
97. *Ibid* p398.

5, *British exceptionalism*

98. See VI Lenin *CW* Vol 31, 1977, p84.
99. Alan Adler (editor) *Theses, resolutions, manifestos of the first four congresses of the Third International*, 1980, p404.
100. Marx to Engels, In K Marx, F Engels *Selected*

101. See David Howell, *British workers and the Independent Labour Party*, 1983, p300.
102. F Engels, quoted in Tony Cliff, Donny Gluckstein *The Labour Party — a Marxist history*, 1988, p14.
103. VI Lenin *CW Vol 15*. 1977, p235.
104. *Ibid* p234.
105. *Ibid* p237.
106. *Ibid* p237.
107. VI Lenin *CW Vol 31*. 1977, p258.
108. *Ibid* p258.
109. Ralph Miliband *Parliamentary Socialism*, 1973, pp55-6.
110. Bernard Barker (editor) *Ramsay MacDonald's Political Writings*, 1972, p232.
111. VII Lenin *CW Vol 31*, 1977. p88.
112. *Ibid* p261.
113. *Ibid* p261.
114. *Ibid* p81.
115. *Ibid* p88.
116. *Ibid* p87.
117. Jane Degras (editor), *The Communist International 1919-1943 Vol 2*, 1971. p83.
118. *Ibid* p83
119. *Ibid* p83
120. *Ibid* p83
121. *Ibid* p84.
122. *Ibid* p135

6. *The logic of opportunism*

123. *The Economist*, December 21 1991.
124. *Problems of Communism*, October 1992,
125. For an interesting examination of this, see ER Carr *The twilight of Comintern 1930-1935*, 1986.
126. See, for example. Noreen Branson *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1927-1941*, 1985.
127. in 1937 the CPGB stopped using the term ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ because of the “need to make clear that this issue is not now on the order of the day in the present

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situation in Britain”. In 1938 the slogan ‘Workers of all lands unite’ was dropped from the masthead of the *Daily Worker*, See Sam Bornstein, Al Richardson *Two steps back*, 1982, p47.

128. The Duchess of Atholl was a member of the Tory Party until December 1938, when she resigned and triggered a by-election in her Perth seat.
129. These were the words used by Comintern general secretary Georgi Dimitrov in his report to Its 7th Congress (G Dimltrov, *The working class against fascism*, 1935, p10).
130. See R Yurokoglou *The disintegration of fascism In Turkey*, 1985.

7. *Nature of Britain's revolution and the task of communists*

131. For our critique of the revolutionary pretensions of 'official communism' and Militant, see Jack Conrad *Which Road?*, 1991.
132. This was the position of the Workers Revolutionary Party under Gerry Healy. a madness carried on as a matter of dogma today by its rump *News Line* wing.
133. See Frank Grafton *The Leninist* No 1, November 1981.

8. *Election 92*

134. For a detailed, if rightwing, discussion of this period, see Richard Clutterbuck *Britain in agony*, 1980.
135. Despairing of Labour's chances, and moving to the right at an incredible speed. the Democratic Left set itself up as a tactical voting advice centre. Its political approach was repeated, albeit with a radical gloss, by Robin Blackburn, Writing in the journal *New Left Review*, of which he is the editor, he recommended the following course of action: "In England it will make sense to vote Labour or Liberal Democrat depending on which candidate is better placed to defeat the Conservative, with some allowance made for

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the individual's stance on democratisation". However, where the Democratic Left would consider a Lib! Lab coalition a step in the direction of a Labour majority, Blackburn actually considers such an arrangement *preferable* because Labour by Itself would be "less likely to

- introduce proportional representation, while in all respects just as moderate". According to Blackburn, PR would enable a New Left formation at some future date to measure its support in elections" (*New Left Review*, January-February 1992).
136. *Militant*, April 3 1992.
 137. Charles Fraser, NCP Industrial Organiser, *The New Worker*, April 10 1992.
 138. *Socialist Organiser*, March 26 1992.
 139. *Morning Star*, March 12 1992.
 140. *Socialist Organiser*, March 26 1992.
 141. *Morning Star*, March 12 1992.
 142. Editorial *Morning Star*, April 9 1992.
 143. *Socialist Organiser*, March 26 1992.
 144. *Workers Press*, March 21 1992.
 145. Eric Trevett, NCP leader, *The New Worker*. March 13 1992.
 146. *Socialist Worker*, March 14 1992.
 147. Eric Trevett *The New Worker*, March 13 1992.
 148. *Workers Power*, March 1992.
 149. *Morning Star*, March 12 1992.
 150. *Socialist Worker*, March 28 1992.
 151. *Workers Press*, March 30 1992.
 152. *Socialist Outlook*, March 21 1992.
 153. *Workers News*, March-April 1992.
 154. *Socialist Worker*, March 14 1992.
 155. *Socialist Worker*, March 28 1992.
 156. *Workers Power*, March 1992.
 157. Interestingly, debate around the tax question confirmed our insistence that the vast majority of the population in Britain are working class. The Tories put themselves forward as defenders of what they called middle income families, who they admitted accounted for a mere 20% of the population.
 158. In 1970 Labour's share of the vote was 43.1%. In 1979 It was 36.9%, in 1983 27.6%. There was a partial recovery

