Without a Communist Party the working class can never liberate itself. And without a communist programme, there can be no genuine Communist Party. The roots of the collapse of the bureaucratic socialist states of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and the liquidation of the 'official' world communist movement can be seen in those parties' abandonment of Marxism. This was a protracted process - a death by a thousand cuts. The collapse of 'official communism' is not the failure of Marxism, but of opportunism.

In the last analysis the reason for the failure of 'official communism' is a failure of programme. This was not the fault of one person, or a break-down in collective intellect. The programmes of 'official communism' reflected were designed to serve - those in the workers' movement who had no interest in revolution, those who preferred compromise with capitalism, rather than its destruction.

This is the significance of Jack Conrad's book dealing with the reformist programmes of various strands of opportunism in Britain. It is more than just a criticism. It provides the preliminary groundwork necessary for drawing up the draft programme around which the struggle to reforge the Communist Party of Great Britain will be focused.

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# CONTENTS

Preface

1. *British Road to Socialism - 1978*  
   1.1. Why Britain needs socialism 6  
   1.2. The forces for change in Britain 38  
   1.3. Toward socialist revolution 70  
   1.4. Building a socialist Britain 87  
   1.5. Some specific questions 96  
   1.6. The ‘BRS’ in practice 116  
   1.7. History of the ‘BRS’ 126

2. *British Road to Socialism - CPB version* 133  
   2.1. The contemporary world situation 139  
   2.2. Britain's crisis 154  
   2.3. The strategy for advance 160  
   2.4. Forces for advance 161  
   2.5. The Communist Party 162

   3.1. After Henry: 'Fordism' and 'post-Fordism' 168  
   3.2. A 'Fordisf order'? 171  
   3.3. Production and consumption 176  
   3.4. What about the workers? 181  
   3.5. 'Fordism', social democracy and the state 189  
   3.6. Thatcherism 194  
   3.7. Why 'Fordism'? Where are the Euros going? 196
Preface

It cannot be emphasised too strongly that without a Communist Party the working class can never liberate itself. Nor can it be emphasised too strongly that without a Marxist-Leninist programme, there can be no genuine Communist Party. Within this lies the significance of Jack Conrad’s book dealing with the reformist programmes of various strands of opportunism in Britain. It is more than just a criticism. It provides the preliminary groundwork necessary for drawing up the draft programme around which the struggle to reforge the Communist Party of Great Britain will be focused.

Some would say that the moment is not right for such a project. This is not true. Certainly these are difficult times for communists and the working class internationally. We are living through a period of reaction. Gorbachevism triggered off a 1914-type general crisis in the workers’ movement though this time on a higher scale, involving as it does states as well as parties. What Brezhnev used to call the "world socialist community" no longer exists. Democratic, mainly peaceful, counterrevolution has swept through Eastern Europe and now the Soviet Union itself.

Capitalism might have won the Cold War. Nonetheless it is a decadent system which long ago exhausted the progressive potential it once possessed. Its victory over bureaucratic socialism can do nothing to save it. Already inter-imperialist contradictions are heightening and will sooner or later lead to direct, violent, confrontation. For all its promises capitalism cannot deliver peace and plenty. To the mass of the world’s population it is a system of unemployment, pauperisation, starvation and war. This means sooner or later reaction will give way to revolution.
What are needed, therefore, are communist parties capable of withstanding the flood tide of triumphalist propaganda coming from the ideologues of capitalism, parties capable of defending the truths of Marxism-Leninism today in order to lead the revolution tomorrow.

As we know, far from rising to the challenge the 'official' world communist movement has collapsed. The cohesion of its parties is a thing of the distant past, they are certainly no longer of any use for the revolutionary proletariat. East and west, the 'official communists' are "rediscovering" the social democratic "heritage in their past": a cynical cover for going over to the camp of the bourgeoisie.

The situation in Britain is typical. The Euros' Executive Committee, in what is for them an act of unprecedented honesty, unanimously agreed in September 1990 to drop the name 'communist' from their title. The alternative they plumped for in March 1991 was Democratic Left! As to the Morning Star's Communist Party of Britain and the New Communist Party, they are incapable of facing up to the realities of the modern world. Both extend the revisionism of yesteryear. Both linger on, for the moment at least, in the form of living fossils.

In the last analysis the reason for the failure of 'official communism' is a failure of programme. This was not the fault of one person, or a break-down in collective intellect. The programmes of 'official communism' reflected, were designed to serve, those in the workers' movement who had no interest in revolution, those who preferred the easy road of compromise with capitalism, rather than the hard road of destroying it.

The progressive examination of the content, origins and development of the Communist Party of Great Britain's British Road to Socialism programme, then the CPB's very own BRS, and then the Euro's Manifesto for New Times shows that opportunism follows a logic. It starts off as a minor watering down of principle for the sake of short term advantage but ends in class treachery. As the comrade shows when he turns his attention to Militant's What we stand for there is nothing unique in this about 'official communism'.

Throughout his book the comrade uses Marxism-Leninism as his method. This is a great strength. Marxism-Leninism is the only effective method to explain the social roots of opportunism; the only effective method that explains why opportunism has to call its reformist programme 'revolutionary'; the only effective method to explain why this opportunism that dares not speak its name eventually collapses into the arms of the bourgeoisie (as social democracy did in 1914 and 'official communism' has done in our time). Above all Marxism-Leninism is the only effective method which can guide the working class in the great struggle to overthrow capitalism and build a future really worthy of human beings: communism.

Clearly the idea that the ideology of Marx, Engels and Lenin is dead is in part preposterous, in part simply wishful thinking. Marxism-Leninism lives and can never die!

That is why we intransigently defend Marxism-Leninism and why the programme we are committed to producing - presented in the comrade's book in outline form - will be based wholly on the scientific ideology of Marx, Engels and Lenin. The future is ours!

Provisional Central Committee,
Communist Party of Great Britain.
1. British Road to Socialism - 1978

Introduction

The introduction to the 1978 British Road to Socialism states that it is "based on the theory of scientific socialism first elaborated by Marx and Engels, creatively applying that theory to the situation in Britain and the world" (p3. All quotes in this chapter, unless otherwise stated, are from the 1978 edition of the British Road to Socialism). Seen in the light of where the world and the 'official communists' themselves are today, this claim is obviously false.

But we have not only come to this conclusion because of the accumulated weight of empirical evidence that life has stacked up against the BRS. For any sort of genuine communist the scientific socialism of the BRS was always transparently a shabby counterfeit, and we said so from the start. Its reformist scheme for a "new type of Labour government" which would solve the capitalist crisis and would even open "the road to socialism" by "transforming" the state (p4) is the legitimate offspring not of Marx and Engels but of Bernstein and Kautsky, the true progenitors of such ideas in the workers' movement.

We shall now go through the 1978 BRS, step by step, to show why Marxism remains ever fresh, ever alive; and why the opportunist programme is incapable of providing the working class with any sort of a road to socialism; in doing so we will naturally present many of our ideas about what should be in a genuine communist programme.
1.1. Why Britain needs Socialism

Consensus politics - defending parliament

The first section of the BRS maintains that "Britain is in deep economic, political and social crisis". All previous editions of the BRS since 1950 made the same claim; this or that statistic has been updated, but Britain (and, as we shall see, world capitalism) is supposed to be in permanent crisis. Throughout the BRS the term crisis is applied with incredible looseness. Certainly capitalism has run out of all progressive possibilities; as a system it has become moribund and decadent. Yes, Britain has been suffering from relative decline throughout the twentieth century. But as we shall see, the BRS has no understanding whatsoever of the real laws of motion of the capitalist system. It refers to capitalism developing through a "series of booms and slumps", yet it is unable to historically locate or relate them to our own day.

The fact of the matter is that throughout the 1950s and 60s world capitalism experienced an unprecedented boom. We will deal with this more fully below. This never seems to have penetrated into the heads of those who wrote the BRS. If it did there is no evidence of it, certainly not in the BRS. Although Britain has been suffering from relative decline in a particularly pronounced form since the end of World War II, because of the boom this was handled without plunging the country into any sort of profound political crisis.

The assortment of social ills such as NHS charges, property speculation and increased police powers listed as features of Britain's crisis were actually products of the boom ending and the beginning of an intermediate period between boom and slump.

There is, even in this first section of the BRS, plenty more muddle. For example we are told that since "the end of the Second World War there have been Tory governments for about half the time, and Labour governments for the other half". Remember this was published in 1978, ie before the Thatcher/Major years, so there is nothing amiss here. But then we find the following nonsense: "They have differed in many of their policies, but neither has solved the basic problems" (our emphasis, p5).

One would have thought it was universally accepted that throughout the long boom of the 1950s and 60s and even during the stagnation of the 70s, the policies of the Labour and Tory parties have been the same in essence. It was because of this that terms such as 'consensus politics' and Butskellism - joining together the names of Tory Chancellor RA Butler and Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell - were coined. But what the BRS wanted us to believe was clear. With different policies Britain's problems could have been overcome.

We have not seen anything yet. The BRS says that "local democracy" was being eroded by "the state", as if local government was not part of the state! After saying this it goes on: "The ruling class tries to confine democracy to the right to vote in elections, and deny the people real participation in decision making", and claims that: "Parliament's sovereign rights are being eroded" (p6).

This is typical BRS. It is not just littered with half truths, it is actually constructed on the basis of them. Of course, the ruling class "tries to confine democracy to the right to vote in elections, and deny the people real participation in decision making". But this is precisely done through the mechanism of the parliamentary system. It gives the minority which owns and controls the means of production a democratic cloak with which to hide its rule.

Parliament is an institution of the bourgeois state. This is elementary. Whether or not its "rights are being eroded" is open to question. But what is being insinuated is clear: parliamentary democracy is more than a sham.
Yet the facts are straightforward. One house of parliament is not even elected; it consists of the hereditary aristocracy, the top ranks of the Church of England and other bureaucrats, retired state officials, senile former MPs and trade union leaders who have been rewarded for services rendered.
As to the other house, it is little more than a talking shop. People vote every five years, true. But this does not mean that power resides with the majority of the population. The fact that the capitalist class owns and controls the means of production is worth any number of general elections.

Nevertheless the authors of the BRS want us to cherish and defend parliament. Why? Because these opportunists see it as a genuine expression of democracy, and more than that, an instrument that can be used for social transformation. This is a slippery slope, which leads directly to the camp of the bourgeois establishment, and ultimately to counterrevolution ... but let us not run ahead of ourselves.

In this section the reason given why we should cherish and defend parliament is merely because its "rights" are under attack by "reactionary forces". In 1978 the most prominent of these "reactionary forces" was said to be the European Community (replacing the USA in previous editions). The EC was apparently eroding "the right in principle for the British people to determine their own affairs" (p6).

Of course, by inserting the phrase "in principle" it is implied that through parliament "the British people" can "determine their own affairs" - a trick, on the basis of which the BRS can go on to paint parliament as a democratic institution which can be taken hold of and used by the working people.

As some might recall, on the initiative of the Euros at the 40th Congress of what they then illegitimately called the CPGB, it was decided that campaigning against EC membership was no longer a "priority". This was merely a pointer to where the Euros wanted to go. A year later, in Facing up to the Future - the forerunner of the Euros' Manifesto for New Times - the 'left' was attacked for not enthusiastically embracing the EC. That is opportunist logic for you.

Clearly a new 'menace' to parliamentary democracy has to be found. Thatcherism had been tried as an alternative to the USA or the EC. In the early 1980s it was described as some sort of new variety of fascism by just about every Euro. But this did not really stick. Thatcherism was far too British. And the Euros were rapidly moving to the right, ie themselves moving towards Thatcherism. So what to do?

As we predicted, the Euros were bound eventually to find their
1.1.1. Contradictions of capitalism

Public sector - transnational companies - imperialism and de-industrialisation

In its own muddled style the BRS correctly located the source of "Britain's problems" in the contradictions of capitalism, most importantly the contradiction between the social nature of production and the private nature of expropriation. This was inherited from orthodox Marxism. Needless to say though, the BRS hints - and it is only that - that somehow the public/nationalised sector of the economy is in some way not capitalist, that it has to be forced to bend to the will of capital. We read that: "There is a constant pressure to subordinate the public sector and make it serve the interests of the private sector" (p6).

We would be the first to say that nationalised industries under capitalism are among the easiest to transform into socialist state property after the revolution. Nationalised industries, like the giant private monopolies, do, in a sense, represent the seeds of the future inside capitalism. They are among the most socialised areas within the capitalist economy. Undeniably though, they are at the moment the collective property of the capitalist class, owned by the capitalist state.

Workers in these areas of the economy are exploited just like other workers; surplus value is extracted and capitalist relations are reproduced. The surplus value is used either to facilitate accumulation directly in the form of 'ploughing back profits' or distributed indirectly into the coffers of 'private capitalism' in interest payments, cheap services, lucrative orders or lower prices. Hence there is no question of "pressure" having to be exerted to force the nationalised sector to serve capitalism's interests.

The BRS goes on to say that the cause of capitalist crisis is a low level of consumption. It tells us that: "to get the profit, the goods produced have to be sold. And since a major factor in the demand for goods is the level of wages and salaries, restricting them also restricts the market in each capitalist country" (p7).

This theory is okay as far as it goes. But it ignores the crucial role of the law of the tendency for the rate of profit to fall - which Marx called "in every respect the most important law of modern political economy". Behind the saturation of markets and the general law of capitalist accumulation - the relative pauperisation of the masses - lies the tendency for the rate of profit to fall (we deal with capitalist crisis in 1.1.3.1. and 2.1.).

Not recognising this could lead one to the simplistic conclusion that if wages were increased at a stroke capitalism's crisis would be overcome. This cloud-cuckoo-land scheme has certainly been proposed by reformists and is the main proposition contained in the Alternative Economic Strategy, abandoned as too 'leftist' by the Euros, but still dear to the heart of the CPB. The AES is a programme which essentially argues that if wages were increased everyone would be happy: increased wages will increase demand and in turn will increase profits. This is the flip side of capitalists' promises to their employees over the ages that if they work harder everyone will benefit: improved productivity will lead to cheaper prices, more demand, secure jobs and eventually higher wages. Of course things don't work out quite like that. Either way, though, on the basis of such utopian confusion class collaborationism is fostered.

Further confusion is added by the BRS' characterisation of the "multinationals". We are told that they invest and operate "all over the world" and that they owe "allegiance to no one but themselves". It is their "policies", says the BRS, which "have led to a continuous export of capital, with under-investment in British industry and its consequent backwardness as compared to other advanced capitalist countries" (p7).

The term "multinational" is misleading. True, capitalism breaks down the barriers between nation states, but there are very few genuinely multinational companies. The vast majority of major
monopolies are transnational companies, operating internationally, yes, but operating from a specific base, from a specific country. Ford, General Motors, IBM, Chase Manhattan, Standard Oil and Boeing operate internationally, but from their base in the USA. In the same way 'our own' monopolies like ICI, BP, Barclays Bank and British Aerospace have their tentacles spread around the globe, but they remain centred on Britain; they are, in a word, British. The same applies to the transnational companies of Japan, Germany, France, etc.

What about the export of capital and its consequent effects on the structure of the metropolitan economy? Well, this is hardly a new, or a peculiarly British, phenomenon. It is a product of imperialism, a concept referred to in the BRS in the case of Britain only in the past tense.

Lenin explained in his work *Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism* that when capitalism reaches its decadent stage it becomes characterised by monopoly and imperialism, ie the export of capital. It is this which leads to the creation of the "rentier state", the "usurer state", in which the bourgeoisie to an ever increasing degree lives on the proceeds of capital exports and the "clipping of coupons". As a result capitalism grows far more rapidly than before. However, Lenin pointed out that this growth becomes "more and more uneven" and this "unevenness also manifests itself in particular, in the decay of the countries which are the richest in capital." It is more than interesting that Lenin cited Britain as being the prime example.3

For Leninists, the decay of Britain's home based industries has nothing to do with lack of patriotism on the part of the transnationals. No, it is simply the result of the playing out of the iron laws of developed (moribund) capitalism, something which can only be overcome by ending capitalism itself.

As to 'our' transnationals having no allegiances except to 'themselves', let us be quite clear as to what is being inferred. It is that they have no loyalty to Britain, that they are unpatriotic. This is not the case. To be a British patriot today is to be a partisan of capital. The British state belongs to capital, capital dominates it, capitalists unite to protect it. The British state represents their collective interests against both the working class and the interests of other, foreign, capitalists.

The BRS itself declares that: "Monopoly capitalism has become state monopoly capitalism, with the state and the monopolies closely inter-connected". If this contention is broadly correct (and it is), and if the monopolies have "grown in size and increasingly dominate Britain" (p7), (which they do) then passages which portray the transnationals as cosmopolitan, divorced from nation and therefore state, must be seen as deliberate attempts to mislead.

1.1.2. How capitalist rule is maintained

**Rule by consent and coercion - democracy - violence**

This subsection of the BRS is pivotal. The entire strategy of reforming British capitalism into socialism rests on one claim. This is the claim that capital maintains its rule by consent and once consent is withdrawn the capitalist state machine can be transformed through an election and used as the vehicle for socialism.

The subsection begins correctly enough with the following observation: "The concentration of wealth and economic control in fewer and fewer hands means that a small number of big firms exercise enormous power. Their decisions have a major influence on Britain's economy, on the extent of investment, the amount and type of goods produced, the prices charged, the balance of payments, and the position of the pound. Yet those who own and run them are not elected by, or responsible to, the people. It is a system which makes a mockery of democracy" (p8).

In other words, under capitalism there is, and can only be, the appearance of democracy, ie formal democracy. The majority of wage slaves can choose who will misrepresent them; but behind the cloak of democracy, a minority rules through control of the state and ownership of the means of production.
Unfortunately the British Road then contradicts this orthodox communist understanding of bourgeois democracy. It says the ruling class exercises "a degree of coercion to maintain its rule" using institutions like "the civil service, the police, the armed forces, the judiciary, the Foreign Office etc" (our emphasis, p9). The word "degree" is no slip. It is a clever all things to all men device which allows opportunism to worm its way in through the description of the formal nature of bourgeois democracy. After all, we can have a small degree of force or a large degree of force. Anyway, having sown some seeds of doubt, the BRS then bluntly states that capitalist rule "relies primarily on the fact that millions of people believe that the present political system is truly democratic" (our emphasis, p9).

We do not deny that because of habit, the media and the domination of bourgeois ideas in society, millions believe in the sham of parliamentary democracy. To suggest, however, that bourgeois rule rests primarily on consent is utter baloney. It does, though, allow the authors of the BRS to reduce political struggle to primarily a battle of ideas. This is a blatantly anti-Marxist position. For us, matter (in this instance the state and class society) is primary, ideas (consciousness) secondary. We do not deny the importance of winning the battle of ideas. But we understand winning the battle of ideas is winning the masses to make violent revolution against the state, a very material act.

Lenin time and time again insisted that behind the facade of parliamentary and judicial nicety lies the concealed mailed fist of counterrevolutionary terror. This had to be taken on and destroyed. The struggle to extend democratic rights can be used to expose it, but when all is said and done force will decide. Some claim this view was based purely on the experience of Tsarist Russia, which was backward and traditionally autocratic; that we need to look to Gramsci and the like in order to understand the capitalist state in the west. This is to gut Gramsci - for all his idealist tendencies - of his revolutionism, and to treat Lenin as a simpleton.

Gramsci was no Euro. He was, from the day he became a communist in the wake of the October Revolution until his tragically early death in 1937, committed to carrying out an Italian "October Revolution".

As for Lenin, he was of course fully aware of the situation in Western Europe. He did after all spend lengthy periods in exile here. But Lenin's analysis of the capitalist state did not rely on mere personal experience, let alone the superficial banalities which pepper the BRS. No, his understanding was based on a truly scientific grasp of the essence of bourgeois rule, not only in backward countries but in the most advanced democratic ones.

Let us see whether Lenin suffered from an eastern bias. Writing against the former Pope of Marxism, in his The proletarian revolution and the renegade Kautsky Lenin insisted that:

"The more highly developed a democracy is, the more imminent are pogroms or civil war in connection with every profound political divergence which is dangerous to the bourgeoisie. The learned Mr Kautsky could have studied this 'law' of bourgeois democracy in connection with the Dreyfus case in republican France, with the lynching of negroes and internationalists in the democratic republic of America, with the case of Ireland and Ulster in democratic Britain, with the baiting of the Bolsheviks and the staging of pogroms against them in April 1917 in the democratic republic of Russia...

"Take the bourgeois parliament. Can it be that the learned Kautsky has never heard that the more highly democracy is developed, the more the bourgeois parliaments are subjected by the stock exchange and the bankers? This does not mean that we must not make use of bourgeois parliaments (the Bolsheviks made far better use of it than probably any other party in the world, for in 1912-14 we won the entire workers' curia in the fourth Duma). But it does mean that only a liberal can forget the historical limitations and conventional nature of the bourgeois parliamentary system as Kautsky does. Even in the most democratic bourgeois state the oppressed people at every step encounter the crying contradictions between formal equality proclaimed by the 'democracy' of the capitalists and the thousands of real limitations and subterfuges which turn the proletarians into wage-slaves. It is precisely this contradiction that is opening the eyes of the people to the rottenness, mendacity and hypocrisy of capitalism. It is this contradiction that the agitators and propagandists of socialism are constantly exposing to the people, in order to prepare them for revolution! And now that the era of revolution has begun, Kautsky turns his back upon it and begins to extol the charms of moribund bourgeois democracy."

We make no excuse for quoting Lenin at length. In our view what he says about bourgeois democracy is as true today as it was when he penned the above words in 1918. Our view of bourgeois
democracy is based firmly on the lessons of life itself. Unlike the authors of the *BRS* we do not impose some preconceived schema on reality. Just as in 1918, bourgeois democracy is, and can only be, formal democracy. The instant the masses attempt to go beyond bourgeois society the ruling class resorts to force to maintain the status quo.

Today, in underdeveloped and medium developed capitalist countries, democracy is a luxury for the ruling class. In these countries the bourgeoisie and its state is weak. Therefore it is often forced to rule without the cloak of democracy. In the advanced capitalist countries the reverse is true. As a result it takes quite profound movements of the masses to disturb the political order. But in the event of such disturbances the powerful bourgeois state is brought to the fore, used to crush and terrorise. It is for this reason Lenin said the descent into pogrom and civil war was "especially" a feature of the "most" democratic bourgeois regimes.

We need only recall what Weimar Germany produced. As for today, to get a glimpse of what lies behind bourgeois democracy, look at Britain which is still relatively speaking a stable bourgeois democracy. The miners learnt more about bourgeois democracy during the Great Strike of 1984-5 than the authors of the *BRS* will ever know. In those heady days the coercive reality of bourgeois rule stood revealed. Miners had to face unprecedented police terror simply to maintain their strike and exercise the right to picket. Ten thousand were arrested, many hundreds injured and two died in what was obviously more, far more, than a run of the mill industrial dispute, but was not a revolution or anything like it.

As to the nationalist population in Ireland's occupied Six Counties, they more than any other section of the population in the United Kingdom appreciate the reality of British democracy. The demand for civil rights in the Six Counties in the late 1960s was met first with police baton and then pogrom. In that part of the UK there are no jury courts, internal exile is routinely imposed, nearly 3,000 have died and the state effectively encourages, and on occasions directs, UVF and UDA fascistic assassination gangs.

All this in a civilised, still stable, western country. Is Lenin's analysis outdated? Hardly. Once consent is withdrawn the ruling class has to, and does, maintain its domination through coercion. This, not the illusion people have in parliamentary democracy, is the material *essence* of the capitalist state.

Although the *BRS* grudgingly admits the capitalists are "prepared to use coercion and violence", it places all its hopes in "preventing" this by the use of "overwhelming working class and popular strength" (p10). What exactly is meant by "preventing" we will see later on. In the meantime let us again emphasise that, for the *BRS*, the capitalists rule "mainly" through "achieving a social consensus and class collaboration" (p10). It is only through such a one sided analysis that the *BRS* can propose to change Britain simply by winning a parliamentary majority.

We do, as we have said, see the need to win the mass of the population, but not as atomised passive voters or walk on walk off extraparliamentary extras. For us the masses must be won to take a collective, active and creative role in the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeois state - and that includes the overthrow of parliament - and in building the new socialist state. Our task is not to defend bourgeois democracy and its parliament before the masses. On the contrary, our task is to expose through political struggle the fact that bourgeois rule is based on the ownership and control of the means of production, and maintained at the end of the day through terror and force.
1.1.3. World balance

classified

There are three major areas in this subsection with which we greatly disagree. So much so that we will treat them under separate headings.

1.1.3.1. General crisis

It is here in this subsection that we find the most extensive references to "the world crisis of capitalism" and "its period of general crisis". The BRS equates this with capitalism's "period of relative decline and decay". We consider the BRS wrong here on a number of counts.

The BRS locates the beginning of capitalism's "general crisis" and its "decay" with the October Revolution in 1917. Undeniably though, capitalism experienced general crises since its very inception. We would also add that it was not in 1917 that capitalism began to decay, ie became a relative fetter on the development of the productive forces. Capitalism became reactionary when it reached the stage of monopoly and imperialism, roughly between the years 1870 and 1880. The October Revolution marked the beginning of the world socialist revolution, not the first sign of capitalism's decadence.

But let us deal more fully with general crises of capitalism, what they are and what they are not.

In essence Marx described three distinct phases in capitalism's cycle. The first phase is the phase of the boom when profit rates are going up and up. Competition between capitalists is over an expanding market. But as we all know, in the race to increase the mass of profits, living labour is replaced by machines (ie dead labour). This is the Achilles' heel of capitalism because it causes the rate of profit to decline. Living labour is, as all Marxist economists will tell you - those who remain Marxists, at least - the source of all surplus value and hence profit (realised surplus value).

Eventually therefore, as machinery takes the place of living labour the rate of profit declines, the boom peters out and capitalism enters its second phase, a period of relative stagnation characterised by a massive expansion of the credit system and speculative profit making.

Life for the individual capitalist becomes increasingly difficult. More and more machinery must be purchased simply to stay still. Capitalism's inner contradiction becomes compounded. Capital becomes relatively over-accumulated and ever greater amounts of fictitious capital are needed simply to keep things going. In time the third phase is reached; where the credit system becomes so bloated and stretched that the slightest loss of confidence causes the whole edifice to come crashing down like a pack of cards.

When Marx used the term general crisis he gave it a definite scientific meaning. It is when the mass of profit can no longer be expanded, when there is the absolute overproduction of capital, the collapse of the credit system and an enforced destruction of capital.

In its infancy, capitalism went through this cycle of boom-stagnation-general crisis every five years. From 1847 onwards, however, Marx noted that the cycle became extended to ten years because of the growth of the credit system. After 30 years or so the decennial pattern itself broke down in its turn. Engels focussed his attention on this in an extensive footnote in Marx's Volume III of Capital, first published in 1894. Showing the depth of his vision, he foresaw the possibility of the "chronic, long drawn out alternation between a slight business improvement and a relatively long indecisive depression" - ie the period of stagnation which spanned the 1880s and 90s - being "the preparatory stage of a new world crash of unparalleled vehemence".

The BRS' idea of a permanent general crisis since 1917, the date when capitalism's "world domination" was "shattered", is not based on Marx' theory of the capitalist cycle. If we are to use the
term general crisis we see no reason to stop using it in the way the founders of scientific communism did. Certainly, as predicted by Engels, capitalism plunged into its deepest and most protracted general crisis. It began in 1914, reached its nadir in 1929 and lasted till the mid 1940s. Only through World War II and the triumph of the USA were the conditions created for a new boom - and what a boom it was.

Capitalism expanded around the world at an unprecedented rate, for an unprecedented length of time. Some could not see what was in front of their noses. Dogmatic insistence on "world capitalism's crisis" and "general crisis" blinded 'official communism' to the reality of the long boom. Failure to grasp the fact that the 1950s and 60s were qualitatively different from the 1920s and 30s inevitably produced a rich harvest of confusion in the ranks of 'official communism'.

There are those who have retreated to one Alternative Economic Strategy version of Keynesianism or another. Many it seemed despairs of serious thought altogether, while some, who still like to pretend that the long boom did not happen, put forward the myopic view that capitalism still goes through a five year cycle and that the fleeting upturn oscillations in the midst of today's general gloom are 'booms'. A veritable goulash of these various ideas can be found in the BRS. Frankly its analysis is not worthy of bourgeois apologetics, let alone the Marxist method.

Capitalism's cycle has been greatly drawn out quantitatively and qualitatively. Where it was once contained within a five year period, capitalism's cycle now stretches over forty, fifty or sixty years. And to this cycle the development of imperialism has added war. This is, after all, the history of capitalism in the twentieth century.

The relative overproduction of capital and the bloated credit system which has characterised capitalism over the last two decades are the classic symptoms of the transitional phase between boom and general crisis. Unless we put a stop to it by making revolution, what lies in front of us is a new general crisis which will certainly dwarf the last one, which included the cataclysmic 1929 crash and two world wars.

As Engels pointed out, the extent and height of a boom determines the extent and depth of a slump. That is why it is vital fully to face up to and understand the long boom. Those, such as the authors of the BRS, who ignore it are hardly in any sort of position to equip the working class for the tasks of the future (for the contemporary situation see 2.1.).

1.1.3.2. World balance

Linked to the idea that capitalism was in permanent general crisis and was quietly withering on the vine, was the contention that there had been "a decisive tilt in the balance of world forces" between capitalism and socialism (our emphasis, p12). Although this might seem daft now, only a couple of years ago we were almost alone in exposing this as untrue and completely alone in pointing to the counterrevolutionary dangers of the real world balance of forces.

It was in the statement issued by the meeting of representatives of communist and workers' parties held in Moscow in November 1960 and at the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1961 (where its 3rd Programme was adopted) that the claim of a "decisive" tilt in the world balance of forces was announced, along with all its opportunist political ramifications.

According to 'official communism' 1960/61, the "general crisis of capitalism" had moved from its "second to third stage". From the stage where, after World War II, socialism became a world system, to where the "balance of forces is changing more and more in favour of socialism", so much so that it comes to be the "deciding factor" in the world's development.6

Necessity is the mother of invention, and this 'discovery' was undeniably born of necessity not fact. 'Official communism' needed a doctrine, plausible to the gullible and by definition optimistic, to maintain its claim that the epoch had gone from being one of wars and revolutions to one where socialism and peace were dominant.

Earlier versions of the BRS had already justified the reformist road with reference to the growing number of socialist countries. But more was needed if Marxist orthodoxy was to be turned on its head. The 'discovery' of a so-called decisive shift in the world
balance fitted the bill perfectly.

As soon as it was 'discovered', it was eagerly incorporated into the BRS. The claim served admirably to shore up and vindicate it against critics. Combined with a reformist concept of the state, the claim that the world balance of forces had tilted constituted a vital extra support through which the authors of the BRS could feel safe in saying that the British "advance to socialism" would not be subject to "foreign military intervention". Because of the changed balance of forces and Britain's traditions (we will deal with them later) socialism will, or so said the BRS, come peacefully and through parliament, ie through a reformist road to socialism.

The 1978 BRS claimed that the tilt "in the direction of socialism and progress" was the "main feature of the world today" (p12). It also wanted us to believe it was only a matter of time before the then existing socialist countries overtook capitalism. The BRS said that in the "post-war period the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries have achieved consistent economic growth increases and maintained full employment and stable prices, in contrast to the crisis-ridden economies of the US and capitalist Western Europe, showing that capitalism will eventually be outpaced by socialism" (our emphasis, p11).

As we have stated above, we never thought that a decisive tilt in the world balance of forces had taken place or for that matter would take place if we relied on the then socialist countries. It is worth repeating our case.

The BRS never actually defined what it meant by the world balance of forces between capitalism and socialism. But it is a safe bet to say that for the BRS in 1978 it was decided by the relative strength of the socialist countries. We would as a matter of course add to this the strength of the working class in the capitalist countries. Although these are related, we can deal with them separately (we will also touch upon the national liberation movements, in which so much faith was placed).

The strength of the socialist countries was never simply evaluated. Rightly though, we always began by looking at what socialist states there were and what relationships existed between them.

The mainstay of the socialist world was obviously the Soviet Union - the country where the working class movement had reached its highest, i.e. the world's revolutionary centre. Around it, what Brezhnev called the socialist community was militarily and economically integrated through the Warsaw Pact and Comecon. Countries like People's China, Albania and Yugoslavia, although socialist were not aligned to the Soviet Union (while a number of capitalist states such as Syria and Iraq were).
Union or was within a hair’s breadth of doing so.

The Soviet Union under Brezhnev may have boasted about its world lead in the production of oil, cement, pig iron and diesel locomotives. Revealingly though, these figures were the economic indices of the 1950s, not the 1980s. Putting them on an unjustified pedestal masked the relative decline of all the socialist countries. The facts were all too clear.

As a percentage of world gross product, and above all in terms of quality, it was widely recognised that their economies were technologically backward, inefficient and wasteful ... and again in relative terms, increasingly so.

We only need recall statistics concerning the energy necessary to produce what is called one unit of GNP. The GDR - the most efficient economy in Comecon - only just equalled the efficiency of Portugal, the most backward member of the European Community which was far behind Federal Germany - its most advanced.

All in all, the imperialist economies always retained their historical advantage over the socialist economies, which emerged in the main on the foundations of backward capitalism. Again, all in all, during the 1970s and 80s the gap stopped narrowing and instead widened. The imperialist powers and capitalism remained the determining force in the world economy. Their metabolism determined the ‘vagaries’ of the world market not least because they never stopped exploiting most of the world through unequal relations of trade, the export of capital and the extraction of massive superprofits.

So taken as a whole the socialist countries could in no way have been said to have "tilted" the world balance of forces if judged in terms of labour productivity. In this respect capitalism remained overwhelmingly the stronger social system.

What about total production? Until a few years ago ‘official communism’ claimed that the socialist countries were rapidly growing and accounted for 43% of the world’s industrial production, and that Comecon alone accounted for 33%. We always questioned this.

Western sources gave Comecon a gross product (and that included Cuba and Vietnam) totalling some $2,020 billion. The economic balance against socialism could be seen if we set this against the top seven imperialist nations' $8,193 billion. Unfortunately these figures were more rather than less accurate, certainly compared with those that used to be triumphantly announced in Novosti publications. The United Nations - a body much admired by 'official communism' - came up with similar statistics. It said that the 'centrally planned economies' accounted for around 20% of the world’s gross product.

Although there are obviously problems with the non-convertibility of the currencies of the then socialist countries, this in no way should have blinded us to the truth. Non-convertibility meant the UN figures were if anything puffed-up, some said by as much as 25% to 30%.

The world is far too dangerous a place to have pretended otherwise. Marx said the task of communists was not merely to interpret the world but to change it. Those who preferred wishful thinking instead of hard fact could never achieve anything. Cooking the books had nothing to do with changing the world. It was always a retreat from the struggle to do so.

The rosy picture painted by the ‘official optimists’ of ‘official communism’ was even more illusory than it might have first appeared. Statistics are one thing, politics another. A statistician could justifiably have taken the socialist countries as a whole. Politically though, this was hardly the case in 1977/8.

Under the leadership of Stalin the socialist world worked in unity. But this was a bureaucratic unity and eventually bound to collapse. Since the late 1940s we saw one conflict after another break out between the socialist countries. There were even armed actions between them, and with the advent of Gorbachevism the on-going process of disintegration plumbed new depths.

Even while they were formally socialist, trade barriers were enforced between Czechoslovakia and Poland. Romania under Ceausescu was lambasted by Hungary. The GDR banned official Soviet publications. Across the board the ruling parties showed themselves completely alienated from the masses - as the bloodshed in Beijing and the wave of democratic counterrevolutions which swept Eastern Europe in 1989 proved beyond doubt (for this see 2.1.3.1.).

This brings us to our last point concerning the strength of what were the socialist countries. Unlike the ‘official communists’, for us living socialism never represented a final victory. The struggle against capitalism continued within the socialist countries and we took that into account when assessing the world balance of forces.
Socialism is not a definite mode of production but a transitional form of society standing in between capitalism and communism. As such it contains within it elements of both, not least the carryovers from capitalism in the form of commodity production and the law of value, as well as the new emerging communist law of planning. The struggle against the former is bound up with the struggle for socialist democracy under socialism, the struggle for the working class to rule directly instead of through a bureaucracy.

This general struggle has an added twist to it because in all the countries of living socialism the working class never exercised hegemony over the bureaucracy. The supposed servant of society was in reality the master. And as could have been seen from the declining growth rates in all the then socialist countries, the stagnation in the Soviet Union and the turn to market socialism, the bureaucracy was no longer able to play any progressive role whatsoever; it became an absolute fetter on the development of the productive forces.

In an attempt to save themselves, the Gorbachevites (and their equivalents in the GDR, Poland and Hungary etc) turned to capitalism, economically and politically. This posed the question who ruled. Either - against the odds - there would have been a political revolution which would transform the bureaucracy from master to servant of society, or there would be an internal counterrevolution, either from below or above. We all know how things turned out.

But before counterrevolution swept Eastern Europe there was never the slightest truth in the 'official communist' claim that the then existing socialist countries had within themselves "decisively tilted" the balance of forces against capitalism. In fact the balance was, from the late 1960s, tilting towards the internal forces of counterrevolution. If they were honest the authors of the BRS would have admitted this. They did not.

The BRS claim that the existing (backward) socialist countries would out-compete (advanced) capitalism originated with JV Stalin. He claimed in the mid 1930s that the USSR could, by its own efforts, and in isolation from the rest of the world, arrive at communism, i.e. abundance.

Communists in Britain have never been known for their ability to think for themselves. So it is hardly surprising that in its own ham-fisted way the BRS puts forward exactly the same proposition for Britain.

At the very least, the theory of communism in one country betrayed a lack of theoretical understanding of what communism is - the fact that it is stateless and classless, and can only operate on a planet wide basis. But it did excuse Stalin's courtship of the bourgeois democracies and the rightist course of the world communist movement, including the leadership of the CPGB.

Only with revolutions in the imperialist heartlands of Western Europe, North America and Japan and the world dictatorship of the proletariat - the World Union of Socialist Republics - and the beginning of the epoch of communism, could the victories which the socialist countries represented for the world's proletariat have been made permanent, irreversible and complete. This fundamental truth was completely absent from the 1978 BRS. So what about the strength of the working class in the capitalist countries and the forces for national liberation?

There is no doubt that, in spite of everything, the march of history is towards communism. Capitalism is moribund and visibly heading for a devastating new general crisis. Only socialism offers the world's population peace and progress. The proletarians of the world, who now have to be counted in the hundreds not tens of millions, are comparatively sophisticated in terms of education and technical knowledge. On a world scale the size of our class has never been greater.

Objectively therefore our class is strong. This, however, is not the end of the story. Class strength is measured not only quantitatively but qualitatively. The Russian working class in 1917 was small in number, but because of revolutionary determination, experience and Bolshevik leadership it was able to seize power and put itself in the vanguard of the country and the world revolution.

In other words the strength of the working class is also a product of its class combativity and communist consciousness. How do things stand in this respect?

From the mid-1920s the world communist movement moved steadily to the right. From the mid-1930s, added to this there began a process of disintegration; ideological unity ended long before the end of organisational unity, the disbanding of the Third International in 1943. This reached its logical conclusion in the late 1980s when 'official communism' collapsed into either organizational liquidation or social democracy. In other words where the collapse
of the Second International took place suddenly, the world communist movement suffered a similar fate, only through a thousand opportunist cuts spread over many decades. So while our class may be strong in numbers, it is subjectively weak. It has no democratic centralist international party. The classic writings of communism have been translated into almost every written language, yet ‘official communism’, as with social democracy before it, has become anti-internationalist. It has national centred programmes which, like the BRS, reek of chauvinism. Like the social democrats, the parties of ‘official communism’ have constituted themselves as left advisers to their own bourgeoisie, demand the protection of ‘our’ industry and immigration controls. As history warns, this is only one step away from supporting imperialist war.

That the bulk of class conscious workers find themselves in the ranks of social democratic type parties - either of the 'official communist' or Labourite genera - is hardly a cause for celebration. But neither is it cause for despair. As indicated above there are significant and important parallels between what is happening in the workers' movement today and what happened to the Second International in 1914, only now what is on the agenda is not beginning the world revolution but completing it. The restoration of capitalism in Eastern Europe and the USSR was popular because people had been won to believe that all that stood between themselves and western-level living standards was the bureaucratic plan. Surely the reality of South American living standards and the role of the new capitalist class as agents of imperialism will infuriate them and will mean that capitalism will be far from stable.

What is needed now, therefore, is for genuine communists in those countries to prepare for new battles and new victories. Of course a precondition for this is ideological victory over opportunism. Only then can the working class be won to act as a class for itself and carry out its self liberation. So it can never be emphasised too strongly that ideological struggle against opportunism is no luxury; it is an integral component part of the struggle against capitalism and the bourgeoisie. That is why we have written this polemic. After all, anyone who has ever read the BRS knows we are not doing it for fun.

Anyway, let us now briefly deal with the national liberation movements. Simply because we are dealing with oppressed, le in the main economically backward nations, it must be admitted that even in those movements led by the most determined revolutionaries, even if formal political independence is secured, imperialism can still crack the economic whip. The examples of Mozambique, Vietnam and Nicaragua tragically illustrate this. Only with further revolutions, above all in the advanced capitalist countries, can the backward parts of the world rapidly advance and become truly free.

It must be admitted though, that for all the socialistic slogans, most liberation movements are led by the petty bourgeoisie, and as such are, at the end of the day, aiming to establish independent capitalist countries where the native, as opposed to the foreign, bourgeoisie can exploit the working class and the people. While we support these movements against imperialism, it is not in our interests to paint them red, to imagine as the BRS does that victories for national liberation movements are equivalent to victories for socialism.

1.1.3.3. A peaceful road?

Due to the supposed new balance of world forces, the leaders of many communist parties claimed world war was preventable simply through supporting pacificist movements. War no longer became the continuation of politics, rather an act of irrationality. The struggle against war was thus divorced from the struggle for world revolution. Furthermore, as imperialism was supposed to be no longer the power it had been, its ability to intervene and drown popular upsurges in blood no longer existed. Thus the parliamentary road to socialism, as advocated by the BRS, was not only a perfectly legitimate strategy, it was the only strategy.

We always opposed this neo-social democracy. For very good reasons too. Those who really fight for communism have no interest in kidding themselves. As we have shown - I think conclusively - the world balance never tilted decisively in favour of socialism. The socialist countries never caught up, let alone

overtook, imperialism. Indeed with the advent of Gorbachevism the gains of
socialism were, state by state, thrown into reverse.

We are confident that through new revolutions a new chapter in the history of socialism will soon begin. But what of the Euros and the CPBers? Looking at the overwhelming evidence that capitalism remains the dominant force on the planet, that there has been no "decisive tilt" in the balance of world forces, indeed that the socialist countries have been reduced from a score to a handful and are still threatened from without and endangered from within, will they abandon their idea that socialism can be won in Britain peacefully, without civil war, etc? Will they admit their wrong assessment and vow to prepare for violent revolution?