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- under Kinnock's leadership; In 1987 it got 30.8% and in 1992 34.2%. The Tories were still comfortably ahead though, with 42.8%.
159. *The Leninist* No52, July 17 1987.
 160. The Labour Party 'continues to believe it is a great party, with a noble

- destiny. Not so. Last week's 35% popular vote strongly suggests that unless it makes a break with its own history it has no future" (Joe Rogaly *Financial Times*, April 14 1992).
161. Labour's "manifesto eschews even token gestures to the old Labourism 11983] Socialism is not even mentioned" (Ivo Dawnay *Financial Times*, March 19 1992).
 162. *Morning Star*, April 14 1992.
 163. *Socialist Worker*, April 18 1992.
 164. *Socialist Outlook*, April 17 1992.
 165. Tony Chater, *Morning Star*, April 11 1992.
 166. *The New Worker*, March 13 1992.
 167. *Morning Star*, April 11 1992.
 168. VI Lenin CW Vol 17, 1977, pp222-3.
 169. *The Sun*, April 4 1992.
 170. The Trotskyite group Workers Power argued "for a vote for Labour because, as the party based on the working class, it is important to put it to the test of office." Showing its complete surrender to Labourism. it promised that only in 'special circumstances do we make exceptions'. When it came to our candidates it refused to lend support, apparently because we were not "standing on a revolutionary communist programme" (*Workers Power*, March 1992).
 171. VI Lenin CW Vol 11, 1977, p285.
 172. See VI Lenin CW Vol 11, 1977, pp314-5.
 173. G Zinoviev, quoted In Jane Degras (editor), *The Communist International 1919-1943* Vol 2, 1971, p1.
 174. On Tuesday April 7 1992 a team of our comrades carried out a token half hour occupation of the *Morning Star's* offices. Next day this miserable publication reported our action with the headline: "Leninists intimidate Star women workers". Its readers were told that our action took place because of a 'refusal to concede' the 'right to use the name *Daily Worker*'. The truth is somewhat different.

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There was only one female member of staff in the building. She shot straight upstairs to phone the police, then stopped there and was not seen again. It is difficult to 'intimidate' someone you have no contact with.

However, the female comrade In charge of our occupation *was* set upon by both CPB national organiser and ex-doorman for the Euros, Nidge Tovey, and CPB executive committee member John Haylett. All the *Star* does, besides lie, is show its hypocritical sexism.

The *Morning Star* boasted that it “declined to press charges” against our comrades. That should be a matter of principle. Yet there was no basis at all to press charges anyway. as the police called by the *Star* admitted when our comrades confronted them. But when a key went missing during the course of the occupation, the comrades were threatened with being charged, carried off to the nearest station and strip searched! When asked if this was with the agreement of the *Morning Star*, the officer in charge replied ‘yes’.

As to the ‘refusal’ to let us “use the name *Daily Worker*”, they can ‘refuse’ us what they like, we never asked permission. But court injunctions, fines and jailing of leading comrades are something different altogether. That is what the *Morning Star* threatened us with, and that was the reason for our occupation. Something — true to form, despite its supposed espousal of ‘glasnost’ — it omits to tell its declining circle of readers.

9. *By way of a conclusion*

- 175. The SWP’s position was characteristically sectarian, ie it was designed to promote Its narrow interests, not those of the class as a whole. It should be noted that to avoid any embarrassing danger of the SWP and its members being seriously tested and put at the service of the class, the call for a general strike was directed solely at the TUG general council, a body made up of proven traitors, class collaborators and spineless cowards. The SWP had no intention of posing the need for councils**

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of action, training workers’ defence corps, subverting the army, let alone fighting for an alternative centre of working class leadership and Initiative which could, given favourable momentum In the class struggle,

rival and then replace not only the TUG, but the government. For those SWPers who might dismiss such talk as wild leftism, that was exactly what your Chris Harman was insisting on In the *Socialist Worker Review* of January 1985: ‘once the point is reached where the slogan of the general strike Is correct you have to be ready to supplement it with other slogans that begin to cope with the question of power — demands about how the strike is organised (strike committees, workers’ councils), with how the strike defends itself (flying pickets, mass pickets. workers’ defence guards) and with how It takes the offensive against the state (organising within the army and the police).’

Needless to say, in the Great Strike of 1984-5 the SWP was arguing *against* the call for a general strike, despite the fact that it was both possible and necessary. Harman was trying to shock his rank and file with the implications of a general strike slogan, not equip them programmatically. The Tories were better servants of *their* class. They *too* did everything they could to prevent other workers joining the miners. They bent over backwards to buy off the Militant-led Liverpool council, a railway strike and two national dock strikes.

In its own way the SWP complemented them. It bent over backwards to rubbish the demand for a general strike. If the idea of *really* taking a step along the road to revolution was not enough to pacify Its followers, there was always the labour bureaucracy. A general strike was apparently Impossible then because of ‘the way the Labour Party leadership and the TUG general council have sabotaged the movement in solidarity with the miners’ (Chris Harman *Socialist Worker Review*, January 1985). That means either the SWP has no consistent theory or the TUC and the Labour Party have undergone a sudden conversion to revolutionary politics on the road to Doncaster’s Mansion House? The reader will decide.

176. *Militant*, October 30 1992.
177. For our critique of *Militant: What we stand for*, see chapter four of *Which Road?*
178. *Daily Worker*, October 23 1992.
179. *Militant*, October 30 1992.
180. *Ibid.*
181. *Ibid.*
182. *Ibid.*
183. *Ibid.*
184. *Ibid.*
185. *Ibid.*
186. Peter Taaffe *Militant: What we stand for*, 1990, p42
187. *Ibid.*
188. *Militant*, November 6 1992.
189. *Militant*, November 20 1992.

Appendices

Appendix I: CPGB's 1st Congress and parliament

190. Sylvia Pankhurst (1882-1960) — youngest daughter of Emmeline Pankhurst, the suffragette leader. She Joined the ILP in 1898 and moved into opposition to the bourgeois feminists who dominated the suffragette movement. Founded the Workers Socialist Federation in 1918. Welcomed the October Revolution and played a prominent role in the Hands off Russia! campaign. She refused to accept the discipline of the CPGB: after the briefest of membership she was expelled from the Party.
191. Tom Bell (1882-1944) — son of a Scottish stonemason, a member of the Associated Ironmoulders of Scotland, he became its president in 1918. Joined the ILP in 1900 and the Social Democratic Federation in 1903. Knew James Connolly. Founding member of the Socialist Labour Party, editor of *The Socialist* in 1919, one of the leading advocates of forming a Communist Party. The majority of SLP leaders took a sectarian position which led to Bell and others being expelled: they formed the Communist Unity Group. Bell became National Organiser of the CPGB.

Appendix II: Affiliation: for and against

192. Scheidemann and Noske: right wing leaders of the German SDP. who in November 1918 headed a government determined to “save Germany from Bolshevism’s. This not only included pacifying the working class, it meant murder of them and their leaders. Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were arrested and assassinated on their orders.
193. David Lloyd George (1863-1945) — elected Liberal MP for Caernarvon in 1890, a seat he held until his death. A demagogue, he introduced the so-called ‘people’s budget’ in 1906. Replaced Asquith as prime minister in 1916. Formed war cabinet with Tories, a coalition which lasted until 1922. With split and rapid decline of Liberals, he lost all influence. Politically he oscillated between extreme reaction and reformism; he expressed admiration for Hitler in 1936 while supporting Keynesianism.
194. Winston Churchill (1874-1965) — entered parliament as a Conservative in 1900, joined the Liberals in 1906. As Home Secretary in 1911 he called troops on striking miners and dockers, presided over the infamous siege of Sidney Street in London. Arch opponent of the October Revolution, he supported armed intervention. After the 1924 general election he rejoined the Tories. During the 1926 General Strike he organised strikebreaking OMS. Expressed sympathy for Mussolini and Hitler, but later became spokesman for the anti-German wing of British imperialism. Prime Minister from 1940-45 and 1950-55.
195. *The Call* — paper of the British Socialist Party — the organisation with most delegates to the Communist Unity Convention.
196. Alexander F Kerensky (1881-1970) — prime minister in the provisional government and a member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party.
197. LG Kornilov (1870-1918) — the Tsarist general who led an attempted coup against Kerensky.
198. Albert Thomas (1874-1965) — extreme right wing French socialist, who saw the choice facing the labour movement

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- as being ‘either Wilson or Lenin’. Joined war cabinet in 1914; sent to Russia to ensure provisional government stayed in war.
199. Aristide Briand (1862-1932) — in 1880s belonged to syndicalist Direct Action Group. Made 180 degree turn in 1914 and sided with imperialism.
 200. Alexander Millerand (1859-1943) — French socialist, who in 1899 accepted ministerial appointment without consulting his comrades. This provoked a bitter debate in the international workers’ movement. Expelled from the French Socialist Party, became prime minister in 1920, gave support to Polish Whites in their war against Soviet Russia.
 201. Morris Hillquit (1869-1933) — foundation member of American Socialist Party and one of its most right wing leaders.
 202. Eugene Debs (1855-1926) — co-founder of the International Workers of the World, a militant syndicalist movement, he became the leader of the American Socialist Party’s left wing.
 203. John Hodge (1855-1937) — trade union leader, member of the Labour Party National Executive Committee and minister in the wartime coalition. He was MP for Gorton *from* 1906-23.
 204. JR Clynes (1869-1949) — Right wing member of the Labour Party who began his working life as a piecer in an Oldham cotton mill. Elected to parliament in 1906, he served in the wartime coalition government as a Junior minister. Served as Lord Privy Seal In the first Labour government.

Appendix III. ‘Lenin on Labour

205. Joseph Dietzgen (1828-1888) — a tanner who became “one of the most eminent German social democratic philosophical writers” (VI Lenin *CW Vol 19*, 1977, p79).
206. This is a reference to the Communist Unity Group formed by comrades expelled by the sectarian leadership of the Socialist Labour Party.

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