That would be the only intellectually honest thing to do. But opportunism is nothing if it is not intellectually dishonest. The opportunists will find new excuses for their opportunism. That, after all, was all their claim that there had been a "decisive tilt" in the world balance of forces, and that the existing socialist countries were "outpacing" capitalism, was all about in the first place.

By exaggerating achievements centrist leaders in the socialist countries could bask in success, even when they were not real. With exaggerated figures all in the garden could be painted rosy. Communism became divorced from international struggle. It became a mechanical process which would proceed smoothly as long as the status quo was not disturbed. We know different. Communism necessitates the continued class struggle of the working class under socialism and the making of revolutions throughout the capitalist world, not least in the imperialist countries. Lenin was right all along.

The revolution will need to be armed and prepared to do violence. The chances of successful counterrevolution are reduced, and the ability of external reactionary intervention is lessened, if there exist powerful fraternal socialist states, not least if they are united in their encouragement of world revolution. But the use of violence, its intensity, is determined by the extent of opposition offered by the capitalists. A peaceful road to socialism is possible in the future. But - and it's a big but - this would be due to the potential of the working class to inflict massive, irresistible and overwhelming punishment in the event of capitalist resistance. Unfortunately this is not the case today.

Some used to argue, in an attempt to excuse the BRS, that as default, so to speak. This was in part wishful thinking, in part downright dangerous.

Socialism never existed outside the world economy. It was a product of its contradictions. There might still just about be two social systems in the world but there is only one world market. As its dominant part goes towards crisis all parts will be affected. Moreover as capitalism plunges into crisis we will not see a universal collapse but a growing unevenness between rival economies and within national economies. In other words there are islands of rapid advance amidst a sea of decline. This was the case in the 1920s and 30s, when, against the general backdrop of decline, the 'sunshine' industries around motor cars, electrical goods and aeroplanes boomed in no uncertain terms. As we know, with the massive advances in computers, biotechnology, superconductivity, lasers and the exploitation of space, it is still the case today and certainly will be tomorrow.

As we mentioned above another feature of capitalist general crisis under imperialism is the drive towards war. The fact is that the imperialist nations always possessed far greater GNPs and had from the late 1960s a growing technological lead; a cause for concern, not least when the leaders of the socialist states sought to appease imperialism with pacifistic speeches and treacherous acts of unilateral disarmament.

Imperialism in crisis dramatically accelerates the power of the means of destruction; it turns humanity's inventiveness to the most obscene use. In World War I Britain's fledgling car industry gave birth to the tank, the brilliant German chemists who had produced all sorts of cleaning agents made possible the horrors of gas warfare. Just over two decades later Hitler ensured German technical genius produced the jet engine, the extermination camp and the V2. Roosevelt and Churchill got their scientists to go one better with the A Bomb.

Are things any different now? No! As I write these lines the US and Britain have just slaughtered 100,000 Iraqi conscripts. That was the post-Cold War peace dividend. The US still has 'wartime' levels of 'defence' spending and a whole new range of smart weapons, stealth aircraft and first strike ballistic missile systems, as well as a continuing SDI programme, to prove that the leopard
has not changed its spots.

All this chilling, almost sci-fi, hardware bears witness to the speed with which the pre-general crisis of capitalism is fuelling the development of the means of destruction. A full blown general crisis will lead to an exponential development in the drive towards war.

While the socialist countries existed under Soviet hegemony as an organised bloc they acted as a restraining hand on imperialism. With their demise the danger of war has greatly increased. Hence, for all his rhetoric to the contrary, Gorbachev has done nothing to serve the cause of peace. This revisionist should receive universal hatred, if not a single bullet.

In 1917, in 1978 and today the only way forward is to carry out our duty to the working class, our proletarian internationalist duty, and fight for revolution. Peace can only come through the working class completing the world revolution. To this end we must undeviatingly build the Party of revolution and support this struggle in every other country without exception.

1.1.4. Britain's crisis

**Imperialism: a policy, or the last stage of capitalism?**

This subsection is titled "Britain's crisis". What the BRS actually deals with here is Britain's decline. It does touch upon the little matter of Ireland in passing, but this is something we will deal with specifically later on. One point though which we do wish to single out from the mishmash of "balance of payments crises", the "growth" of the National Front, the rise in inflation, ie what struck the BRS's authors as important in 1977, is the concept of imperialism. It is projected as being the mistaken policy which has exacerbated "Britain's crisis". This is what passes for 'Marxist-Leninist' theory in the BRS.

Apparently following World War II there was a "need for a complete break with past imperialist policies". But instead, "successive governments, whether Tory or Labour, have continued with such policies" (our emphasis, p13). We have already referred to the implications of this reasoning. A Labour, or even a Tory, government could, if the will was there, "break" with imperialism. After all, it is only a "policy". Such a course would be possible if imperialism was nothing more than that. If that was the case, then yes. This or that government could discard imperialism like a pair of smelly old socks. But imperialism is not simply a policy.

The most precise definition of imperialism was supplied to us by VI Lenin. He said the essence of imperialism is monopoly capitalism. It is the replacement of competitive, industrial capitalism by monopoly through the massive concentration of the ownership of the means of production into fewer and fewer hands and the growing together of industrial capital and banking capital to form finance capital. In other words it is a stage - the highest - in capitalism's evolution.

No matter what privatisations, monopoly commissions and price regulations various governments have concocted in the name of promoting competition, the last two decades have seen monopolisation reach heights hardly imaginable a century ago. As to the growing together of industrial monopolies with banking monopolies, their merger was long ago completed, a fact we can illustrate with almost any big 'industrial' company.

Many of these enterprises have bankers on the board. Many earn more by moving money around the world than they do by producing commodities (as was recently the case with car manufacturers like Rover and Volkswagen). That, and the ever-increasing pace of international takeovers, reinforces the correctness of Lenin's insistence that under imperialism the export of capital assumes greater importance than the export of commodities. Only to philistines are ICI, BAE or Glaxo examples of industrial capitalism. In fact they are all standard examples of the merger of industrial and banking capital, ie finance capital.

Because imperialism is parasitic and lives through the export of capital, it inevitably engenders a tendency towards stagnation and decay in the metropolitan country. More and more capital is
controlled from the City of London but the origin of surplus value is more and more from outside the frontiers of Britain.

Indeed during the Thatcher years the stratum of capitalists who play no part in production, whose profits depend solely on 'clipping coupons', expanded enormously with the massive upsurge in the export of capital, so-called 'overseas investments'. This, as Lenin said, goes hand in hand with industrial stagnation in the metropolitan countries. So it is worth noting that in spite of all the Thatcher/Major hype about a British industrial renaissance, investment in industrial production still hovers not far above 1979 levels.

Lenin said that with the monopolisation of the economy and the subordination of the majority of the world to imperialism, capitalism becomes moribund - it holds back the development of the forces of production from what would be possible if they were organised along socialist lines (in order to reflect the social nature of production). In other words imperialism is a relative fetter on the productive forces.

Imperialism also comes to represent an absolute danger to what has been achieved by thousands of years of human labour. As witnessed by the twentieth century, the century of imperialism, one step behind the uneven growth rates of the great powers stalks war. Uneven development means that imperialist peace can only be a preparation for imperialist war. Rising powers are forced by the iron laws of capitalism to challenge the declining established powers and if a peaceful redivision proves impossible war is inevitable.

The two world wars we have seen in our century show this, as does imperialism's regressive effect on the world economy. Through the slaughter of 75 million people, the destruction of countless cities and the diversion of production to the task of destruction, imperialism has dramatically forced down the 'natural' growth of the world economy. The monstrous, and historically unprecedented in peace time, levels of spending on arms since 1945 have had a similar effect. With today's military technology, who can doubt that a third imperialist world war would have an absolute effect on production; it would throw the world back into a new dark age.

Clearly, if we understand imperialism as monopoly (whether in the form of Marks and Spencer, British Telecom or Barclays Bank), there can be no talk of it being discarded by this or that government. Those, like the authors of the BRS, who called for a non-imperialist capitalism are in effect calling for capitalism to return to the womb, for the monopolies to de-evolve into hundreds and thousands of small competing concerns, employing tens not tens of thousands of workers.

This is like disinventing the wheel. It is sheer nonsense. Imperialism can only be 'discarded' by going forward with a social revolution. This will transfer ownership of Marks and Spencer, British Telecom and Barclays Bank, etc, to the workers' state in Britain, merge them with their former monopolistic rivals Next, Mercury and National Westminster, etc, and then as quickly as possible hand them over to the workers' world government.

Why do the authors of the BRS insist on being so daft? It is hardly ignorance. They have ready access to the works of Lenin. The Euro organisation received tens of thousands of pounds in hidden subsidy from Moscow every year from their sale. So why did they refuse to define imperialism as a definite stage in the development of capitalism?

The answer is, in a word, material interest.

Marx made the point that the ancient proletariat of Rome lived at the expense of society and that conversely capitalist society lived at the expense of the modern proletariat. This remains true, but it has to be admitted that imperialism has complicated the picture somewhat. A privileged, upper layer of the working class has been brought into existence and lives partially at the expense of the proletariat in the subordinate and neo-colonial countries. Through the enormous superprofits capitalists can gain from abroad over and above those which it squeezes out of its 'own' workers, it is possible to bribe, through countless direct, indirect, overt and covert methods, the leaders of the labour movement and their hangers on. Hence superprofits obtained through imperialism are the material basis for the growth of opportunism.

A 'bourgeoisified' layer of the working class develops thanks to the crumbs from the imperialists' table. It enjoys what is essentially a petty bourgeois lifestyle, indeed to a degree it merges with the petty bourgeoisie. Politically this enables capital to put the labour bureaucracy on the payroll and turn it into an agent of the bosses within the working class movement.

The BRS as a programme reflected the interests of the labour
bureaucracy in Britain; it has an interest in the reform of capitalism - channelling British capital into British industry for example - but it fears any challenge to the system itself.

At its origin the leadership of our CPGB was made up of those whose conception of communist practice did not go much beyond left centrism. In spite of our profound respect for Arthur MacManus, Albert Inkpin, Tom Bell and other founding comrades, this has to be admitted. Unfortunately the ideological weakness was never fully rectified. There was consequently a failure to really steel the Party ideologically. Hence it was vulnerable to infection from bourgeois ideas, not least once the leadership of the Soviet Union itself began to retreat from the principles of scientific socialism under JV Stalin.

Some will consider what we have just said to be a slight against those who devoted their lives to the struggle for socialism. Nothing could be further from the truth. The growth of bourgeois ideas is not the result of agents or a lack of militants with guts. At the risk of oversimplification, bourgeois, ie opportunist, ideas come into the communist movement through, so to speak, the very air we breathe. They are a spontaneous product of commodity production (of which capitalism is the highest but not the only example).

Only with constant and unyielding ideological struggle can the ever present ideas of the capitalist class and its dominant culture be combated. We all know this did not happen in the CPGB. In the absence of an unyielding struggle for a scientific, revolutionary world outlook, the inevitable 'bourgeoisification' saw the 'official' CPGB end up with a programme which wanted to defend Britain's parliament, which refused to demand the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and could not even bring itself to pay lip service to the fact that imperialism is far more than a mere policy.

Thus alongside the bourgeoisie Britain had - to paraphrase Engels - a bourgeois aristocracy, a bourgeoisified upper section of the working class, a bourgeois Labour Party and a bourgeois 'official communist' programme.

Reading the BRS, how can this last point be doubted. Far from appreciating the significance of imperialism as a stage in capitalism's evolution, outlining ways to combat its political and ideological effects on the working class, the BRS precisely reflects the influence of imperialism on the working class movement.

The simple truth is that to break imperialism is to break capitalism itself. Whatever utopian schemes the authors of the BRS might have dreamed up, there can be no post-imperialist capitalism. The door to the past is permanently closed. The future is a matter of either descent into barbarity through an imperialist world war or a qualitative leap to socialism through the proletarian revolution.

1.1.5. Strategy for socialism

In spite of its title this subsection does not present any sort of a strategy for socialism, only yet another rehash of arguments which excuse developing a real strategy for socialism.

We are told correctly that it is necessary to go beyond the defensive struggles which characterised the late 1960s and early 70s. There must, says the BRS - again correctly - be a "struggle to end capitalism"; "capitalism's crisis cannot be solved within the limits of capitalism"; "only socialism can overcome the basic contradiction of capitalist society" and for that what is needed is "socialist revolution" (p15). But does the BRS mean it?

Not at all. As we have seen, the BRS is full of opportunist escape clauses. Deviously, after outlining the advantages of socialism, it again claims that the so-called "decisive change in the balance of world forces" makes it possible to have a "revolution" without world war, military intervention, civil war or for that matter social collapse (p16).

But why does the BRS link world war and military intervention and civil war and violent revolution? Simple. Those who advocate a genuinely revolutionary strategy - which in the case of capitalist resistance would include violent revolution, itself a form of civil war - can be dismissed as lunatics, advocates of world war. Of course, this is only done by implication. Nonetheless it is transparent, a ruse to break the struggle for socialism in Britain from developments in the world as a whole and lay the basis for dishonestly calling the BRS's programme of reforms a "strategy for socialism".
1.2. The forces for change in Britain

Section two of the BRS is devoted to the various classes, strata and movements in Britain today and their relationship to social progress, something we would at our stage of historical development in Britain only define as progress from capitalism to communism.

The 'progressive' forces would, according to the BRS, be united into something called the "broad democratic alliance", the Euro replacement for the "anti-monopoly alliance" of previous editions. The BRS assures us that the broad democratic alliance "would embrace the great majority of the people and would be overwhelmingly superior in number and strength to the forces which want to maintain the status quo." Why? Because "those who own and control the monopolies which dominate the economic and political system in Britain are only a tiny minority of the people" (p17). It is clear that the BRS bases its comforting picture of the future on population statistics not politics (which is crystallised economics).

In bourgeois society bourgeois ideas are the ruling ideas. Those who "dominate the economic and political system in Britain" might be a "tiny minority". They are, because of ideas and money (economics) able to count on the middle class, and at this moment in time, through the Labour Party, on the overwhelming majority of the working class.

Even the Tory Party, which Is the most open champion of those who "dominate the economic and political system in Britain", is able to command the votes of a sizeable swathe of the working class. Not surprisingly the authors of the BRS make no reference to the political problems imperialism has produced in our class. This was more than an oversight if we agree with Lenin that the upper layer of the working class in countries like Britain constitutes the main social support for bourgeois rule.

Only in the midst of the most profound socio-political crisis, where the ruling class is suffering the deepest internal divisions and the masses are unwilling to be ruled in the old way would it be possible for the forces of revolution to achieve anything like an arithmetical majority, even though objectively speaking they are always acting on behalf of the vast majority, indeed, when all is said and done, the whole of humanity. However, the BRS's parliamentarist embrace of the "great majority of the people" will never be requited.

1.2.1. Classes in capitalist society

The 1978 BRS says that: "Building the broad democratic alliance involves an understanding of the class forces in capitalist society in Britain." Of course, the broad democratic alliance is a utopian dream; it is also reformist. Politically therefore the "broad democratic alliance" excludes the entire spectrum of the revolutionary left; sociologically however, on the right it stretches almost to the point of infinity.

What then is our attitude towards democracy and alliances? Communists do not dismiss the struggle for reforms in the least but we fight for them in a revolutionary fashion. Nor do we on principle shun alliances with other classes and political forces. For us though, unlike the BRS, reforms and alliances are means to an end, not an end in themselves. For us they are considered in light of the aim of enabling the revolutionary vanguard of the working class to exercise hegemony over the working class and society as a whole so as to make revolution.
1.2.1.1. The working class

The main substance and purpose of this subsection is to blithely and reassuringly announce that the leading force in the [broad democratic] alliance will be the working class”. The BRS advanced two reasons as to why this should be. Firstly, its "interests are most directly opposed to those of the capitalist ruling class"; and secondly, because it is "the great majority of the population".

For those concerned with winning reformist parliamentary majorities the last question is of prime importance. Obviously the authors of the BRS like to believe that their "broad democratic alliance" articulates the interests of those who are "most directly opposed to those of the capitalist ruling class", rather than the labour bureaucracy.

What makes the working class crucial for us, though, is not simply the antagonistic contradiction which exists between it and the capitalists, or its size. The slaves and peasants of the ancient world made up a majority of the population and there was an antagonistic contradiction between them and the tiny minority of slave owners. Likewise the serfs made up the majority of the population under feudal society and had interests which were antagonistic to those of the landowners. In spite of numerous revolts, the popular classes of ancient and feudal society were not revolutionary classes, rather than the labour bureaucracy.

Of course, left to itself, left to its spontaneous struggle, the working class exists merely as a class in itself. Trade union struggles over wages, conditions and against this or that law, leave the working class as a slave or serf class. But through the intervention of communists the working class can be transformed into a class for itself - a future ruling class which has an undeviating interest in social progress because its self liberation lies in the triumph of the communist mode of production (a society where production is not fettered by social restraints). While the size of the working class is important, it is not the key to this role. In the Russia of 1917 workers constituted only roughly 10 per cent of the population. Because the working class was concentrated in the cities and big towns, because of the collective nature of its labour, it was able to exercise considerably greater social weight than its numbers would suggest. More, because the working class was led by a party guided by Marxism and based on the principles of proletarian internationalism it was able to exercise hegemony over all oppressed classes and strata in the country - in particular the peasantry, with which it formed a revolutionary alliance.

Having established that size is not the crucial question, let us move on. The BRS rightly takes a wider view of the composition of the working class than bourgeois sociology. As well as industrial manual workers, it considers that the working class a also consists of "non-manual workers in industry and distribution such as technicians, clerical and sales workers" and "workers in the health service, the civil service and local government." Their interests "broadly coincide with those of the workers in manual occupations, and indeed the distinctions between manual and non-manual work is more and more being broken down by modern processes of production."

In terms of interests, those of "manual and non-manual workers" do not "broadly coincide", they do coincide in the form of the class interest in communism. Of course, if the working class operates only at the level of a class in itself, it is riven by opposing competitive interests which pit not only blue and white collar workers against each other but every section against every other section.

A further difference we have with the BRS is a passing, but revealing, reference to black workers (who might be interested to learn that the BRS supports 'non-racist' immigration controls, and thus 'non-racist' deportations - see 1.5.5.). It is erroneously implied that black workers are less unionised than other workers. "Winning black workers, who often find themselves in unorganised factories, for active participation in the trade union movement, and giving them its full support is vital" says the BRS (p19).

This is a patronising attitude. In actual fact black workers have for a long time been more organised on average than other workers.
On occasions they might find themselves "in small unorganised factories", but more likely they would work in industries with large concentrations of workers, such as health, transport and car manufacture. The real problem then is not winning black workers to actively participate in the trade union movement but removing the chauvinist trade union bureaucracy from its leadership.

1.2.1.2. The capitalist class

We agree in broad terms that:

"The capitalist class comprises the owners and controllers of the means of production, distribution, and exchange - the factories, banks, shops land etc, - and their agents. People in higher management positions and in the higher echelons of the civil service and the state apparatus, although they sell their labour power, are part of the ruling class because they act directly on behalf of the capitalists, identify with them, and own substantial amounts of company shares" (p20).

Also that:

"Within it there is a minority exercising the dominant power - those who control the very big firms, which not only exploit the workers, but also operate at the expense of many smaller businesses, small shopkeepers and small farmers" (p20).

But then it is claimed that:

"There is ... an objective basis for an alliance between the working class and many in those sections of the capitalist class [the non-monopoly bourgeoisie - JCI against the common enemy - the big British and international capitalists" (p20).

We have a number of objections to this. The "big British" capitalists - the monopoly capitalist imperialist bourgeoisie - are our main enemy. Lumping in "international capitalists" is dangerous.

After all, in two world wars big British capitalists succeeded in lining up the mass of the population behind their fight against German 'international' capital, their bitter rival. For us the main enemy is at home.

In Britain, as in any capitalist country, there are contradictions between the monopoly and non-monopoly bourgeoisie, but this is a secondary contradiction. All capitalists are pitted against each other in the market, are engaged in a fight for survival against each other. This is also a secondary contradiction, for all capitalists are interested in the continuation of the capitalist system. All are united in wanting the working class to continue for ever as wage slaves.

The capitalist system in Britain may be dominated by monopoly capital. But although the non-monopoly bourgeoisie suffers because of this, it also benefits from monopoly capitalism's exploitation of the world through imperialism and its ability to keep the working class passive. So as well as contradiction there is also benefit, which is the main feature of the relationship of non-monopoly capital to monopoly capital.

This is reflected politically. The non-monopoly bourgeoisie is politically united behind the monopoly bourgeoisie. It has no real independent voice. It supports organisations like the Freemasons, the Tory Party and the Confederation of British Industry, which are undoubtedly dominated by the monopoly bourgeoisie. So, while monopoly capital does operate at the expense of small capitals, the small capitalists are tied to the coat-tails of imperialism. Naturally, like the monopoly bourgeoisie, the non-monopoly bourgeoisie is opposed to working class revolution and as we know from countless examples it is most decidedly not democratic or anti-imperialist.

Ideologically this section of the capitalist class is narrow-minded, irrational and violently anti-working class. It champions 'stand on your own feet' old-fashioned capitalism, and hates trade unions with a vehemence that puts Norman Tebbit to shame. And in times of acute crisis, those capitalist forces which the BRS wants to win to the 'broad democratic alliance' find themselves drawn to the fascist solution, not revolution. In short, the non-monopoly bourgeoisie is a reactionary section of society.

If the non-monopoly bourgeoisie were to organise itself independently of the monopoly bourgeoisie, a reformist alliance with it
would be possible. The Euros used to regularly and pathetically propose electoral pacts between themselves, Labour (which is a monopoly bourgeois workers' party) and the former Alliance parties (which were politically also parties of the monopoly bourgeoisie). What this shows is that a reformist alliance could be formed with any section of the capitalist class. A reformist alliance would be within the confines of bourgeois politics and would simply be a case of the working class subordinating itself to bourgeois interests.

Our task is to break bourgeois influence over the working class, not blur class contradictions. We must fight for working class political independence from the bourgeoisie, big, medium and small. In today's Britain a revolutionary alliance between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, even a disaffected section of it, is an utter impossibility because no section of the bourgeoisie has been revolutionary for well over a century.

This does not mean we close our eyes to the likelihood of individuals from this class defecting to the proletariat - many fine communists have come from the ranks of the bourgeoisie. Nor do we close our eyes to fissures opening up between sections of the bourgeoisie.

Even in peaceful times divisions between various sections of the monopoly bourgeoisie and non-monopoly bourgeoisie play an important part in the life of society. In a revolutionary situation even more so. Hence during the run-up to insurrection communists pay particular attention to divisions in the ruling class so as to take advantage of the political openings they create. All sorts of tactics can be used. We can even attempt to politically neutralise the non-monopoly bourgeoisie by offering it big concessions so as to weaken our main enemy. But this hardly constitutes "an objective basis for an alliance" between the non-monopoly bourgeoisie and the working class.

1.2.1.3. Intermediate strata

The BRS says that "in contemporary capitalist society the great majority of people are either members of the working class or the capitalist class" (p21). This is a typically sloppy formulation. The "great majority of people" in Britain are working class. The capitalist class is, in terms of numbers - as we have already seen the BRS state - minute. Presumably what the authors of the BRS are trying to say is that the working class and the capitalist class are the two basic classes in capitalist society. But we will not put words into their mouths. Let the bumbleheads be judged on what they actually say. Incidentally the CPB's own BRS uses this very same formulation - see chapter two.

Anyway, in between the two basic classes are the middle strata, including the petty bourgeoisie, which consist of "middle-grade management and the middle ranks of the state apparatus ... Members of family businesses, small shopkeepers and small farmers who employ little or no labour ... professional sections like lawyers, doctors, writers and artists who are self-employed" (p21).

The BRS says these strata are "affected by the social and economic crisis of capitalism" and calls for "policies" to win "as many as possible among these sections for the broad democratic alliance". We too look to winning "as many as possible" from the middle classes - not to reform, however, but to revolution.

We would certainly be prepared to enter into alliances with revolutionary organisations of the middle class. However, given the unlikely possibility of the intermediate strata in Britain producing serious revolutionary organisations, our main strategy toward this section of the population as a whole should be to neutralise them as allies of monopoly capital.

In Britain, even with the petty bourgeoisification of the upper layer of the working class, the intermediate strata constitute a comparatively small, historically declining, sector of the population due to the development of capitalist production and the
consequent effect of the dominant process of proletarianisation. Having said this though, it is important not to dismiss these strata.

The impact of a capitalist crash will plunge the now prosperous middle class into financial crisis and into violent political action. Although the intermediate strata make up no more than 20% of the population, prising sections away from loyalty to the imperialist bourgeoisie would represent an important victory for the forces of the revolution.

Not surprisingly the BRS has no understanding of the two sided and wavering nature of the middle classes - how they are tied to imperialism through Jobs as its well paid servants, and yet capable of being drawn to the working class. For the BRS it is enough to say that they have interests opposed to monopoly capital.

For us the intermediate strata cannot under any circumstances be considered consistent allies of the working class, even in the struggle for democratic rights (see subsection 1.2.8.). They will only want to be a friend of the Working class when the working class is strong enough to impose its leadership and looks like a future ruling class.

1.2.2. The labour movement

According to the BRS the "main influence of the working class on society is expressed through the labour movement". This is true for a working class that is merely the class in itself. But for the class for itself, the "main influence of the working class on society is expressed through" a genuine Communist Party.

The term "labour movement" is used in the BRS as an alternative for the working class as a whole, although it admits "it does not yet comprise the whole of the working class". The BRS says that the labour movement includes the "trade unions, the Labour Party, the Communist Party, and the cooperative movement, and such organisations as the shop stewards committees and trades councils"(p21).

We consider the term working class movement a more appropriate term to use when dealing with the politics and organisations of our class. In spite of this quibble, reformism is rightly said to be the "dominant outlook" in the "labour movement".

The BRS provides us with the following definition of that outlook: "Its main features include class collaboration rather than class struggle; the view that the state is neutral and can serve the interests of a Labour government as well as Tory or Liberal governments; and the belief that the industrial power of the workers should not be used for political, but only for economic ends" (p22).

Let us clear up one point here. If we take as our starting point the BRS's understanding of the state, there can be no question whatsoever that it has in practice been used in the interests of governments - Liberal, Tory and yes, Labour. This is not a naive 'reformist' illusion but a bald statement of fact. The BRS insinuates that Labour governments are in some way different, and that their good intentions are foiled by the nasty capitalist state. This is not true. The Labour Party (and the Tory and Liberal parties) have willingly and enthusiastically served the capitalist bureaucratic-military state.

More damning of the BRS, though, is its definition of reformism.

1.2.2.1. What is reformism?

According to the BRS, reformism is "class collaboration rather than class struggle", a "belief that the state is neutral", and a "belief that the industrial strength of the working class should not be used for political, only economic ends". This is a deliberately selective and indeed distorted definition. Right wing reformism undoubtedly fits the bill. But what of left reformism?

It most certainly believes it pursues the class struggle. It does not in the main think the state is neutral and certainly is prepared to use industrial strength for political ends. We heard calls on more than one occasion for the use of industrial action to bring down Thatcher from the likes of Scargill, Benn, Livingstone and Skinner.
Aren’t they reformists? Not, it would seem, according to the BRS.

By defining reformism in such a way that excludes left reformism, the little matter of revolution is cynically slipped under the carpet. This is contemptible but understandable. After all, the BRS wants to avoid defining itself reformist!

Falsehood has to be relentlessly added to falsehood. The BRS goes on to maintain that: "The reformist strategy is based entirely on the ballot box" (our emphasis p35). What a whopper! It is because the BRS has completely embraced reformism that it employs such blunderingly crass formulations. Instead of being honest, the authors of the BRS try to hide their reformist shame with a linguistic fig leaf.

It is all too transparent; the truth is easily seen. Let us quote three reasonably well-known left reformists, so they can speak for themselves on extra-parliamentary action. Revealingly, their views are if anything to the left of the BRS.

- "We cannot achieve socialism through parliamentary channels alone".
- "A defeat of the Tory government will be brought about by a series of disputes, of which parliament is only part".
- "I am not in favour of the army. I am in favour of replacing it with armed workers’ brigades in the factories".

Do these statements actually put these left reformists beyond reformism? In a word, no. None of them fight for the liberation of the working class through revolution and working class dictatorship. They all look - sincerely perhaps - to parliament being transformed into an organ of genuine democracy, using, among other tactics, extra-parliamentary pressure.

Few, except The Sun, would seriously suggest these Labourites have embraced revolutionary politics. Neither has the BRS. No matter how it twists and turns, crudely redefines reformism and calls it revolution, reformism remains reformism.

So what is reformism? Reformism in the workers’ movement is the denial of the necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist state. This is not a full, rounded definition of reformism; it does not tackle the important question of reformism’s mass support, nor the possibility of centrist currents developing from the reformist milieu, but it is its essence, its kernel, and it should be the starting point from which any serious attempt to analyse reformism should begin.

1.2.2.2. Left and right reformism

Running through the BRS is the congenital left reformist assumption that what lies at the heart of the labour movement is the struggle between "left and right". The BRS says that the labour movement is a "battle ground between a right wing trend, composed of the most consistent exponents of reformist policies, and a left wing trend, which has often challenged the practical policies resulting from reformism." It goes on to say that: "The issues on which this right-left conflict has been fought out have constantly changed, and the political positions of individuals have shifted, but the clash has been constant and will continue" (p23).

In this way - yes, using yet another sleight of hand - the BRS tries to obscure the basic contradiction in the working class movement: that of revolution or reform.

There are differences between left and right reformism. This cannot be denied. But these differences do not, like reform and revolution, make up dialectical opposites, the struggle between which results in a positive outcome on a higher level, that is the victory of revolutionary politics in the form of the socialist revolution and the building of communism.

The struggle between left and right reformist politics leads nowhere. The two wings of reformism play complementary roles. The struggle between them is secondary to their unity and, until revolution intervenes, never ending. The reformist left and right are in the last analysis symbiotic and on the same side against revolution.

When in office the reformists carry out bourgeois policies and when in opposition ‘realistic’ alternatives are offered. Right reformism shoulders the main burden here. But whether in office or in loyal opposition, working class support must be maintained. It
is on to the shoulders of the left that this task falls.

The left reformists 'insist' on 'genuine socialist policies' while calling for the masses to keep their faith in the 'movement'. To do this, some sort of a coherent ideology is needed. This is where the left's ideas of transforming capitalism into socialism through the medium of the capitalist state come in.

While the left argues itself into knots in an attempt to square its reformist dream with reality, the right presents a consistent 'realistic' reformist face to the capitalist class. Part and parcel of this is keeping the left in line, preventing it from 'going too far', when necessary witch hunting, purging and expelling elements of it.

As a result the left/right reformist conflict is never ending. The left is always doomed to defeat, never endingly doomed to apologise for the disappointing last Labour government while prattling on about the marvels of the next Labour government.

After the debacle of the Wilson/Callaghan government, left reformists refused to draw the inescapable conclusion that Labour governments will always be anti-working class. One of the most notable apologists was the late Eric Heifer. In spite of seeing from inside the reality of government, he immediately dangled before his supporters the prospect of a "bold and audacious" next Labour government which would not "settle once again for propping up the capitalist system, but from the start carry out fundamental changes so that stage-by-stage the capitalist system is eliminated."

Heifer, an ex-minister of the crown, like other left and former left reformist leaders such as Kinnock and MacDonald, Livingstone and Bevan, Benn and Wilson, personifies the contradictions of reformism. They are thrown from left to right by the contradictory demands of governing a capitalist state, or presenting themselves as fit for the job of government and the need to maintain the allegiance of the working class.

The kaleidoscopic shifting factional alignments in the Labour Party, the moves to the left and then to the right by this or that individual, the socialist promises and treacherous sellouts should not be interpreted as being at the heart of the struggle for socialism. As we have seen, nothing could be further from the truth. The war within the reformist camp is permanent but secondary. Only the successful war against reformism (of all varieties) must be defeated. The Communist Party must triumph in the minds of the working class.

Here we will touch upon the question of economism. According to the BRS it is necessary for the Communist Party to break the

### 1.2.3. Trade unions

#### The labour bureaucracy

The danger of the BRS painting pale pink left reformists a darker, revolutionary hue can be seen in the following passage in the subsection on trade unions. It says that: "To win workers to a socialist, and not only a militant, class outlook, increased political activity by the Communist Party and the Labour left in the workplace is essential" (our emphasis, p24).

The Labour left is thus given a progressive, nay communist, role. Yet as we know from the theory of Marxism-Leninism, and life's rich confirmation, only a Communist Party can win workers to understand their historic mission of making the socialist revolution and building communism. We would call this communist consciousness opposed to the catch all "socialist world outlook" in the BRS.

The Labour left is in fact part of the problem, the Communist Party is the solution. One of the key tasks of the Communist Party is to split away the electoral base of the Labour Party. This might or might not be done using the tactic of forming a united front (an alliance) with Labourites. Nonetheless at the end of day to win workers to communist consciousness the ideas of reformism in all their varieties must be defeated. The Communist Party must triumph in the minds of the working class.

Only through being won to the leadership of the Communist Party - guided as it is by the scientific world outlook of Marxism - can the working class transcend trade union and left Labourite consciousness (a form of bourgeois consciousness) and realise itself as a class for itself as opposed merely to a class in itself. The workplaces will then become the fortresses of communism.

Here we will touch upon the question of economism. According to the BRS it is necessary for the Communist Party to break the
"grip" which "economism" has over the labour movement (p23). A worthy aim. But what the authors of the BRS mean by "economism" is "the trade union struggle on economic issues as sufficient in itself." This is not economism. Economism is a variety of opportunism affecting socialists and communists. It is not something emanating from trade unions as such.

Economism is the doctrine which states that before political issues like Ireland, gay rights or making revolution can be put to the working class it is essential for workers to first fight around economic issues. Economism therefore erroneously states that politics loyally follows economics. If the "grip" of economism is to be broken then the ideological positions we need to take on are not those of the trade unions as such but those of the likes of the Socialists Workers Party.

Let us now turn our attention to the trade union movement itself and its leaders. The BRS explains the trade union leadership's commitment to the continuation of capitalism, its reformism, its treachery etc, in the following way: "Over many years leaders of the working class movement have been drawn into the practice of class collaboration, as part of the capitalist power structure, and have enjoyed some of its rewards, including company directorships. This has made reformism particularly strong at the higher levels of the movement" (p22). This is only part of the story.

The BRS refuses to recognise that the class collaborationism of trade union officialdom stems from the fact that it constitutes a social caste resting on the working class but with sectional interests which run counter to the long term interests of the class as a whole. Trade union officialdom is in point of fact a key part of the labour bureaucracy, which also embraces Labour MPs and MEPs, along with research assistants, journalists, Labour JPs, councillors and assorted full time hangers on.

In spite of Thatcher booting trade union officials out from the corridors of power and a decline in trade union membership, the trade union part of the labour bureaucracy still consists of many thousands of full time functionaries, 100% time off convenors and branch officers. It employs an estimated 10,000 people," controls millions of pounds in property and shares. At its top there exists a stratum consisting of several hundreds, who enjoy a chauffeur driven life-style similar to that of middle to top management.

Not surprisingly, as the BRS does not want to locate the treachery of trade union officialdom in its narrow sectional interests, the term labour bureaucracy is never used, although it is a perfectly orthodox one in communist circles. Given the prominence of the labour bureaucracy, and its despicable history in Britain, refusal - and that is what it is - to call things by their real names is a direct result of the desire by the authors of the BRS not to face up to the material reasons why all reformist trade union functionaries (left and right) end up practising class collaboration.

For all its socialistic banners, rule books and protestations the trade union bureaucracy does not work to end the capitalist system. As we have indicated this is not because of a lack of moral backbone, though with a few exceptions trade union officials are notorious for their spinelessness. Neither is it £30,000 plus salaries, chauffeur driven cars and expense account meals by themselves which have made "reformism particularly strong at the higher levels" of the trade union movement. Nor is it direct bribery.

The company directorships, peerages, knighthoods, OBEs, seats on the remaining 'quangos' and commissions of inquiry, coupled with lavish wining and dining mentioned in the BRS result, in reality, from the social position of the labour bureaucracy as an intermediary between labour and capital.

Because of this, trade union officialdom is ideologically bound hand and foot to the existing system: a system which, as the working class has no commodity to sell other than its ability to labour, is a system of wage slavery. Trade union officials bargain for higher wages for workers' labour power. That is their function, which even those compromised by single union/no strike deals have to fulfil at least to some extent.

Marxists do not let themselves be overwhelmed by the stench of bribery and corruption that hangs over the labour bureaucracy.

Bribery and corruption are only a symptom of the basic problem. While we demand that officials are paid only the average wage of their members, that they are electable and recallable and that all negotiations with the bosses be open, at the end of the day the difference between one reformist trade union leader, who is transparently corrupt, and another, who is not, is one of degree not substance.

Under capitalism labour power is sold on the market like any other commodity. Although commodities, on average, exchange for commodities (eg money) of equivalent value, equivalence is not
necessarily the case with every exchange, indeed it is not invariably the case. If we understand this we can understand both the importance and limitation of trade unions.

Trade unions represent a tremendous gain for the working class (even under the domination of a bureaucratic caste). Just like the oil producers getting the best price for their commodity through the Opec cartel, workers form cartels (trade unions) to suppress competition among themselves and get the best price for their labour power on the market. Yet although the constant efforts of the capitalists to pay for labour power below its value can be combated, even the most militant strikes, factory occupations, mass demonstrations and agitation for social reform cannot by themselves end the system of wage slavery.

The bureaucrats are attached to the 'common sense' idea of a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. As a result even the most militant, most intransigent reformist trade unionists cannot escape the confines of bourgeois political practice, even though it is the bourgeois politics of the working class. British bosses might not like Opec or the TUC. However they can learn to live with them.

Without being won to accept the leadership of a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party, trade unions are inevitably dominated by officials who tend to have the role, outlook and social position of the merchant rather than the class fighter. Trade union officialdom owes its position in society to becoming specialists in the bargaining process over the price for which labour power is sold. This enables it to accrue for itself privileges. It also leads to a sectional outlook which at the end of the day seeks to perpetuate wage slavery rather that fight for its abolition. After all, without the wages system there would be no bargaining over wages.

Hence although it is in the interests of the working class as a whole to abolish the wages system, leave behind class society and build communism, the labour bureaucracy is ideologically and materially committed to working within the (capitalist) system. Proof of this can be seen in the fact that the bureaucratic stratum has to all intents and purposes become the labour lieutenants of capital.

As we have already pointed out, the authors of the BRS obviously have much in common with the labour bureaucracy. Like the labour bureaucracy, the BRS is totally lacking in any conception of how to fuse the day to day struggles of trade unionists with the struggle for revolution. Neither is there any perspective as to how trade unionists should formulate their demands in a revolutionary, as opposed to a reformist way. Without a revolutionary perspective the BRS cannot offer any serious guidelines for communists working in trade unions. All it serves up are prosaic platitudes about "mass action".

Given its affinity to the trade union bureaucracy, the BRS is afraid to call for trade unions to become politically dependent on the Communist Party, afraid to say that communists should fearlessly fight for democracy in the trade unions and seek to replace reformist leaders with communist ones who would work under the iron discipline of the Party, afraid to call for trade unions to be made into schools for revolution. None of this is excusable in a communist programme. But then the BRS is no communist programme.

We take a very different perspective to that of the BRS. Leninists have always argued that workers in trade unions should not only struggle for a bigger slice of the cake under capitalism. This does not mean demanding 'socialism now' or some such nonsense. But it does mean linking where we are in the here and now to the fight for revolution.

Communists do this by winning workers to fight for what they need, not simply what capitalism can afford. Whether a company is in profit or loss (books, especially those of transnationals, are easily cooked by accountants) is not our concern.

What workers need is, of course, determined socially, by the level of subsistence in society. In Britain that means wages for unskilled work should be able to purchase enough to properly house, feed, clothe, transport and culturally develop a family of four at the present level of social development, at today's prices (1991) this amounts to something like a minimum of £250 per week (this incidentally should also be the level of unemployment benefit). If capitalism cannot afford such a basic demand then it must go. This is how communists approach trade union demands.
1.2.4. The cooperative movement

As with the section on trade unions, no revolutionary tasks were posed for communists in the cooperative movement. The BRS limited itself to vague calls for increased sales and liaison with the trade unions.

1.2.5. The Labour Party

The Labour Party, we were told, is "the mass party of the working class." Not only that, but "changing the politics of the Labour Party is bound up with changing the politics of the working class." And in an attempt to further muddy the waters the BRS states that: "The Communist Party does not seek to replace the Labour Party as the federal party of the working class" (our emphasis, p28).

First, let us deal with the BRS on not replacing the Labour Party as the "federal" party of the working class - an example of sheer sophistry. Of course, the Communist Party should not seek to replace the Labour Party as the "federal" party of the working class. How can it? Communist parties - unlike the Democratic Left - are not federal in their structure.

What the BRS is trying to do is to excuse its liquidationist retreat from the necessary and vital task of replacing the Labour Party as the 'natural' party of the working class. Doing this is "bound up with changing the policies of the working class". Indeed it is a precondition for socialism.

So let us turn to the nature of the Labour Party itself. Frankly we do not consider the Labour Party "the mass party of the working class". This is a one sided definition which fails to go to the heart of the matter and leads to all sorts of erroneous conclusions. The Labour Party should be defined first and foremost as a bourgeois workers' party. Although it is based on the working class, on its trade union affiliates in particular, its leaders, its programme, are thoroughly reactionary.

Lenin thought likewise. In his famous polemic with Willie Gallacher, Sylvia Pankhurst, John MacLean and other British proto-communists over the Labour Party (it hardly needs noting that international polemic, was considered healthy and normal, even the duty of communists in those days) he criticised MacLean for calling the Labour Party the "political organisation of the trade union movement" and "the political expression of the workers organised in trade unions".

Here is Lenin's argument:

"I have met the same view several times in the paper of the British Socialist Party [the main organisation which went on to help form the CPGB - JC]. It is erroneous, and is partly the cause of the opposition, fully justified in some measure, coming from British revolutionary workers De, opposition to parliamentary activity - JC]. Indeed, the concepts 'political department of the trade unions' or 'political expression' of the trade union movement, are erroneous. Of course, most of the Labour Party's members are workingmen. However, whether or not a party is really the political party of the workers does not depend solely upon membership of workers but also upon the men that lead it, and the content of its actions and its political tactics. Only this latter determines whether we really have before us a political party of the proletariat. Regarded from this, the only correct, point of view, the Labour Party is a thoroughly bourgeois party, because, although made up of workers, it is led by reactionaries, and the worst kind of reactionaries at that, who act quite in the spirit of the bourgeoisie. It is an organisation of the bourgeoisie, which exists to systematically dupe the workers with the aid of the British Noskes and Scheidemanns."^{12}

The Labour Party can change - for example, in the midst of the storms of revolution. Not into a revolutionary party mind you. But a Labour Party mouthing left slogans would be a by-product of a revolutionary situation. It should not be seen as a programmatic aim. Winning the masses from reformism is essential if the revolution
is to triumph. That goes without saying. It is this task that communists should be tackling, along with the tactics and methods of work which revolutionaries should employ in a non-revolutionary period; which is in reality for us nothing more than the preparation for revolution.

Instead the BRS concentrates on selling the Labour Party left as a vehicle for socialist change. We have already dealt with the symbiotic relationship between the reformist left and right and the totally unscientific position advanced by the BRS. So it certainly comes as no surprise to us that there is no mention of the danger the Labour left represents, not least in a revolutionary situation.

1.2.6. The Communist Party

1.2.6.1. The Party's "essential characteristics"

This subsection begins by asking:

"What are the essential characteristics of a party capable of giving the leadership needed in the struggle to transform the labour movement, strengthen working class unity, build alliances with other democratic movements in society, and achieve socialism?" (p25).

Five such characteristics are given in answer:

1. "... it must be based on Marxism-Leninism". How true!
2. "... it must be organised for socialist revolution", and "It must be firmly rooted in the working class." Yes! Yes!
3 and 4. It must be organised on the basis of both democracy and centralism. Again, how could we disagree?
5. It needs to have "international solidarity" with the world communist movement.

For us these five characteristics are vital principles on which a Communist Party must stand or fall. Of course, the 'official communists' drained them of all revolutionary content. In the BRS they represent vestiges from the past, not living practice. We will briefly examine the five "essential" characteristics one by one.

1. "... it must be based on Marxism-Leninism". As has already been seen - and the rest of this critique will prove - the BRS is definitively not based on Marxism-Leninism. Now the Euros at least have admitted where they really stand. Their secretary Nina Temple says that she was never happy with Marxism-Leninism, it was "too narrow and confining" for her. She and her friends may not be particularly democratic and are certainly not left. Nonetheless although it still pretends to "draw upon" what it calls "creative Marxism", the Democratic Left makes it clear that it considers Marxism-Leninism "outdated". 13

2. "... it must be organised for socialist revolution" and it "must be firmly rooted in the working class." Again, from where they are today and everything we have seen in the BRS so far, its authors completely embraced reformism and had no intention whatsoever of organising themselves "for socialist revolution". The authors of the BRS wanted to organise for social reform ... and could not even manage that.

What about being "firmly rooted in the working class"? Theory and practice tell us otherwise. Contempt was always the attitude towards the working class from the Euros and their Marxism Today. These Euros were always firmly rooted in the petty bourgeoisie and orientated towards the bourgeoisie. The CPB is different, but not much. It is firmly orientated towards and Just about rooted in the lower echelons of the labour bureaucracy. Neither trend in 'official communism' is firmly rooted in the working class or has ever really seen the need to be so in practice.

3 and 4. The Communist Party must be organised on the basis of both democracy and centralism. With these two organisational principles monolithic unity can be forged around a principled Marxist-Leninist party programme. There is a dialectical relationship between a revolutionary programme, and democracy and centralism, in a Communist Party. Democratic centralism is the form of organisation the Party uses to carry out its revolutionary programme.
Under certain circumstances, it is true, communists will organise with the maximum of centralisation and restricted democracy. The balance between the two is determined by objective conditions. Naturally though, in a bourgeois democracy like Britain the democratic side of democratic centralism in a Communist Party does not need to be curtailed. But there is none of this in the BRS.

No wonder. Looking at the Euros in 1978 there was one sided centralism and no real democracy. In their own narrow circles it was a case of anything goes. Marxism Today did what the hell it liked and the overwhelming majority of members did not bother to attend monthly (1) meetings, while a substantial minority did not even pay dues. So much for 'centralism'. What about 'democracy'? Anyone who has even passing knowledge of the 'official' CPGB would have been aware that it was riven with factions. Far from minority rights being recognised, the Euros excluded oppositionists like the Straight Leftists or set in motion wholesale expulsions (one way or another) of those who supported the Morning Star. In other words although the Euros exerted no centralism over their own ranks, others were subjected to the most authoritarian methods.

In an organisation whose leadership long ago abandoned Marxism-Leninism, such 'democratic centralism' could only have been bureaucratic centralism. Far from this maintaining unity, it ensured splits, factional conspiracies and organisational disintegration. Who can doubt it in the light of Democratic Left liquidation-ism?

The practice of the CPB organisation in the 1990s is hardly different to the Euros in the 1980s. Tony Chater, editor of the Morning Star, does what he likes with it: the paper is effectively his personal property. In his 'party', bureaucratic centralism reigns, just as it did in the Euro organisation he split from. There is no genuine debate, no life. Membership is overwhelmingly inactive, discipline is reserved only for those who dissent politically.

1.2.6.2. Proletarian Internationalism

Here we will deal with the fifth "essential characteristic" of a Communist Party. The reason we are giving "international solidarity" a separate section is simply that there is a burning need for clarity on the question.

The BRS substitutes the Marxist-Leninist concept of proletarian internationalism with the much 'broader', much more acceptable (to the bourgeoisie) catch-all of "international solidarity". For the opportunists internationalism is about liberal sympathy for the oppressed, which increasingly has taken the form of charity-mongering stunts like Band Aid and Mandela Day. Beside this 'official communism' considers internationalism to be a matter of taking "into account the socialist experiments of other nations" so as to facilitate the "highly original and specifically British" road to socialism.14

That proletarian internationalism gets no mention in the BRS is directly linked to the fact that its authors (and apologists) have no understanding at all of world revolution. For them Britain can build full socialism all by itself. In contrast, for Marxist-Leninists the liberation of the working class is a world wide struggle.

A genuine communist programme should be founded on and developed in the spirit of proletarian internationalism. 'Official communist' leaders used to consider this to be a code word for subservience to the leadership of the CPSU. Leninists on the other hand do not use proletarian internationalism (or socialist internationalism) in this perverted way at all. Proletarian internationalism grows out of the universality of capitalist exploitation. It is an objective law which reflects the development of the world economy - never analysed in the BRS - which renders the existence of national frontiers, rooted in the capitalist order, increasingly anachronistic.
Because we are fighting in conditions of worldwide capitalist exploitation, because the working class can, at the end of the day, only liberate itself through a world communist order, it is obvious that what proletarian internationalism requires is more than a vague "international solidarity". It requires a *general line of march*, a plan of action determined by world, and not merely national, conditions. Our fight might begin on the national terrain, but truly we workers have no country.

Therefore, as Lenin said, a genuine communist "must not think only of one's own nation, but place above it the interests of all nations". In other words, workers might today fight for national leadership, but only in order to realise communism tomorrow. Because workers' struggles are ultimately indivisible "proletarian internationalism demands, first, that the proletarian struggle in any one country should be *subordinated* to the interests of that struggle on a worldwide scale ...".

In the name of communism we must combat all forms of chauvinism and national narrowness within the workers' movement (not least when it is dressed up as "highly original and specifically British"). Only on the basis of the ideological victory of internationalism over nationalism can the revolution move decisively forward. Genuine communists must also fight to give this organisational form.

Proletarian internationalism demands the unity of theory and practice of the workers' revolutionary struggle on a world scale. This found its highest expression so far in the Third (Communist) International - the world party of socialist revolution established under Lenin's leadership in 1919. In the future we are certain it will find an even higher expression in a global proletarian dictatorship, the World Union of Socialist States.

Extending solidarity to national liberation movements like the African National Congress and Sinn Fein (which latter the opportunists actually denounce) flows from our proletarian internationalism but does not entail burying our ideological differences with such organisations. Nor does it mean denying the necessity for a genuine Communist Party winning the leadership of the masses in every country without exception.

National liberation movements led by revolutionary democrats are not working class organisations. Their programmes and practice are not based on the Marxist-Leninist scientific world outlook.

Nevertheless, when such organisations fight the forces of imperialism - our main enemy - in a revolutionary fashion, we have a duty to do all in our power to deliver active solidarity. All this is a far cry from the national narrowness enshrined in the *BRS*.

### 1.2.7. Social forces and movements

The *BRS* takes five pages to tell us all about what it calls the "social forces and movements". It says these consist of women, the old, the young, homosexuals, blacks, nationalists in Scotland and Wales, tenants and residents associations, environmental groups, community newspapers, theatre and other cultural groups, broad committees against social service cuts, teachers, civil servants, scientists, technicians, journalists, local government and social workers, peace organisations, students and, last but not least, many religious people. In other words, just about everyone (pp29-33).

### 1.2.8. Alliance not isolation

The authors of the *BRS* present these "social forces and movements" as distinct from the class struggle - and if anything, therefore, above class interests, which by implication are equated with economic questions. Apparently, by identifying with the "social forces and movements" the "labour movement" (*sic*) can "become more conscious of its own national role as the leading force in society".
1.2.8.1. Class and "social forces and movements"

The 'discovery' that working class interests go beyond the workplace and the lumping together of a sociobiological mixed bag of groupings, races, sexes, orientations, professions, protesters, age groups and enthusiasts into "social forces and movements", was supposed to be the great contribution by the Euros to humanity's intellectual treasure house. This is, of course, sheer silliness. It's like young teenagers thinking they are the first to discover sex. Since the dawn of class society there have been "social forces and movements" aplenty. Naturally we must study them as things in themselves, in their 'autonomy'. At the same time though, we can only fully appreciate their origins, true social significance, historical evolution by examining them in the light of the underlying struggle of classes.

For example no serious study of Christianity is possible without a thorough grasp of the bible. But merely to do that would not get us beyond the 'how many angels dance on a needle' theology. Christianity can only be fully comprehended by examining it in the light of the decay of ancient slave society, the class struggle in Jewish society as represented by the Sadducees and the Zealots, and how and why the Roman ruling class was able to turn what was a religion of the oppressed in Palestine into the state religion of the oppressor empire.

It took the historical and dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels to reveal that all "social forces and movements" were in fact reflections, invariably unconscious and indirect, of the class struggle. Marx and Engels insisted that the class struggle was the locomotive of history, and therefore to understand what was going on in society it was necessary to go beneath the surface of the "social forces and movements" and the ideology of the open struggle of the

1.2.8.2. Democratic rights and 'autonomy'
only be fully realised through the struggle for communism. Women and homosexuals, for example, can only be truly free when the family as the economic basis of society is abolished. The same goes for the demands of the peace movement. Peace can only be guaranteed when the proletariat has secured its victory on a world scale. Certainly the religious dream of heaven on earth will only come near to realisation with communism.

In the BRS the "social forces and movements" are projected as autonomous components of the "broad democratic alliance". In fact there is an insistence on 'autonomy'. For the Euros community politics, protest groups and the feminist milieu are the stuff of politics, and ugly class interests should not be allowed to interfere.

By insisting as a matter of principle that the "social forces and movements" should be "autonomous" the BRS can be interpreted in such a way that classes and their struggles can be downplayed, even dismissed. The petty bourgeois Euros sneered at the 'economism' and 'class reductionism' of Marx, Engels and Lenin. Their abandonment of the politics of class also allowed them to undeservedly elevate their miserable scribblings in Marxism Today to truly molehill heights.

Our aim is working class political independence from all other classes and strata. This is a pre-condition for socialism. We do not accept the situation as good, inevitable nor permanent where, to use just three examples, women, black and Scottish workers are organised by feminists, black separatists or SNP nationalists. For us, all workers must be won to accept the leadership of the Communist Party. This means we will fight to break the working class from the influence of all non-Marxist forces.

So while the BRS makes a fetish about respecting the 'autonomy' of its 'broad democratic alliance' allies we make no bones about our determination to defeat all sectional misleaders and gain communist hegemony over all areas of working class life and activity. 'Autonomous' movements can in the end only be autonomous from Marxism-Leninism and dependent on the bourgeoisie.

As to championing the rights of the oppressed, this must never be left to the oppressed alone. Frankly that would be disastrous. The rights of the oppressed should be the concern of the working class as a whole. This also applies to the Communist Party. There should be no black or women onlyism. The Party should establish commissions and organisations in which all elements participate.

'Autonomous' sections in the Party can only weaken it. We are for monolithic unity.

1.2.8.3. Alliances

As we have said, the working class must support the struggles of all those oppressed by capital by becoming the champion of democracy. This does not mean, however, as the BRS seems to imagine, that capitalism can be ended simply through the extension of democratic rights. The working class champions democracy in order to make revolution and become the ruling class. With the political weight and determination of the working class thrown into the battle for the extension of democracy we can get all oppressed sections of the population to align themselves to the Communist Party and its programme for revolution.

The whole question of alliances must be put into context. It is not the main strategic question of the revolution, as it was in Russia. In Britain today, with the working class constituting around three-quarters of the population, it is clear that our revolution will be decided by the extent and degree of working class unity we have achieved. This is the main strategic question we face.

Again, unlike Russia the intermediate classes in Britain are not overwhelmingly downtrodden and culturally backward peasants. In the main they consist of the relatively well-heeled petty bourgeoisie and middle class professionals like doctors, lawyers and journalists, as well as the middle ranks of managers and civil servants (see subsection 1.2.1.3.). Because this stratum can gain from selling itself to monopoly capital it is therefore at best an extremely unreliable ally, even in the fight for democracy.

However, despite being tied to the existing system by a thousand golden strings, there is a possibility that in the event of a profound capitalist socio-economic crisis certain sections of it could turn to revolution. In the event of such a development it would be perfectly principled to consider an alliance - not a reformist alliance but a revolutionary alliance, one committed to the revolutionary over-
throw of the existing state.

We certainly aim to get many talented members of the middle classes to commit class treachery and join the Communist Party, and as large as possible a percentage to look to the working class for salvation. Nonetheless it has to be admitted that only after we have won state power would it become possible to win the intermediate stratum as a whole to our side. With state power we will transform it from being a servant of the bourgeoisie into a servant of the proletarian state, eventually proletarianising it, as the forces of production develop along with communist social relations.

For the BRS it is not only the Communist Party but the Labour left which has to help build the "broad democratic alliance" and working class unity (p34). We have already stated our opinion on the reformist objectives of the BRS and the role of the Labour Party and the Labour left. However, we can never emphasise too strongly that the only genuine form of working class unity is unity around the Marxist-Leninist banner of the Communist Party.

Only the Communist Party can fight for the long term interests of the working class as a whole. Only through its class party, the Communist Party, can the working class become a class for itself and exercise hegemony over oppressed strata and sections, such as blacks, women and homosexuals. Only the Communist Party can enable the working class to operate strategically, to enter and break tactical alliances, to defeat politically the ideas of the bourgeoisie in our class and make revolution.

The Labour Party is criticised for creating disillusionment among the masses, for falling back from the 49% of the vote it obtained in 1951. To reverse this the BRS offers a "new strategy" in order to achieve a "decisive advance in the Labour vote" (p34).

This "new strategy" rejects the "traditional right wing approach of adopting capitalist politics to win the so-called middle ground in politics"; this "has been constantly tried, and has constantly failed to win the majority of the electorate to Labour's side." The BRS says that its "alternative" is "the only way forward" (p35).

That the working class became disillusioned with the Labour Party in the 1970s is not surprising. Nor was it a bad thing in itself. The real question is where this disillusionment is channelled: to the politics of despair or to the politics of revolution. Revolutionary politics has everything to do with exploiting Labour's difficulties caused by its congenital attachment to capitalist policies. Our task should not be to throw social democracy a life-line, but to ensure that it drowns without trace. This is the real way forward.

### 1.2.9. Winning a new popular majority

This subsection illustrates the prostration of the BRS to the Labour Party. The "winning of a new popular majority" referred to in its title, is a majority for the Labour Party. This is what the BRS's dreams of building alliances are all about.
1.3. Towards socialist revolution

Winning state power, says the BRS, "can only be achieved when the great majority of the British people is convinced of its necessity and prepared to bring it about" (our emphasis, p36). Why not say: winning state power can only be achieved when the active majority of the working class is convinced of the necessity of winning state power and are prepared to die to bring it about?

The BRS says that success in winning state power "depends on the left becoming the dominant force in the Labour and democratic movement and on the building of a mass Communist Party as part of that left" (our emphasis, p36). It is because the BRS is reformist to the core that there is such concern for 'great majorities' of the 'British people' and that amorphous body the 'left'.

For communists, it is the balance of class forces during a revolutionary situation which is crucial. All success at the end of the day hinges on the extent to which the Communist Party - not the 'left' - has developed a scientific strategy and is able to act as the general staff of the proletariat.

The central aim of the BRS is gaining a majority in parliament, "enabling the formation of left and later socialist governments". According to the BRS this evolutionary project is "based on our [British - JC] political and social conditions, degree of working class organisation, and the new world setting." To justify what can only be called British narrowness and reformist make-believe, the BRS uses the following sly argument.

Every "socialist revolution is unique in specific respects" it says, stating the obvious. "There are universal principles, such as the transfer of state power, but no universal model or pattern that can be followed." It then comes up with the rather incongruous assertion that: "Export of revolution is a myth." And that: "Decisive social change can only arise out of the particular circumstances in each country" (our emphasis, p36).

Let us disentangle truth from distortion. First, "unique" and "specific" conditions. Obviously every revolution is "unique in specific respects". Still, what the BRS - which has reformist politics unique to Britain in specific respects - is out to do is to prove its loyalty to bourgeois democracy and the bourgeois state by implicitly attacking the very real "universal principles" of revolution.

A genuinely revolutionary programme draws on the most advanced theory available to the working class in the world. But communists apply this to the specific conditions which appertain in a particular country; it could not be otherwise.

The Bolsheviks could never have succeeded if their programme had not taken into account the existence of the Tsarist autocracy, Russia's place in the world division of labour and the possibility of forging a revolutionary alliance between the proletariat and peasantry, etc.

Likewise communists in Vietnam were able to unite the mass of the population behind them because they took the lead in the crucial fight for national independence and unity. Again, for communists in South Africa the revolutionary overthrow of apartheid is a central question, as is the necessity for communists in Turkey to recognise the imperialist ambitions of finance capital in their country.

We could go on. But there is little point. There is no argument, at least from us. Communists should not and cannot ignore national conditions and peculiarities. The real point though is that the BRS wants to blow specific features in Britain out of all proportion and reduce general laws of revolution to the level of empty platitudes.

The BRS is hardly the first to do this. Time and time again, opportunists around the world have maintained that the conditions in their country invalidate this or that principle. This was the essence of Bernsteinism in Germany, Millerandism in France and Browderism in the USA. The BRS is from the same stable. Attempts to plead innocence by citing "universal principles" are worthless. We can easily show this. Take its "universal principle" of the "transfer of power". It is simply a flimsy reformist attempt to sidestep the iron law of revolution, ie, that the bourgeois state must be smashed and that a new, proletarian state must arise from the
rubble of the old.

In this light it is clear why a righteous denunciation of the "export of revolution" has been inserted. It was never there as a counter to those in the Euro camp who dreamed of a Soviet 'intervention' in Britain and the introduction of socialism here Eastern European style - behind the tank tracks of the Red Army. It is definitely not because the authors once imagined they had a militaristic future where they themselves export socialism via some sort of BRS Red Army all of their own.

In part the export of revolution 'myth' has to be attacked because the authors of the 1978 BRS inherited the opportunist defence of previous editions against Cold War charges of being agents of a foreign power. But it is more than that. The BRS is irredeemably national and anti-international.

Given the BRS's inability to see beyond "British conditions and democracy", any ideas on the unity of the working class struggle on a world scale, the need to subordinate the national to the international, the part to the whole, would seem to be outside interference. Proletarian internationalism is in fact the real target behind attacks on the export of revolution. In this way the BRS does not make an excusable mistake. It openly abandons the real struggle for socialism, which is international if it is anything.

The BRS repeatedly emphasises that the advance to socialism in Britain "will be our own road." This, as we have seen, is to state the obvious. But, again what the authors of the BRS have in mind is to deny the general and the international. Let's quote the BRS.

"The fact that it will be different from that taken in other countries is due not only to the specific position taken within Britain, but to changes in the world brought about after the October Revolution in Russia in 1917. This, the most significant event in world history, showed in practice that the workers and their allies could gain state power and construct socialism. But the path of the revolution, insurrection and the creation of the Soviets as organs of power, and the subsequent development of a one party system, were determined by the particular conditions and background of Tsarist autocratic rule, counterrevolution and civil war, and imperialist intervention. Similarly, the methods by which socialism has been established in other countries have been determined by their particular circumstances and by the world situation at the time.

"The different conditions and history of Britain, and the changed balance of class forces, make it possible to achieve socialism in Britain by a different road. The working class is the majority of the population. The potential power of the labour movement is enormous. Together with its allies it can isolate the big capitalists and confront them with overwhelming strength. The democratic forces have had long experience of struggle and have won civil liberties and democratic rights which, though under constant attack, give the basis for carrying forward the political struggle. Parliament, itself the product of past battles for democracy, can be, and needs to be, transformed into the democratic instrument of the will of the working class and its allies, who constitute the vast majority of the people. Though there is the possibility of outside intervention against a socialist government, this has been diminished by the change in the world balance of forces.

"Through the democratic transformation of society, including the state, in all stages of the struggle, democracy can be carried to its utmost limits, breaking all bourgeois restrictions on it, and creating the conditions for advance to socialism without armed struggle" (our emphasis p36-37).

We have quoted at length to leave no shadow of doubt concerning the BRS's position. We have already dealt with the fallacy that the world balance of forces had decisively shifted towards socialism. With the defeats of the steelworkers, the printers at Wapping, the miners' Great Strike and the dockers behind us we can also dismiss ideas that the British labour movement as presently organised is an irresistible force. As to the idea that democracy will be taken to its "utmost limits" during the transition from capitalism to socialism, this is absurd.

Democracy will be taken to its "utmost limits" during the transition from socialism to communism, to the point where democracy - a form of the state - negates itself with the disappearance of classes and the emergence of the "kingdom of freedom".

But what of the BRS's praise of the October Revolution? Praise from such opportunists is disparage. While it pays tribute to the October Revolution, the BRS goes out of its way to deny the general laws of revolution definitively proved by that glorious event. There were, of course, many features specific to the Russian revolution: the overthrow of Tsarism, the government of 'socialists' headed by Kerensky, the extreme backwardness of the country combined with highly advanced features etc. There were specific features in its subsequent development too: the emergence of the one party system, the consolidation of bureaucratic socialism etc. Nevertheless
the general laws are easy to see and remain valid:
1. The necessity of violently smashing the bourgeois state and replacing it with a new, proletarian one - its most appropriate and dynamic form being that of soviets.
2. The replacement of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie by the dictatorship of the proletariat.
3. The need for a working class vanguard party based on the most advanced scientific theory.
4. The development of capitalism, the emergence of imperialism, and a world economy means that the struggle of the proletariat must become ever more unified and international.

It is our contention that the emergence of soviets, their becoming organs of state power, the smashing of the old state, the dispersal of the bourgeois parliament (the Constituent Assembly), the creation of the Third International, were all direct products of the general laws of revolution. Such features are not, as the BRS would have us believe, the product of peculiar features of Russia at that time.

In saying this we are following in the footsteps of those giants who founded the Comintern, ie those who actually carried out the October Revolution. Having let the BRS speak for itself in its efforts to confuse the specific features of the October Revolution with the general, we will accord the Comintern the right of reply. The Platform of its first congress makes its position perfectly clear:

"The conquest of political power by the proletariat means the destruction of the political power of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeois state apparatus with its capitalist army commanded by the bourgeois Junker officers, with its police and gendarmerie, is the strongest weapon the bourgeois possesses. The capture of state power must not mean simply a change in personnel in ministries, but the elimination of the hostile state apparatus, the concentration of real power in the hands of the proletariat, the disarming of the bourgeois, the counterrevolutionaries and the White Guard, and the arming of the proletariat, the revolutionary soldiers and the Red Workers Guard; the removal of all bourgeois judges and the organisation of a proletarian court; the abolition of the rule of the reactionary civil service and the creation of new proletarian organs of administration. The victory of the proletariat is guaranteed by the disruption of the enemy's power and the organisation of proletarian power. The bourgeois state apparatus has to be shattered and a proletarian state machine constructed. Only when the proletariat has finally broken the resistance of the bourgeoisie and is clearly the victor can former opponents be gradually brought under control and made to contribute to the construction of communist society.

"... the new type of state power, known as the Soviet system, ensures the proletariat the opportunity of guaranteeing its rights and freedoms in practice. Soviet power provides the people with the best palaces, houses, printing works, stocks of paper etc for their press. and clubs for their meetings. Only such measures make proletarian democracy really possible ... The Soviet system with its right of recall, the combination of legislative and executive power and the consequent position of Soviets as working bodies, is able to link the masses with the administrative organs. This link is further strengthened by the electoral system which is based on production units rather than artificial territorial constituencies.

"Thus the Soviet system makes possible genuine proletarian democracy - a democracy for the proletariat, by the proletariat and against the bourgeoisie ... Only an International, capable of subordinating so-called national interests to the interests of international revolution, will organise aid on an international scale, for without economic and other forms of mutual support the proletariat is not in a position to build a new society."\(^{17}\)

Have the general laws proclaimed by the Communist International been invalidated by subsequent events? Do the conditions prevailing today force us to reconsider them?

We think not!

The state machine in Britain, like all others in imperialist countries, is a bureaucratic-military one. It has a huge military machine costing tens of billions of pounds per annum, 250,000 in its armed forces, 150,000 members of its police force and a truly massive bureaucracy. For the masses, democracy remains only formal, parliament is a thoroughly bourgeois institution, and terror is always just below the surface.

The truth is that the smashing of the bourgeois state remains the central task before us today. We too must construct a new proletarian state on the ruins of the old bourgeois order; the dictatorship of the proletariat must be used to crush all bourgeois opposition. And we would maintain that the best institutions to guarantee the transition from socialism to communism, are workers' councils or soviets.

The idea of soviets in Britain was always inconceivable for the
The authors of the BRS refuse to see any of this. For them the extension of bourgeois democracy will in itself create a civilised, smooth, British road to socialism away from capitalism. In doing so it will, they say, avoid the dangerous road of insurrection and proletarian dictatorship of October. This was meant to be “highly original” ... yet Lenin in his own day had to deal with opportunist with exactly the same problems:

... what constitutes their [that is the opportunist] short-sightedness in matters of theory, their subservience to bourgeois prejudices and their political betrayal of the proletariat is their failure to understand that in capitalist society, whenever there is any serious aggravation of the class struggle intrinsic to that society, there can be no alternative but the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or that of the proletariat. Dreams of some third way are reactionary, petty bourgeois lamentations. That is borne out by more than a century of development of bourgeois democracy and the working class movement in all the advanced countries ... This is also borne out by the whole science of political economy, by the entire content of Marxism, which reveals the economic inevitability, wherever commodity production prevails, of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie that can be replaced by the class which the very growth of capitalism develops, multiplies, welds together and strengthens - that is the proletarian class."19

Lenin goes on to say:

"It follows that proletarian dictatorship must inevitably entail not only a change in democratic forms and institutions, generally speaking, but precisely such a change as provides an unparalleled extension of the actual enjoyment of democracy by those oppressed by capitalism - the toiling classes."20

We think that our extensive quotes from Lenin at the First Congress of the Comintern in 1919, when he addressed the world's proletariat, shows what he at least thought about the fundamental laws of revolution. All we need to add to Lenin is that nothing fundamental has changed since then to invalidate his words.

If the defenders of the BRS were to be intellectually consistent they would have to tell us that:

1. Lenin was wrong all along, in Russia possibly, in the west definitely.
2. Alternatively, at such and such date what Lenin said about the
universal applicability of the general laws of proletarian revolution confirmed by October 1917 became out of date.  

The Pope and other princes of the church have to lie. So do the authors of the BRS. If the Pope were honest he would have to say that Jesus was a Palestinian apocalyptic revolutionary who hated the rich and sought to bring all existing governments crashing down, that he was a dangerous subversive who deserved the death sentence he got. Of course, to do that would be to commit religious suicide. Much better to keep on dressing up in bejewelled robes and keep in with the powers that be by telling the poor that they will find salvation only after they are dead. The authors of the BRS, in their own way, do exactly the same.

The 1978 opportunists could not admit the simple truth that Lenin was a revolutionary who believed in revolution. Much better to keep in with the labour bureaucracy and pay lip service to Lenin's "general laws" of October, all the while denying them through linguistic tricks. Much better to promise the proletariat that they will find salvation through bourgeois democracy than tell the truth. The lies of these people are as transparent as the Pope's; even, if it's possible, more sickening.

In the name of Marxism-Leninism the authors of the BRS monstrously claimed that parliament - apparently a "product of past battles for democracy" - can be transformed into an institution serving the masses. Yet both Marx and Lenin would have violently disagreed.

Marx and Lenin insisted that the capitalist military-bureaucratic state machine had to be smashed and replaced by specifically proletarian organs of state power. Can this be denied? Tricks aside, we think not. So let us conclude our rather lengthy comments on this subsection by dealing more comprehensively with soviets.

Marx first wrote about the necessity of smashing the state machine as a result of the lessons he drew from the revolutions of 1848. In spite of this it was not until after the revolutionary events of Paris 1871 that he answered the question of what was to replace the old state. When his well grubbed old mole resurfaced, it provided the first example of a workers' state machine - the Commune. Although members of the Commune were elected by universal suffrage, Paris had been deserted by its 'upper class' inhabitants, the francs-fileurs. The electorate consisted overwhelmingly of revolutionised common people, therefore the Commune was the state organisation of this stratum of the population.

The delegates to the Commune were subject to immediate recall, and its first decree was to replace the standing army with the armed people in the form of the National Guard. Other measures included regulations limiting the pay of Commune officials to that of workingmen, and the right to elect and recall all members of the judiciary.

This first example of a workers' state enabled Marx and Engels to draw the theoretical lessons concerning the future form of the state. Their theory was always based on concrete foundations, never on utopian speculation of the sort the BRS wallows in. Their scientific generalisations on the state were confirmed with dramatic clarity by first the 1905 and then the February and October 1917 revolutions in Russia. Soviets of workers, peasants and soldiers emerged from the cauldron of the class struggle, and it was in their name the Bolsheviks seized power, creating the world's first sustained socialist state.

The Russian Revolution was not a unique, purely Russian event. It was the epicentre of a profound world capitalist general crisis. Not surprisingly therefore, even before the dust settled in Russia other countries experienced their 'Octobers'. In Hungary, Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Latvia and various German cities short-lived soviet republics were established. The bourgeois order in Italy and Austria was likewise threatened by rising soviet power; even in 'conservative' Britain, embryonic soviets emerged in the form of Councils of Action.

Soviets, like the Commune, were not invented by revolutionary theorists. They spontaneously sprang forth from the cradle of working class struggle, as a higher form of class organisation, but similar to trade unions and cooperatives in that they embraced the mass of workers.

Unlike parliament, soviets are based on production units - on factories, mills, mines, offices, hospitals, depots - uniting all workers, overcoming sectional differences, organising workers as a class, not as atomised 'citizens'. It is these organisations we look to. We have no faith in the fetid parliament of the reactionary bourgeoisie. Society organised along soviet lines could evolve into communism, something that could not be said about the BRS 's worked out.
in every detail and never to be realised cloud cuckoo land reformist utopia. Soviets are *not* specific features of the Russian Revolution, as the BRS ignorantly pronounces. We see every reason why they should re-emerge, given sufficiently acute class struggle. This view has nothing to do with wishful thinking. It is based solidly on the history of the working class over the last hundred plus years, and is fully in line with the generalisations of Marx, Engels and Lenin, the greatest individual contributors to scientific socialism.

Life has shown our expectations to be fully justified. What did we see during the miners' Great Strike of 1984-5? We saw the emergence of embryonic organs of working class power in the form of the Miners' Support Groups. Organised in just about every city and town, they 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 did everything we could in encouraging 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, which even the petty bourgeois left, such as the SWP, quite rightly give great weight to. 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 boy to the man. In that light, although the miners were defeated, nothing should or can take away from their support groups, being a real step forward in the class struggle and a real herald of the future. They were worth 1,000 editions or versions of the BRS.

The miners and their supporters showed yet again that it is the masses, not the reformist road to socialism committee room negotiators, 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. 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" (Marx on the Paris Commune).

### 1.3.1. Next stage in the revolutionary process

"It is impossible", the *BRS* maintains, "to proceed overnight from Labour governments which in effect manage capitalism to a government which introduces socialism."

Untrue. The October Revolution showed that is was possible to do exactly that. Over the night of November 6 1917 the Bolsheviks overthrew the government of Alexander Kerensky "which in effect" managed capitalism, and replaced it with a Soviet government which introduced socialism. But let us stick with the *BRS*'s line of reasoning. For it, before we can put socialism on the agenda, in the meantime, we must win "a new type of Labour government, which will begin to carry out a left policy" (pp37-38). This government "has the task of putting Britain on a new course, so that far-reaching changes in society are initiated, the crisis is tackled at the expense of the big capitalists and not the working people, democratic rights are greatly extended and the quality of life and personal freedoms enhanced" (p38). In other words, a left reformist capitalist government.

It would, according to the *BRS*, save British industry, massively extend the nationalised sector of the economy, abolish the House of Lords and the monarchy, create Scottish and Welsh parliaments, and on top of that it would pursue an independent foreign policy, and withdraw British troops from abroad (except Ireland - where they would merely withdraw to barracks).

We would not rule out the possibility of Labour coming into office on a wave of radical promises. Examples of left reformist governments are numerous enough. A few years ago we saw a socialist/communist coalition in France. This was a reformist government in
BRS packaging. What we must ask is whether such a government could "in effect manage capitalism" in the interests of the working class and would it inexorably lead to a government "which introduces socialism". To these two questions we can give a one word answer - no!

The fundamental anti-working class laws of capitalism cannot be negated without destroying capitalism itself. This is true whatever sort of government manages capitalism. Capitalism can only prosper on the backs of the working class (at home or, with imperialism, abroad) through increasing the rate of exploitation and/or war. Notions to the contrary are based on theories utterly alien to Marxism.

There is no BRS non-imperialist, non-monopoly, prosperous and democratic form of capitalism which has to be achieved before the question of socialism can be put on the agenda. Programmatically there is no stage we aim at short of the revolutionary overthrow of the existing state. Capitalism's tendency towards crisis and war is inevitable, and can only be overcome positively through socialism. This is what Marxism teaches and history proves.

1.3.2. A new kind of Labour government

The programme outlined in the BRS could apparently only be implemented in full "as a result of a new type of Labour government". Sounds very realistic, does it not? There is a problem though. In the real world a "new type of Labour government" could only but be an old type Labour government. The authors of the BRS would like us to think otherwise. But a "new type of Labour government" which operates against capitalism, as we have surely shown, goes against the grain of Labourism and for that matter logic itself. Never mind, we must yet again let the BRS ramble on ...

the hocus pocus anti-capitalist "new type of Labour government" which the authors of the BRS magicked up in an effort to justify their reformist cowardice would not "be a socialist government carrying out a socialist revolution". Still we need not worry. They assure us that "subsequent left governments" would, with the inclusion of communists, have a "more far-reaching" programme (pp44-45).

1.3.3. The relationship between the governments and the Broad Democratic Alliance

We can be brief here. Very brief. All this subsection outlines is the need for the pie in the sky "broad democratic alliance" to support pie in the sky "Labour governments of a new type" and the need for it to push this fantasy government further along the path of reform.

1.3.4. The revolutionary transition

Now we come to a fuller outline of the BRS 's utopian idea of laying hold of the imperialist bourgeoisie's military-bureaucratic state machine and using it to "transform" capitalism in Britain, through
left, left, left, even left, and finally socialist governments, to socialism - the first stage of communism!

To cover its abject reformism, the BRS hypocritically declares that: "For social revolution and the transition to socialism, however, state power is critical." Absolutely right! But then it adds: "What is needed is the transfer of state power from the old ruling class to the working class and its allies, and the transformation of the state apparatus so that it serves the needs of the working people" (p46).

This is a classic example of opportunistic sophistry. While claiming that state power is "critical" on the one hand, it contradicts this by all the nonsense about "transferring" state power, "transforming" this state so that it serves the interests of socialism.

1.3.5. Meeting capitalist resistance

Revolution and left-reformism - reaction

The BRS fears that: "The ruling class will fight against this (reformist - JC) process by any possible means." It might not play the game according to the rules, it might try and resort to "illegal methods, sabotage and an armed coup". But if it did not, being good 'democrats', if an election went the 'wrong way', the authors of the BRS say that the 'Communist Party would respect the verdict of the electors, if the Tories were returned to office, there would be no question of a coup from the left to reverse the electoral verdict". The BRS assures liberal opinion that: "The real danger of a coup would come from the right" (pp47-48).

Let us begin our comments on the muddle above by looking at the possibility of capitalist 'resistance. Unless there was a developing revolutionary situation there seems no earthly reason for the capitalists to launch a coup. The truth of this can be seen from the respectable history of Labour governments in this country as well as a host of other coup-free reformist examples from Europe and around the world.

If, on the other hand, capitalism was plunging into economic and political crisis, if the rulers were increasingly unable to rule in the old way, then the emergence of a left reformist government would be a distinct possibility, as would the danger of a counterrevolutionary coup.

In a revolutionary situation, a left reformist government would act not as a leadership, a stimulus, or a focal point for the revolutionary aspirations of the masses. No, on the contrary, it would act as a brake on revolutionary developments. Left reformist government forces would see themselves, as it were, between the devil of the revolutionary masses and the deep blue sea of reaction. Hence such a government would play, in turn, a centrist role and then one of 'democratic' counterrevolution.

This was the situation in Russia in 1917. The Kerensky government (made up of two socialist parties, the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries) faced in turn the White counterrevolutionary forces of Kornilov and then the revolutionary masses, who were increasingly under the sway of the Bolsheviks.

Kerensky and his socialist colleagues were pushed by the revolutionary masses to enact far-reaching reforms, making Russia the most democratic country in the world. Later, as the demands of capitalism and necessities of conducting the imperialist war asserted themselves, the government attempted to reverse many of these reforms. Finally it banned the Bolsheviks and went over to the camp of counterrevolution.

Under these circumstances the Bolsheviks, whipped on by Lenin, considered it their internationalist duty to launch what the BRS might call a "coup from the left", or in other words the October Revolution - an event on which the BRS lavishes fulsome praise while burying its key lessons.

Even more shocking for the BRS would be the Bolsheviks' lack of "respect for the wishes of the electors" when it came to elections to the Constituent Assembly in 1918. The Bolsheviks had supported slogans demanding the calling of the Constituent Assembly prior to October 1917, and had themselves presided over the organisation
of the elections after October. As it turned out they secured an absolute majority of the votes to the Constituent Assembly in Moscow and Petrograd, and were the leading party in most other cities, obtaining 175 seats (around 25% of the total vote nationwide). But the Socialist Revolutionaries had 410 seats which gave them a clear majority in the 707 seat parliament.

However, the Bolsheviks argued that the list of candidates drawn up by the Socialist Revolutionaries did not reflect the subsequent split in the party and the creation of the Left Socialist Revolutionary Party, which gained substantially from the right in the elections to the soviets. This was a highly important matter. The Left SRs were at this time allies of the Bolsheviks and sat in the first Bolshevik-led government. Even more important was the Bolsheviks' insistence on the primacy of soviets over parliament. At the Second Congress of Soviets, the Bolsheviks had 51% of the delegates, which gave them with the Left SRs an overwhelming majority.

Following in the footsteps of the English and French revolutions, the Bolsheviks decided to disperse parliament. But illustrating the proletarian nature of the new order, and the contempt felt for the assembly, it was not a Cromwell or a Bonaparte but a rank and file soldier who walked in and announced its dispersal ... "because the guard is tired". The October Revolution had decided that real power was to lie with the soviets, hence parliament was consigned to the dustbin. Its irrelevance is attested by the bourgeois historian EH Carr, who willingly admits that "the act of dissolution passed almost without protest".21

Although, as has been said, such a government envisaged by the BRS could come to play a centrist, and in the end, a counterrevolutionary role, if it were threatened by a reactionary coup we as revolutionaries would almost certainly fight to save it. A reactionary coup would be aimed at resolving the revolution negatively, not merely at toppling a left reformist government. Our defence would not be of the BRS government but of the revolutionary situation which we would want to see continue to its positive conclusion with a 'coup from the left'.

### 1.4. Building a Socialist Britain

This is the last section of the 1978 British Road. It sets out the essentials (for it) of the new, socialist society. Because these matters are of a long term nature, for the future, it is understandable why we have less differences with this section. Despite this, there are some areas where we disagree and in addition to stating them, we shall take the opportunity of presenting our positions on some important areas of agreement.

To begin with we agree in essence with the statement: "Socialist democracy is not an additional, but dispensable luxury, or something which can be postponed until a socialist economy has been created - it is essential to the building of socialism" (p50).

### 1.4.1. The economics of socialism

If due account is taken of the balance of class forces, internationalisation of production, and development of the world revolution, then the BRS is more or less right to say that the first economic task of socialism is the "socialist nationalisation of all monopolies", ie the expropriation of the expropriators. On this basis the "production of wealth would be greatly increased" (p51).
We also agree, with minor reservations, that:

With the advent of socialist planning and the ending of direct conflict between worker and capitalist employer, the function of the trade unions would change. They would be independent of the state apparatus and active in defending workers' interests, and would also, through the development of industrial democracy, play a vital role in creating the economic basis of socialism, cooperating with the socialist government and strengthening support for it. Management would be democratic, with workers' participation on all levels, in planning industry as a whole and in every enterprise and department. The workers would have a dominant say in determining the conditions of work. Unions would be responsible for protecting the conditions of the workers and negotiating wages and other benefits. They, with the government, would need to guard against over-centralisation, bureaucracy, and the subordination of the interests of one section of workers to those of another section. Excessive pressure of production targets, abuses of the workforce and unreasonable demands made on them by management or the central planning authorities would need to be avoided or corrected by the full development of industrial democracy (p53).

However, without qualification the BRS then says that "small businesses, shops and farms would have a place in socialist society." Here there is a problem. Undoubtedly attempts to socialise every aspect of the economy in the immediate aftermath of revolution would meet with disaster. Nevertheless small-scale commodity production is not only inefficient, it is also a breeding ground for capitalist ideas and attitudes. Because of this it is essential that as socialism develops those who own and run "small businesses, shops and farms" find their place in socialist society, first through the development of cooperatives and then through full integration into the socialised economy.

1.4.2. Foreign policy

Socialism - pacifism - war

There are a couple of points worth passing comment on in this subsection.

The authors of the BRS seem to think that there is a "principle" that socialist and capitalist states peacefully coexist. This is not true. The coexistence (unity) of opposites like socialist and capitalist states is temporary, their antagonistic contradiction permanent. Peaceful coexistence is for us a tactic - a holding operation to create the best conditions for the world revolution, which will see the resolution of the contradiction between capitalism and socialism through the dialectic of the proletarian revolution.

The BRS goes on to claim that a "world without war and conquest requires the victory of national liberation everywhere; an end to all fascist and racist regimes; full and equal rights and independence of all nations, respect for their national integrity and non-interference in their internal affairs" (our emphasis, p55).

There are two gross blunders here. For there to be a "world without war" requires the complete victory of socialism on a world scale. This is a fundamental truth revealed by Marxism, though not for the BRS. But where the first blunder is a direct result of revisionism, the second is the result of, we presume, plain stupidity. Or are we being too generous?

There are many, many nations in the world. Many more than there are states. Official sources used to say there were some 120 nations (or more correctly nationalities, stable communities of people based on common territory and language) in the USSR. The idea that these and all other nations and nationalities on the planet should be "independent" is thoroughly anti-Marxist.

Nations should, of course, have the right to self-determination. That is the right to determine their future, the right to independence,
yes, but also the right to stay united with another nation, or to agree to unity with others. Only for narrow nationalists should all nations be independent. We, on the other hand, aim for the voluntary unity of all nations in a World Union of Socialist States. Even before this, it is in the interests of the proletariat to fight for unity through the organisation of the largest and most highly centralised states; the original idea of the Soviet Union was that all new socialist states would join it and produce an ever-expanding and ever more powerful socialist state.

Our attitude toward the right of nations to independence is the same as our attitude towards marriage. We are in favour of the right to divorce. Yet that does not mean we advocate divorce. We do not picket registry offices urging loving couples not to 'tie the knot'. In fact, as we have indicated, we are in favour of the marriage of one nation to another - as long as it is a voluntary, loving, union where the right to divorce or temporary separation exists in the event of friction or breakdown.22

But while the authors of the BRS might be simply stupid on the question of independence for all nations, when it comes to war it is another matter. The BRS says that a socialist government "would renounce war as an instrument of foreign policy" (p55). This is head-in-the-clouds pacifism. War is the continuation of policy by other means. To renounce war before the end of class society is to renounce serious politics, and for that matter the real world. Such pacifist sentiments have nothing in common with Marxism.

The BRS is at sixes and sevens. We note the claim on the same page that: "All movements for national liberation would be supported" (p55). A fine sentiment, especially considering such movements often, and as is their right, resort to armed struggle (right because we do after all support the right of nations to self determination - which means by definition supporting the fight to exercise it). Surely though, such a commitment to "support" such movements contradicts the renunciation of war. And it is worth asking the authors of the BRS whether or not their "support" for the forces of national liberation extends to Ireland?

Certainly the Soviet Union never in practice renounced war as an instrument of foreign policy. From its earliest days it used war/force as a legitimate means to further its interests; the war against the interventionist powers; its counter-invasion of Poland in 1919; its attack on Finland in 1939; its counter-invasion of Germany in

1944-45. Nor did other socialist countries embrace pacifism in practice. Cuba physically aided those engaged in just struggle, including the sending of armed forces. And quite right too. We wholeheartedly agree with revolutionary wars.

1.4.3. Socialist democracy

Having just criticised the BRS's call for the independence of all nations it is strange to note that in this subsection, when it comes concretely to Britain, the authors flatly contradict what they have said above. Incorrectly calling Scotland and Wales "nations" - there are Scottish and Welsh nationalities but not a Scottish or Welsh nation; rather there is a British nation23 - it recognises their "right to self determination", which we would also support. Then the BRS stresses the "advantage" of the unity of Britain! (on this at least we agree).

We now move on to a central disagreement. But as this concerns the BRS's utopian dream about the bourgeois parliament serving socialism (which we have already dealt with) we will confine ourselves to just a few comments on this occasion.

The BRS states: "The freedom of all democratic political parties, including those hostile to socialism, to contend for political support would be guaranteed" (our emphasis, p56). And: "All parties should be pledged to respect the verdict of the electors, and to abide by the laws of the socialist state. If parties hostile to socialism failed to do so, and turned to the use of force to sabotage the democratic process, the socialist government and the working people would use whatever force was necessary to defend socialism" (p57).

In principle, we are not in favour of banning political parties simply because they are hostile to socialism. We know of no principle which demands their automatic banning. But, after the revolution, forces hostile to socialism would find themselves (and we can guarantee this) on the receiving end of the dictatorshi^p of the workers. It could hardly be otherwise.

So socialism could never guarantee in any absolute sense,
especially in the immediate aftermath of seizing power, all political liberties, not least for our enemies. Note here also that the BRS, which says that the bourgeoisie maintains its rule under capitalism mainly through "relying on consent", now says that in the last analysis the working class "would use whatever force necessary to defend socialism".

Having spoken about the rights of bourgeois parties it must be pointed out that these parties are, as far as the established soviet system is concerned, irrelevant. They would have become completely marginalized, not least because the democratic institutions of socialism will evolve out of the class struggle against the institutions of the bourgeoisie, including their parties. Soviets, or workers' councils, begin life as organs of working class struggle. Through revolution they are transformed into organs of working class state power against capitalism. Expecting bourgeois parties to find a nice cozy niche in such institutions is like expecting the Tory Party bigwigs to have flocked into the Miners' Support Groups during the Great Strike of 1984-5.

Consequently, declarations about respecting the "verdict of the electors" with regard to bourgeois parties have no relevance to the soviet system. Workers' parties would compete in soviet elections against each other not against bourgeois parties. Under these conditions, if the Communist Party found itself defeated we would of course respect the result. But in this case there would be no question of reverting to capitalism. Such a fear under the established soviet system is a mirage.

A minor point worth touching upon here is religion. The BRS maintains that there "would be freedom of religious worship and propaganda in public or private, equality of all religious beliefs and creeds, and separation of church from state" (p58).

The problem here is not what is said. More what is left unsaid. There is no mention of the freedom of anti-religious propaganda, and the struggle by communists to eliminate religious prejudice and mystical mumbo-jumbo. Again, such 'forgetfulness' is inexcusable.

1.4.4. Popular democratic power

This is a particularly bland subsection. Yes, we too are in favour of popular democratic power, and therefore agree with the BRS that: "In a socialist Britain there must be the fullest encouragement of ... democratic initiatives, as an essential check to bureaucracy and to abuse of power by the state" (p59). But we would go one further.

As we recognise that the basic contradiction within socialism is between the emerging law of planning and the declining (capitalist) law of value, we also recognise that socialism is a period of transition between capitalism and communism characterised by struggle for socialist democracy, which is essential for the law of planning to operate effectively.

Hence, where the BRS places all its emphasis on "transforming" the bourgeois state and making sure it does not "abuse" its powers, we place emphasis on ensuring that the (necessary, if only temporary) socialist state bureaucracy is kept as the servant of society, as part of the long term aim of creating the conditions in which the bureaucracy finally withers away, through the full development of socialist democracy to the point where democracy negates itself.

1.4.5. Women and socialism

(See 1.5.4.)
1.4.6. Political parties of the working class

This subsection claims that: "Socialism can only be won and built on the basis of Labour-Communist unity" (p60). Clearly, more feeble minded nonsense. Let us repeat yet again that history shows the need for communist hegemony over the working class. The victory of socialism will be both a victory over capitalism and a victory over Labourism. Of course, in order to achieve that the unity tactic could be used to achieve communist hegemony over sections of the working class previously dominated by Labour. But such a tactic is to be used only under specific conditions and is no principle. So "Labour-Communist unity" is not the "only" way forward, rather a possible, passing tactic designed to destroy the influence of Labourism.

Another point. The BRS mentions two "political parties of the working class". We have already explained fully why we consider the Labour Party to be a bourgeois workers' party. Does this mean we favour the 'principle' of the one party system? No, we think it perfectly feasible that a wide variety of parties within the spectrum of genuine working class politics would exist and compete in elections to workers' councils. That is not to underestimate the importance of a genuine Communist Party. No, only such a party can express the long term interests of the working class as a whole, rather than passing, sectional interests. Nevertheless it would be strange indeed if everyone agreed with us, and those who do not should have the right to form political parties.

A final point; the BRS declares for "open and full debate in which all trends will participate". All we say to those who support or supported the BRS is that you never practised what you preached.

1.4.7. Towards a communist society

At last the closing subsection of the BRS. While we cannot disagree with it, it is worth asking whether the BRS's strategy ever got us a millimetre nearer socialism, let alone communism, where "the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all".

Why should we base ourselves on the BRS's utopian reformist dream about achieving communism through the bourgeois state and without revolution? Humanity already has behind it the example of October 1917 and has in its possession the scientific socialism of Marx, Engels and Lenin. As we have shown, no one should place any faith in the reformism of the BRS. There is only one road to socialism - Lenin's road of proletarian revolution.
1.5. Some specific questions

While going through the BRS we have deliberately refrained from dwelling on a number of questions which have special significance. We will therefore deal here with parliamentary elections, the army, Ireland, women and, last but not least, racism and chauvinism.

1.5.1. Parliamentary elections

We shall now briefly touch upon parliament and electoral tactics. Not surprisingly the BRS places great emphasis on parliamentary elections, and that includes the approach of communists, to which we will limit ourselves in this section. According to the BRS the CPGB: "needs to increase its electoral activity, giving the maximum possible number of people the opportunity to vote communist, and winning representation in parliament as well as more local council seats" (p27).

Surely this contradicts the BRS's desire for Labour Party general election victories? And the word "maximum", as well as the overall context, shows all too clearly that the BRS had elevated what should be a matter of tactics to the level of principle.

For those who consider parliamentary politics - in spite of protestations to the contrary - as the locomotive of history, this is natural. After all, the opportunists believe that parliament can be transformed into a genuine instrument of the democratic will of the British people. And that through a Labour government!

Our approach is very different. Yes, we advocate the standing of communist candidates in parliamentary elections - how many and against whom is a matter of tactical fine tuning - but not because of any illusions we have in parliament. The reason we would argue for parliamentary candidates - indeed we would consider it obligatory for a Communist Party to stand except in the most extreme circumstances - is because we want to use every avenue to propagate the ideas of communism.

As long as the masses have illusions in the bourgeois parliament it is vital to use parliament. And in the event of communists finding themselves in the House of Commons - that den of thieves, charlatans and knaves - we would use every parliamentary privilege and device to create a platform for the communist programme. Our MPs would in parliamentary terms be 'thugs', i.e. tribunes of the oppressed and advocates of violent revolution. Communist MPs would in this way turn parliament against parliament, use it as a platform to expose parliamentary democracy and help prepare the conditions for its overthrow.

Because parliamentary democracy is bourgeois democracy, and thus moulded to serve bourgeois interests, it is merely coincidental that it once was a progressive institution. Despite all the myths manufactured by the toadies and sycophants, there can be no question that parliament is part of the bourgeois state machine. It plays the legislative role in that machine, providing a forum where various factions of bourgeois opinion can vent steam and vie for influence.

This function is separated from the executive role, carried out by other parts of the state machine. So it is not, and never has been, a working body; something abundantly clear to anyone who has ever listened to the pompous, turgid 'battles' in that talking shop, the 'best club in London'.

As we have seen throughout our critique, the BRS, while castigating the shallow nature of bourgeois democracy, perpetuates the reformist lie that parliament can equally serve any strata, section or class in society. In other words, the idea that parliament is above classes.

Of course, it was not so long ago that suffrage was extremely restricted; before 1832 only 4.4% of the adult population was enfranchised; this rose to 16.4% after the act of that year. It was only in 1867 that any workers had the vote, and no women at all
had the parliamentary vote until 1921. Truly universal suffrage only became a reality after 1931, when the electorate became 96.6% of the adult population. So there is nothing inherently popular about parliamentary democracy.

Nonetheless, the authors of the BRS insist, presumably because of universal suffrage, that the state can be transformed to serve the interests of the masses. That is why they wanted to stand in the maximum number of parliamentary elections. Engels had a better approach.

He was most explicit in calling universal suffrage (although this was before women had the vote, the point is still valid) an *instrument of bourgeois rule*, and that it could be nothing more than "the gauge of the maturity of the working class. It cannot and never will be anything more in the present day state." 24

We take the same position as Engels. By putting up candidates, genuine communists can gauge the readiness of the working class to make revolution. Obviously if large numbers are unwilling to vote for us they are highly unlikely to be ready to die in the struggle for socialism. When large numbers do vote for a genuine Communist Party then it is obvious that the masses are turning towards revolutionary ideas. Then the time is ripe for revolutionary sentiment to be turned into revolutionary action.

1.5.2. The Army

There are two important references to the army in the BRS. The first states:

"Democratic changes in the armed forces and police are vital. Britain under left governments would need efficient and adequately-equipped armed forces to defend it against enemies. But it is essential that the domination of their upper echelons by representatives of the capitalist class should be ended, and that members of the forces should have full trade union and democratic rights. This should also apply to the police force, and the use of both for strike-breaking or other actions against
democratic rights should be prohibited. Democratic supervision of the police and the armed forces by parliament and local authorities should be strengthened" (p41).

The second refers to the threat of a right wing coup.

'The critical problem would be the composition and attitude of the armed forces. This faces the left with four tasks. First, democratic reforms in the armed forces are vital questions for today, and not Just in the future. Second, at each stage every effort should be made to strengthen the broad alliance and its support for the left government, since this would have a great effect on the decision of the armed forces on whether or not to act. Third, the left needs to win direct political support from among the armed forces themselves. This would be assisted by the democratic reforms already proposed, and by the way in which the strength and activity of the broad democratic alliance affected members of the forces. Finally, the left governments themselves would need to transform the structure and leading personnel of the armed forces as rapidly as the situation allowed" (pp48-49).

Apart from the entire assumption that it is possible to lay hold of a ready made (capitalist) state machine and use it to change society, these statements reveal what is in the last analysis the pro-capitalist position of left reformism.

The BRS's "left government" is, as we have already made abundantly clear, nothing but a left reformist government administering capitalism. For that reason (and that should be good enough for all who call themselves communists) there can be no support whatsoever for its ‘defence' spending, let alone support for "efficient and adequately equipped armed forces". In the real world the BRS's ‘defence' spending can only be defence of the interests of the British bourgeoisie, against either the capitalists of some other state, or the working class itself. That is the reality of capitalism whether it has a right, centre or left government.

This question separated the internationalist forces which went on to form the Third International from the opportunists and social chauvinists of August 1914. At the urging of their own national bourgeois masters the MPs of the opportunist parties of the Second International voted for war credits (‘defence' spending) and in the process became culpable for the deaths of millions upon millions of workers who were slaughtered in World War I.
business. Only then can we really hope to "prohibit" the police and army being used for "strike-breaking or other actions against democratic rights". The workers' militia does not spring forth ready armed like Athena. It grows out of the class struggle itself, from anti-fascist actions, from battles on picket lines, from defending mass demonstrations and workplace occupations. Experience shows us how true this is. The miners' Great Strike produced its own embryonic workers' militia in the form of the heroic hit squads. And as the class struggle goes to even higher levels and reaches the point of insurrection there can be no doubt that such bodies would evolve into a unified workers' militia.

So the demand for a workers' militia is one we fight for under capitalism. And we will use every opportunity to take even tentative steps towards it; because, as we have said above, only by fighting for the workers' militia can talk of socialism be taken seriously.

The workers' militia is the necessary and dialectical complement to our slogans demanding democratic rights in the state's armed bodies. Indeed without such a rounded position one inevitably falls into either infantile leftism, which does not want to get sullied by association with those in the enemy's state machine, or senile rightism of the BRS kind, which puts all its eggs into the basket of bourgeois constitutionalism. Only through combining tireless agitation for democratic rights and the organisation of communist cells in the army - along with the organisation of the workers' militia - can there be any hope of preventing (presumably in a revolutionary situation) the right wing coup the BRS fears. From these two sources - a subverted and divided army and our own armed bands - arises not only the means for preventing the right wing coup but carrying out the "left wing coup" we want to see. This brings us to what is to replace the old army.

Where the BRS wants to "transform the structure and leading personnel of the armed forces as rapidly as the situation allowed", we want to disperse the existing (bourgeois) armed forces as rapidly as the situation allows and replace them with the armed people, as advocated by Marx and Lenin.

In principle we are against the standing army. It was only the isolation of the world revolution in Russia that forced the Bolsheviks to take what they thought was a temporary step back from their aim of replacing the standing army with territorial workers'
militias. Intervention, civil war and the cultural and technical backwardness of the country forced them to build a new standing army, the Red Army.

Although the Red Army was led by communists, it was in a sense a bourgeois institution. The standing army was a carry-over from bourgeois society, and therefore more of a reflection of Russia's formal socialism than the dawning of communism. As society moves toward communism, all bourgeois remnants will wither away, and one of the first carry-overs to disappear must be the standing army.

So the question of what is to replace the smashed bourgeois army is determined by the environment socialism emerges into and the progress of the world revolution. A standing proletarian army might be necessary, but our aim is to abolish it "as rapidly as the situation allowed" and move forward to the armed people.

But even if we are forced to have a socialist standing army, this "bourgeois" institution must be firmly counter-balanced by the communist workers' militia based on the workers' councils. Because an army, even under socialism, is a sphere for specialists, bureaucratic and, removed from the day to day life of the masses, it could pose a block to social progress.

Therefore as well as ensuring that there is no officer caste and that there is a comradely, democratic atmosphere in the proletarian army, the workers' militia should be equipped with the most advanced weaponry, otherwise its power to balance the army would be meaningless, merely formal.

Today, such weapons would have to include tanks, 'smart' surface-to-air and anti-tank missiles, anti-chemical and biological equipment, and radar and sophisticated communications equipment. Only then would the workers' militia be genuine.

1.5.3. Ireland

The BRS places no conditions on its correct insistence that: "Independence should be granted to all remaining British colonies and all British troops abroad should be withdrawn" (our emphasis, p43). It also commits a future "left government", and presumably itself, to supporting: "all movements for national liberation" (our emphasis, p55).

Jolly good. But the BRS 'official communists' don't mean all when they say all. They are selective. When it comes to Britain's 'oldest colony' Ireland, all principle is thrown out of the window. Instead of unconditionally (ie now) demanding the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and supporting Sinn Fein/IRA, the BRS pleads that Britain:

"should ensure a democratic solution in Northern Ireland, based on the implementation of a Bill of Rights, the end of all repressive measures, the withdrawal of British troops to barracks, and financial and other measures to begin to tackle the appalling problems of poverty and unemployment. These steps would create conditions in which sectarian strife could be ended and British troops withdrawn completely. The British government should recognise the right of the majority of the people of Ireland to rule their country, and should co-operate with their representatives in bringing this about by consent" (our emphasis, p43).

In other words, the BRS advocates that the British government should carry out a 'positive colonial policy' along the lines suggested by its spiritual father, Eduard Bernstein, who wanted German imperialism to carry out "civilising work" in its colonies.25

It is to British imperialism which the BRS looks to ensure a "democratic solution", "ending all repressive measures", the "overcoming of poverty and unemployment" and even more far-fetched, "creating conditions in which sectarian strife could be ended". In other words, only after the 'Paddies' had been civilised would it be
possible, in this BRS never-never land, for Britain to withdraw completely. Well, that is after British imperialism had brought about the basis for Irish unity on the terms of the "consent" of "their representatives", who presumably by definition must include the likes of the fascist Rev Ian Paisley.

In saying that the withdrawal of British troops is only possible after British imperialism has ended unemployment, poverty, repression and sectarian strife, the BRS is putting its own version of the church's worthless message to the working class: you will enjoy happiness and the good life only when you're dead. In reality the precondition for enjoying happiness and the good life is life. Likewise the precondition for ending unemployment, poverty, repression and sectarian strife in the Six Counties is British withdrawal. It is British imperialism which has overseen the massive imbalances in unemployment and housing conditions between the loyalist and nationalist populations in the Six Counties, precisely in order to foster sectarianism. And it is British imperialism which used troops and a whole gamut of draconian laws to suppress the nationalists when they refused to be ruled in the old way and turned to the armed struggle.

However, the opportunists desperately want to appear left and principled on this question. So with their usual facile sophistry they 'boldly' declare that as British imperialism has caused the mess, it must clear it up! Frankly, such an approach might apply to small children - they will, after much altercation, reluctantly tidy up their bedrooms. But British imperialism is no 'little monster'. British imperialism is an irreformable beast. It owes its existence in no small part to its rape and systematic plunder of Ireland. For Ireland, Britain is the problem, not the solution.

Using the logic of the BRS one should propose that, as the apartheid regime causes racial discrimination, poor housing and oppression for South African blacks it must be made to deal with these problems ... and only after these problems have been overcome should there be majority rule! The same logic should have led the BRS to insist that before one could countenance a US withdrawal from Vietnam it should have been 'forced' to create the conditions for the unity of Vietnam ... because it was responsible for maintaining the division!

But the BRS is not concerned with logic, nor with the class struggle for socialism. Its tortuous formulations are designed to achieve a 'socialist' veneer to cover the revolting practice of its authors on the 'Irish problem'. When it does not matter, the opportunists are quite prepared to mouth anything. But as soon as it comes to putting principle into practice, then it is a different matter. How else are we to explain the following passage from the 1978 BRS's immediate predecessor?

"The enforced partition of Ireland should be ended and British troops withdrawn from Northern Ireland, leaving the Irish people free to realise their united republic."26

In fact all four previous editions of the BRS dealt with Ireland in a similar vein without any opportunist caveats. None of them contained anything about "troops returning to barracks" or British imperialism solving social ills, let alone being the benign instrument with which to overcome sectarianism and unite the country it divided. Why was there no promise to negotiate with the Paisleyites to ensure that they "consent" to Irish unity? Simply that before 1969, it was a matter of abstract principle. After that the bombs, bullets and molotov cocktails started to fly and British soldiers started to return home ... in bodybags.

We do not consider the previous editions to have been in any way Leninist. But they, like the Second International adopting the Basle Manifesto, which committed all affiliated parties to fighting inter-imperialist war with class war, could uphold principle, at least on paper.

A year after they voted in the 1968 BRS the opportunists wilted, did a volte face and junked it. Because the revolution leapt from the safe abstraction of the printed page to the dangerous actuality of life, the Executive Committee of the 'official' CPGB went against its own programme. Together with the Irish Workers' Party and the Communist Party of Northern Ireland (they later merged to form the Communist Party of Ireland), the 'official' CPGB issued an appeal for a "democratic solution" to the crisis of British imperialism in Ireland. However, this "democratic solution" did not entail the defeat and ejection of the forces of British imperialism on the skids of their helicopters. No, it was the imperialist government of that dyed-in-the-wool reactionary, Harold Wilson, the 'official' CPGB called upon to "take action to solve" the problem "without delay".27

It was only in the BRS fifth (1978) edition that this implicitly pro-
imperialist position was enshrined programmatically. Although as we have seen this edition commits a "left government" to support all movements of national liberation, it contains actual attacks on those very forces in Ireland.

Because the armed struggle has been "exploited" by British imperialism, apparently the actions of the IRA make "more difficult the development of joint action by the working class and labour movements of Britain and Ireland" (p 14). In this way the BRS is able to blame the forces for national liberation for the lack of a mass solidarity movement in Britain and, even more disgustingly, for the violence of the oppressors!

In terms of the basic issues before us, Ireland is in essence exactly the same as any other imperialist colony. The minimum demand we make is for Britain and British troops to get out unconditionally, ie now. The IRA is likewise no different from any other liberation movement that has fought British imperialism. Hence our minimum programmatic position must also be one of unconditional support for it against 'our own' rulers.

Of course there is a difference between the Six Counties of Northern Ireland and other colonies. It is nearer. It is more important to British imperialism than any former colony, not least because it is part of the United Kingdom and thus regarded as 'home' by important sections of the imperialist bourgeoisie.

No wonder the opportunists wilted. It is far harder to maintain a principled position on Ireland than on far away South Africa or El Salvador. However, the reasons which make it far harder to maintain a principled position on Ireland are at the same time the very reasons why a principled position is so vital.

While opinion poll after opinion poll registers a majority of the population in Britain wanting to see British troops withdraw from Ireland, there can be no doubt that this is in the main because of deeply reactionary anti-Irish prejudices, not sympathy with Ireland's freedom fighters. Naturally there are as a result those who attempt a short cut when it comes to Ireland by pandering to the existing consciousness of the masses, by watering down slogans and principles. Inevitably, however, this produces no better results: only demoralisation and further splits and divisions in the solidarity movement.

A solidarity movement with Ireland can only be built on the basis of challenging British imperialism and pro-imperialist sentiments within the workers' movement head on. It is not IRA bombs that are the problem but the opportunism of the dominant organisations on the left in Britain. They shy away from the long, difficult and dangerous task of winning workers in Britain to take sides: for the IRA, against the British army. That is the main reason why the nationalist masses in the Six Counties do not have the mass solidarity movement they deserve, and quite rightly demand; a problem that will only be overcome through the ideological victory of Leninism and the reforging of a genuine Communist Party.

Where the BRS cannot go beyond demanding that the liberation movement in Ireland lays down its arms and takes the road to reform, Leninists not only fight for the communist line in Britain but also in Ireland. What Ireland lacks - just like Britain - is a genuine Communist Party. Only with such a party can the working class in Ireland establish its hegemony over the national liberation struggle, draw protestant workers away from their attachment to loyalism and achieve real freedom through socialism.

The struggle for a united Ireland must be linked to the struggle for socialism; this means the working class taking a lead in the national liberation struggle and at the same time ideologically combating all nationalist tendencies no matter what 'socialist' credentials they claim to have. For genuine communists in Ireland there must be no playing up to nationalist sentiments. They must march separately from revolutionary nationalists but strike together with them against British imperialism.

What is needed is a programme of uninterrupted revolution which unites all oppressed forces and sections into one mighty stream that can sweep British imperialism and capitalism away from Ireland as an integral component of the struggle for socialism in the rest of the British Isles. This, not the BRS's treacherous calls for surrender, is the communist way forward in Ireland.
1.5.4. Women

There are two main passages which deal with women. As they are both relatively short we will quote them in full. The first is from the subsection dealing with "social forces and movements".

"The struggle for women's liberation is a central political question for the working class. The emancipation of women is an important goal in itself. In addition, unless women are involved in the overall struggle for socialism, and men in the struggle to resolve the specific problems of women, the possibilities of developing working class unity and the broad democratic alliance will be greatly diminished. Thus the fight for women's liberation is an integral part of the struggle for socialism, and needs to be taken up by the whole labour movement.

"The subordination of women to men in society is experienced by all women, but working class women are doubly oppressed. They are exploited because of their position as workers and discriminated against because of their sex. The movement for women's liberation which has developed in recent years has been a major stimulus to thought and action on these questions. It has focused attention on the sexual division of labour, particularly on how women's role within the family, economic dependence, and responsibility for child care, limits educational opportunity, career prospects and participation in social and political life on equal terms with men. This has highlighted the debate and activity on economic and social issues like equal pay and childcare, and shown the importance and potentialities of organising on related questions like abortion and battered wives. It has also raised other questions on the nature of personal relationships, human sexuality, and the future of the family, with which the progressive movement needs to concern itself much more than in the past. Support for the basic demands of the Women's Liberation Movement and of the Working Women's Charter and the overcoming of sexism, the defence of male privilege, are essential parts of the struggle to build the broad democratic alliance" (pp29-30).

The second quote is the subsection "Women and socialism".

"Major improvements in the position of women under capitalism can be won by campaigning for the practical conditions for their liberation and by combating sexism. But the conditions for their full liberation can only be achieved as socialism is built and society moves toward communism. A socialist government would complete the practical basis for this by fully implementing any of the measures outlined in the previous section which had not yet been carried through. Women's control over their own bodies, with freely available abortion and contraception: socially-organised child-care, taking account of parents' responsibilities and wishes, housework and dependants; and equal rights to jobs and at work, would be basic rights in a socialist society.

"But more than this is needed, as has been shown by the experience of the existing socialist countries, which have ended legal and economic discrimination against women but still have to conduct a constant battle against outworn ideas carried over from the past. There would have to be a sustained effort, in which an autonomous women's movement would have an important part to play, to end the sexual division of labour between men and women in the family and at work. This division of labour, which stems from women's child-bearing function in our society, is not inevitable nor eternal. The continued subjugation of women in their personal relationships which it involves would not only limit their potential role in building a socialist society, but deform that society itself. There would need to be a persistent and determined struggle against the deeply-ingrained prejudices resulting from generations of discrimination against women. The aim would be to create a deep respect among people for each other, on the basis of equality, within which both sexes would be able to use their skills and abilities for the benefit of all, and express themselves fully within personal relationships" (pp59-60).

We are inclined to agree with much of what is written above. Nevertheless we have certain important reservations, indeed we consider some of the BRS's formulations vague, some downright wrong.

Yes, the "struggle for women's liberation is a central political question for the working class." It is also true that the liberation of women is an "important goal in itself" and that the unity of men and women is vital if socialism is ever to be realised.

But we need to go further. The oppression of women is tied up with the existence of exploitative society. The BRS nowhere near Emphasises this enough. Women's oppression resulted directly
from the development of class society. Under capitalism this specifically means that women perform unpaid domestic labour; they also bear and raise children (future workers, the source of the commodity, labour power) gratis, ie at no cost to the capitalists.

As a result of this division of labour (no pun intended) women are placed in a marginal position in the labour market. They thus constitute a major section of the reserve army of labour - brought into work or thrown out of it with the ebb and flow of the capitalist economy. Women are therefore among the most vulnerable sections in capitalist society, used as cheap labour, often reduced to doing part time work, used to divide the working class in an effort to drive down wages and increase the rate of exploitation.

Women workers have no long term separate interests from other workers. Our task therefore must be to win all workers to recognise that they have a vital interest in the liberation of women. Women's liberation is, in other words, a task for the working class, not something to be left to women alone. The abolition of exploitation is the beginning of the liberation of women; and the liberation of women and the liberation of the working class are closely interconnected.

Material advances in society have obviously created the objective conditions where the second class position of women in society can be greatly broken down. Even under present day society women must have full equality before the law, equal formal opportunities in social, economic, political and cultural life. There can be no compromise on this. Moreover we must also fight to close the gap between formal and real equal opportunities. That is why we demand now free and unrestricted contraception and abortion rights, free 24 hour nurseries, high quality but cheap laundries and workers' restaurants (the Ritz could be a useful benchmark in terms of quality) and other sweeping measures to socialise housework.

These should be "basic rights" under capitalism as well as in "a socialist society". Of course, we doubt very much that capitalism will carry out such measures. In that case via revolution we will smash through its objections and replace it with a socialist state that will socialise domestic work and the responsibilities for rearing children. As socialist society advances it will leave behind the conditions which lie at the root of women's oppression ie, the division of labour and what Marx called "bourgeois right" (people receiving goods equivalent to their work). Only then can we begin to really talk of women's liberation.

Obviously all of this is perfectly orthodox communist stuff, going back many, many years. That is why we find it strange, very strange that the BRS calls for us to line up behind the feminist movement.

We do not equate feminism with women's liberation. It is a petty bourgeois separatist movement with roots in the nineteenth century. It is not, in other words, a product of "recent years".

Feminism has a completely utopian world outlook. Even in its most 'socialistic' manifestations, it is in the last analysis an ideology which sees men, not capitalism, as the source of women's oppression. As such it has always been opposed by genuine communists, not 'only' men such as Lenin but by our great female comrades, Clara Zetkin, Rosa Luxemburg, Nadezhda Krupskaya, Alexandra Kollontai, Inessa Armand and others.

In the absence of any genuine communist work on the women's question in Britain, feminism assumes a prominence it no way deserves. Feminism is akin to other sectionalist ideologies such as black power, Muslim fundamentalism and Zionism. It will never liberate women because, although it is a reaction to chauvinism it is separatist, isolating women from the working class movement and the struggle for socialism.

As the BRS says, middle class and bourgeois women are oppressed. But it is working women who are responsible for all the general advances women have made, not feminism, which is more concerned with winning economic advantages for middle class women at the expense of middle class men than liberating women.

Put to the mild test of capitalist stagnation, feminism has completely retreated from its own limited programme into reactionary calls for censorship, attacks on male picket line violence and blaming the male sex for all the world's evils. As a result what was the Women's Liberation Movement has collapsed organisationally and dissolved itself into Labourism.

What is needed is the beginning of real communist work on the women's question, not channelling women's anger into the proven dead end of feminism. Male workers have both a short term interest in drawing women into the workers' movement in order to conduct their common struggle against capital effectively, and a long term interest in winning women to the revolutionary movement. Truly, without women victory for men is impossible.
This does not mean we should rely on spontaneity. It might be capital that oppresses women, but male chauvinist attitudes are, as the BRS quite rightly states, deep rooted. That is why it is necessary for the Communist Party to take a lead in fighting for women's equality in the working class movement and in society at large.

Against haughty male objections that they are more important, experienced or committed, concretely what this means is insisting on positive measures to promote women to leading positions. That means before housework and child rearing are fully socialised, communist men must be won to take on a full share of the burden. In order to ensure that this involves the mass and not only the vanguard, it also means ensuring that, both before and after the revolution, a powerful proletarian women's movement is built which will fight for the right of all women to take a full part in all aspects of social life (including the workers' militia and its precursors) alongside men.

Again as the BRS points out, the experiences of the "existing socialist countries" showed that the advance of women is not automatic. Because of bureaucratic socialism many women's rights under socialism remained purely formal. More, because of Gorbachev's perestroika and the restoration of capitalism (welcomed by Euro and CPB men and women alike) the position of women there is set to deteriorate dramatically through being thrown out of work in their millions. Gorbachev set the stage for women "returning to the purely feminine functions" through his sickening 'mummy, daddy and me' campaign. Clearly the interests of women lie in defeating such counterrevolutionary crap.

1.5.5. Racism and chauvinism

The bourgeois state is officially very, very anti-racist. It passes much publicised 'anti-racist' legislation, solemnly promises that its police will give due attention to preventing racist attacks and sadly blames racism on working class ignorance and narrow mindedness. Of course, it has to bow reluctantly before popular fears of being 'swamped'. After all, it says, without immigration controls there would be even more pressure on scarce housing, jobs and services.

What lies! What hypocrisy! The facts tell us different. Only to neo-Malthusians is Britain overcrowded - take a trip to North Wales, Cumbria or Scotland. As to unemployment and homelessness, they are diseases of capitalism, not the result of too many people. Then there is the much vaunted Race Relations Act. It was passed under a Labour government which had imposed tough immigration controls and deported countless 'illegal' immigrants rounded up in police raids. Labour's motive for introducing it owed more to its determination to head off the anti-racist movement that was building up from below than to outlaw racism. The act gave it an anti-racist halo, while allowing the state, through the Commission for Racial Equality, to be arbiter between the "different racial groups".

The role of the BRS is to act as a left critic of the bourgeois state. Therefore instead of using the Marxist-Leninist method to analyse the social roots of racism (which can only be understood as a particular form of national chauvinism resulting from national oppression) it trades in superficialities.

The BRS blames either the working class as the source of racism - from which it has to be weaned away - or isolated "racist and fascist organisations". Hence, to get rid of racism a left government
would, says the BRS, expand "social services, housing and education ... this would remove some of the underlying grievances exploited by the racists" (p41). That, and strengthening and implementing the Race Relations Act, are all that is needed (Ibid).

But the source of racism is not working class "grievances" against the lack of "social services, housing and education". Nor is it the ability of "racist and fascist organisations" to take "advantage of the worsening situation in Britain to put the blame for social and economic problems on the 2.5% of the population who are black" and the "deep seated racist ideas which have resulted in Britain's colonialist history" (p14). It is the capitalist system itself in the here and now. On this the BRS is completely silent.

For the BRS, racism is only a matter of skin colour. Black people are, it says, oppressed "because of their colour", which has nothing to do with the "relations of production". Such oppression is obviously silly and irrational. After all, if it is not the colour of one's skin, it might just as well be hair colour or eyes. Therefore "eradicating" racism is only a simple matter of education, overcoming prejudice, getting rid of the dead weight of the past, and thus a "task for all" (p30).

In fact racism is an inevitable, cancerous outgrowth of capitalist relations of production, especially at its imperialist stage. If we understand racism as a form of national chauvinism, not only a matter of skin colour, we can begin to see the wood for the trees.

Imperialism involves by definition the creation of worse paid labour, ie a massive section of the working class that is paid far lower wages than the average. There is nothing fair, nothing to do with equal exchange here. Imprisoning people into a permanent category of worse paid labour from which they cannot escape is greatly facilitated through the subjugation of weak countries. Under conditions of domination, monopoly capital can keep the worse paid labour in the oppressed countries or import it into the home market. Either way it produces superprofits.

The status of worse paid labour is maintained by an open or concealed denial of rights in its country of origin or country of adoption. To justify this all sorts of chauvinist measures and myths have to be developed. Not only immigration laws, colour bars and crude prejudice, but ideas of imperialism playing the benevolent role of educator, aid giver and provider of charity to the so-called Third World. In this way worse paid labour is made to be seen as a devil to be kept out and controlled on the one hand, a child which cannot look after itself on the other,

Today workers who themselves or whose parents originated in the West Indies and the Indian subcontinent suffer super-exploitation in Britain. Naturally because of their darkish skins liberals will rationalise their worse paid position, the discrimination and prejudice through their colour. But it is necessary to recall that in nineteenth century Britain it was the Irish who constituted the worse paid section of the working class. They were the 'white niggers' of the time. All sorts of legal controls, stereotypical prejudices and discrimination were imposed on them. It is also worth noting that in 1990s Germany it is the Turks who are the worse paid section of the working class. These workers are subjected to the sorts of official and unofficial attacks - deportations, non-citizenship, fascist gangs - suffered by black workers in Britain.

The opportunist BRS refuses to side with those black youth who have actively defended themselves against police and fascists. Instead it demands that the labour bureaucracy plays the leading role in overcoming racial prejudice. It wants the working class to put its faith in the Labour Party. We take a different view. We say that to combat racism and national chauvinism one must combat the cause: the capitalist system. This is a task for all workers.
1.6. The 'MS' in practice

The opportunists are fond of boasting about their practicality. They like to think of themselves as realists who are not afraid of getting their hands dirty. We do not deny that 'official communists' have dirty hands nor that they think their road, while it might have all sorts of bends and detours, is the only road to socialism.

However, the dirty hands of 'official communism' have nothing to do with the struggle for socialism. Reformism is a dirty business and necessitates all sorts of excuses about practicality. Bowing before the now, 'official communism' suffers from a theoretical shortsightedness which verges on blindness. As we have argued, in terms of charting a practical road to socialism their grey programme is a non-starter. They are doomed to one Sisyphusian disappointment after another. The green eternal tree of life proves it. If we have a look at where a BRS type programme has been put into practice, what do we see? In a non-revolutionary situation a BRS type programme could only result in a reformist whimper, like the Socialist Party/Communist Party government brought together by Mitterrand when he first came to presidential office in France. But in a revolutionary situation, such a programme results in bloody counterrevolutionary terror as witnessed in Chile in 1973. Let us examine these two examples.

1.6.1. France

May 10 1981 witnessed the election of Francois Mitterrand as French president. A month later, in June, triumph was crowned with laurels, ie an absolute majority for his Socialist Party in the general election to the National Assembly. The 'official communists' in Britain greeted these developments with unrestrained joy. When the composition of the new government was announced it was seen as a grand slam confirmation of the BRS. Four members of the French Communist Party (PCF) - Charles Fiterman, Jack Ralite, Anicet Le Pors, Marcel Rigout - were included in the government. As the Morning Star reasoned at the time, if it could happen in France why not on the other side of the English Channel? Why not indeed? In accepting government positions, the PCF advanced the "peaceful, democratic and pluralistic" perspective enshrined in the BRS; that of acquiring small gains in the 'here and now' in the name of realising, step by careful step, the goal of socialism. The PCF had long held this view, and throughout most of the 1970s it had been working in 'Common Programme' alliance with Mitten-and and the French Socialist Party (PSF) - which it projected as an integral part of the left in order to conceal the bourgeois essence of social democracy.

Yet the bourgeois nature of the PSF's politics was plain to see. During his election campaign Mitten-and demanded that the Communist Party fall in line behind attacks on President Giscard because of his "conciliatory stance toward the Soviet Union" over Poland and Afghanistan. On the home front Mitten-and was less overtly reactionary. He promised that if elected he would reflate France out of a world capitalist recession through extensive nationalisation, a 35 hour week, a wealth tax, increases in state benefits, administrative decentralisation, in conjunction with massive investment to modernise industry and the economy. In other words, the BRS's Alternative Economic Strategy in the colours of
France.

It is true that his new government actually delivered a few minor reforms: increased pensions, an extra week's holiday and a 39 hour working week. However, it did not take long for capitalist rationality to reassert itself and wipe out these gains.

In an effort to stem inflation and restore France's competitive standing, Mitterrand discarded his ill-fitting Marxist cap, did a U-turn and embraced a free market Thatcherite-style ideology. By March 1983 the reflatory policy was thrown into reverse and Monetarist austerity imposed. Government spending was cut, Giscard's 1% levy on wages was reimposed and a halt to all wage increases ordered; unemployment was soon spiralling past two

For all the claims of the main resolution of the PCF's 24th Congress in February 1982 that France had entered a "new historic era" and that "socialism is on the agenda", the PSF/PCF government was forced, like any other government of a capitalist nation, to serve the profit system and the god of capitalist accumulation. Workers' living standards and interests had to take second place, and if necessary be sacrificed.

What was the role of the four PCF ministers in all this? They were used as a left cover for the Mitterrand regime and to dampen down Working class resistance. Because of them PCF militants were meant to be trapped in a Catch 22 situation, and to a large extent they were. How could they not lead strikes against attacks on the Working class? How could they lead strikes against their 'own' government?

It was, of course, precisely for this reason that Mitterrand (whose PSF, it is worth repeating, had an absolute majority in the National Assembly) wanted the PCF given junior ministerial positions, including seats in the cabinet. There was another, perhaps more important, reason for Mitterrand's 'generosity'. Since the late 1960s Mitterrand had openly stated his objective of winning the centre-left of French politics for the PSF, from where it could first "balance", then "dominate" and finally marginalise the PCF. Through including it in government Mitterrand did just that.

Some 'official communists' in Britain excused the PCF's reformism at home because of its international position, not least its 'impassionate response to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and the declaration of martial law in Poland in particular. This, it was argued, was evidence of its 'pro-Sovietism'. Of course, foreign policy is and can only be an extension of domestic policy.

The PCF was in fact utterly opportunist at home and abroad. PCF support for bureaucratic socialism was "often dressed up to appeal to anti-American or anti-German sensibilities" in an effort to firm up its own identity in the face of PSF competition. For these and other opportunist reasons, it might have gone along with the Soviet Union on Poland and Afghanistan. But this was never in contradiction to its participation in a government which was unquestionably anti-Soviet and reactionary.

During the period when it included four PCF ministers, the Mitterrand regime added new weapons of mass destruction to the force defrappe, which was firmly directed against the Soviet Union, including medium-range land-based and submarine-launched nuclear missiles; it also supported the installation of Cruise and Pershing II missiles in Federal Germany as a 'counter' to the Soviet Union's SS20s.

The ground for all this had actually been laid by the PCF. In 1977 it abandoned its opposition to French nuclear weapons, forcing the PSF to do likewise if it wanted to maintain the Common Programme alliance.

Compared with his predecessor Giscard d'Estaing, Mitterrand has rightly been portrayed by the bourgeois establishment as being more pro-US, an 'Atlanticist' rather than a Gaullist. Whatever the nuances, though, both Mitterrand and Giscard served the interests of French imperialism, and there is nothing 'progressive' in that. Therefore there can be no excuse for the PCF's rotten collaboration with Mitterrand and the PSF.

The task of communists is not to provide a cover for reaction. The task of communists is to expose reaction, especially when it is fronted by a 'socialist' president. Only in this way can workers be prepared for the only progressive social development possible in a country such as France - proletarian revolution. With its BR5 type programme and practice it is not surprising that the PCF's opportunism represents a barrier on this road.
1.6.2. Chile

The election of Mitterrand took place in the absence of a revolutionary situation. It was no different from the election of a Labour government in Britain with a MacDonald, Attlee, or Wilson at its head.

Salvador Allende's election to president in 1970 was different. It happened when Chilean society was in a "state of profound crisis", where Frei's Christian Democrat government's "feeble attempts at social change" had "disintegrated with neither grief nor glory in economic stagnation, in shortage of supplies and in the violent repression of the people" and where the "majority of the people are discontented and are seeking an alternative". Put in Marxist terms, Chile was in the midst of a rapidly maturing revolutionary situation: the ruling class was no longer able to rule in the old way and the masses were no longer willing to be ruled in the old way.

The Popular Unity bloc of parties backing Allende and forming the government under him was centred on the two main workers' parties, the Communist Party (CPC) and the Socialist Party. These two parties were both dominated by opportunism, shown by the fact that Popular Unity not only included a number of petty bourgeois reformist parties, but the bourgeois Radical Party. Hence it was by definition no revolutionary alliance, uniting different forces on the basis of a commitment to overthrow the existing state through revolution.

As with Allende's Socialist Party - a party that from its beginnings in 1933, as it said, shunned "all ties of an international nature" - the Communist Party was fully committed to Popular Unity. In fact it was its prime initiator, its most staunch defender, and fought to broaden it to include the country's main bourgeois party, the Christian Democratic Party. This perspective flowed from its BRS type programme. It was constitutionalist to the core, rejecting revolution and civil war, in spite of Latin America's all too rich history of conquest, wars of independence and rash of military coups, which all go to show that there, as everywhere in the last analysis, force is decisive.

Against all the evidence Allende's socialists and 'official communists' claimed that the bourgeois state machine could be won over, salami-like, slice by slice. To justify this they were forced to turn both Marxist theory and the history of Chile upside-down. In his inaugural presidential address on November 5 1970 Allende actually quoted Engels' musings about the possibility of a peaceful revolution in pre-imperialist Britain and the US, "where the representatives of the people have concentrated in their hands all the power", as justification of the reformism of Popular Unity, which denied the need for a workers' state; instead he defended the idea that all that was needed was "workers in government". Or, put another way, the state was something that could be laid hold of ready made by the working class - something both Marx and Engels came to hotly deny as a result of experience and development of their theory.

History was treated in a similar cavalier fashion. Chile's punctuated bourgeois 'democratic traditions' made it the Britain of South America, for the opportunists. In the mythology of opportunism Chile became a country of evolution not revolution. As with the BRS, this meant that the institutions of the state were granted a supposedly impeccable loyalty to the constitution; and to show just how wrong you can be, that included the army. According to Allende the "great characteristic of the armed forces of Chile has been the obedience to the civil authority, their unquestioned regard for the public will as expressed in the ballots, for the laws of Chile and for the Chilean constitution".

There was another similarity with the BRS. The main enemy was overseas, not at home; in the words of the popular saying, Chile was "so far from god, so near the United States". Native monopoly capital within Chile was seen almost purely as a semi-colonial subbranch of USA Incorporated, against which all classes could rebel.

True, Chile was "dependent upon imperialism and dominated by sectors of the bourgeois allied to foreign capital." However, when it came down to it this junior partner of imperialism stood at the head of the entire capitalist class in Chile, including the small and medium businessmen Popular Unity thought of as potential allies. Indeed, the notion that these strata could play some sort of progressive, anti-imperialist role excused the CPC's refusal to fight.
for socialism: any attempt to do so would after all have frightened them off and was therefore 'premature'.

Put another way, before socialism could be contemplated it was necessary for the CPC to complete the 'democratic stage' of its 'revolution'. What this amounted to was a programme of stages: an artificial imposition of a non-existent bourgeois democratic stage on the living revolutionary process.

This theory had nothing in practice to do with the perspective of winning working class hegemony over the struggle for democratic rights and against imperialism, by carrying out the duty of every revolutionary to make revolution. It was all about cosily uniting with the 'progressive' section of the ruling class and securing reforms. Naturally this was a perspective justified by claiming that it was a precondition for Chile's careful journey to socialism. As it turned out it was a road to disaster.

The CPC's stagist approach was applied before and after the 1973 fascist coup with equally bad results: working class sacrifice in the name of the Chilean nation, then a bloody military fascist coup, followed by a slow relaxation to ease off pressure from below that has ended in a limited bourgeois democracy.

Obviously the battle against the Pinochet fascist military junta was one that did unite a broad spectrum of the Chilean population. Precisely because of this the task of communists in Chile should have been to gain hegemony over the anti-fascist movement, not with the aim of placing in power some different section of the bourgeoisie, but to ensure that after the overthrow of the fascists, the revolution developed uninterruptedly towards socialism. In that case there would be no need for a second, specifically socialist, revolution. In such a way the struggle for democracy against fascism, and for independent economic development, would have been led, used, and resolved by the workers fighting for their own rule.

With the disintegration of Pinochet fascism the lack of proletarian hegemony led to the limited bourgeois democracy we see today in Chile: only proletarian-led revolution could have secured democracy and allowed its full development. Yet in the conditions which gave rise to Pinochet fascism - the revolutionary situation that spanned the years from the late 1960s up to 1973 - strictly working within the boundaries of bourgeois legality forced the opportunists to act in an almost suicidal fashion.

In order to secure Christian Democrat approval for appointing Allende as president, Popular Unity agreed never to act unconstitutionally. Later, to win cooperation from army chiefs, all political agitation in the ranks of the armed forces was prohibited. For the same reason the government did its best to discourage land seizures from below and allowed squads of soldiers to terrorise and torture workers and peasants who attempted to arm themselves.

Clearly Allende's government was neither the product of any sort of revolution nor committed to the task of making revolution. It never seriously attempted to break from the shackles of bourgeois legality, instead it redistributed lucrative state posts to its supporters and in a vain effort to appease the growing danger of counterrevolution, it attacked the working class and peasantry - again in the name of bourgeois legality.

Objectively in the conditions of a revolutionary situation Allende's left reformist bloc acted as a barrier to resolving the revolutionary situation positively. The government of Allende deceived the Chilean people with socialist phrasemongering, while in practice compromising with and playing into the hands of the counterrevolutionary bourgeoisie.

The leaders of the CPC naturally do their best to excuse the bloody failure of Popular Unity. They also deny any sort of comparison between the Chile of 1970-3 and the Russia of 1917. To do that would be to admit their opportunism. Writing in The Lessons of Chile leading CP member Volodia Teitelboim does his best to muddy the water:

"Throughout the period of Popular Unity rule, Chile was under a kind of dual power, which cannot of course, be compared with the situation in Russia in 1917. In Chile there was a lawful popular government and on the other hand, an unlawful reactionary power backed by all who earlier had dominated society. In addition to certain key economic and financial layers and the mass media, that reactionary power controlled a considerable part of the state apparatus."32

The Popular Unity government cannot in its essence be counter-posed to the rest of the state machine: although the army struck against the government, both in the last analysis served the bourgeoisie (the reason for this seeming paradox of one section of the bourgeois state striking against another is the deep splits that the emergence of the revolutionary situation had caused in the
ranks of the bourgeoisie, preventing it from ruling in the old way). Nor did the Popular Unity government, as Teitelboim claims, somehow represent an element of dual power - what Lenin called an alternative centre of authority, a power resting not on the law but directly on the force of the armed masses of the population. The Popular Unity government did, because of the revolutionary situation, acquire a certain \textit{bonapartist independence} from both labour and capital. That makes Teitelboim wrong on a third count, there being no parallel between Chile 1970-3 and Russia February-October 1917. In point of fact to get a historical perspective on what Allende's government was, we can do no better than look at Russia in 1917.

The provisional government had certain \textit{bonapartist Kerensky too}, seeming to stand above the main classes of capitalist society, while in reality being an \textit{instrument for the exploitation of the oppressed classes}. It consisted of members of the Socialist Revolutionary Party and the Mensheviks, who undoubtedly considered themselves socialists. This did not make it an example of dual power. Kerensky's government was the result of a February Revolution that swept away Tsarism, yet this did not resolve the revolutionary situation. Kerensky and Co did not represent the objective interests of the working masses of Russia, instead they sought to hold back the revolution and pursue a non-existent 'middle way'.

Kerensky wanted to consolidate the bourgeois state in Russia so as to carry out a programme of gradual reform, not smash that state, light the flame of revolution across Europe and usher in a programme of social revolution. Determined on the 'middle way', like Allende, Kerensky was therefore faced by two threats, the aspirations of the masses (fortunately given communist consciousness by the Bolsheviks in Russia) and the threat of army counterrevolution.

In Chile a "kind of dual power" was developing; not from inside the bourgeois state but in the factories and workplaces. The \textit{cordones} existed in most industrial centres, sparked into life by an early threat of a military coup. Despite initial objections from the trade unions (led by the CPC) they eventually united all major working class tendencies. From meetings open to all tendencies these workers' committees were elected from the factory floor. Because delegates were subject to recall, these committees reflected the political level of class conscious workers. They were proto-soviets, organs of embryonic dual power.

It was these institutions that revolutionaries should have looked to, sought to nurture, and to transform into new organs of state power. Yet, because of the lack of a party solidly based on Marxism-Leninism and determined to see the revolution concentrate all its forces of destruction against the old state power, the \textit{cordones} slowly withered, never revitalising, even on the eve of the 1973 coup.

The Communist Party of Chile, because of the domination of the opportunists, must take prime responsibility for this. It fought any moves to break from the reformist path. Strikes, illegal occupations, the \textit{cordones}, the arming of the masses and agitation inside the armed forces were all opposed by the CPC leadership. It put its futile goal of creating an alliance with the Christian Democrats above everything. Before the 1973 coup, the opportunist leaders of the 'official' CPGB promoted the Chilean road as the \textit{British Road} in practice. Parallels were drawn between the 'long democratic tradition', 'constitutional army', and 'strong organisations of the working class' of Britain and Chile.

Of course, come the September 11 coup, everything was thrown into reverse gear. In a piece of political dishonesty which takes some beating, the opportunists metamorphosed their previous claims into their opposites. Suddenly we were presented with Chile's lack of democratic traditions, its backwardness, even the activities of the 'ultra-left' as reasons for failure.

These were diversions, designed to protect the "uniquely" British \textit{BRS}. But life had spoken. The only conclusion that any communist worthy of the name can come to is that \textit{the reformist road led to disaster for the working class}. As we know, though, opportunism is not honest. It has to lie. Our aim is not to convince congenital liars of the truth. That would be futile. Our aim is \textit{to break the hold} opportunists have over the working class, for \textit{only if this is done} can we avoid the slaughter of Chile.
1.7. History of the 'MS'

It is essential to look at the BRS in terms of its evolution. Only in this way is it possible to appreciate how 'official communism' has arrived at its present dead end and how it produced a programme which is hopelessly eclectic, full of strange incongruities and totally useless as a guide to practice.

For the BRS and the miserable gaggle of reformist Euros and CPBers to claim in their programme any sort of living ideological link with our Party when it was formed, when it vowed to follow the Bolshevik road to workers' power, let alone any criticism of the abortive 1939 Draft Programme. For Soviet Britain was the refashioning of the CPGB into an arm of the Soviet state's diplomacy. Naturally today's opportunists do not want to face up to this. Instead they use the centrist sectarianism of Class against class to dismiss the revolutionary positions it advanced, above all any criticism of the Labour Party as a whole is characterised as wholly wrong and wholly sectarian.

- A general election manifesto, Class against class. This is always thought of as being wildly leftist. In reality the CPGB was uncritically adapting to the centrist drift in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Sure, there were plenty of leftist phrases; sure, a sectarian attitude towards rank and file members of the Labour Party resulted. But we must separate the wheat from the chaff. The essence of Class against class was the refashioning of the CPGB into an arm of the Soviet state's diplomacy. Naturally today's opportunists do not want to face up to this. Instead they use the centrist sectarianism of Class against class to dismiss the revolutionary positions it advanced, above all any criticism of the Labour Party as a whole is characterised as wholly wrong and wholly sectarian.

- For Soviet Britain. Unlike Class against class, For Soviet Britain was formally the programme of the CPGB, its first. In spite of this it reads more like a centrist (ie, revolutionary in words/reformist in deed) election manifesto or a run of the mill centrist congress resolution. There are general truths about the evils of capitalism and the correct insistence that socialism can only come as a result of "forceful" revolution and a "workers' dictatorship". Yet galumphing through the entire document is an army of facts, figures and frankly utopian plans that were only relevant for the year 1935. Reference is made to the number of unemployed and how the Albert Hall is "refused to the workers", there are quotes from the then prime minister and detailed schemes for after the revolution for everything from banking to mining, from iron and steel to railways, from textiles to agriculture, from fishing to trade, and from housing to health and education. Such irrelevant facts and fancies are damning evidence of an inability to grasp the strategic purposes of a real communist programme and hence evidence of a sharp turn to the right. Hardly surprisingly, it was thought necessary to produce another programme within four years!
• Draft programme. It was to be submitted to the CPGB's 16th Congress scheduled for early October 1939. However the outbreak of World War II meant that the congress was only convened in 1943. Because the Draft programme just like For Soviet Britain was specific to its immediate day, rather than outlining the broad tasks of the epoch, le the strategic measures necessary for the conquest of state power, it was not surprisingly absent from the agenda. Like For Soviet Britain it had become an anachronism, but this time within one month of being published! In many respects the Draft programme was an expanded version of For Soviet Britain. Yet there were differences. Its authors had moved further to the right. The Draft programme took on board Comintern's 7th Congress project of international class collaboration with the proposal for a popular front between the working class and the bourgeoisie in order to "safeguard" bourgeois democracy against fascism. But the most significant step to the right was the description of how socialism would be achieved. According to the Draft programme a "labour movement" majority in parliament was key. A proletarian state would emerge not from revolution but from the new (parliamentary) government's call to rebuff the "violent resistance of the powerful financial magnates". Showing the clear signs of what was to come its authors insisted, against all the evidence of the October Revolution and in true moralistic style, that: "The path of violence is never chosen by the working class, but only by the exploiters".

• The British Road to Socialism. It was first issued by the Executive Committee of the CPGB in 1951 and a second slightly amended form was adopted at the 22nd Congress in 1952. Using silly arguments along the line that Marxism had previously failed to realise that "no two countries are exactly alike" the BRS for the first time committed communists in Britain to a consistently Labourite parliamentary/reformist road to "socialism". Soviets/ workers' councils were out. Parliament was no longer to be replaced, instead it was to be "transformed".

• BRS 1958. It stated that "a transition to socialism without armed struggle is possible today"; that is capitalist resistance to a Labour government committed to socialism could be resisted without recourse to violence. Another 'innovation' was the perspective of affiliation of the CPGB to the Labour Party and the eventual formation of a "single working class party".

128 Which Road?

• BRS 1968. It updated the 1958 edition, it also insisted in an effort to distance itself from living socialism, that parties "hostile" to socialism would be free to operate under socialism. At the same time it was in this edition that a decisive shift in the world balance of forces was 'discovered' in order to justify the peaceful, parliamentary road.

• BRS 1978. We have dealt with the fifth edition in terms of its eclecticism, its parliamentary cretinism, and how it became outdated one year after it was published with the election of the Thatcher government. Nonetheless it is instructive to look at the Party crisis it provoked.

When the Executive Committee launched a new Draft of the BRS in 1977, its intention was to repeat the propaganda exercise that heralded the previous four versions. But instead of CPGB members going through the ritualistic 'debate' - success being gauged by how many Labour MPs put their oar in - the 'debate' became real.

Up and down the country there were meetings against as well as for the Draft. Many branches and districts - now riven with factions and proto factions - refused to act as the leadership's spear carriers, they had new masters. The columns of Comment, the forerunner of 7 Days and now Straight Leftist faction, ensured that his troops mutinied on their knees by merely calling for the draft to be "referred back".

Charlie Doyle took a more principled stand. He produced a pamphlet outlining his (centrist) criticisms of the Draft BRS under the title of: The British Road to Socialism Draft - Revolutionary Path or Diversion? It circulated widely inside and outside the party and was even reprinted in the Trotskyite paper Socialist Challenge. This was something that the leadership was not prepared to tolerate. It banned it, using the tenuous argument that as all other rank and file members were only allowed 800 words (1) in the 'official' press to outline their views on the Draft, it was unfair for anyone else to get more.

In spite of Canutian efforts, at the end of the day the leadership had to reconcile itself to the reality of deep divisions, something which the 35th Congress, in spite of its clear majority for the BRS, did nothing to overcome.
The overwhelming bulk of opposition to the Draft came from the centrist. Their break up and disintegration had already begun (now they are divided between the ranks of the New Communist Party, the Morning Star's CPB and the Straight Leftist faction inside the Euro organisation). Those around Surrey District Secretary, Sid French, did not fight out their position at the CPGB's 35th Congress in November 1977. It was rumoured at the time that the leadership was preparing to 'reorganise' Surrey District, French's power base. Some even suggested that both Sid French and Eric Trevett (district organiser - and now NCP general secretary) were to be expelled at the congress for their undoubted factional activity. To avoid such an 'embarrassment' a split was decided upon. French and 700 supporters left the CPGB to form the NCP in July 1977. Lack of principle aside, let us examine the NCP's historiography, in essence it mirrors the entire centrist spectrum's mythology about the rightward drift of the CPGB and their 'fight' against it.

According to one of its later documents:

"The denunciation of the Stalin personality cult and the Hungarian counterrevolution in 1956 were used by revisionist elements to weaken and divide. The party programme, the BRS was first revised in 1957 -the start of a process culminating in 1977 which deprived it of all revolutionary content ...

"In 1965 the Daily Worker had its name changed to the Morning Star which marked the definite beginning of the decline ... Harry Pollitt had died in 1959, R Palme Dutt had retired from the Executive Committee and stalwarts like JR Campbell, W Hannington, W Rust and J Mahon were gone to be replaced by the likes of G Matthews, J Gollan and J Woddis ...

"1968 saw the CPGB take the wrong side during the events in Czechoslovakia, and 1977 saw the new draft of the BRS - which put the cap on the whole process ...

"Marxist-Leninist forces within the party, like Sid French, had waged a struggle since 1965 to correct the line but this had proved impossible. So it was that in July of 1977 healthy forces met to form the New Communist Party and renew the struggle on Marxist-Leninist principles."

It was our "stalwarts" like Pollitt, Dutt, Campbell et al, who presided over the launching of the BRS in 1951. Were the 1951 and 1952 BRS's fundamentally different from the 1977 Draft or the 1978 fifth edition? No! If the 1978 BRS is revisionist - and it is -there can be no doubt that all earlier editions are also revisionist.

All have exactly the same reformist approach to central questions such as the state, parliament, and democracy. Differences that exist are superficial. For example, the 1951 BRS claimed to be based on "Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin". And in place of the 1978's implication that Britain has been turned into some sort of EC colony, we find the 1951 BRS instead obsessed with Britain being "turned into a satellite of America".

Gollan, Woddis and Matthews (the CPGB's leaders in the 1960s) were the chosen successors of those who produced Class against class, For Soviet Britain and Draft programme. They walked in the 'official communist' footsteps of Pollitt, Dutt and Campbell (the CPGB's leaders from the late 1920s till the late 1950s). This does not mean that there was no change. Centrist opportunism evolved in the 1960s - particularly after the events in Czechoslovakia in 1968 - into right-opportunism, thus creating a schism with those forces which remained loyal to 'yesterday's revisionism'.

Claims by the 'official communist' centrists that the 1977 Draft marked a qualitative departure from previous editions, "depriving" the BRS "of all revolutionary content" indicate, if they indicate anything, a recognition of the need to cover up the role of the heroes of centrism, and their indirect responsibility for today's state of affairs.

Moreover that Sid French's heirs only place the beginning of his struggle against "revisionism" from the opposition to the name change of the Daily Worker in 1965 is a clear indication that his political tendency had nothing to do with "defending Marxism-Leninism". No, his bucking at the change was because he perceived the divergence of the leadership from centrifist opportunism. If not, if his was a genuine struggle against revisionism, it would have commenced well before 1965, before the BRS was even conceived. Either that or the NCP would trace - yes, with hindsight - the origins of opportunism back to the leaders it still insists on lionising. It does not. Nor does any other centrist current.

Centrists always find themselves defending 'last year's revisionism' as opposed to this year's. Their resulting problem is obvious.
2. British Road to Socialism
- CPB version

All the myriad opportunist groupings that limp on as 'official communism' in Britain have at one point or another in their evolution voted for one edition or another of the *British Road to Socialism*. Yet time moves on, and with it opportunist political tastes and requirements. Most like to imagine that now they have grown up.

There is, though, as is always the case, one group that in opportunist terms refuses to move with the times. That group is the Communist Party of Britain (the *Morning Star's* split). It was actually formed on the basis of defending all editions of the BRS up to and including the fifth, 1978, edition against the now abandoned Euro attempts in the late 1980s to 'update' it with their then coalitionist monomania and 'Fordist' mental decay.

Farce into horror is predictable with 'official communism'. The CPB was not content with defending the rotting BRS corpse. It wanted to revive it. True, it produced first its own, new, draft and then, at its 2nd Congress in November 1989, a finalised version "for the 1990s". However as we will see only too clearly the CPB does not have the abilities of Jesus Christ, rather Mary Shelley's all too human Baron Frankenstein.

As well as commenting on the CPB's version of the BRS, it is necessary to refer in passing to its pre-2nd Congress Draft version. Dealing with its Draft has definite polemical advantages:

1. By definition it unquestionably represents the views of the CPB's leadership rather than its congress.

2. In opportunist organisations invariably a certain gap exists between the politics of the leadership and the politics of the activists, who usually stand somewhat to the left of those at the top.
The resulting lopsided pyramid was illustrated in the CPB branch amendments to their leadership's Draft and the votes on them at the CPB's 2nd Congress. As well as correcting some of the more outrageous rightist blunders of the CPB leadership these votes revealed that the CPB carried from its birth all the ideological differences which the 'official' CPGB was riven with when it last debated the BRS in 1977, along with a host of 'left' proto-factions and 'left' proto-splits. The only difference being that the CPB will play out its congenital liquidationism on a far smaller scale; its splits and their polemics are those of the 1977 CPGB, only as if seen through the wrong end of a telescope.

Before getting stuck in to the CPB's BRS let us deal with its leadership's claim to represent the continuity of the Communist Party of Great Britain from the day it was formed on July 31 1920 till its 40th Congress in November 1987; which its forerunner, the Communist Campaign Group, insisted marked a qualitative break from the past and in particular from the principles underlying the BRS.

We do not need to reiterate the CPGB's founding principles, which unlike those of the CPB were unquestionably revolutionary. As to the idea that it was the 40th Congress that represented the break, from those principles this is simply preposterous, a transparent, self-serving lie (as was the NCP's founder/leaders' claim that the adoption of the 1977/8 version of the BRS meant that the CPGB had become a social democratic organisation). True, the decisions of the 'official' CPGB's 40th Congress were a further step to the right. But far from it representing a qualitative break from Marxism-Leninism, the congress decisions were merely a quantitative development of the rightism in the 1978 BRS. Just as it was a quantitative rightist development from the 1968 BRS which those who went on to found the NCP accepted and voted for.

The CCG needed an excuse to split and form the CPB. Why is easily explained.

Long ago the right opportunist bureaucracy - personified by now retired 'official' CPGB general secretary Gordon McLennan and Morning Star editor, Tony Chater, - which traditionally ran the 'official' CPGB, being without ideological and political initiative, bowed before the disciples of 'Eurocommunism'. After that the right opportunist trend became more and more reduced to the level of simple administrators of the various parts of the party machine with little or no support among the rank and file. From the mid-1980s we saw the final marginalisation of the old right opportunist bureaucracy, a natural result of the disintegration of the 'official' CPGB and the growing polarisation between Euros and centrists at branch level.

McLennan and Chater came from the same right opportunist bureaucratic mould, equally grey and uninspiring; in the field of theory neither has produced anything whatsoever. Chater and the Morning Star bureaucracy broke with the 'official' bureaucracy (fronted by McLennan) and turned to the centrist opposition for support when it seemed the Euros were at last strong enough to get their hands on what Chater had come to regard as his paper. Only then did Chater become anti-Euro.

The formation of the CPB was a direct product of Chater's bureaucratic rebellion. And it must be emphasised that it was not the 40th Congress but the so-called 're-establishment of the CPGB' in April 1988 and the formation of the CPB which marked the qualitative point in the disintegration of the Euro-led CPGB from being a party to a mere grouping. Who can doubt it! The Euro 'official' CPGB is now a faction ridden petty bourgeois rump bent on its own Democratic Left liquidation!

What of the CPB's claim to be the Communist Party? Frankly it has no right to call itself a 'party' let alone 'communist'. Organisationally the CPB - whose membership is now far, far below the 1,600 it claimed after its formation - does not represent a unity of communists, even to call it Menshevik would be to insult the original Mensheviks. Many of its members do not even pay the paltry sums asked for as dues, its branch meetings are few and far between and sparsely attended, and although it started with a number of paid full timers (one only agreed to work for his 'party' after a pension plan had been agreed), it only has a part time general secretary in the form of Mike Hicks. The CPB has a record of public activity that is virtually non-existent. It has only produced some dozen pieces of literature since it was formed. At the admission of its own leadership it does not lead the vanguard of the working class, nor a significant section of it. Put another more precise way, it is no party.

As to its 'communist' politics, it is well known that Tony Chater declared his Morning Star the "daily living embodiment" of the British Road. True! But as we have seen it has nothing, not a thing,
to do with genuine communism.

Of course, there are those in the leadership of the Morning Star’s “political wing”, who once thought the same thing. They correctly voted against the BRS in 1977 because, as they said, it was “revisionist”. It certainly was. Now in order to facilitate their broad democratic alliance in the CPB, these very same people champion the BRS, privately, they say they do so in the name of tactics.

How can this be? For genuine communists tactics should be subordinate to principle, not the other way round.

The publication of a new draft of the BRS in 1977, and its subsequent acceptance at the 35th Congress of the CPGB in the November of that year, represented an important victory for the Euro wing of the CPGB. It was, as we have shown, an important quantitative development of the Party’s rightist drift, which had been going on for many decades.

Such a document as the BRS cannot legitimately be defended in the name of defending communism. Defence of it by certain ‘tactically clever’ right centrists is either cynical careerism or evidence of the degree to which, now they are at last in leadership positions, they have embraced open opportunism.

It has been widely said that the CPB’s draft BRS is merely an updated version of the 1978 version. There is a lot of truth here. However, as well as getting rid of some of the more obviously dated aspects of the Euro edition, there are some shifts in emphasis as well as a couple of rather desperate original contributions from the CPB leadership. Therefore as we have already fully dealt with the 1978 version, we will concentrate our criticism on these ‘shifts’ and ‘contributions’.

As we will see bureaucratic rebellion only produces bureaucratic politics and bureaucratic politics are by definition short-sighted. In point of fact the updates inserted to resuscitate its BRS became hopelessly outdated even before it was published, and that is understating it. The central pillars of its ‘updated’ programme have already turned to dust.

There is nothing wrong with tactical flexibility and responding to changing conditions. Real communists find no problem here. But in The re-establishment of the Communist Party - a perspective the CCG proto-CPBers stated that the 1978 BRS was in need of redrafting because “there have been significant changes both in the world situation, and in Britain’s political, economic and social situation in particular.” That “significant” change will take place is easy to predict. Change is after all constant. It is one of the absolute truths.

Fully aware of this those who write genuine communist programmes take that into account and therefore do not concern themselves with the fleeting prime ministers, facts, figures and tactical questions of the day.

The real communist programme should only need changing when there has been a strategic turning point, eg when in our circumstances the task of capturing state power has been carried out. Lenin’s party made do with one programme before the revolution and one programme after it.

Not the CPB. Having a programme that monotonously has to be rewritten and updated has become a habit. The BRS, “our programme” had to be “revised every five years”<sup>45</sup>. It admits with the casualness of a Hollywood divorce announcement. Such faithfulness is not the norm for communists.

Regular trade-ins had one crucial advantage for the CPB however. They provided the excuse its leadership needed to steal the BRS from the Euros (who no longer wanted it) and to limit debate within its own ranks to technical matters rather than allow questioning of the programme as such. Clever, but not very. The BRS is a poisoned chalice.

The 1978 BRS was left standing by a “significant” development which in historic, and it must be said in programmatic terms too, was a non-event - the Tories replacing Labour in government. The same fate was in store for the CPB’s version, only quicker, even before its final, official version was published. Frankly it was only to be expected.

Opportunists cannot but base their programme on pragmatism. What they are interested in is not a search for objective truth and a guide to revolutionary action but justifications for their opportunist practice and their narrow subjective interests and desires. This leads to mind blowing blindness, of which there is more than plenty in the CPB’s BRS.

The CPB claims to have a long-term strategy. But its BRS is full of 1989 facts and figures. All claims that socialism is striding forward; solidarity with Gorbachevism; wishful thinking that Labour will be elected at the next general election etc, etc, will hang round its neck like the proverbial albatross. It deserves it! (All quotes unless otherwise stated in this chapter are from the 1990 CPB version. It is actually undated).
The communist programme does not become dated simply because of a general election, let alone because 1989 and its socio-economic facts and figures give way to 1990 and its socio-economic facts and figures. The opportunist programme is very different. The CPB's BRS is rooted in 1989 and is therefore, even on purely technical matters, already outdated.

So for all the above quoted claim that the BRS is a "long term strategy" its introduction lets the cat out of the bag when it admits that it is based on "British conditions in the world as it exists today" ie conditions which by definition will change tomorrow (our emphasis p2).

The CPB's introduction gives us the flavour of the whole. The bulk of it is a simple rewrite of the Euro's 1978 edition, the absurd claim that it is based on the "theory of scientific socialism", that contradictorily "only by putting an end to capitalism" can Britain's problems be solved and yet a "general improvement in living standards, a wide expansion of democracy and a genuine policy of peace" can be achieved under capitalism if the government adopts the so-called Alternative Economic and Political Policy etc (p2). There are however some changes.

Either by Machiavellian design or more likely simply through nostalgia the CPB version is slightly to the left of the 1978 one. Where the well trained Euros chase after the latest establishment kite the CPBers hark back to their safe 'official communist' past. Thus out goes the reformist 'broad democratic alliance' of 1978 and the reformist 'anti-monopoly alliance' of 1968 returns in its place.

However all the CPB has produced is an 'official communist' version of the Amish sect. The overall picture, even at this stage, is whacky; not least with the continued insistence that there has been a "shift in the balance of forces internationally against imperialism" (p2 - more of this later).

2.1. The contemporary world situation

Or how the CPB forgets all about communism and fails to understand capitalism

The first 'chapter' of the CPB's BRS - Draft and final version - says it all. Instead of a general description of our epoch, the epoch of the transition from capitalism to communism we are presented with a mishmash of 1989 statistics and the claim that "the situation in Britain ... is at the most basic level characterised by the transition from capitalism to the higher system of socialism" (p3).

Not only does this halfway house truism, like its Euro predecessor, reveal a predictable national narrowness - it is the world that is in transition - but far more importantly in its Draft BRS, unlike all previous BRS's, communism as a social system was not mentioned! Not only in the first chapter but throughout the whole document! Hard to believe, but true.

The CPB criticised the Euros for wanting to drop 'communism'. We see nothing wrong with their rare act of honesty. They never had anything to do with it. The CPB leadership though, in its 1989 Draft BRS, pre-empted them.

We must stress not deliberately. Yes, the politically illiterate CPB leadership simply forgot communism! At its congress it did not object to branch amendments putting it back in.

Such 'forgetfulness' is surely proof that the CPB leadership is only communist in name. They should follow the Euro's example and start thinking up a new, more accurate, title for their organisation. How about using one of the names the Euros toyed with and
then rejected? Radical Democrats might fit the bill ... but then again the CPBers like the Euros are not particularly radical, and certainly not very democratic.

Forgetting to include communism in its Draft means, of course, that the CPB leadership can have no understanding of our epoch, neither of capitalism nor of socialism. Socialism is after all nothing but the transitional stage between capitalism and communism, and cannot be understood scientifically in any other way. But, before going on to deal with that, let us deal with the rest of the first section in its final version of the BRS.

The CPB understandably feels a need to explain the post-World War II boom. It fails. In its scheme of things the "decisive factor" in producing the boom was the emergence of "new socialist countries" which "offered new hope and optimism, to millions" and "helped the working class to achieve significant advances in wages, job prospects and living standards generally" (p4).

That the USA emerged as the capitalist world hegemon and reshaped the world in its own image is completely overlooked, a crass stupidity. It was the US dollar which provided the material basis for the post-World War II boom, not the spread of socialism, let alone the "increased power and militancy of the working class" (p4 - the CPBers' claim that working class militancy increased in the 1950s and 60s compared to the 1920s and 30s is as revealing as it is silly). Inability to see the truth flows directly from its BRS's combination of wishful thinking and its failure to understand capitalism's cycle, and which stage of it we are in now. For the CPB's BRS world capitalism's "cyclical crises" in the 1950s and 60s and their "range and depth" were "restricted", since then apparently there has been an "aggravation of the general crisis of the world capitalist system" (p4). A classic case of not seeing the wood for the trees.

We have fully dealt with the false notion about capitalism's crises that all previous editions of the BRS were based on; the notion that the capitalist world has since 1914 or 1917 been gripped by a permanent general crisis (see 1.1.3.). Nevertheless as this CPB BRS places so much emphasis on its belief that capitalism experienced a great boom in the 1950s and 60s - which clouding the issue it calls a "relative boom" (p4), ie the greatest boom in capitalism's history, and could with the utopian AEPS do so again simply as a result of the subjective expectations of the working class, means we must return to the subject.

The CPB's BRS is wrong to imagine that capitalism's oscillations in the 1970s and 80s are examples of booms and slumps. They are not. The epoch of imperialism has greatly expanded and generalised capitalism's cycle.

As we have said under imperialism the massive expansion of the credit system has allowed booms to reach unprecedented heights for unprecedented periods. Again, as we have said, a price has to be paid; the subsequent general crisis reaches unprecedented depths and lasts for an unprecedented length of time.

The last general crisis began with World War I and included the crash of 1929 which almost overnight wiped out a third of the capitalist world's productive capacity. World War II - which cost 50 million lives - resolved the crisis, not the "inspiration" provided by the emergence of bureaucratic socialism in Poland, Hungary etc. Because it was the US which won, its previously hemmed-in dynamic capital was allowed to penetrate previously protected or closed areas of the world economy. In doing so this allowed capitalism to enjoy the long boom of the 1950s and 60s.

But nothing lasts for ever. Since the late 1960s capitalism has visibly again entered the intermediate phase of its cycle between boom and slump. The phase of declining profit rates, overproduction and speculation, featuring the stretching of the credit system to its limits. Within this phase upturn oscillations (such as Thatcher's 1985-8 'economic miracle') have become ever more fleeting, and downturn oscillations ever longer, deeper and characteristic of the period. This means that in order to survive and keep up the mass of profits, capitalism seeks to raise the rate of exploitation, it also turns to the export of capital to find new markets. Britain is a classic case in point.

The ability of trade unions to ameliorate competition within the working class has been attacked in a uncertain fashion and the export of capital has broken all records. But the main reason companies were able to restore some of their lost profitability has been monopolisation. For all the privatisations and hype, competition within capitalism has been further curbed; capitalism in Britain has reduced itself to the omnipotent rule of a score or two giant transnational corporations and three giant banks. The fundamental contradiction of the capitalist order, between social production and private expropriation, has thus reached new heights.
As we all know capitalism must grow in order to survive. The nature of the profit system dictates it. Every capitalist must never-endingly strive to put on to the market the greatest possible amount of commodities; it is this or certain bankruptcy. A dynamic system, yes, and a technically revolutionary one. The striving for profits demands increased productivity and new techniques of production. But there is a catch.

Capitalism is like the sorcerer's apprentice. In the words of the *Communist Manifesto* the "conditions of bourgeois society are too narrow to comprise the wealth created by them." Consequently as sure as night follows day dynamism leads to the overproduction of capital when an ever expanding mass of capital is finding it ever more difficult to realise its surplus value in a market saturated with commodities.

The overproduction of capital also means the rate of profit tends to fall. Of course, until the market had become completely saturated with commodities the tendency for the rate of profit to fall can be partially offset by extending the credit system. This is exactly what we see today. Fictitious capital - stocks, bonds and shares, whose call on existing wealth relies on nothing more than an accumulation of claims on future profits - has grown extraordinarily fast in a series of speculative booms (1e, upward oscillations within capitalism's pre-crisis cyclical pattern).

Yet because of its lack of intrinsic value, the entire credit system is extraordinarily fragile, nervous and prone to panic selling. At the least disturbance the whole thing can come tumbling down and trigger a general crisis. This crisis does not result merely because workers cannot "buy all the goods being produced" (p3) but because of "the production of too much wealth", in the form of "antagonistic capital". Antagonistic because in conditions of general crisis one capital must destroy another in order to survive. Because imperialism has created a world economy this now involves states and not only companies.

Today, because of uneven development, dynamic Japan and a dynamic united Germany (dominating Europe, east and west) are set on a collision course with the US which, whatever post-Gulf War interregnum it can establish, only faces in the longer term the prospect of unremitting further relative decline and decay.

In an effort to keep its economy from nose diving, the US has sucked in ever larger amounts of imports (both commodities and capital) - which it has paid for through stretching the credit system to unheard-of limits. Over the last decade the US was thus transformed from the world's principal creditor into its principal debtor. As a result protectionist demands have been raised in ruling circles. These have been echoed by the US labour movement bureaucracy. This, as with its British counterparts in the CPB, demands import controls against 'unfair' competition. In effect these demands add up to a call for the competitors to commit hara-kiri.

Because of the sheer size of its economy, and its importance as a market, the US has been able to get the world's two over-exporters, Japan and Germany, to pay for its over-imports through their purchasing of US stocks and bonds. But not for ever. Sooner or later neither of these powers will be able to compromise with the US.

The need to survive will overcome the need to cooperate. And when peaceful compromise becomes impossible, jaw, jaw will become war, war. Inter-capitalist contradictions will in turn produce protectionism, trade war and finally a shooting war to open up markets. Thus where industrial (pre-imperialist) capitalism developed through a cycle of booms and crises of overproduction, imperialism adds wars of redivision to this as a necessary and inevitable feature of capitalism's cycle.

The CPB's BRS recognises that the origins of World War I and II lie in overproduction. But due to its social-pacifism it cannot bring itself to admit that the increasing signs of capital overproducing itself today mean that capitalism has not only become a fetter on the full development of productive forces, but that it threatens to plunge all of humanity into the most devastating crisis and war imaginable.
2.1.1. Features of state monopoly capitalism today

This subsection is hardly worth commenting on. It is a rather poor attempt to explain why the capitalist boom of the 1950s and 60s ended and why government 'deregulation' has done nothing to reverse the monopolisation of capitalist production. There is however one point we ought to touch upon. The CPBers' BRS has, as we have said above, a peculiarly blinkered national vision of socialism, peculiarly blinkered and national even by the blinkered and national standards of 'official communism'.

The integration of the world economy is something we welcome. It lays the material foundations for the future communist order. Correctly the CPBers' BRS notes that the integration of the world economy "undermines the possibilities ... for adopting an integral national economic policies" (p6). But the BRS does not think this is a good thing, because after all, its own AES, the 'Alternative Economic and Political Strategy' (the 'political' being a 1980s Euro insertion) is exactly such an undermined Integral national economic" plan. We shall briefly touch upon the AEPS below.

2.1.2. Neo-colonialism

The subsection on neo-colonialism is full of the 1989 details which we have already said have no place in a programme, eg, that debt in Latin America accounts for over 40% of national output. It also uses the term "Third World" to describe the underdeveloped capitalist countries and perhaps the remaining underdeveloped socialist countries (p8). This is typically slipshod.

2.1.3. Socialism

Given the silly stuff we have had to wade through so far it is hardly to be wondered at that the subsection on socialism comes out with more silly stuff. There are so many misconceptions here that we must deal with them under separate headings.

2.1.3.1. Once again on the world balance

We have already dealt extensively with the baseless claim in the BRS of both 1968 and 1978 that there has been a "decisive tilt in the balance of world forces" and that it is the "main feature of the world today" (see 1.1.3.). We have no wish to repeat ourselves. But some will never learn. The CPB's BRS insists on its own, albeit watered down, claim that there continues to be a "shift in the balance of forces internationally against imperialism" (p2).

Many treated opportunist claims in the 1960s about a "decisive shift" in power towards the socialist world seriously. Not in our day. The passage in the CPB's Draft which states that the "world socialist system continues to expand to the extent that it now represents a dominant force in world relations" has obviously been left far behind by the march of events. The CPB was not prepared to face up honestly to the fact that socialism has never exercised any sort of "decisive", ie determining, dominant influence on world politics. Let alone the fact that it has been swept by a series of democratic, mainly peaceful, counterrevolutions. Instead of learning and engaging in a thorough rethink the CPB decided that tinkering was all their tattered programme needed. Hence its
definitive final version now maintains that "the world socialist system continues to exert an important, and sometimes decisive influence on world affairs" (p9).

Because it was only prepared to tinker with the more outrageously wrong statements in its *Draft*, what remains can only but seem ridiculous. Except, that is, to its CPB authors. Transparently imperialism has not suffered a "loss" of its "world hegemony" (p9). Nor is it a "fact" that the "balance of world power continues to tilt away from imperialism towards the forces of progress and socialism" (p10). Imperialism remains the dominant force in the world. It has won the Cold War and is set on a world counterrevolution. The leadership of the CPB has done everything to misunderstand developments in what was the socialist world. It claimed in its *Draft* that nothing is going on apart from reforms resulting from socialism's maturity, which "do not in any way herald a return to capitalism". Although this was modified in the final version, with reference to "negative features", the CPB insists on expressing its "support" for the "restructuring" of socialism (p10).

Of course, there has not been a restructuring of socialism. Yes, we have seen the obscene Berlin Wall breached, millions taking to the streets and corrupt governments fall. Yet, whatever the subjective intentions of the masses, objectively what began in 1989 was a process of counterrevolution through which capitalism was restored in one country after another culminating in the August 1991 counterrevolution in the USSR. Imperialism has decisively asserted its dominant position in the world politic and economy. We do not need to waste space in order to state our case. For those who are prepared to face up to real facts what we have to say is obviously true. Some CPBers insisted that because in general the old state machine, the army, the police, the civil service, etc, have remained largely intact in Eastern Europe and later the Soviet Union, they remain socialist. An example of formal logic at its most mechanical. Long ago we said that given the reality of bureaucratic socialism and the purely formal nature of proletarian rule, it was quite possible for a new bourgeoisie to take hold peacefully of the bureaucratic socialist state machine - which is anyway a carry-over from bourgeois society - and use it for its own purposes. Not only has this proved to be the case, but elements from the top of the socialist state machine have set their sights on becoming officials are, before our eyes, transforming themselves into owners of newly formed capitalist joint stock companies.48

The CPB will have none of it. In an act of wilful self-deception it claims that the 'official communist' parties in Eastern Europe are simply correcting past "mistakes" and are displaying "courage" and "honesty" in "taking steps seeking to overcome them" (p9). Obviously nothing could be further from the truth. These parties took the "mistakes" of the past to counterrevolutionary conclusions. In the process they have displayed the cowardice, dishonesty and treachery we have long come to expect from 'official communism'.

Across what was the socialist world ruling 'official communist' parties have lost all belief in themselves and no longer even have the will to rule. Worse, where they have not disintegrated, as in Romania, or been 'suspended' as in the former USSR, they are going over, 1914 fashion, to the politics of the bourgeoisie within the working class movement, ie social democracy. Even before it became social democratised in Poland the former 'official communist' party, the Polish United Workers' Party, supported the Solidarnosc government, a government of the proto-bourgeoisie. It has now split into two social democratic parties equally committed to Solidarnosc's marketisation programme -80% of its industry is up for sale to home grown or foreign capitalists. Hungary is different, but only in detail. When its social democratised former 'official communist' party was still in government it was, like its colleagues in Poland, fully committed to restoring capitalism. To facilitate the turn back toward capitalism, it dumped the old bureaucratic socialist constitution in favour of a bourgeois democratic one, banned political organisations from the workplaces and proposed Hungarian membership of the EC. With the possible exception of Czechoslovakia, the other former ruling parties in Eastern Europe were not long in catching up.

Surprisingly enough the concrete process of social democratisation and counterrevolution explains why the capitalists and their press have been so enthusiastic, ecstatic indeed, about developments in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. If there was a genuine renaissance of socialism it would be a different matter. In all likelihood this could only have resulted from a proletarian political revolution, and if this was what was being played out, one thing would be certain: the forces of international imperialism.
would do everything in their power to crush it. Naturally in order to bamboozle the gullible and weaken the forces of communism, media pundits and establishment politicians alike find it useful to talk of revolution rather than counterrevolution. But the truth cannot be hidden. What we saw was democratic, largely peaceful counterrevolutions against bureaucratic socialism, which offer the imperialists the prospect of new markets and cheap labour. That is what makes the bourgeois mouth water, and gutter press hacks chatter on about the 'marvels' of revolution and the 'heroism of the masses'. One would have thought it was obvious that when the bourgeoisie supports mass demonstrations and uprisings, welcomes new popular leaders and offers massive financial aid, it would be universally recognised by those who consider themselves partisans of the working class that something untoward was going on. But not the CPB leadership nor its membership. Not only might it just as well have written its Draft on the planet Mars but held its congress - where the final version was agreed - on Pluto. None of its leadership's above quoted mind boggling tomfoolery concerning imperialism's "continued contraction" (published in draft form in the summer of 1989) was corrected at its congress in November 1989!

2.1.3.2. Gorbachevism and the crisis of the USSR

The CPB gives uncritical support to the Gorbachevite line. Echoing Gorbachev its BRS insists that "the growing resort to bureaucratic and administrative-command system of management progressively stunted the growth of working class and socialist democracy, and seriously hampered the further development of socialism's potential .... the restructuring of the economy and society is proceeding in conditions of fuller socialist democracy and openness, and there is a determined effort to decentralise decision making in every area of life to promote the initiative and genuine involvement of all working people" (p10).

In other words the privatisations, opening of stock exchanges and the influx of imperialist capital is motivated by good will. So there was no need to worry. In their Draft the CPB said that these changes "are occurring in the context, and not to the detriment of the social ownership of the major means of production. The greater emphasis, within the framework of an overall plan given the market mechanisms, cost accounting, and self financing, is designed to promote, not private profit, but greater efficiency, initiative and choice in a socialist environment." By the time of its final version this has been modified to include a daring reference to "some negative features and even setbacks". But struck by a sudden bout of restraint the CPBers say that these developments "cannot be fully analysed here". As it turns out, as far as CPB literature is concerned, that is all we hear of them. What exactly these "negative features" and "setbacks" are, is left to our imagination.

The fact of the matter is that, before Gorbachev, the CPB types never offered general criticism of bureaucratic socialism. Not at all. They were its most vociferous advocates. But what it is supporting now has nothing to do with "fuller socialist democracy" and giving power to the "working people". Claims that Gorbachev's perestroika programme will strengthen socialism are more than wishful thinking, more than a lie. The CPB lined up behind the forces of capitalism. Naturally, given the Gorbachevite bureaucracy's innate cowardice the turn towards capitalism was never openly proclaimed. That would have been to commit political suicide. Instead the Gorbachevites sought to change things while keeping the names of things the same. They found all sorts of devious theoretical loopholes for this, violating the principles of socialism while claiming loyalty to it.

Nevertheless Gorbachev's programme was never opaque. What-
ever confusions existed, his claims to advance socialism always sounded "more like social democracy". And no wonder. Gorbachev's aims before the counterrevolution included the denationalisation of property, the promotion of the market system, the integration of the Soviet economy into the imperialist dominated world economy, the expansion of financial markets and the stock exchange, as well as moves toward the full convertibility of the rouble. Yet the CPB leadership claimed that this does "not in any way herald a return to capitalism"!

2.1.3.3. Peaceful road?

The reader might be tempted to think that further polemic with such idiocy is pointless. That would be understandable, but a mistake. By confronting the CPB we confront the opportunism of 'official communism' at its point of final crisis; in the process we can learn something about opportunism in general. In reality what we are dealing with here is not a case for the psychiatrist's chair. The reason for the CPB's blind stupidity is simple. Because of the ending of the Cold War, history has speeded up to such an extent that it has left slow footed excuses for its opportunism far, far, behind events.

Prediction. The CPB will attempt sooner or later to find some new formulae to excuse its opportunism. Such is the nature of opportunism ... all that distinguishes the CPB is that it is so theoretically conservative, so rooted in yesteryear revisionism, and so clearly bound to routine that it might actually wait five years, if it lasts that long, before it allows any such internal discussion on its BRS.

Claims that there has been a "decisive tilt" in the world balance of forces were made in the first place in order to justify the peaceful parliamentary road enshrined in the BRS. Then and now it was hogwash. But with some sections of bourgeois opinion taking Krushchev's "we'll bury you" bombast seriously, the fact that the Soviet Union did have a growth rate well ahead of the western average, and the failure of US imperialism to crush the communist-led guerrilla armies of South East Asia, you could get away with it.

Logically, with the evidence of Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, the GDR, Czechoslovakia and above all the USSR, and the shift in the world balance of forces towards imperialism the CPB should conclude that the idea of a peaceful road should be abandoned.

Another prediction. As a to-the-marrow reformist organisation it will do no such thing.

2.1.4. The fight for peace and progress

In essence this subsection is a continuation of the CPB's daft official world balance optimism we have already examined above. It tells us that the "balance of world power continues to tilt away from imperialism and toward the forces of peace and progress and socialism" and that it "cannot be denied that the transition towards socialism on a world scale continues to be inexorable" (p 10). To prove it and keep the picture rosy its Draft BRS actually boasted about the "significant advances" for peace and progress represented by ultra-backward Zimbabwe, Mozambique (neither being socialist states), Ethiopia (which in 1990 abandoned its pretence to be a socialist regime), and how Nicaragua has apparently "joined Cuba as a liberated zone" (p 10). Its proof is our refutation.

Yes, imperialism can only "temporarily slow down" progress toward socialism (p 10). But in order to take on and defeat the imperialist monster we must never take the communistic rhetoric of petty bourgeois radicalism at face value, let alone pretend that we have not suffered defeats when we have.

However the main point of this subsection is to tell us all how the Soviet Union loves peace. But nowhere is the struggle for peace linked to the struggle for revolution; and without that, as we have fully explained, all that is left is a pacifist attempt to fool the working class.
2.1.5. The struggle for environmental and ecological security

Here is a brand new subsection. Ten years ago environment and ecology were foreign words to the CPB types. Now, fired by adopted petty bourgeois good intent, the CPB has come out with some very dubious, and it must be said dangerous, formulations.

Echoing neo-Malthusian claims that the cause of ecological problems is to be found in the increase of the world's population the CPB's BRS bemoans "the explosive growth in population" because it is another factor aggravating the "pressure on the environment" (p12). This is to accept the unscientific view that the world is a finite, static entity, that population growth is therefore an evil.

In fact population has its own specific laws that correspond to each mode of production. Human beings cannot be treated as if they were bats, beetles or butterflies, as if we were just another animal species whose optimal population is determined by nature. We, and our population, are subject not mainly to biological, but economic laws.

Primitive communism, based as it was on hunting and gathering, could not have supported a world population of more than 20 million, and in all likelihood the population during the Palaeolithic era was only one-third or one-half of this figure at most. Advances in production, most notably agriculture, associated with slave society allowed the population to rise to 170 million, two-thirds within the Roman and Chinese empires alone. The population of high feudalism, in 1600, reached some 500 million and today there are nearly 5 billion of us.\(^5\)

Neo-Malthusians single out the masses in Africa and South America for causing deforestation and the spread of deserts. They are told to sterilise themselves, or practice sexual restraint. It's that or face starvation. We take a very different view. Under capitalism there is no fixed optimal world population, indeed capitalism creates overpopulation through the mechanism of the market (not least the labour market and unemployment). It is not possible to remove capitalism's social and environmental problems through demographic means. Instead it is necessary to remove capitalism.

A planned communist world could easily support many, many more billions of people. Africa in particular is, in objective terms, actually underpopulated, with less than eight people per square mile. The same is true of vast tracts of Central Asia, Australia, North and South America. We, as opposed it seems to the CPB, like people and do not see why there should not be more of us.

Another rather dubious formulation is the aim of "waste free production" (p 13). Readers can easily see how stupid this is if they like to contemplate the demand for waste-free human beings. What are we to do, put a cork up our backsides? Measures to protect the environment from harmful pollution are one thing - the equation of waste with harmful pollution is another. Releasing waste mercury into the seas is not the same as releasing waste water or faeces into a well managed sewage system. What applies to human beings applies to the production of their means of subsistence.
2.2. Britain's crisis

The opening subsection of the second 'chapter' of the CPB's *BRS* is very much in the mould of previous editions. Imperialism is, we are told in true Kautskyian fashion, a "policy", not capitalism at its highest and last stage. The CPB wants British capitalism to completely break with "past imperialist policies". But "successive governments" Labour and Tory have taken no notice, instead they have continued with imperialism (p14). Only an opportunist would find anything foolish or strange in such intransigence. Modern capitalism cannot break with imperialism, as we have said it is imperialism.

What follows is a potted reformist history of Britain from 1945 to the 1979 election. It is worthless apart from telling us that the CPB's beloved Labour Party, in the form of the Callaghan government, "promised to bring about a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power and wealth in favour of working people and their families", but produced a "further substantial shift in the balance of power and wealth in favour of the capitalist class" (p15).

2.2.1. Tory strategy today

Equally worthless is this potted reformist history of Thatcher's Britain since 1979. It points out that Britain faces a major contradiction between its membership and further integration into the EC, and its former position as the world's number two imperialist power characterised by its 'special relationship' with the US. The Thatcher government also sought to restore the profitability of British capitalism and in the process trade union rights have been attacked. All true.

But nowhere does the CPB's *BRS* even attempt to ask why the Tories won three successive elections and dominated parliamentary politics during the 1980s. Certainly, therefore, it does not provide any answers. Given its terms of reference this is a major fault.

The gormless (in terms of bourgeois rationality) left reformist politics of Bennite Labourism and the rise of the Alliance parties were both important factors. So too, though, was the real above average economic growth experienced during the period 1985-8. The Tories' success in the 1980s was due to more than "an elaborate propaganda campaign extolling the virtues of private enterprise" (p 16). The CPB does not want to face up to the fact that a whole upper stratum of the working class was won over to the Tories. No, not by their attacks on wages and "cuts in living standards" (p16). But precisely because under the Tories real incomes (for those in work) rose and millions of the better paid workers bought their own houses and even shares.

The CPB's one-sided approach can only see grinding poverty on the one hand and the increase in wealth centralisation and concentration on the other. Not the fat crumbs used to win ideological loyalty to capitalism. Over the top claims about wage cuts, how the welfare state faces "outright abolition" and how "genuine local democracy is being extinguished" (as if there has ever been "genuine local democracy" in Britain) etc, etc, are no way to fight capitalism. To fight capitalism we must understand its strengths as well as its weaknesses.

2.2.1.1. Ireland

It is in this subsection of its *BRS* that the CPB leadership chooses to deal with that thorny subject, for reformists, of Ireland. After giving a brief history of Ireland till 1969, it continues ...

"In 1969 British troops were transferred to Northern Ireland ostensibly to keep the peace, but instead the army has consistently been used to
suppress the nationalist forces seeking a united independent Ireland. It has been responsible for torture, killings, mass arrests and the maintenance of a martial law presence in working class areas. Diplock courts, hunger strikes, shoot to kill and counter-violence have become the norms in Northern Ireland. What is also ominous is the 'guinea-pig' role of Northern Ireland, as methods of repression first applied and tested there by the British state, are then subsequently transferred to Britain as instanced by the militarisation of the police, their equipment with plastic bullets, CS gas, special armoured vehicles and growing attacks on the jury system.

"The Anglo-Irish Agreement is the latest manoeuvre by the British state to give the impression that it genuinely wants to seek a solution to the problems in Ireland. But there can be no solution unless the British government renounces its right to occupy Northern Ireland and declares an intention to withdraw. Far from contemplating this, British imperialism instead is seeking to use the Anglo-Irish Agreement to extend its domination over the whole of Ireland, to end its traditional neutrality and involve it in the reactionary Nato military alliance. The British labour movement must be won to support the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland at the earliest opportunity.

"The policy adopted by the Tory government toward Ireland symbolises, as it were, the identity and continuity between its reactionary domestic policies and its equally reactionary foreign policy” (p19).

So that we can deal with the question at one fell swoop we will include what the CPB has to say about Ireland from the next section.

"Given that Ireland has been the subject of British imperialist domination and repression longer than any other country, Britain has a special responsibility in ensuring a democratic solution in Northern Ireland.

"Repression in Ireland feeds authoritarianism within Britain itself. The continued inclusion of the Six Counties within the United Kingdom is therefore a major obstacle to social and democratic progress in Britain, holding back the struggle for socialism itself. The removal of this obstacle is therefore in the interests of the British working class and all who would benefit from the creation of a more democratic progressive society in Britain.

"For these reasons all repressive and undemocratic laws and practices in Northern Ireland should be ended immediately, and there should be a declaration of intent to withdraw British troops. At the same time Britain has a duty to provide substantial financial and other material forms of assistance in order to tackle the acute problems of poverty and unemployment caused in the main by British imperialist exploitation, opening the way for the Irish people to determine their own future as a united, sovereign and independent state” (p31).

As will be appreciated with reference to the 1978 BRS on Ireland (see 1.5.3.) this is a shift to the left for the CPB leadership. Of course, there is not a trace of genuine communist internationalism in it. Nevertheless it is notable that the CPB’s BRS does not go out of its way to blame the IRA and the forces of Irish nationalism for the death and destruction since 1969. In other words this BRS is not an example of unadulterated anti-republicanism. Having given, it is necessary to take. It must be emphasised that the essential reformist utopianism of previous editions of the BRS remains.

Instead of unequivocally calling for Ireland's freedom to exercise its democratic national rights; demanding the unconditional withdrawal of British troops (that is: troops out now) and self-determination for the Irish nation, the CPB, like the Euros before, indulges in all sorts of wishful thinking. British imperialism ought to do this, British imperialism ought to do that. This is not naivety. It reveals a complete lack of democratic principle.

2.2.2. Reformism

Right wing reformism attempts to keep "any opposition to the Tory policies confined within parliament" in order to "deflect resistance". What is more, the Labour leadership supports policies which "in general protect the economic and political power base of the capitalist class as a whole" (pp21-22). In fact it promotes "policies that are virtually indistinguishable from those of other parties" (p23). In other words the Labour Party is a bourgeois workers' party, its leadership acts as a fifth column for the bourgeoisie within the organised working class. In spite of this the CPB types always have, and always will, automatically call for people to vote Labour.
We are also told that the "right wing have always dominated the Labour Party leadership" (p22). This is simply not correct. Ramsay MacDonald, George Lansbury, Michael Foot and yes, Neil Kinnock, were all elected leaders of the Parliamentary Labour Party on the basis of their left reformist credentials. The CPB does not want to admit this, for if it did it would have to own up that the Labour left is in the last analysis no different from the Labour right.

Muddle can only produce muddle. The CPB leadership goes on to claim that Kinnock represents a break from previous post-World War II leaders of the Labour Party. Where they offered "increasing benefits" he only offers a reformism of a "more restricted type", along with "reduced incomes and living standards" (p22).

We have already referred to the last Labour government, and how it cut living standards further than any other government in the twentieth century. We do not see that Kinnock and his promise of running capitalism represents any sort of a break here. Given their age one would have thought those who constitute the CPB leadership would personally remember the austerity, wage freeze and strike-breaking of the first post-World War II government of Attlee. They should also remember the Butskellism of the Gaitskell leadership and how this was continued in the form of the classless 'white heat of the technological revolution' mumbo jumbo and 'In place of strife' by the Wilson government.

Thatchnockism does not represent any sort of fundamental break in the tradition of Labourism. Kinnock has broken with the left reformist policies he originally espoused in his CND and Tribune days and taken on board Thatchanism; but this merely brings him into line with the dominant tradition within Labourism. As such, like any run of the mill bourgeois politician, he does offer benefits for the working class within capitalism. What he would deliver if he got into No10 is, of course, another matter entirely.

For their own purposes it is under the heading of right wing reformism that the CPB leadership chooses to deal with the Euro organisation. The CPB's BRS says, a not unimportant role in getting people to accept Kinnock's refashioning of mainstream Labourism (p22). Nothing wrong here. The same cannot be said of what follows.

Apparently Euro calls for an electoral pact between Labour and the old Alliance parties - in 1990 the Euros were still insisting that without such a pact the Tories could never be beaten - would lead to Labour's "complete abandonment of progressive working class policies". What is this "abandonment"? It has never been committed to "progressive working class policies"! As we have seen above - including in the text of the CPB's BRS - Labour has always been committed to the anti-working class policies of capitalism.

There is more and, yes, worse. The CPB tell us in their BRS that Kinnock's shift to the right and his promotion of "policies that are virtually indistinguishable from those of other parties" will not "help Labour's election chances". All we have to say here is look at the opinion polls!
2.3. The strategy for advance

The final three 'chapters' of the CPB's BRS are to all intents and purposes a CPB rehash of the Euro 1979 version. We will therefore deal with them briefly.

Chapter three is all about what used to be called the Alternative Economic Strategy, and what the CPB inherited from the Euros as the Alternative Economic and Political Strategy. The AEPS is supposed to be a transitional programme linking "immediate issues facing working people" and socialism (p26). In reality though it does not represent a strategy for socialism. That necessitates revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state, which in its state form can only be the dictatorship of the proletariat, and, as a socio-economic formation, the first stage of communism. Instead the AEPS pretends that capitalism's contradictions can be resolved by a Labour government within capitalism, and on this basis socialism can be ushered in through a series of parliamentary votes. Fat chance.

In reality the AEPS is a typical utopian reformist dream, along with its promises that a reformist British capitalism can prosper if it ignores the laws of capitalist accumulation laid bare by Marx, ignores the integration of the world economy, and breaks from the EC, combats the transnationals and imposes import controls.

To usher in its new, AEPS, higher form of capitalism the CPB leadership wants to reform the House of Commons, strengthen local democracy and "eventually" abolish the House of Lords and the monarchy (p29). In passing it is also implied that Scotland and Wales are oppressed nations rather than being part of the British nation and that "genuine equality for women" can be assured under capitalism (p30). Nonsense.

2.4. Forces for advance

The CPB leadership completely fails to understand the working class politically. While the CPB's BRS wants, like its predecessors, to unite as many classes as possible around AEPS, including sections of the capitalist class, because of its numbers, for the CPB's BRS, the working class is the "leading force" in its "democratic anti-monopoly alliance". It sees the working class not as a class with a historical interest in uninterrupted revolution but a leading force for reform.

The lack of political understanding is continued. According to the BRS at the "heart of the working class is its most advanced section, those workers concentrated in large-scale enterprises" (p25). We disagree. We say that the "advanced" or vanguard section of the working class should be defined politically not sociologically.

The vanguard of the working class is that section of the working class that thinks politically, that is open to persuasion through communist propaganda. The fight for the Communist Party is the fight to win this section of the working class.
2.5. The Communist Party

From everything we have read so far, it is clear that the CPB leadership does not have any possibility of building a Communist Party, which is first and foremost a revolutionary not a reformist party.

The CPB was established "on the basis" of the rules and programme of the Euro organisation. Given the bureaucratic centralist nature of these rules and the hopeless updating of its reformist programme the fate of the CPB is sealed.

Only Leninism can give the working class the communist programme its needs for its self liberation. Only Leninism can reforge the Communist Party.

3. Manifesto for New Times

In the late 1980s the Euro organisation and the Morning Star's Communist Party of Britain split both promised us new versions of their mutual and transparently antiquated programme the British Road to Socialism. As has been seen the CPB eventually came up with a backward looking sixth edition. (The CPB was actually formed on the basis of defending the fifth, 1978, BRS against Euro attempts to revise it - hence it is more than an ironic twist that it was originally drafted by George Matthews and arch-Euro liquidationist Martin Jacques.)

But showing the depth of the ideological crisis afflicting the Euros their new BRS never saw the light of day. The commission entrusted with the redraft job had its own factional agenda. The leading lights of the Euro organisation Bea Campbell, Marion Darke, Tricia Davis, David Green, Joanna de Groot, Ron Halverson, Steve Hart, Martin Jacques, Charlie Leadbeater, Bert Pearce, Jeff Rodrigues, Mhairi Stewart and Nina Temple unilaterally decided, in the words of the latter, that it was "not appropriate" to "merely amend the existing programme".

Completely disillusioned with the whole BRS dream, they insisted that a "fresh approach" was needed. Surprise, surprise there had been "major developments not dealt with, or even envisaged" in the BRS; as if the purpose of a programme was to predict the future in the manner Old Moore's Almanack purports to do.

What were these "major developments"? The undated Euro organisation speakers' notes on the Manifesto for New Times has the following list: the "world ecological and environmental crisis", "Britain's new role within the European Community, and the internationalisation of production and capital", "Britain's ten years of Thatcherism" and the "impact" of Gorbachev's "new political thinking". Do these "major developments" really have the originality and importance the Euros claim for them? The first half of their list is hardly new; Marx and Engels certainly wrote about the "world
against, but apart from flirting with every 'good cause', they really have no idea what they are for. Their new catch-all ideology not unexpectedly leads to all sorts of contradictory claims even about what it is; it is either post-Marxist, modernised non-Leninist Marxism or even some sort of a return to the tradition of "More's Utopia, the Levellers" or "William Morris".55

Undeniably though, the Euros are still haunted by the spectre of Marxism-Leninism. That is why the Third International, Leninism, insurrection and the understanding that the aim of socialism flows from the historic interests of the working class are exorcised, either by slyly stabbing them in the back, or openly attacking them. Furthermore because the authors of MFNT appreciate the awe in which Marxism is still held, even by some of the more honest bourgeois intellectuals, and the enormous impact it has had on the twentieth century, they attempt to gain standing by paying lip service to certain fundamental doctrines of Marxism-Leninism while in reality turning them on their heads using quasi-materialistic explanations.

The result deserves scorn, if not an action under the Trades Description Act. Under the imprint of what the Euros still dared call the Communist Party they passed off as "a serious attempt to modernise Marxism" a mishmash of the deeply pessimistic 'post-modernist' ramblings of the disoriented university intelligentsia, Gorbachev's reactionary 'market socialism', green and pacifist utopianism and bad old-fashioned class collaborationism (Nina Temple's foreword, p8, - all quotes in this chapter unless otherwise stated are from the Manifesto for New Times).

In spite, or more accurately because of this, the bourgeois establishment was pleased, to say the least, with the ideas of the MFNT and its precursor Facing up to the Future. With the campaign to foster demoralisation and so-called 'new realism' in the labour movement in full swing the two documents were a god-send. There was praise all round.

The Guardian called Facing up to the Future "so radical as to take the breath away", The Independent joined in with the claim that it was "one of the most fundamental rethink of British Marxism ever undertaken". The Sunday Times recommended that "every Labour conference delegate ought to read it" and, not to be left out, the New Statesman and Society seriously maintained that it was "one of the most stimulating, fertile arguments about Britain's future to have

ecological and environmental crisis" and the "internationalisation of production and capital". As to the other half, who is (was) leading Britain, and who is leading the Soviet Union, has no place whatsoever in any sort of a communist programme.

Nonetheless by using these "major developments" to browbeat those in the Euro leadership who were less keen on 'mould breaking', Nina Temple and her commission got their way. After much to-ing and fro-ing the Euro Executive Committee declared in a statement that the BRS, supposedly being "a long term strategy for socialist revolution", no longer related "to present conditions and is not suitable as the current programme of the party."53

In the name of equipping themselves for the 1990s they agreed to a "short to medium term strategy document", the Manifesto for New Times. As is always the case with opportunists, instead of realising that any "strategy" based on "today's" facts and statistics will become outdated even before it comes off the press the Euros repeated the mistake in their "fresh approach". Written over the "New Times" manuscript Facing up to the Future - which we shall refer to below - it is packed full of the facts, statistics and fads of 1989.

So like some not very trendy trendy the Euros have found themselves saddled with last year's craze. Already their MFNT concerns and obsessions seem just plain daft. Their MFNT, as with all such opportunist attempts at "modernisation", dated with the certainty of Saturday giving way to Sunday. Even though it was published in 1990 its belief in Thatcher and Thatcherism as the main enemy, its adulation of Gorbachev while in reality turning them on their heads using quasi-materialistic explanations.

The result deserves scorn, if not an action under the Trades Description Act. Under the imprint of what the Euros still dared call the Communist Party they passed off as "a serious attempt to modernise Marxism" a mishmash of the deeply pessimistic 'post-modernist' ramblings of the disoriented university intelligentsia, Gorbachev's reactionary 'market socialism', green and pacifist utopianism and bad old-fashioned class collaborationism (Nina Temple's foreword, p8, - all quotes in this chapter unless otherwise stated are from the Manifesto for New Times).

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come from the left in years”. As to the MFNT the Financial Times called it a "radical overhaul" of the "traditional class-based approach to politics" in order to "meet the economic and political 'realities' of the 1990s."

For genuine communists such active support from the bourgeoisie (and make no mistake, that is what it is) would be enough to damn MFNT and Facing up to the Future into oblivion. But not the Euros. These fawning flunkies actually used some of these very quotes in a Marxism Today ad in an effort to try to persuade people to join their shrivelling ranks! These Judases are proud of their 30 pieces of silver!

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that many militant workers will dismiss MFNT out of hand. Such an attitude is very natural: but that does not stop it from being woefully mistaken. Because it enables us to hone our critique of opportunism, present the principles of the genuine communist programme and expose the shallowness of the bourgeois establishment - which, as we have seen, united in praise of the profundity of the MFNT and Facing up to the Future - an examination of the arguments contained in these two documents is more than worthwhile. Indeed as we have repeatedly said unless the struggle against opportunism is fought and won there can be no hope for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

MFNT is a direct product of Marxism Today and the campaign it, and a loose grouping around it, have conducted over the years to undermine Marxism from 'within' by promoting what many of them now call 'post-Marxism'. But whatever it is called, the underlying philosophy of Marxism Today and the likes of Ernesto Laclau, Gavin Kitching, Gareth Stedman Jones, Stuart Hall and Chantal Mouffe does not, in spite of arrogant claims to the contrary, represent a step forward from Marxism. Rather it is a reversion to a pre-Marxist bourgeois socialism, replacing as it does the class struggle as the locomotive of historical progress with the 'politics of discourse' and proletarian revolution with parliamentary reform (publishing companies have churned out literally hundreds of left academic books claiming to be 'post-Marxist', there are a few honourable exceptions from this milieu which expose the insubstantiality and dishonesty of this school of thought, perhaps the best is The retreat from class by Ellen Meiksins Wood).

Needless to say the fifth column philosophy of the Euros is diametrically opposed to historical materialism. If we clear away the thick layer of speculative cobwebs in which the authors of MFNT wrap their sorry "eternal truths", we can see that their "humanitarian socialism" rests on the premise that ideas are primary and the material world is somehow secondary; a view which ultimately leads to religion.

Of course our concern is not to rescue the Euros. They can go hang (on the cross if they so wish). No, the fact of the matter is that, using their quack philosophy, the Euros are able to present new realism in a far more clever-clever form than the Labourites around Kinnock were ever able to do with their lumbering policy reviews.

In other words what we have with MFNT is the politics of class collaboration in its most sophisticated, pernicious ... and, simply because it was published by the Executive Committee of the CPGB, radical guise. So striking a blow against MFNT is to strike a blow against Kinnockism, Gorbachevism, the anti-Marxism of academic 'Marxism' and the bourgeoisie.

As we have already indicated, MFNT is a sort of 'post-Marxist' manifesto. It is certainly an attempt to cobble together a coherent presentation of the Euro world view, circa 1989. Obviously to counter every false argument, half-truth and downright nonsense would be a waste of time. Not wanting to do that we will tackle what we consider the central ideas that run through MFNT. Let us begin with what MFNT calls 'Fordism' and 'post-Fordism', its main theoretical 'innovation'.
3.1. After Henry: Fordism' and 'post-Fordism'

Because the Euros are a trend in transition, because they have not arrived at religion, because they want to lay claim to at least the intellectual prestige of Marxism, it is not unexpected that they have sought and found a 'materialistic' excuse to justify what is ultimately idealism and anti-materialism. This is 'Fordism' and 'post Fordism'; an amalgam of the theories of post-industrial society championed by 1960s bourgeois futurology and those of the French economist, Michel Aglietta. (Aglietta was at least partially inspired by Americanism and Fordism written by the Italian communist leader Antonio Gramsci, while he languished in one of Mussolini's prisons between the years 1929 and 1935; Gramsci's work deals with the impact of America and American productive methods in the aftermath of World War I on a Europe, in particular Italy, which still had many vestiges of feudalism).

We will give a brief outline of the Euros' version of 'Fordism' with reference to the MFNT and because it is more brazen, Facing up to the future. In the hands of the Euros the theory of 'Fordism' has become far more sweeping and all-embracing than anything Aglietta suggested. Nevertheless in MFNT the whole 'Fordist' thing is given a distinct Anglo-centric twist; it was the opening of the Ford plant at Dagenham in 1931 that introduced the "mass production techniques - known as 'Fordism' - which were to have a sweeping impact on the rest of industry" (p18) - the mass production of cars was in fact first successfully pioneered by Henry Ford in 1913 in his native USA. But for the Euros, 'Fordist' techniques "were the leading edge of economic development, capitalist profitability and accumulation", not in the 1920s, or 30s, but in post-World War II Britain (p19).

Apparently the core of 'Fordism', which characterised Britain throughout the 1950s, 60s and 70s, was "large manufacturing factories". They "sucked in armies of mainly semi-skilled workers" who worked in a "strictly regulated division of labour on assembly lines, pumping out standardised products" (p19).

From the 'Fordist' production base flowed the mass consumption of television sets, fridges, vacuum cleaners and cars and corresponding ideas and life styles. Almost every conceivable aspect of society was meant to have been shaped by, and reflected, this mass production, mass consumption and the predictable nature of competition; not only the "social democratic state" and the mass party but, say some writers in Marxism Today, everything in cultural life from Diaghilev to American football, from modern architecture to mass fashions.

Crucially the MFNT would have us believe that because of 'Fordism' post-World War II Britain saw a whole series of what it calls "settlements"; these include industrial, economic, social, gender, patriarchal, racial, environmental, regional, national, party political and international "settlements" (pp 19-22). However in the 1970s, because of the decay of 'Fordism', these "interlocking, contested settlements began to break apart" provoking a "tumultuous crisis" at the end of the decade, the election of a Thatcher-led Tory government.

This and the emergence of 'post-Fordism' put an end to the "social democratic project". Where the right in the labour movement pushed an "increasingly autocratic, visionless agenda" and where the left was "trapped by a complacency", Thatcherism was able to provide a solution, albeit a "populist" and "authoritarian" one (pp22-23). Before we turn to criticise MFNT's notion of 'Fordism', let us sketch out what it calls the new 'post-Fordist' order.

Because "multinational companies" were on the "lookout for new production methods", and found them from the early 1980s, we are entering a brave new, 'post-Fordist' phase of capitalist development. Although things are still in the process of transition, world history has to be divided into an 'old times' and a 'new times' like BC and AD. The 'old Fordist order' was dominated by mass production and the USA. The 'new post-Fordist order' will be dominated by flexible production, information technology and microelectronics, 'plurality', consumer choice and the economies of the Western Pacific - Japan and South Korea.
On the basis of information technology, computers, robots, fax machines and flexible and integrated production, the workforce and the whole of society, maintains MFNT, is being reorganised. More, its precursor Facing up to the Future claims production "is losing its old dominance" and retailing and marketing have become the "commanding heights of the economy".

For the Euros the 'post-Fordist era' will see the creation of an "underclass" (p25) of epsilons and a beta-like "core" of highly skilled workers - who, again according to Facing up to the Future, are apparently both exploited and exploiters. This and the segmentation of consumers erodes, if not ends, the importance of class divisions in society. Hence exploitation at work and the class interests of the workers "cannot straightforwardly provide the collective interest for modern socialism," argues Facing up to the Future.

Having outlined what the MFNT and Facing up to the Future have to say on 'Fordism' and 'post-Fordism' we shall now present our main disagreements.

### 3.2. A ‘Fordist’ order?

As its predecessors 'Fordism' and 'post-Fordism' is an eclectic amalgam of the ephemeral anti-Marxist ideas of the moment. Indeed the reader, we are sure, will already have come to the conclusion that there is nothing new under the sun. MFNT is only the latest in a long line to say goodbye to the working class and hello to class collaboration. In the 1890s there was Bernsteinism, during the 1930s Mondism arose, in the 1950s theories of the bourgeoisifled working class were the vogue, in the 1960s capital we were told, had given way to post-capitalism. 'Fordism' and 'post-Fordism' will no doubt go the same way.

Like its predecessors MFNT has a fundamental flaw. It wants to have things both ways. It wants to appear materialistic and objective, and at the same time it wants to elevate the subjective and embrace idealism. MFNT is of necessity therefore based on the most sweeping generalisations and dishonest claims. It puts up and duly knocks down Aunt Sallies in order to 'prove' its case and comes to conclusions which are by no means justified, neither on the basis of formal logic, nor capitalism's historic course. This is easily shown.

The idea that there has been a shift from a 'Fordist' to a 'post Fordist' order is based on the modern myth that mass production, and with it the working class, is on the decline. The size of the working class will be dealt with below. Before that, though, let us recall the words of a rather well-known "historical document": the "bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society." In other words the working class must be constantly restructured by developments in the production process. Ever since the dawn of the industrial revolution the size, composition and skills of the working class have time after time been thrown into the melting pot by the changing needs of capital. The same is true today with the
microelectronic revolution. All this needs careful study and evaluation by communists.

But the MFNT is not the result of honest inquiry. Its self-fulfilling male, manual and cloth-capped definition of the working class is no different from that of Tory sociology; from where it should be noted it gets its "two-thirds/one-third society" theory. The idea that Britain is characterised by a "growing gulf between the majority - itself highly differentiated - leading relatively comfortable lives, and the one-third trapped in poverty" is deeply reactionary (our emphasis - p24). Self-evidently that is the case with any theory which virtually ignores the existence of the capitalist class and the fact that Britain is a capitalist society; a society run by and in the interests of a class which, although tiny in numerical terms, owns and controls the means of production. The MFNTs "two-thirds/ one-third society" theory conveniently encourages those "relatively comfortable" workers to look upon themselves as part of the privileged and at the "underclass", not as fellow exploited workers, but as the object of charity. Such a theory should be treated with contempt. It certainly has nothing to do with Marxism.

Let us now turn to the question of mass production and assembly lines. "Mass production will not disappear" rather it is becoming more "flexible, diverse and fragmentary" says MFNT (p24). Because of this detail within capitalism the authors insist that there is an "epochal shift occurring in the organisation of society" (p46). To justify that 'big thought' the Euros have come up with the claim that assembly line production is no longer at the "leading edge" of the economy.

MFNT and its precursor Facing up to the Future equate assembly lines with 'Fordism'. They argue that assembly line production shaped post-World War II Britain - that is until the 1980s - presumably because this technique dominated the "leading edge" of the economy. There is a snag here. As we have already said assembly line techniques predated the 1950s and 60s; and, in spite of what the Euros claim, they are not being marginalised but developed.

There can be no doubt that assembly line production of cars became the norm in the 1920s (not the 50s or 60s!). But as soon as this was achieved the absolutely standardised product epitomised by Ford's Model T - which only came in black - made way for Chevrolets, Buicks, Oldsmobiles and Pontiffs, which not only came in different colours but different styles each directed at particular segments of the market: ie families, the young etc. (This is something MFNT tells us is a defining characteristic of the late 1980s, what it calls 'post-Fordism'.)

If we place the car industry of the 1920s in the context of the general tendency of capitalism to replace living labour with dead labour, to mechanise production, the real significance of Henry Ford becomes clear. Without taking anything away from this ruthless plutocrat, it has to be said that any suggestion that he invented mass production or the assembly line, let alone created a new order, is bunk.

Leaving aside the modern production of steel, iron and chemicals which are organised using the production line and a high division of labour, the prime originator of what the Euros calls 'Fordism', ie, mass production assembly industry, was the American Eli Whitney. In 1789 (repeat 1789) he was undeniably at the "leading edge" of the times when he began making guns from uniform parts; when power tools were brought in it made it possible to stamp out huge numbers. Of course, Whitneyism does not have much of a ring to it. How about Coltism or Oldsism? After all the first introduction of the moving assembly line was by Samuel Colt of 'six-shooter' fame, in 1847. And it was Ransom Olds who brought the assembly line to the manufacture of cars in 1900 (but then lost his financial backing).

What Ford did 13 years later, in 1913 (1), was to successfully introduce the Whitney plan and what was then relatively huge amounts of fixed capital into the infant car industry. There was, as a result, a huge increase in labour productivity and the mass of profits (the production of the Model T started off at the record breaking level of 1,000 a day; by 1927, when production was discontinued, 15 million had been produced). His competitors either had to adopt the same methods or go under.

Similar developments had transformed other industries long, long before, and that they triumphed in the car industry in the 1920s, surely disproves Euro claims that 'Fordism' is a post-World War II phenomenon. We will now turn to so-called 'post-Fordism'. Developments in the supposed 'post-Fordist' 1980s did not go against the trend of replacing people with machines. The evidence of every day working life tells us that the tendency to replace people by machines continues. And now the talk is not only of the
automated mine and factory but the automated office.

Without fetishising the division of labour, of which assembly line production is an example, it is clear that the mass of commodities today are produced using a very developed division of labour which, it hardly needs saying, is on a far higher scale than Henry Ford would have been able to imagine. What about the production teams employed by firms like Volvo, on which MFNT places epochal significance? Well, they have long been used in the manufacture of ships and aircraft. Apart from being a method used to increase the exploitation of labour it does not represent a qualitative break from former techniques, only a reorganisation and refinement.

So, frankly, the idea that current developments in capitalism are leading away from mass production and mass markets is banal. To further illustrate and hammer home the point we only need look at what the MFNTs precursor, Facing up to the Future says are the countries at the "leading edge" of the Euros’ post-Fordist' era, Japan and South Korea. Their vast factories churn out masses of standardised products that have come to dominate one sector of the world economy after another. The world is not being swamped by designer labels or William Morris type arts and crafts ... but it is being swamped by standardised and mass produced Korean manufactured ships, TVs and computers and Japanese cars, hi-fis and silicon chips. What is more, these commodities, as with the products of IBM, Deutsche Grammophon, Phillips, Hoffman La Roche and Coca-Cola are standardised, mass produced world commodities.

Luxuries like 'designer labels' (which the Euros seem to imagine we all wear) included, the dominant trend is more and more towards the integration of the world market based on these world commodities. This applies to the production of the means of consumption and the means of production.

Then there is marketing. Even before capitalism was dominated by monopolies individual capitalists targeted consumers with "distinct tastes and lifestyles". This did not contradict mass consumption, in fact it was a means of facilitating it. Monopolies today have developed the marketing techniques pioneered in the late nineteenth century and have expanded spending on advertising to truly obscene proportions. The growth of unproductive capital hardly creates "new times". It merely carries on the decadent features of capitalism which appeared towards the end of the last century and takes them to even more rotten levels.

In fact where capitalism was in the 1920s, in the 1950s and where it will be in the 1990s represents a quantitative development of the monopoly capitalism which came to dominance in the 1870s to 1880s. There has been no fundamental qualitative break that necessitates our designating the last decade the beginning of a completely different 'order' or 'era' compared with the last hundred or so years.
3.3. Production and consumption

The main device the Euros use to elevate the subjective and embrace idealism is their treatment of the importance of production in society. There is a contradiction between what MFNT says about the 'Fordist' and 'post-Fordist' order being determined by production. Namely the supposed transition from assembly lines to flexible production based on robots and computers, and the claim made in Facing up to the Future that under 'post-Fordism' production has been replaced by consumption at the "commanding heights of the economy".

We will leave this problem to the Euros. Suffice to say Facing up to the Future's main argument remains in MFNT - under 'post Fordism' production and the class struggle are no longer the critical thing in social evolution and have been replaced by such issues as the environment, and enjoying an agreeable petty bourgeois life style through individualism and consumption.

This is a central question. What the Euros are suggesting is that we have just made a historical leap equivalent to going from ape to man (except, maybe, this time backwards). Now there is homo consumptionist, the unrestrained individual consumer, as opposed to homo sapiens - the social being "created" as Engels points out in his Dialectics of Nature by the labour process itself "which begins with the making of tools" (ie, the instruments of production in the broadest sense of the word).

For Marxists what makes our species more than an animal is not consumption but the labour we expend on the production of the necessities of life - food, clothing, housing etc, using tools. Within labour lies the secret of what makes humanity different from other animals. Humanity's language, culture, its consciousness, its social life is in the last analysis made possible by the fact that it is a productive animal which uses tools. With which it adapts nature to itself by making it into a "thing for us".

This is not the case with other animals which, instead, slowly and passively have to adapt to nature - a "thing in itself" - or face extinction. They obviously consume, but this is done through using external nature. Because they cannot use tools they cannot "master" nature. Incidentally for those who imagine "environmental politics" a recent invention, Engels warned that we should not "flatter ourselves overmuch on" mastering nature because "each such conquest takes its revenge on us."^59

That the Euros get themselves in such a tangle is a direct consequence of their philosophical idealism. Nonetheless it would do us well to restate why production - indeed the production of the means of production - in the last analysis determines the whole development of society and social consciousness.

To the authors of MFNT this does not appear to be the case. For these bourgeois socialists, like all true blue Tories, the 'consumer is king'. Marxists on the other hand understand that developments in the productive forces create their own consumers. It is not the other way round. This can be easily illustrated by using a couple of the examples of 'post-Fordism' cited in Facing up to the Future. It rightly places a lot of emphasis on the impact computers have had, and will have, on society. Less convincingly it also says that the development of satellite TV will result in "lifestyles" becoming more "diverse" because we will have a multiplicity of channels (putting out stuff even worse than the insipid stuff we get from the BBC and ITV).

Both these examples prove our point. The computer was not developed because of consumer demand. Advances in the computer created the basis for mass consumer demand. Likewise with satellites. They were first developed for military purposes, mainly spying. Since then miniaturisation and the availability and cheapening of launches have created the possibility for Murdoch types to send teams of pushy Burton-suited young men around the country in an effort to create consumer demand for the array of channels made possible by satellite broadcasting.

At the most fundamental level it is clear that under capitalism the transition from using first water and wind power, then steam power, then oil and gas electrical generators and finally nuclear power - ie advances in the production of the most basic means of
production - have had a profound impact on creating new possibilities of what can be produced, consumed and thought. Without steam power industrial capitalism could never have taken off. There would have been no successful development of the coal mining industry (pumping out water), therefore no leap in the iron and steel industry, no Lancashire cotton industry, no steam ships, no railways, no Manchester, no Glasgow, no mass markets for mass produced consumer goods, no Marxism, no escapist Pre-Raphaelites, no music halls.

The development of electrical generation had a similarly profound impact. It made possible completely new industries from aluminium smelting to telegraphs and telephones. Without electrical generation there could have been no demand for vacuum cleaners, radios or TVs, no North London and Midlands industrial explosion, no Charlie Chaplin, no surrealist art, no computer games. In the same way the development of nuclear fusion, cybernetics, space stations, nanotechnology, 'warm' superconductivity and the fifth generation computer in the period ahead will create their own demand and have a knock on effect with the stimulation of all sorts of new ideas along with the creation of a host of new industries and goods which we cannot predict and for which at present there certainly is no consumer demand.

The claim made in *Facing up to the Future* that the marketing decisions of Marks and Spencer are more important than developments within the field of production and, logically, in the production of the means of production, is ridiculous. It only contains a truth in the sense that it points to the power of monopolies -whether in production or retail. They can subordinate to themselves vertically and horizontally a whole Tom, Dick and Harriets of scattered smallish producers and outlets. This in turn affects society as a whole. But the Euros are not really concerned with any of this.

What they want to do in the name of 'modernising' Marxism is to overthrow Marxism, and having overthrown it - at least in their own eyes with 'post-Fordism' - go on to claim that the biggest barrier to social advance is the conservatism of the working class.

This is not the case. Whatever justified trade union resistance to job losses and pay cuts as a result of new technology, the fact of the matter is that the new technologies springing up at the command of capitalism find their biggest barrier in the existence of capitalism itself. It acts as a fetter on the development of the productive forces. Indeed because of its inherent limitations it finds that it cannot control the very forces it has created.

The emergence of previous forms of class society - ancient and feudal - allowed the productive forces to leap forward once, after which they could not prevent them from stagnating. Capitalism, because it is based on the insatiable thirst for profit, must constantly revolutionise production. Yet, in spite of being a dynamic system, capitalism has become reactionary because it now represents a relative fetter on the development of the productive forces.

Capitalism has a historical tendency to create the relative pauperisation of the population - the masses get poorer relative to the wealth of the few. This leads to a situation where the ever-increasing quantity of commodities produced, in the effort to increase the mass of profits, cannot find a market: crudely, workers' wages are not enough to buy what is in the shops. Moreover, because of the drive to replace living labour with machines and the resulting tendency for the rate of profit to decline, capital itself is overaccumulated.

Capitalism's aim and limit is profit. The endemic drift toward overproduction under capitalism results in the development of capitalism through a series of crises, each one more devastating than the other. Surplus capital has to be destroyed before a new round of accumulation can begin. But where under competitive/industrial capitalism surplus capital was destroyed simply through the economic mechanism of a slump, imperialism as we have shown adds war to the cycle.

What this means is that capitalism's basic contradiction between the productive forces and the productive relations (ignored by the Euros) has come to represent a danger to both the potential of the productive forces to advance and now, with nuclear weaponry, humanity itself. None of this, imperialist war, crisis, overaccumulation, is to be found in MFNT.

The technical developments which MFNT and *Facing up to the Future* make so much of can only be seen in the context of a definite mode of production - capitalism - which now holds back what is possible. The socialisation of labour - through which monopolisation is advancing more rapidly than ever - demands an end to capitalism's boom/slump/war anarchy of production and the founding of a real new order - proletarian socialism.
Unless proletarian socialism triumphs, capitalism will plunge the world economy into a new general crisis - far more devastating than the 1914-48 general crisis - and possibly a World War III. The existence of capitalism no longer stands in harmony with the productive forces. The class relations and the corresponding state, and laws which protect it, have become a barrier which has to be removed by the working class through revolution if humankind is to advance, or for that matter survive.

So while paying due attention to the huge technological strides we are witnessing, it is essential to recognise that although they lay the material basis for sweeping social changes, this will be ensured not in the coming together of the remaining little circles around Marxism Today but in the workplaces, on the streets and in the determination of the working class to make revolution.

3.4. What about the workers?

MFNT is equally as wrong when it comes to the working class, as it is about mass production. Far from disappearing or declining, as MFNT implies, if we take a world view - and capitalism can only be understood as a world system - it is clear that the working class is growing a tremendous rate.

Using the narrowest definition of the proletariat - industrial workers - its numbers are increasing by about 8% per annum. If we take the 36 leading industrial countries, it actually grew from 173 to 183 million between the years 1977 and 1982 (a period of recession which saw millions sacked). It is also clear that the working class is no longer concentrated in Western Europe and North America. Already the USSR and China have more industrial workers than the US, Federal Germany and Britain. Huge concentrations of industrial workers are now to be found in countries like India, Brazil, Mexico and Pakistan - ahead of Italy, Spain and Canada.

In short, there are more workers in the world today than at any other time in history. The figures would be far more dramatic if we (correctly) used a broader definition of the working class, ie including those who work in transport, mining, services etc.

If we did we would see that even in Britain - historically the most proletarianised of nations - the working class is growing. The crash in industrial production in the late 1970s and early 1980s wiped out some two million jobs in this sector. But with the growth and proletarianisation of other sections of the workforce - eg nurses, teachers and office workers - the working class has certainly increased in size and makes up some 70% of the population.

The rise of non-productive areas of the economy that MFNT
interprets as heralding the dawn of a new era is in fact a direct result of the parasitic nature of Britain's imperialist economy (revealingly MFNT only refers to imperialism once, and then in the past tense - p66).

No doubt for these Euros the essence of imperialism is colonialism. This is not the case. The essence of imperialism is monopoly capitalism and the export of capital. Imperialism did not end with the break up of the great colonial empires, it simply took a new, more appropriate, form. Under imperialism - capitalism's last, decadent, stage - growth is uneven, spasmodic and parasitic. While the speculators, advertising agencies, bankers and arms manufacturers amass huge fortunes, this takes place within a sea of relative decline in industry. This is ABC for Marxist-Leninists. But so mesmerised are the authors of MFNT by 1980s Thatcherite talk of the enterprise culture and Gorbachev's promise of world peace and cooperation that they actually claim that decadent capitalism is giving birth to a new world of individualism and affluence.

As we have seen, MFNT tries to get rid of the working class through the claim that it is irreversibly on the decline. On top of this, by maintaining that the centrality of production has given way to the centrality of consumption, the centrality of class - which is after all a relationship to production - is played-down in favour of issues like feminism, ecology and education reform. But there are yet other strings to the Euros' attack on the working class. Try, try and try again is their motto.

MFNT's arguments are based on those of Facing up to the Future which contains a relatively long passage on the working class. Because of its typical intellectual dishonesty it is worth quoting:

"Class in modern capitalism is not the product of a single polarisation between a ruling class, which owns the means of production, and a working class of wage labourers. Class is produced by the intersection of different kinds of exploitation, which produce different class positions within the workforce."

"The working class is that class which has no productive assets to counter capitalist exploitation at work. But the development of postwar capitalism has produced a great swathe of wage earners and the self-employed, who control some kind of productive asset - skills, knowledge, organisational power over production. They are both exploited and exploiters. An increasing number of people in modern capitalist society occupy these 'contradictory class locations'. This complexity has increased with the new divisions created by the transition to the new order."

The importance of these contradictions within the workforce means that class cannot straightforwardly provide the collective interests for modern socialism.

"Exploitation through work is not the only determinant of how power and resources are distributed. Other forms of oppression and domination systematically structure inequalities of power... Socialism will not succeed on the basis of an appeal to a single 'pure' class identity. It will need to construct an alliance of social forces, made up of diverse class and social interests. This does not mean that 'class struggle' should be downgraded. It means that class politics will have to take new forms: more than ever it will be about building alliances. But as importantly the social arena will be a key area of contestation. Socialist strategy must connect economic struggles with moral, sexual and ethnic struggles. This can no longer be a secondary agenda after the 'class struggle'. It must be alongside it. Centre stage.

... Increasingly coalitions will most easily be constructed around issues which affect the quality of social life - health, education, ecology - rather than around the workplace" (our emphasis).

There is an awful lot of nonsense here, deliberately vague nonsense too. The authors of Facing up to the Future consistently refused to openly state their real views, relying instead on evasive formulations which can be taken this way or that way. So we must patiently try to differentiate between what is said and what is meant.

The life of society is extremely complex. This is not a new discovery and has nothing to do with the emergence of some 'new order'. Yes, within class society there are and always have been conflicts between the sexes, different ethnic and religious groups and alliances between different sections of different classes over issues like democracy, education, health, etc.

The great leap forward that Marxism represented was providing a means to put the blurred mass of ideas, movements and campaigns into focus. It was able to do so with the theory of the class struggle. Using this theory it became possible to reveal to the working class what its objective interests are, and expose the hidden motives of those who claimed to speak for god, country or universal good. In the final analysis what is crucial are socioeconomic interests.
As we have shown, in spite of what Facing up to the Future says, the fundamental determinant of social life is material production. In other words classes are shaped and should be defined not by 'power', 'polarisation' or 'inequalities' nor by "the intersection of different kinds of exploitation". They are defined by their socioeconomic relations (in most cases fixed and formulated by law) to the means of production. This has a reality not only in the workplace, as Facing up to the Future suggests, but in society as a whole. Relationship to the means of production is what leads to different class interests, power or the lack of it, social polarisation and exploitation.

Facing up to the Future talks vaguely about "different sorts of exploitation". What we have here is a deliberate attempt to equate oppression based on colour, sex etc with exploitation, i.e the extraction of surplus value. In other words Facing up to the Future has no wish to admit what exploitation actually is and how it is the product of one class owning the means of production while another labours and produces surplus value. Not an unimportant question. After all, the contradiction between capital and labour lies at the very root of all social life in capitalist society.

This does not mean that we are saying all the differences and contradictions in society apart from class should be considered irrelevant. They most certainly are not. But what we are trying to establish is that grasping the central importance of class is essential if we are to understand how and why society evolves.

Workers may speak different languages, have different skin colour or be men or women. However this is secondary and has nothing to do with the existence of "different class positions within the workforce", if by workforce is meant the working class. Our class has every interest in fighting all forms of national, racial and sexual discrimination because the key to its liberation lies in uniting itself in the fight for communism. The same cannot be said for capital, which has every interest in fostering sectional divisions among the exploited and the oppressed.

Precisely the basic classes of capitalist society are the product of who "owns the means of production" and who has to sell their labour power for wages. This is what defines the working class; it has nothing to do with not being able to counter "capitalist exploitation at work".

Without the working class the capitalist mode of production could not exist; that cannot be said of secondary differences within the working class. The relationship between the two basic classes (labour and capital) is fundamental to the existence of the mode of production itself. But within this unity there exists an antagonistic contradiction simply because the basic classes of capitalism have diametrically opposed immediate and long term interests which must be positively resolved in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Of course, beside the two basic classes of capitalism there are other, non-basic classes. There never has been nor will there ever be a pure capitalist society with only workers and capitalists. As well as carry-overs from feudalism there is within developed capitalism the middle class which stands in between the two basic classes.

But while this class makes up some 20% of the population in Britain, it is definitely not true that an "increasing number of people" in modern capitalist society occupy such "contradictory class locations". Sections of what was the middle class have become proletarianised. Certainly it is a general rule that the more capitalism develops the stronger becomes the working class - the vehicle of a new higher social order. Life, in the form of strikes by civil servants, teachers and nurses, brilliantly proves our point.

What about the notion that "postwar capitalism" has produced workers who are both exploited and exploiters? This is perhaps the most desperate and dishonest attempt to dismiss the importance of class. Here the Euros seem to have taken their cue from the Italian-born academic Piero Sraffa and his followers. They maintain that the labour theory of value is wrong and has to be separated from the concept of exploitation. For them, like Facing up to the Future, the possession of skills is a form of property allowing the skilled to 'exploit' the unskilled.

Where Marx explained the inner workings of the capitalist system, the Euros are determined to produce a fog which hides the fact that the exploitative relationship between labour and capital is the axis around which the whole of capitalist society revolves. Their "attempt to modernise Marxism" is a collapse into obscurantism.

Marx showed how the growth of money possessed by all the capitalists taken together did not and could not have its true source in the sphere of circulation, which involves only the ex-
change of equivalents. Simply putting up prices could not be it, because mutual losses and gains would cancel each other out. There had to be a special commodity whose consumption is at the same time an act of creation. This special commodity, Marx revealed, was human labour power. Surplus value is created through the special quality of the commodity labour power - the ability of workers to produce enough in part of the working day to sustain themselves physically and culturally (necessary labour time which actually covers the value of wages) and then to spend the rest of the working day (surplus labour time) producing surplus value which is appropriated without payment by the capitalist. This exploitation is the source of capitalism's ever-growing wealth, the origin of profit, interest and rent.

Let us now deal with the question of skills. It is true that different individuals and groups of workers can obtain higher wages because the skills they possess are in short supply. But that hardly adds up to exploitation, ie the expropriation of surplus value. Skilled workers do not live by buying the labour power of other workers as capitalists do with variable capital. The position of individuals can, of course, change. Former workers can 'better' themselves and become petty bourgeois or full-blown capitalists. But skilled workers are by definition workers. It is as simple as that. Like all other workers they possess nothing other than their ability to labour, however skilled that labour may be.

To sustain themselves and their families they are forced to sell their ability to labour (the commodity labour power) to capitalists for wages. These workers actually 'pay' their own wages during the part of the day in which they perform necessary labour - the capitalists appropriating the surplus value produced during the surplus labour time. In other words these workers occupy the same position as other workers, ie, they are exploited by the capitalist class. In spite of their skills these workers live off their wages, not capital, they are wage slaves not exploiters.

Whatever the Euros claim to the contrary it is abundantly clear that they are out to downgrade the class struggle. In fact they want to dismiss it entirely. Revealingly in Facing up to the Future they put the words 'class' and 'class struggle' in inverted commas and reduce it to the workplace. Doing this, and having used one intellectually dishonest device after another to marginalise the working class, the authors felt safe to declare, in the style of bourgeois socialism, that:

"contradictions within the workforce means that class cannot straightforwardly provide the collective interests for modern socialism."

Straightforwardness aside, it is exactly the "collective interests" of the working class that makes socialism a real possibility rather than a utopian dream (the section in MFNT on socialism contains plenty of very vague, rather nice ideas, but not one reference to the working class or class for that matter). Socialism is not a question of 'appealing' to 'pure' class identity but recognising the objective historic mission of the working class.

Marx and Engels, through their analysis of the economic structure of capitalism, came to the conclusion that the capitalist social system, like all previous ones, creates its own gravediggers. Where this role was played by an exploiting minority, the slave owners, the feudal aristocracy and the bourgeoisie in the past, the capitalist system places this task before the proletariat.

The founders of scientific communism did not reach this conclusion as a result of locating the working class along with the bourgeoisie as one of the two basic classes of capitalism. Nor that the day to day interests of the working class propels it into struggle with the capitalist class. What is crucial is that capitalism arrives at a point where it holds the workers' interests coincide with the forward march of history, in the form of liberating the productive forces from the shackles of capitalist (private) property relations. But the main thing Marx and Engels were able to show was the historic role of the working class as the builder of socialist society.

The working class does not own the means of production. Indeed, since capitalist ownership of the means of production forms the basis for the exploitation of the working class, its abolition and replacement by social ownership (socialism) is the key to its self liberation. The working class is well-suited to this task of self-liberation. Not only is it constantly added to by the growth of capitalism but, by the very nature of its conditions of life, it is capable of the highest levels of organisation and discipline. As opposed to other classes,
as opposed to cross-class protest movements, the working class can be welded - under communist leadership - into a force which can really challenge the capitalist order.

It labours in workplaces, factories, mines, hospitals, offices often containing hundreds, if not thousands, and lives in large towns and cities. In their daily lives workers are trained to think and act collectively. Solidarity, mutual support and action become second nature. Every day capitalist exploitation is met by working class organisation, resistance and strike action. All this gives the working class the raw, objective, potential to carry out its historic mission of abolishing capitalism and replacing it with communism.

The Marxist doctrine of the historic mission of the working class shows why the class struggle of the class and the struggle for socialism (the first stage of communism) are inseparable. Where utopian communists in the past appealed to princes for justice or organised tightly knit circles of conspirators, where the Euros place their faith in influencing the bourgeois state through appealing to "common sense" (p10), Marxists understand the revolutionary logic of working class interests and the power of working class organisation.

Of course, to turn raw potential to actuality, to become the ruling class, the working class must learn to champion the rights and interests of all classes and sections oppressed by capitalism and the capitalist state. The fight for socialism has nothing to do with 'pure' class interests but winning the working class to the consciousness of itself as a class for itself which, by liberating humanity, liberates itself. This is the role of the Communist Party.

The struggle of the working class is not therefore confined to the workplace as Facing up to the Future suggests. It concerns every area, every aspect of social and political life, yes, including "moral, sexual and ethnic struggles". Unless the working class raises itself to that task it remains either a slave class unaware of its own slavery, or a slave class which merely fights to improve its conditions, certainly not the instrument to end slavery. That is why genuine communists say that the working class must become the hegemon of all those engaged in struggle.

### 3.5. 'Fordism' social democracy and the state

There can be no doubt that the capitalist world has undergone a dramatic sea change since the balmy days of the 1950s and 60s. The idea then was that, with the economic wizardry of John Maynard Keynes, capitalism was able to overcome slumps; could guarantee full employment and offer the masses ever-rising living standards. Establishment politicians and university professors peddled the theories of the prophet, and many on the left became reluctant converts. Now, even with the counterrevolutions in Eastern Europe, there is no such confidence. The bountiful god Keynesianism has been superseded. In its place squats the dark, primeval god Friedmanism. Mass unemployment and recessions are back and claimed to be the natural order of things; the only appeasement acceptable to the new deity of profit.

The Euros put it all down to the "decay" of 'Fordism', presumably based on the false claim that the car and other 'assembly' line industries are no longer at the cutting edge of technique. We beg to differ. As we have shown there was no coming to an end of a form of production, as the Euros imply. The assembly line continues to roll. It uses robots and microchips, it is also responsible for their production. What the Euros call the "decay" of 'Fordism' is in fact a period of relative stagnation within capitalism's economic cycle. There's nothing new in that. Since its origins capitalism has experienced a cycle of boom, pre-general crisis, general crisis. Today's situation is a direct consequence of capitalism's cycle; specifically the end of the long post World War II boom, and the beginning of the drift toward a new general crisis.

The drift toward general crisis has had profound consequences. It is the drift towards general crisis, not the "decay" of 'Fordism', or the transition to 'post-Fordism', which has caused the return of
mass unemployment and an economy increasingly characterised by fleeting upturn oscillations in the midst of overall stagnation. Likewise the "break apart" of MFNT's fanciful edifice of economic, gender, patriarchal, etc. "settlements" (p22), ie, the collapse of the 1950s and 60s style politics of class consensus can only be attributed to the same cyclical cause. Just as with any other observer the Euros cannot help being struck by the consequences of the end of the post-World War II boom. However with them everything is distorted. Because they insist on wearing their 'Fordist' tinted glasses they equate 'Fordism' with full employment. Not only that but class consensus and the "social democratic state". This does not stand up to examination.

As we have shown assembly line production in the car industry became generalised from the 1920s (not as the Euros claim the 50s). It has to be said that the 1920s and 30s were hardly decades of full employment or for that matter class consensus. Across the board in all the advanced capitalist countries as a percentage of the workforce unemployment was far higher than even now. Far from class consensus there was class war. Germany was gripped by a crisis which was only resolved with the coming of the Nazis. Civil war pitted class against class in Austria, Spain and China. Even in Britain - compared with other countries a conservative nation - we had embryonic soviets in 1920, a general strike in 1926 and a communist-led National Unemployed Workers' Movement which had 100,000 members by the early 1930s. It was only the new conditions created by World War II that allowed capitalism to begin a new cycle of accumulation on the basis of class consensus (in Federal Germany and Japan imposed from outside).

As to the "social democratic state" ... here we see the descent of MFNT into imbecility. The USA epitomised 'Fordism', say the Euros. However that country has never even produced a mass social democratic party, and surely not a 'social democratic state'. Henry Ford himself was violently anti-union and had known fascist sympathies. But who knows? What exactly the Euros mean by a 'social democratic state' they never make clear. Is it a country where the state exercises control over large sections of the economy? The USA would not fit in here ... Nazi Germany would. Where this leaves the US epitomising 'Fordism' we will again have to leave them to sort out.

We certainly accept that the capitalist state can take a number of different political forms - fascism, monarchy, democracy, etc (nonetheless the essence of these states - any state for that matter - is an armed body of men which is used as an instrument of class rule; all states are therefore dictatorships). So could their 'social democratic state' be those capitalist countries whose government system has been dominated by a social democratic party, which has also achieved ideological hegemony for a definite set of "for the benefit of the working class" ideas and values over the nation and all other major parties? The result could, in our view, legitimately be called a 'social democratic state'. It is true that in Britain and a number of other Western European countries there was until recently a broad commitment to 'full employment', free at time of need health care and social security. Yet apart from a few exceptions like Sweden (where social democracy is in ideological crisis) we have not seen social democratic parties becoming the natural party of government.

Unless the authors of MFNT have decided to make Winston Churchill, Anthony Eden, Harold Macmillan, Alec Douglas-Home and Edward Heath (let alone Richard Nixon and General de Gaulle) 'social democrats', they have a problem ... and if they have, they most certainly do have a problem.

Having dealt with this mess let us turn to the question of whether or not the 'social democratic project' has come to an end. Obviously as an alternative road to socialism it was always a non-starter. But what about as an alternative party to administer capitalism?

At the time of writing (September 1991) it would seem not. We used to argue that the Labour Party in Britain had gone from being the alternative party of government, back to the role it performed for capitalism in the 1920s and 30s, ie, a party of crisis. Perhaps an overestimation, though an understandable one. After all from the late 1970s the Tories won three general elections in a row, and the Labour Party's electoral base suffered a serious shrinkage because of the SDP breakaway.

Nevertheless while we might have overestimated the crisis of the Labour Party, we never thought that it was finished. There was no question about it never being able to form a majority government as the Euros insisted, or having somehow died. Quite the contrary. We warned workers of the danger of a Labour government, we said the working class would have to fight whichever party set
about trying to administer capitalism.
If we lift up our eyes from Britain, and look at social democratic parties internationally, it is clear that the contention that the social democratic project has come to an end - supposedly because 'Fordism' has been eclipsed by 'post-Fordism' - is patently wrong. Western Europe in the 1980s has had social democratic parties in office for more than one consecutive term in a number of countries, not least France, Spain, Greece and of course Sweden (until September 1991 that is). The Euros’ attempt to explain the decline of the Labour Party through the world-wide decay of 'Fordism' shows that they think of Britain as the centre of the universe. It also shows that they have no understanding of capitalist economics and its relationship to politics.

The social democratic project has not ended. For the social democratic parties of France, Spain and Australia administering the capitalist system is a fact of life. Neil Kinnock, with his revamped Labour Party, wants to do exactly the same; even though, as capitalism's long boom has come to an end, this means imposing the politics of austerity against working class resistance. Which is, of course, exactly what Labour governments and prime ministers did in the hungry 1920s and 30s.

As to the Euros, when we read in Facing up to the Future proposals for a "controlled market", giving workers shares in the top 200 companies and the creation of a “social” stock exchange it is clear that they had ideas of themselves at the head of a reformist renaissance. A suspicion confirmed by MFNTs unashamed applause for "the Archbishop of Canterbury's Faith in the City" (p37), the Scottish Constitutional Convention (p38), and charity-mongering stunts like Live Aid and Band Aid (p40) and advocacy of what it revealingly calls the "social society" (pp85-91).

Like the Labourites they believe that the key to social progress lies in the bourgeois state. Unlike communists they have no wish to smash this overblown, parasitic instrument of bourgeois rule. They openly claim that socialism has no direct relationship to working class interests. For them socialism is essentially a non-class question, and that, if it is anything, it is merely an extension of bourgeois democracy.

Like the Labourites they now praise the EC imperialist bloc. Likewise their pacifism has been blunted with a 'new realist' multilateralist caveat. In other words, like the Labourites they
3.6. Thatcherism

Some Euros used to directly equate Thatcher with Adolf Hitler. This owed less to scientific analysis, more to wanting to excuse the call for the broadest - bishops to brickies - alliance against the Thatcher government. The time came in due course when the Euros no longer felt the need for excuses. As a result now the Euros less extravagantly define Thatcherism as 'populist authoritarianism'.

MFNT more than respects its enemy. It wants to emulate it. Thatcherism is "powerful", "novel", "innovative", "hegemonic", it has "a commitment to modernisation" and it moves "with the times". Thatcherism "is always on the move attempting to make and remake the political agenda, constantly testing the limits of what is possible" (p27).

MFNT correctly says that the Thatcher government was the most authoritarian Britain has experienced since the end of World War II; it lists the abolition of the GLC, the poll tax, GCHQ and the use of the Prevention of Terrorism Act to illustrate the point (pp31-32). We would add that it is certainly true that due to the ineffective nature of working class resistance the Tories, under Thatcher, succeeded where Heath, Wilson and Callaghan failed. Under Thatcher the government successfully shackled the trade unions, made effective trade unionism illegal and through doing little to stop the rise in unemployment (except changing the methods of calculation) undermined the bargaining power which organised labour enjoyed during the 1960s and 70s.

Worse, the methods used by Heath, Wilson and Callaghan to suppress the Irish have been brought home. The British people cannot listen to the voice of Sinn Fein, their right to silence has been eroded and the tactics perfected on the streets of Derry and Belfast were used with deadly effect against the rebel youth of the inner cities, striking printers and above all the heroic miners.

The Euros would not disagree with us here. Yet where the Euros try to explain these authoritarian developments through reference to the "decay" of 'Fordism', we say it has everything to do with the end of the long boom. It dictates confrontation in place of consensus. Nevertheless it must be emphasised that this has taken place within the framework of bourgeois democracy. That is why we insist Thatcherism represents not a qualitative break with post-World War II Toryism as MFNT suggests, but a quantitative development; the ground for which was prepared by Heath, Wilson and Callaghan.

What of 'populism'? Thatcher obviously appealed to existing prejudices, "articulating a range of strongly felt, and popular fears, prejudices and aspirations" (p27). But then so does Labourism and MFNT. And as a party the Tories have not achieved anything remarkable in the way of popularity. The Tory vote is well below what they were getting in the 1950s and 60s. In three general elections their vote has hovered around the 40% mark and every opinion poll shows that on issue after issue, the poll tax, testing for seven year olds, the NHS, there exists a huge reservoir of opposition.

In spite of this, the fact of the matter is that the Tory Party is the bourgeoisie's preferred party of government. Nothing - not even the miners' Great Strike - has led this class to look for an alternative. And in the sense that the ruling - hegemonic - ideas in bourgeois society are always the ideas of the bourgeoisie, Thatcherism has been the articulation of a drive to shift popular opinion across a whole range of different issues. Those who have no world view anchored in the scientific ideology of Marxism-Leninism were inevitably pulled along in the Tories' wake.

As the figurehead of the ruling class for eleven years Thatcher set the agenda both in society as a whole and within Labourism. The Labour Party abandoned one old reformist shibboleth after another till it now has a Thatchnockite ideology. The Euros too have the Thatcher euro MFNT.
4. Militant: What we stand for

Hardly a day goes by when the bosses' press, radio or TV does not contain some reference to or attack on Militant and Militant Tendency. In spite of its status as the official bogey of the media there can be no doubt about its real growth. When it was first launched, in October 1964, Militant was an obscure four page monthly. Today Militant is a widely read 16 page weekly. As to Militant Tendency itself, it is Britain's biggest Trotskyite group and claims to be the "largest organised force on the left" (Peter Taaffe, What we stand for p33 - all quotes in this chapter unless otherwise stated are from the third, June 1990, edition).

Yet in spite of its two Labour Party MPs, numerous Labour Party councillors, a layer of trade union officials, its domination of the leadership of the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation and Liverpool Real Labour, it is the ritualistic slanging match between the two front benches in the House of Commons that is primarily responsible for projecting Militant on to our carefully controlled TV screens.

For the Tories, Militant is the perfect cudgel with which to beat the eminently respectable Kinnock. It, not the pro-bomb, pro-traditional family, pro-market Welsh windbag, is the real face of Labourism, they say. Of course, the Tories know their target. All the lying mud slinging accusations that Militant "orchestrated violence outside town halls", and was responsible for the fight back following the police assault on the March 31 1990 200,000 strong anti-poll tax demonstration in London are designed to harm Kinnock and Labour, not throw light on Militant.

That is why Militant Tendency has been the butt of attack after attack by the Labour Party leadership too. As part of his programme of re-establishing his party as a safe alternative for capitalism this St George fought the Militant dragon.
Since Kinnock came to lead the Labour Party, in 1983, there have been hundreds of expulsions of Militant supporters, including its five editorial board members; but, for every one who is out, ten remain. Having agreed that the left of his own party is the problem Kinnock must continue to attack his own party and impose what will eventually amount to an inquisition ... in August 1990 Kinnock 'victoriously' secured a widening of the witch-hunt; now not only against Militant Tendency but also supporters of Socialist Organiser (something Militant disgracefully and sectarianly kept quiet on; it wants its readers to think of it as unique).

Putting media Militant hype into perspective does not mean that Militant is not important. It is. It is one of the most important barriers that will have to be overcome if we are to reforge the Communist Party of Great Britain our class needs if it is to liberate itself from the shackles of decaying capitalism. Where some, like Militant, use the caucus, the committee room and the lie, the main method Leninists use to combat opponents within the workers' movement is open ideological struggle. It is this time-honoured and always sharp weapon that we now turn on Militant.

Militant Tendency leaders complain that its detractors never mention "our programme" (p4). In the Marxist sense, of course, Militant Tendency has no programme, no democratically arrived at strategic document outlining its principles and minimum and maximum demands. Nothing to compare with the Communist Manifesto, the 1919 Programme of the Communist Party of Russia, or even the British Road to Socialism.

Nevertheless it does have Militant: What we stand for (we will simply call it What we stand for), which although far from being a programme, is the nearest thing Militant has to one. As its title suggests What we stand for is an authoritative and broad-ranging pamphlet. Written by Militant editor, Peter Taaffe, originally published in December 1981, and since then, showing its role, twice updated (February 1986 and June 1990).

While it might be true that the Tories and the Labour leadership ignore this 'programme', we will not. Naturally we like many of the things in What we stand for, the demand for a 35 hour week, an immediate end to the poll tax, trade union independence from the capitalist state, etc. Our intention here, however, is to concentrate on differences. Not because we are bloody minded and simply like an argument for an argument's sake. No, we want to concentrate on the differences we have with Militant because its politics, taken as a whole, are, if not challenged and defeated through open ideological struggle, capable of taking the working class movement to disaster.

Precisely because it contains the politics of Militant Tendency in their most crystallised form we will focus on What we stand for in particular. Through discussing our differences with this document (and Militant in general) we will expose the falseness of Militant Tendency's claims to be a revolutionary, let alone a Marxist, organisation. We will also show that whatever the subjective intentions of its supporters, its "programme" does not "offer the political weapons for establishing a socialist society" (p33).

Not at all. No, just like the various versions and editions of the British Road to Socialism produced by 'official communism', the "programme" of Militant has in the final analysis a counterrevolutionary logic.
4.1. Labour pains and Militant's origins

Militant calls itself "the Marxist tendency" of the Labour Party. This is wrong on two counts. As the reader will already have gathered we question the Marxism of Militant (what follows will prove it). It is also well known that the Labour Party contains within it a rich diversity of Trotskyites and semi-Trotskyites, all claiming to be Marxist organisations. Pretending to be unique, though, has the advantage of winning the politically inexperienced, and mentally blinkering them against the rival claims of the many competitors in the Labour Party.

But the paramount concern of Militant's leaders is to wall off their supporters from the siren call of those outside the Labour Party. In particular communists, who say that what workers in Britain need, if they are to overthrow capitalism and build socialism, is a Communist Party, not a reformed Labour Party. To poison the minds of its supporters Militant's leaders ludicrously dismiss anyone (except, of course, themselves) not carrying a Labour Party card as being "outside the labour movement". A lie undoubtedly greatly helped by the present disarray in the communist movement caused by the wrecking activity of Euro, CPB and other varieties of 'official communist' opportunism.

Alas, to justify its political theory and practice Militant must lie, not once, but all along the line. For example, the treachery, strikebreaking and imperialist warmongering of the Labour Party, the reason why it has operated as a "second eleven of capitalism", is, according to Taaffe, because the right wing has "infiltrated the labour movement" (p29). It is Militant alone that apparently represents the genuine, original spirit of the Labour Party. "Marxism", maintains Taaffe, "has always been part, and an important part at that, of the Labour Party right from its inception" (p29).

We can easily cut through these falsehoods. Neither the implication that Militant somehow dates back to the origins of the Labour Party nor the idea that the Labour Party has some sort of Marxist ancestry (if not from both parents, then at least from one) has any foundation in truth. The Labour Party was conceived in the bowels of the TUC bureaucracy and was raised to the level of a serious parliamentary party through the recruitment of a bevy of Liberal MPs. It was the TUC and defecting Liberals who were the mother and father of Labourism. There was no right wing "infiltration", the right dominated the Labour Party from the very beginning.

Marxism did not play the sort of role Taaffe and Militant would have us imagine. Marxism and the class struggle had as much to do with the formation of the Labour Party as it did with the election of Britain's first woman prime minister. The Social Democratic Federation, Britain's first Marxist organisation, wrongly or rightly walked out in disgust from the proto-Labour Party, the Labour Representation Committee, in 1901. Why? Because the committee refused to recognise even formally the "class war" let alone have "for its ultimate object the socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange".

Clause 4, which Taaffe and Militant think so much of, and go on so much about, is informed by reformism, not Marxism, as any serious historian of the Labour Party would tell us. It was only reluctantly adopted and purely for propaganda purposes in 1918 in a pre-emptive move to stop workers turning to communism. Clause 4 had nothing to do with a genuine conversion to genuine socialism; rather it was "a blueprint for a more advanced, more regulated form of capitalism".

That is why, when the newly-formed CPGB applied for affiliation to the Labour Party in 1920, it was bluntly and fearfully refused. As it was in 1921, 1922, 1923, 1924 and on every other occasion it tried. It was the real Marxists of the CPGB who were the first victims of a Labour Party witch-hunt. The Labour leadership went on to expel individual communists who had dual membership and to prevent elected communists from representing their unions at Labour Party conferences. Later it drew up a McCarthyite list of bans and proscriptions to keep the Labour Party free of 'red contamination'.

True, there has always been a Labour left, and it has on occasions been influenced by Marxism; the British Socialist Party
was an affiliate till it helped form the CPGB in 1920. The CPGB itself was behind the influential Left Wing Movement of the 1920s. However the essence of the Labour Party - including its parliamentarist left wing - has nothing to do with the struggle for socialism, which is, and can only but be, the struggle for revolution.

The Labour Party, taken as a whole, is and always has been, a "bourgeois workers' party" (Lenin). When in opposition it promises to run capitalism if only it was given the chance of government; and when in government it does just that. Militant's Labour left loudly protests, but at the end of the day it always gives loyal support to the dominant right wing.

All in all it is quite clear that the main influence Marxism has had on the Labour Party has been marginal, and when more than that, it has been from the outside. As to Militant, it has its origins not in the Labour Party, but in the Trotskyite movement of the early 1930s, which either splintered away or was expelled from the CPGB. Specifically it is the organisational and political continuation of one of the fragments of the Trotskyite movement in Britain which shattered in 1951 (two years after the Revolutionary Communist Party - a united Trotskyite organisation - decided to take the advice of the International Secretariat of the Fourth International to begin "systematic work as a tendency within the Labour Party") 68

Out of the resulting chaos of collapse and disintegration Ted Grant, Militant's founder/leader, managed to keep around himself a small body of former RCP members: originally known as the International Socialist. This later became the Revolutionary Socialist League. It published the journal Socialist Fight, until 1963, when it was closed in order to make way for the launch of Militant in 1964.

Now Grant and Taaffe would have us believe that Militant was purely the product of the Labour Party. That the idea that "Marxists' (ie RCP/RSL/Militant) "infiltrated" the Labour Party is a "legend" (p29). This is dishonesty taken to Brobdignagian proportions. They deny the RSL with the same hypocrisy the government of the day denies the existence of MI5. It was never publicly dissolved. Of course, there are those who say they are recent ex-members. There is also the history of Militant's leaders, the decision to enter the Labour Party in 1949 and their rewriting history. All this is well known. Yet merely to mention the initials, RSL, in the presence of leading Militant supporters, is like saying Jehovah in ancient Israel; the name of god which was never spoken aloud by Jews (remember what happened to the poor sod who did in the Life of Brian). We do not know for sure whether or not the RSL still exists. Frankly it doesn't matter either way. What we are interested in is not Militant's internal structure. We are interested in its political origins, current politics and political direction.

The fact of the matter is that Militant has taken Trotsky's organisational entrist tactic to its furthest political point. From being a tactic to overcome the extreme isolation of the Trotskyites, entrism has become, in the hands of Militant, a principle (entrism is entering and then operating within mass reformist parties). That is why it will mystify its own history, original aims and even existence prior to 1964.

There is, as is always the case, a price to pay for such opportunism. Militant's founders might have entered the Labour Party as revolutionaries. But far from changing the Labour Party it is they who have been changed. The pressures and demands necessary to maintain deep entrism on already weak politics, has produced assimilation. In conquering Labour Party wards, constituencies and the LPYS they have themselves been conquered. Militant's leaders (expelled or not expelled) are today, to all intents and purposes, part of the Labour left, they have become Labourised. 69

Either that or we are to believe that nothing Militant's leaders say is the result of what they actually believe. People do not do that (at least with consistency). It is not a matter of always expecting the unalloyed truth. Rather recognising that there is always some sort of a connection between word and intention. In spite of what media hacks say to the contrary there is no devious secret master plan which has convinced a group of dedicated revolutionaries to talk, write and act like reformists. They talk, write and act like reformists, because reformists they are.

Those who refuse to recognise the obvious would do well to remember the recent history of 'official communism'. In the late 1960s and early 70s I well remember that sections of the bourgeoisie seriously thought that Eurocommunism was a ghastly plot by the Russians to take over Western Europe. No one says that any more. The Euros really were what they said they were: petty bourgeois democrats.
4.2. Nature of epoch

Militant has no grasp or definition of our epoch, the epoch of imperialism, war and the revolutionary transition to communism. In fact neither imperialism, the *inevitability* of war (not just the "danger of nuclear holocaust" - p7) under imperialism, nor communism, is mentioned in What we stand for. None of this can be put down to carelessness. If Militant ever did have any Marxism, it has forgotten it all, and needlessly reinvented its own brand of social democratic idealism.

What we stand for does say we "are now moving into a period of unparalleled economic and social disturbances" (p26). We agree. However where we have located a coming new general crisis within the movement of capitalism since the end of World War II from boom, to stagnation and pre-crisis, Grant has been predicting a crash almost every year since 1945 (as opposed to other Trotskyites, he did at least have the virtue of admitting the reality of a post-World War II "recovery" in the late 1940s, although he thought it would not last for more than a few years). Like a clock that has stopped, he is bound to be proved correct eventually. But to call this Marxism is an insult.

What we stand for is decidedly Anglo-centric - its occasional references to internationalism are only for form's sake. With such a starting point any attempt to actually square up to the crisis of Britain is hopeless.

Because of his theoretical blindness to the importance (or existence) of imperialism Taaffe can only explain Britain's historic decline through its "colossal expenditure on arms" compared with Japan (p10) ... What we stand for goes on to attack Kinnock for his "admiration" of Japan (p22). In spite of this the implication is clear: British capitalists should follow the example of Japan (incidentally, given the nature of imperialism, it is much more likely in the medium to long term that Japan will be forced to match and then overtake British levels of arms spending).
That is no doubt why Militant's 'programme' contains a plaintive call for "massive arms cuts" (p7). Lenin dismissively called such slogans a "dream". In opposition to Militant's pacifistic hopes, Lenin's militant communist slogans remain as fresh and true as ever: Not a man, not a penny for the bourgeois army! Arm the proletariat to defeat, disarm and expropriate the bourgeoisie! (see VI Lenin, The military programme of the proletarian revolution).

Unlike Militant's version of the permanent arms economy 'theory', Lenin's theory of imperialism gives a profound insight into the reasons behind the rise and fall of various capitalist powers. Lenin analysed imperialism as the highest and last stage of capitalism. It represented the triumph of monopoly over competition, the growing importance of the export of capital as opposed to commodities, the merger of banking and industrial capital, and the emergence of finance capital. All this and imperialism's creation of a fluid world money market greatly exacerbates uneven development within a country and between countries. This is the key to a real scientific explanation of Britain's relative decline, not arms expenditure; certainly not the "rotten" stewardship by "British capitalists", or the "ruinous policies" of Thatcherism (pp 10,11). Relative decline is due to the internal laws and dynamics of capitalism itself. It has nothing to do with the subjective failings of Britain's, or anyone else's, capitalists.

The reason Militant does not want to use Lenin's theory of imperialism is transparent. It wants us to believe that reversing Britain's decline simply depended on replacing Thatcher's "ruinous policies" with "radical socialist measures" which would be carried through in parliament by the Labour Party (p39). Naturally by closing its eyes to the existence, effect and reality of imperialism Militant will not/cannot see the capitalist world as being split into oppressed and oppressing nations. This is no abstract or sentimental question. It is crucial when it comes to politics in Britain and political practice. What we stand for only contains a passing reference to Ireland ... in 1914! Nothing about the presence of British troops in the Six Counties today, let alone a call for the unconditional defence of the forces of national liberation. Such silence speaks volumes about the 'Marxism' of Militant.

Given the pivotal nature of Ireland to politics in Britain - how the occupation is used by the ruling class as a training ground for oppression and to rally the masses behind it - Taaffe's silence is an act of political cowardice and inchoate pro-imperialism (hardly an exaggeration, it should be remembered that during the Falklands War in 1982 Militant called for a Labour government 'socialist' war against Argentina).

Furthermore, by ignoring imperialism, Militant is able to ignore the split in the working class movement. Buying off "certain sections" of the working class and the labour and trade union bureaucracy with "morsels of the loot" from imperialism's table is one of the main political consequences of imperialism in the metropolitan/oppressing countries. Again the reason for such determined refusal to use the Leninist theory of imperialism is transparent: Militant looks to the labour and trade union bureaucracy (namely the Labour Party and the TUC) as the force that will take the lead in the socialist transformation of Britain.

### 4.2.1. Socialist countries

The October Revolution and the resulting Soviet Republic represented a historic gain for the world's working class; a gain that had to be defended unconditionally, be defended no matter what. The horrible backwardness, deprivations and bureaucratic perversions that deformed socialism in the USSR, the spread of a version of that deformed, bureaucratic socialism into Eastern Europe with the victory of the Red Army over the Nazi war machine, while necessitating a critical approach, does not for one moment mean that communists should have relaxed or moderated their defence of these countries. No, critical but unconditional defence of the international gains of the working class remains a matter of the highest principle.

Not for Militant, at least as evidenced by their 'programme' What we stand for. Nowhere is there any sort of call for workers, internationally, to defend what remained of the socialist countries. What we stand for outlines measures of democratisation it favours in the "Stalinist states": no official to receive a higher wage than a skilled worker, for an armed people, for an end to one party regimes,
etc (p8). All of which we agree with. But clearly Militant's position is one-sided and therefore wrong. It included nothing about its duty to defend these states as they were, in order to advance them to what they should be. Militant's desire not to be associated with the socialist countries as they were led it straight into the opportunist quagmire.

Thus when Eastern Europe was swept by counterrevolution (albeit peaceful and democratic), Militant wholeheartedly welcomed it as a vindication of the naive Trotskyite belief that all spontaneous movements in the socialist countries would produce an anti-bureaucratic political revolution. Militant has always maintained that there were only two possibilities in the socialist countries: there "will either be totalitarian control under a one-party state ... or there will be control of industry and the state by the workers".

Against this we always warned of the third possibility - the reversal of socialism. Socialism is after all, a transitional society between capitalism and communism, containing features of both, not least the state - according to Marx and Lenin a carry-over from capitalism. Given this, the alienation of the masses and the fact that socialism was built on very backward foundations - the foundations of backward capitalism - there was an ever-present danger of the bureaucracy developing independent sectional interests and slowly transforming itself into a capitalist class.

Because of this we declared that reversal (counterrevolution) in the socialist countries could come from above, as well as from below and without. This danger could only but be exacerbated by the economic crisis that developed in the USSR during the Brezhnev years. As we have argued for a number of years now in The Leninist, the bureaucracy in the USSR is no longer a relative fetter on the development of the productive forces. In the 1980s it became an absolute fetter. Unwilling and unable to abolish itself, as historical progress demands, the economically and socially privileged bureaucracy, or at least its technocratic wing, sought salvation for itself through turning towards capitalism and transforming itself into a fully fledged capitalist class.

The political personification of this was Gorbachev. His promise to the west never again to do a Hungary '56 or Czechoslovakia '68, to abandon the so-called Brezhnev doctrine for the so-called Sinatra doctrine, unleashed counterrevolution in an already overripe Eastern Europe.

Taaffe has the cheek to claim that "in the past Marxists ruled out this [restorationist] possibility" (p45). Obviously Marxists did not. Militant did. After all it was only a short time ago that Taaffe was saying - because of his one way mechanical world view - that talk of "capitalist restoration" in the socialist countries was a "chimera", that "Gorbachev's coming to power signified the beginning of the political revolution" and that we are entering the "Red 90s".

In What we stand for he at least admits that "there is now a real possibility of some or all" the socialist countries "returning back to capitalism". Of course, the USSR and all of the countries of Eastern Europe have already returned to capitalism. It is no mere possibility. It has happened.

We have always insisted that what was necessary for a genuine political revolution was the leadership of a genuine Communist Party. Without this, as What we stand for now admits, the masses in Eastern Europe were swept behind pro-market (read pro-capitalist) forces.
4.3. The capitalist state and socialism

Militant comes from a different tradition to the 'official communists' who produced the various editions and versions of *British Road to Socialism*. It is from the Trotskyite stable, of that there is no doubt. Despite this there can be no doubt that after travelling along its own narrow path for many decades it has arrived back on the same social democratic highway as 1990s 'official communism'. Thus its split from 'official communism' has proved to be nothing more than a detour. Today Militant has many of the same ideological positions held by 'official communism' circa 1978. Nowhere can this be seen more clearly than when it comes to the capitalist state and the transition to socialism.

For real Marxists socialism begins with the smashing of the bourgeois state through revolution and ends with the dawn of communism. Socialism is a transitional society between capitalism and communism; in this sense it is therefore the first, lower, stage of communism. Socialism is characterised by the continued existence of the state - the dictatorship of the proletariat - built on the ruins of the old state through the transformation of working class organs of class struggle into organs of working class state power. All this is basic Marxism. That in the name of 'Marxism' Militant takes a very different, indeed opposite position, again says everything about its supposed 'Marxism'.

Some bourgeois authors have tried to paint Militant in lurid revolutionary colours, that lurking behind its respectable Labourite facade are plans for insurrection; an insurrection which will see parliament "superseded by workers' councils or soviets" and possibly even the Labour Party and the trade unions "outlawed". In spite of this everything we know about Militant's theory and practice tells us different.

The real, as opposed to the fictional or left posing, Militant maintains that socialism will come, not through revolution and smashing the state power of the bourgeoisie, but "through an Enabling Bill in parliament". Parliament will nationalise "the top 200 monopolies with minimum compensation on the basis of proven need, with one third of places on the management board elected from unions in the industry, one third elected from the TUC representing the working class as a whole and one third nominated from the government ... This would then allow a socialist plan of production to be democratically drawn up and implemented by committees involving trade unions, shop stewards, unwaged and small business men and women" (p8).

That is the true programme of Militant. There are differences between it and the Euros' 1978 *BRS*. But the differences are of detail not substance. For example Militant tries to distinguish its reformist schema from other reformist schemas by emphasising speed. Where the 1978 *BRS* fantasises about introducing socialism through a series of ever leftier Labour and then Labour/communist governments Militant fantasises about introducing socialism in one fell parliamentary swoop via a Labour government and an enabling bill.

The "precedent" Militant quotes for enabling legislation is the Tories' rescue of the bankrupt Rolls Royce in 1971 and their "rushed" entry into the European Community in 1972 (p40). This is fully in the spirit of *BRS* parliamentary cretinism. As with the *BRS* the emergence of a revolutionary situation does not enter into Taaffe's scheme of things. As with the *BRS* the expropriation of the bourgeoisie will be the result of parliamentary legislation, not carried out through a revolution. As with the *BRS* (and Margaret Thatcher and John Major for that matter) he equates nationalisation with socialism.

With great flourish Militant, as with the *BRS*, likes to refer to the role of the masses: "we have stressed" says Militant leader Rob Sewell, "that a socialist Britain can be accomplished through parliament backed by the mobilised power of the labour movement outside".
Except for those who refuse to be convinced by facts it is perfectly clear from this that parliament is central for Militant, the masses supportive and secondary. The liberation of the working class is, according to Militant, not an act of the working class. On the contrary it will come through an arm of the bourgeois state ('transformed' because of a 'socialist' Labour majority). Rosa Luxemburg pointed out that the real difference between the parliamentary road of those like Militant, and the revolutionary road, was not two ways to get to the same end: ie, socialism. No, these different strategic approaches (means) lead to very different conclusions (ends). The reason is simple. Communists - that is genuine Marxists - seek to mobilise the working class to smash the bourgeois state, including parliament (to do that we fully accept the need to stand candidates and get MPs elected). Reformists on the other hand regard parliament as something to treasure and protect. Is it not the instrument which will be primarily responsible for ushering in the socialist order? No wonder Militant leaders insist that "the idea ... that we want to 'smash parliamentary democracy' is completely untrue". ??

Serious revolutionaries should believe them. This does not mean that Militant's leaders are harmless, safe, nice people. At least, as far as the working class goes, it means that Militant is dangerous and must be fought and ideologically destroyed.

When the question of the state and parliamentary rule goes from the realm of theoretical dispute and is posed point blank in a revolutionary situation the leaders of reformism are inevitably propelled pell mell in a counterrevolutionary direction. After all the major threat to 'parliamentary democracy' in such periods comes, at least initially, from the left, from the revolutionary parties and the revolutionary proletariat organised in workers' councils and workers' militias.

This in essence was the case in 1917 Russia. The Mensheviks and Right Socialist Revolutionaries - who in terms of theory are far to the left of Militant - saw in the Provisional Government a vehicle for social progress. Quite rightly they considered that the biggest threat to this body - which, although cobbled together, eventually looked to securing its authority through a parliamentary Constituent Assembly - came from Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

That is why after the July Days, which saw armed workers' demonstrations demanding a second revolution, the Mensheviks

*Militant: What we stand for* 217

and Right SRs who came to dominate the Provisional Government joined the camp of counterrevolution, suppressed the Bolshevik press and forced Lenin to go into hiding, as had the Tsars. In a revolutionary situation in Britain who can doubt that the leaders of Militant will be commanded by the same iron laws of history to play out exactly the same sorry logic.

### 4.3.1. Arms and the Militant

Because it is now committed body and soul to bourgeois democracy, Militant finds accusations that it is out to smash parliament annoying to say the least. What it finds infuriating, though, is the "cry that Militant would establish a socialist Britain by violence". That, says Taaffe, is a "red herring" (p42). Pointing to the overthrow of the left reformist Allende government in 1973 Taaffe insists that "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" (p42).

It is true, of course, that the capitalist class has carried out military or fascist coups to protect its interests. But it must also be said that Marxists have carried out revolutionary insurrections and have always had that aim. Revolutionary situations are messy, complex phenomena that surface at the most unexpected moments. They do not usually have the domesticated habit of neatly coinciding with general elections. While it is true that if we cannot get people to vote for us, it is unlikely that they will die for us, and that parliament must be utilised as a barometer of the revolutionary consciousness of the masses, our authority to make revolution comes from below, not above, and from the active, not the passive. Specifically our authority comes from the workers' councils and other such bodies a revolutionary situation creates at the base of society; especially in the factories, offices, mines, mills, hospitals and other workplaces. We do not look to the electoral college in the House of Commons that results from the peculiar arithmetic of an atomised electorate,
but the organs of mass revolutionary action. Making revolution is not a romantic luxury, which we fight for because of some strange desire to reenact Sergei Eisenstein's *October*. It is a matter of life or death.

As we have said in a revolutionary situation the first threat to an existing bourgeois government comes (or at least should come) from the left, from the forces of revolution. If, however, for one reason or another the proletarian vanguard fails to make revolution the forces of reaction will resolve the revolutionary situation negatively through fascist counterrevolution. That was the case in Italy in the 20s, Germany and Spain in the 30s, Greece in the 60s, Chile and Turkey in the 70s.

Precisely because Militant believes the election of a left reformist government in a revolutionary situation would be a fulfilment of its programme, it would oppose Bolshevik-style moves to overthrow it. To the extent that this took an active form, Militant would go over to the camp of counterrevolution. It would also directly play into the hands of fascist counterrevolution. A revolutionary situation can only have one of two outcomes; revolution or counterrevolution. Those in the workers' movement who do not fight for the revolution can only but pave the way for the counterrevolution.

In the same way that it dismisses the need for revolutionary violence Militant complacently plays down the danger of counterrevolutionary violence. Taaffe claims that "all the scheming and conspiracies of the capitalists can come to nothing on the basis of a bold socialist policy backed by mass mobilisation of the labour movement. An entirely peaceful transformation of society is possible in Britain, but only on the condition that the full power of the labour movement is boldly used to effect this change" (p43).

Hence for Taaffe there is no need at all for the working class movement in Britain to arm itself. If by chance the generals move to carry through a military coup, Militant believes it can scotch any such attempt by a simple "appeal to the ordinary soldiers" (p46). In another work, Taaffe actually says that "by offering the perspective of a new society, the officer caste can be neutralised, or a section -even a majority - can be won over to the side of working people". We are all in favour of appeals to "ordinary soldiers". Appeals to turn guns on officers and to join the revolution. But it cannot be emphasised too strongly that such appeals will only be taken seriously, the wavering "ordinary soldiers" will only have the courage of their convictions, if the forces of revolution are utterly determined and look as though they are going to win. Having arms - even of the most rudimentary sort - is an essential aspect of this. It shows we mean to win.

Although it is nowhere mentioned in *What we stand for* workers' violence has been considered legitimate for Britain by various Militant leaders. But, and it's a big but, only as a defensive not offensive action. It is considered legitimate only as a response to an "illegal" Tory or military coup attempt after the election of a socialist government. Frankly such bold promises of "ferocious resistance" are not worth the proverbial brass farthing (p46). Militant's "ferocious resistance" would be a rerun of the slaughter of Chile.

It is criminal to tell the working class that socialism will come peacefully, through parliament and that the "best equipped and largest armies" can be brought to the point of disintegration by "appeals to ordinary soldiers". For when the other side predictably turn out their bodies of armed men, the last minute call for "ferocious resistance" can only but lead to disaster.

The class struggle will inevitably grow more and more fierce and at a certain point the question of a revolutionary insurrection will be posed. Therefore in order to be capable of overcoming the "ferocious resistance" of the bourgeois state the working class must be prepared, first, through propaganda and agitation, and then as quickly as possible through organisation, for violence. Yes, we must systematically imbue the working class with the understanding that violent revolution is inevitable. Lenin said that "this view of violent revolution lies at the root of the entire theory of Marx and Engels" (*State and Revolution*). Who can doubt that Militant has betrayed this theory?
4.3.2. Bolsheviks and peaceful revolution

Militant tries to give its peaceful parliamentary road to socialism some sort of orthodox status by quoting Marx, Engels and Lenin. Their arguments and the quotes are exactly those used by the 'official communists' of the mid-1960s to give their opportunism some sort of orthodox status.

Rob Sewell, for example, claims that Lenin's attempts to secure a peaceful handing over of power from the Provisional government to the Bolsheviks and the soviets can be generalised because in Britain the "balance of class forces is overwhelmingly in favour of the working class".79 Letting pass what we must assume to be Sewell's crass equation of the size of the working class in Britain, with the balance of class forces, let us see what he has to say about the aims of the Bolsheviks.

The "aim of the Bolsheviks in 1917" writes Sewell "was to secure peaceful change in society".80 This is hardly true of the whole of 1917. Nonetheless it is certainly the case that from April to July 1917 the efforts of the Bolsheviks were directed to making possible a peaceful change of power through the soviets.

Within Russia there existed a dual power situation. Beside the Provisional government, workers', peasants' and soldiers' soviets had emerged from below. It was because there was a rapid shift within these soviets - organs of the armed revolution - from the Mensheviks and Right Socialist Revolutionaries to the Bolsheviks and the parties of the revolutionary left that Lenin held out the "last chance" of a peaceful hand over. The main reason the Provisional government had any authority was because of the support it was given by the Menshevik and Right SR majority in the soviets; once this body peacefully changed hands it could be peacefully dissolved.

As the Menshevik/Right SR majority was steadily whittled down and looked like quickly giving way to a Bolshevik majority, a peaceful - second - revolution was conceivable. But, as we know, it was not to be. In the face of Menshevik and Right SR stubbornness and the danger of an imperialist-backed military strike against the heartlands of the revolutionary proletariat in Russia, the Bolsheviks acted. In late October old style/early November new style, organised as Stalin said "under the immediate leadership of the chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, Trotsky", the Military Revolutionary Committee carried out an almost bloodless, but nonetheless violent, insurrection. Dual power was ended positively with the toppling of the Provisional government and handing of power to the Congress of the Soviets, which by that time had a Bolshevik majority.

Ironically the quote that Sewell uses from Lenin to justify Militant's parliamentary dreams utterly undermines his claims that there exists some sort of parallel between Militant's parliamentary cretinism and the Bolsheviks of 1917. Sewell quotes an article by Lenin written just before the Bolshevik insurrection in early October 1917 as offering "to help to do everything possible to secure peaceful development of the revolution." What comes later in the article sends Militant's schemes crashing about its ears: "Having seized power" says Lenin "the Soviets could still at present - and this is probably their last chance - secure a peaceful development of the revolution, peaceful election of deputies by the people, a peaceful struggle of parties inside the Soviets, a testing of the programme of the various parties in practice, a peaceful passing of power from one party to another" (our emphasis).

It is worth noting that while we have emphasised "soviet" in the above quote, Sewell emphasised the word "peaceful" throughout. Even more revealingly he completely fails to draw any distinction, let alone see a contradiction, between soviets and parliament.

The reason Lenin could envisage any sort of peaceful transfer of power was that a revolution had already taken place in February 1917 which was not only violent, but had created a dual power situation. It was not because he had any illusions in parliamentary democracy or a peaceful transfer of class power through parliament. This is something Lenin vehemently denied and consistently polemised against throughout his politically active life.
We expect that Grant, Taaffe, Sewell and other leaders of Militant know all this full well. But now that they have gone from being revolutionaries to reformists, and yet still claim to be revolutionaries, they have to engage in all sorts of distortions, double talk and downright lying to keep their supporters in the dark about the gulf that separates the politics of Militant and the politics of Lenin and Leninism.

4.3.3. Miners' strike

The 1984-5 miners' Great Strike put all the theories and programmes of the left organisations in Britain under the microscope. It was unquestionably "a decisive turning point in the post-war history of Britain" (p18). It also brilliantly showed the creativity of the masses. New organs of working class struggle were thrown up which owed nothing to reformism in inspiration; support groups, hit squads, women against pit closures.

The significance of these organs is not frozen in a particular moment of time, as in aspic. Like the Councils of Action of 1920 (which Lenin called "embryonic soviets") and the Councils of Action and Workers' Defence Corps of 1926, they give us a glimpse of the future proletarian state in Britain. Everything we know about dialectics tells us that if the bodies created in 1984-5 were allowed to go to full development they would have been transformed into bodies that would have stood in parallel and in opposition to the bourgeois state, parliament included.

Hardly surprisingly given its commitment to the bourgeois parliament and the peaceful, reformist road to socialism, none of this seems even to occur to Militant. The miners' Great Strike is seen purely in the negative, seen as a warning of "the long term measures which the ruling class are preparing against the working class" (p 18).

Although Militant wrongly declares as a matter of doctrine that the balance of class forces is overwhelmingly in favour of the working class, it at least admits that the "miners were defeated" (many for their own reasons refuse to admit this obvious truth). But what did Militant do, itself, during the 1984-5 strike? What we stand for is quiet on this. Again not surprisingly.

According to Taaffe the miners were defeated "only because the right wing dominated TUC failed to organise effective support and solidarity from other unions" (p 18). This is simply not true. The trade union bureaucracy, right and left, failed to organise effective solidarity. But what do we expect from such as these? Primarily the miners were defeated because there existed no vanguard party in Britain, no genuine Communist Party capable of breaking, or at least seriously challenging, the stranglehold the TUC and the Labour Party have over the working class. From what we have seen thus far, Militant is hardly a candidate for the job.

In 1984-5, like many others on the left, Militant devoted itself mainly to telling miners and other workers what they already knew. Worse, it tried to pull the wool over the eyes of militants by repeating the NUM leadership's 'official optimism' about imminent power cuts and coal stocks being reduced to molehills etc. Not once did it set tasks for the workers' movement which would really take the struggle forward on to a qualitatively higher stage, which was vital if the miners were going to win.

With Liverpool, moreover, Militant had the opportunity to link the fight against rate-capping to the miners' strike in practice. Militant supporters were in positions of the highest authority within the council, and the council's workforce. Derek Hatton did talk a lot of rubbish about Liverpool being Britain's Petrograd, yet nothing was done to mobilise the city's workers into a united front with the miners.

The most notable thing about Militant was its determination to channel the anger and militancy of the miners into the dead end of the Labour Party, and the lame call for a 24 hour general strike: a tactic all very well as a protest, but hardly what was needed to see the miners to victory. What was needed was the organisation of a general strike. Only then could the Tories' anti-working class offensive be halted and replaced by a workers' anti-capitalist offensive.

While it was vital not to let the TUC off the hook, while it was vital to demand that it called a general strike, it was more than likely it would do everything in its power to sabotage such an action. That is why we Leninists raised the necessity of organising working
class resistance in an alternative centre, namely a National Council of Action. We argued that such a National Council of Action could be created through basing it on transformed local support groups (making them into bodies of elected and recallable delegates from all working class organisations). With a National Council of Action, and bold, decisive, daring leadership, the balance of class forces really could have been shifted in favour of the working class.

A general strike 'with or without the TUC' would have had to be in support of the miners, that goes without saying. But it would also have to encompass the interests of the mass of workers if it was to be sustained and carried through successfully. Hence we linked the call for a general strike to the smashing of the Tories' anti-trade union laws; laws which have crippled one strike and one union after another, not only the NUM. Militant was, and is, incapable of thinking such dangerous, but practical and necessary thoughts.

Let us turn again to the question of violence. This time briefly. As the temperature of the class war rises social peace melts and with it the state and its monopoly of violence begins to be challenged. The miners' strike certainly saw ruling class state violence on both scale and methods reminiscent of the Six Counties. This met its answer from below in the miners' hit squads. It must be said that Militant liked them just as much as it likes the IRA. In other words it loathed them. Although they were ripe for expansion into Workers' Defence Corps, by drawing in other workers, Militant could hardly make any such call. Its belief that the police are nothing but 'workers in uniform', that socialism will come via the Labour Party and parliament, peacefully and without any fear of counterrevolutionary coup, meant that Militant was paralysed. What hope for it in a revolutionary situation?

4.3.4. Poll tax

The fight against the poll tax provides an even greater expose of the true nature of Militant's politics. In What we stand for Militant tells us how wrong Thatcher was to try and push through the tax and pats itself on the back for its ability to predict the "widespread revolt" against it. Militant is also understandably proud that its supporters are the "backbone" of the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation" (p 19).

Despite this it never had a plan to develop the local Anti-Poll Tax Unions, no tactic beyond non-payment, no aim to smash the poll tax through an indefinite general strike. And where we say no taxes on the working class; because its main preoccupation is staying within the Labour Party and being seen as loyal Labourites, Militant came out first in support of Labour's 'roof tax', now its 'fairer rates'. As well as thoroughly exposing its Labourism, the struggle against the poll tax again thoroughly exposes Militant's pacifism. After all what happened when the police attacked the ABAPTF March 31 1990 anti-poll tax demonstration in London's Trafalgar Square? Did Militant leaders respond by organising the construction of street barricades and co-ordinating the defence of the demonstration? No! Instead with the unerring instinct of the reformist they appealed to "a very senior police officer" to pull his men back. That proved unsuccessful. So as 3,000 actively and bravely fought back - without weapons or co-ordination but with the encouragement and sympathy of the overwhelming majority of the 200,000 strong demonstration - the Militant ABAPTF leaders quietly and cowardly pulled their 650 stewards out and headed home.

Having seen "mounted police officers charge the crowd, including elderly protesters and mothers with young children"82 it was frankly disgusting for Militant leaders to then blame the violence on "anarchists and lunatics". Worse, its Steve Nally went on TV and
promised to "name names" ... in other words line people up for arrest and imprisonment by the bourgeois state.

A genuine revolutionary organisation would expel any leader who said such a thing (Militant isn't and hasn't). A genuine revolutionary organisation would at least learn the lesson of Trafalgar Square and make the call for Workers' Defence Corps to ensure that in the future our demonstration are defended, along with non-poll tax payers under threat from bailiffs (Militant isn't and hasn't).

4.3.5. Dangerous words

For a supposedly 'Marxist' 'programmatic' document What we stand for is remarkably lacking in basic Marxist concepts. We have already noted its refusal to face up to the Leninist theory of imperialism, its contorted formulation to avoid the word 'communism' and its denial of the inevitability of violent revolution. Hence, especially given its parliamentarianism, it is hardly surprising that What we stand for contains no reference to the dictatorship of the proletariat.

It is not that Militant is engaging in a conspiracy of silence. Elsewhere Militant comes out against the term dictatorship of the proletariat. Writing in the already quoted Militant International Review No33, Rob Sewell says that "the events of the last forty years have indelibly stained the term." Apparently "the monstrous totalitarian dictatorships that have arisen in Germany, Italy, Spain and also the Stalinist regimes, the connotations of totalitarian repression associated with the word 'dictatorship' have blotted out the meaning intended by Marx: "predominant rule" (p11). In place of proletarian dictatorship Militant therefore substitutes "proletarian democracy" as the "correct term".

This is old as the hills revisionism. There has been a long line of 'Marxists' - stretching back to Bernstein in the 1890s - who have repudiated, or as they say 'corrected', Marx's scientifically precise term to describe socialism: the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Militant could just as well argue that events of the last 40 years (and bourgeois propaganda) have indelibly stained the terms socialism, revolution and Marxism. How quickly Militant will take to arrive at that well-trod conclusion is not easy to predict. Yet its fawning before bourgeois respectability today surely gives us more than a clue. Because Militant is tied to one person one vote, who will misrepresent us this time, bourgeois democracy, it must reject the dictatorship of the proletariat and pretend that socialism is merely the "predominant rule" of the working class. Only for philistines such as Militant do democracy and dictatorship stand as opposites. For Marxists it is elementary that democracy is merely a form of the state, and that all states are class dictatorships. However democratic, all are ultimately based on the use of force by one class against another. The socialist state is no exception. It is the dictatorship of the proletariat, "the organisation of the proletariat as the ruling class", the rule of the working class unrestricted by any laws, not the "predominant rule" of the working class.

Compared with bourgeois democracy the dictatorship of the proletariat - with its soviets, workers' militia and subordination of the bureaucracy - is a thousand times more democratic. Nonetheless it cannot be denied that democracy itself means the suppression of the minority: under socialism the suppression of the old ruling class, the expropriated capitalists. This can be peaceful. But if needs must it will be ruthless and violent.

Quite clearly the term dictatorship of the proletariat is central to the Marxist world view. That is why Lenin insisted: "Only he is a Marxist who extends the recognition of the class struggle to the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat."
4.4. The affiliation tactic and the entrist strategy

For Lenin it was a principle that communists should always, no matter what the circumstances or difficulties, organise themselves independently and, if need be, against other trends and forces within the workers' movement. Firstly, so as to openly declare and spread their politics, and secondly, to begin the slow, painful but necessary task of building a genuine Communist Party capable of uniting, training and organising the vanguard of the proletariat and successfully leading the mass of the working class to the conquest of political power. Only with a Communist Party, not a 'radical' Labour Party, can we hope to see socialism.

Naturally there is no universal blueprint detailing how to build such a party. Tactics have to be developed that take full account of the tempo of the class struggle in each country and all other national peculiarities. It was with this in mind that when it came to Britain - and only Britain - Lenin sided with those who called for the newly-formed CPGB to seek affiliation to the Labour Party; a party of the Second International from which he was doing his utmost to lever away the communist and revolutionary forces in order to win them to the banner of the Third International.

Wanting to affiliate to the Labour Party did not mean having or fostering illusions in it. Lenin called the Labour Party a "bourgeois workers' party" which "exists to systematically dupe the workers". However, given the small size of the CPGB and the strength of Labourism, it was vital to open up an active dialogue within the working class between the advanced, communist, minority and the backward, Labourite, majority. If the CPGB was unable to do this and establish close links with the mass of workers, "then it is not a party, and is worthless in general" (Lenin).

What made the 'British exceptionalist' tactic of affiliation viable was the unique federal structure of the Labour Party. Before 1918 it was not a party in any full sense of the term; membership came through its affiliated trade unions or cooperative or socialist organisations. After 1918, when the Labour Party began to organise individual members, affiliation remained the source of most of Labour's support and finance.

Of course, such 'British exceptionalism' was very limited. Affiliation was always viewed as a tactic, and a short term tactic at that. There was never any Militant-style idea of winning the Labour Party, let alone winning it to take the lead in the fight for socialism. As far as Lenin was concerned, CPGB affiliation to the Labour Party would give the communists a far wider audience, indeed affiliation could only have been the result of successful communist mass work in the trade unions and Labour Party wards and constituencies. On the other hand if the CPGB were turned down, Lenin said that "we shall gain more, for we shall at once have shown the masses that [the Labour Party leaders - JC] prefer their close relations with the capitalists to the unity of all the workers."

The tactic of affiliation was very much of its time. Conditions change and so must communist tactics; in 1946 for example the Labour Party put a bar on any new affiliations. That does not mean that conditions could not change again or that in the future the Communist Party should refuse on principle to consider the affiliation tactic again. Nonetheless because of the wrecking activities of the 'official communists' the main task today is not for communists to gain mass influence but to reforge our Communist Party.

Militant, at least in private, likes to draw a direct correspondence between the Leninist tactic of affiliation to its strategy of entrism. Yet the very fact that it does not openly admit it is an entrist organisation says the opposite. It is said that it circulates the pamphlet *Entrism* to new recruits, but it will never publicly admit this strategy. It prefers to keep its history and perspectives secret.

Such entrism is by definition uncommunistic. Where Marx insisted that communists deign not to conceal their views, the Trotskyites entered the parties of social democracy slyly and dishonestly. We say this not because as individuals they kept their organisational secrets close to their chests, rather because their organisations and press made no declarations of revolutionary
intent. Instead they pretended to be products of left reformism. The supposed real views of these entrist organisations were kept concealed, as were their criticisms of left reformism. Of course, we Leninists defend the right of revolutionaries to organise in the Labour Party. But there is all the difference in the world between conspiracy and secrecy in organisation, and conspiracy and secrecy in politics and ideology. One is principled, the other unprincipled.

The affiliation tactic predisposed as a matter of the highest principle that the CPGB openly demand from the Labour Party that it would have "full freedom of criticism and is able to conduct its own policy". The CPGB would openly say that it would support the Labour Party leadership like a "rope supports a hanged man", have its own independent organisation, democracy and international links, namely the Third (Communist) International.

The affiliation tactic was not only short term. It was also without the slightest illusion in the Labour Party. Entrism, in contrast, involves feeding on and reinforcing the existing illusions workers have in Labourism and social democracy in general. After all the Trotskyites applied it to all social democratic parties throughout the world. Revealingly, showing its direction, the Militant brand of Trotskyism has extended this to include bourgeois organisations such as the People's Party of Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan and the African National Congress in South Africa.

4.5. In conclusion

Militant's claims to be revolutionary and its reformist practice defines it as a centrist organisation. What is important about such organisations is their direction. Are they going to the left or the right? Having examined Militant's origins, its revisionist denial of elementary Marxist truths and concepts, its assimilation by the reformist left, there can be no doubt that it is a right centrist organisation: and as such an obstacle to the forces of genuine communism and a danger to the revolutionary proletariat.
4.6. Postscript

As we have long predicted, Militant Tendency has developed open divisions along left-right lines. The trigger was obviously the Walton by-election in July 1991 when Militant supporter Lesley Mahmood stood against the official Labour candidate, Peter Kilfoyle.

Our position was clear. This was more than an internal Labour Party squabble. We opposed those sectarians who called for a boycott and those Trotskyoid and CPB and NCP 'official communists' who lined up behind the bosses' "second eleven". Instead we urged all partisans of the working class to support Mahmood; a victory for her would be "a victory for struggle over passivity, a victory for those who call themselves socialists against the explicitly pro-capitalist policies of the Labour Party, a victory of the future over the past."

Unfortunately Mahmood lost, and lost badly. Nevertheless because it had broken from its programme, Militant found itself strategically adrift; What we stand for was useless as any sort of a guide to action. Some of its leaders wanted to backtrack. They wanted to keep heads down in the Labour wards and hope for better days. For them the 2,613 votes in Walton was no "pointer to the future". Rather it was a dire warning that the whole 40 year entrist project was about to be wrecked. The majority disagreed. They wanted to see Mahmood win in order to show those who supported her that we need go further.

Militant's central committee split 46:3 over the question. In numerical terms a minority of three is nothing. But the three are not any old three. They consist of Ted Grant, the organisation's founder and leading theorist, Rob Sewell, national organiser and Alan Woods, editor of Militant International Review.

They were prepared to remain silent as long as Walton was a one-off. When it became clear that the majority had no such intention they went public. In a document leaked to The Guardian, the three make clear their opposition to Militant's New Turn, describing it as "ultra-left adventurism". They argue that with the "active base of the Tendency in Britain and internationally" shrinking, Kinnock's purge and a general downturn on the left means that there are "objective difficulties" for Militant, that now is the time to retreat not attack.

Argument has been bitter and personal. The minority complain of a "clique" operating "outside formal structure of the Tendency" which has attempted to shield "individuals from criticism" and "gag" dissidents. The majority imply that Grant is getting crusty, if not senile. That with Kinnock's shift to the right a vacuum exists on the left: "It would be criminal to pass over an immediate opportunity for expansion in order that we may cling to our few remaining points of support within the Labour Party."

Such a split was easy to predict. Militant is an organisation which long ago abandoned the revolutionary theory that once gave it a sense of cohesion. It has become social democratised. Such politics inevitably engender a tendency to split along left-right lines. The present contradictory dynamics of the Labour Party moving to the right on the one hand and the experience Militant had of fronting the truly mass anti-poll tax movement only speeded up the schism that was already there.

The more Militant recruited and was successful the more it, and its members, were accused by Kinnock and the Labour Party mainstream of being the problem. For a Militant rank and file, impatient to fight the system, the Labour Party was becoming the problem.

From our point of view this development is good. We want militants and Militant to break from the Labour Party. Outside the Labour Party there is one real question: the necessity of building a Communist Party. Only with such a Party can our class smash this rotten capitalist system and build a real new world order, socialism. Those who refuse to face this question are doomed to permanent sect-like status or vicarious Labourism.

Because we recognise the importance of Militant as a group, the roots it has in the working class and the good comrades it has in its ranks we have done our utmost to encourage a break from the Labour Party and the taking up of the one task worthy of genuine partisans of the working class: reforging the Communist Party of...
Great Britain along the ideological and organisational lines it was founded on in July 1920.

The "communism has collapsed" Socialist Workers Party has a different project. It wants a half way house centrist party. A few years ago it made a great song and dance about an 'open letter' proposing a straight organisational merger with Militant. Nowhere was the necessity for scientific Marxist ideology mentioned, nowhere was the need for a "party of a new type" even touched upon. Not surprisingly the SWP ended up losing members to Militant and the Labour Party.

Now the SWP reckons things will be different. With Militant in turmoil, Kinnock burying the last vestiges of Bennism, it has launched its 'open letter' mark two. This calls for the building of a "socialist alternative" whose only defining feature seems to be that it is "outside the Labour Party". This is not only a cynical recruiting attempt, it stands witness to the SWP's inability to build a party of the new type. Not only does the SWP automatically vote Labour at every election, but its organisation is becoming thoroughly soft, inactive and social democratic.

What workers in Britain need is their Communist Party.

3.7. Why 'Fordism'? Where are the Euros going?

We must now ask ourselves where the Euros are going. Obviously their case for a 'Fordist/post-Fordist' historical divide and the conclusions they draw are completely erroneous. But tilting at 'Fordism' and then duly knocking it down with 'post-Fordism' does serve a purpose. Post-Fordism does not help anyone come to grips with developments in the real world but it does admirably suit the Euros and their political project of securing a niche within the mainstream of bourgeois politics.

To arrive at this nirvana they must pass through the eye of the needle and shed the ideological baggage of the past. Instead of openly admitting what they are up to they need an excuse. This is what 'Fordism/post-Fordism' is all about. Capitalism becomes 'Fordism', or at least the imperialist capitalism analysed by Lenin, Hilferding, Bukharin etc. By claiming that 'Fordism' is now dead if not buried, the Euros can safely do the same for the theory that we are living in an epoch of moribund capitalism, war and socialist revolution.

More, MFNT promises us a bright new 'post-Fordist' future for capitalism, as long as the 'left' - which also apparently included the Liberal Democrats and Social Democrats! - is able to break from the "political demarcation lines which it inherited from the old order." A more honest way of putting this would be breaking from working class politics and embracing a petty bourgeois version of Thatcherism. But then the Euros have only rarely been known for their honesty.

Because of the supposed demise of supposed 'Fordism' the contradictions of capitalism, the tendency for the rate of profit to decline, the inevitability of general crisis and war under imperialism can be disregarded using the excuse that 'post-Fordism' makes
all previous analyses irrelevant. Even better, because of 'post Fordism' the Euros can promise a new "political settlement", which would produce a "modernised", "democratic" and "prosperous" capitalism. Heard it before? Yes, for all its claims to be new, this is in essence the line pushed by Labourite social democracy from its very inception.

Yet where Labourism has deep social roots in bourgeois society through the labour and trade union bureaucracy, the Euros are a socially shallow trend in transition, and moving at a pace of knots to the right. In the name of "democratic, humanist, environmental socialism" the Euro organisation's secretary, Nina Temple, argues that "there will never be a communism of abundance", that socialism "has produced some of the worst crimes of the twentieth century", and that "1990 had seen the Bolshevik era end in disaster" (in that sense the Paris Commune ended in disaster, but that does not lead real communists to deny what was marvellously heroic, progressive and positive in it). Naturally having rejected all vestiges of class politics the Euros openly embraced and lauded the counterrevolution that swept from Eastern Europe in 1989 to the USSR in 1991. No wonder Temple was so eager to name her organisation more accurately.

Labourism can swing ideologically to the left or right, but it remains anchored to a basically stable social base. The same cannot be said of the Euros. When it emerged as a distinct trend within 'official communism' it claimed to be revolutionary, it targeted the disillusioned 'children of 68' and drew a not insignificant number into its ranks. What it will be saying tomorrow cannot be said with any certainty. However if the Euros fully evolve and do not organisationally liquidate themselves into oblivion, as Marxism Today editor, Martin Jacques advocates, there are basically two forms it can end up taking. The first is full social democracy. We have in front of us today the living obscenity of the former Italian Communist Party as an example of a party that has made this transition. Achille Occhetto and its other leaders never mention class, let alone the class struggle. They consider the European Community and Nato good things and are determined to prove themselves "worthy of a place in the mainstream of Western Europe's social democratic parties".

The only obstacle that prevents the Democratic Party of the Left (the former PCI) from joining the Socialist International has been
Italy's established Socialist Party which is determined to maintain a monopoly on the franchise. No doubt if the temperature of the class war in Italy were to rise, if the working class in Italy took to the offensive, the ruling class would call upon the DPL to take governmental position in order - like the Labour Party in Britain in the 1920s - to act as a safety valve to save the bourgeois order.

Such a future is highly unlikely for our Euros. Those with their heads in the clouds might like to imagine themselves taking government positions, but they lack the social base of the DPL, and in Britain the Labour Party left is the obvious candidate.

This brings us to the other alternative. The rightist trajectory of the Euros is clear. Unless they end up as some sort of living fossil - which, given their ideological fluidity, is not likely but possible - the alignment to the right will continue. There are important lessons from history which show where this leads, which however shocking, have to be admitted and faced.

The leaders of fascism came not only from the right but also from the left. Mussolini was once the editor of the Italian Socialist Party's central organ Avanti!, Pilsudski the fascist dictator of pre-World War II Poland was the leader of the Polish Socialist Party, while Mosley, Britain's numero uno fascist was a Labour MP from 1924-31 and served as a minister in Britain's second Labour government till he resigned and formed the New Party, along with initial support from Labour leftists like Aneurin Bevan and AJ Cook (the Arthur Scargill of his day) and John Strachey a fellow traveller of the Communist Party.

It is vital to emphasise that we are not saying here that this is where the Euros will definitely end up. Nonetheless, given any sort of an economic or political crisis, fascism could undoubtedly grow and would find expression in the form of trends that were once on the reformist left.

The Euros, with their ideological flux, their commitment to capitalist modernisation and petty bourgeois hatred for the working class, fit the bill perfectly. They already consider themselves an elite; they want us to believe that it is they who are the bringers of socialism, not the working class masses.

Transparency their 'socialism' is of the bourgeois sort that Marx and Engels lambasted in the Communist Manifesto. The socialism of "economists, philanthropists, humanitarians, improvers of the condition of the working class, organisers of charity, members of
4. Militant: What we stand for

Hardly a day goes by when the bosses' press, radio or TV does not contain some reference to or attack on *Militant* and Militant Tendency. In spite of its status as the official bogey of the media there can be no doubt about its real growth. When it was first launched, in October 1964, *Militant* was an obscure four page monthly. Today *Militant* is a widely read 16 page weekly. As to Militant Tendency itself, it is Britain's biggest Trotskyite group and claims to be the "largest organised force on the left" (Péter Taaffe, *What we stand for* p33 - all quotes in this chapter unless otherwise stated are from the third, June 1990, edition).

Yet in spite of its two Labour Party MPs, numerous Labour Party councillors, a layer of trade union officials, its domination of the leadership of the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation and Liverpool *Real Labour*, it is the ritualistic slanging match between the two front benches in the House of Commons that is primarily responsible for projecting Militant on to our carefully controlled TV screens.

For the Tories, Militant is the perfect cudgel with which to beat the eminently respectable Kinnock. It, not the pro-bomb, pro-traditional family, pro-market Welsh windbag, is the real face of Labourism, they say. Of course, the Tories know their target. All the lying mud slinging accusations that Militant "orchestrated violence outside town halls", and was responsible for the fight back following the police assault on the March 31 1990 200,000 strong anti-poll tax demonstration in London are designed to harm Kinnock and Labour, not throw light on Militant.

That is why Militant Tendency has been the butt of attack after attack by the Labour Party leadership too. As part of his programme of re-establishing his party as a safe alternative for capitalism this St George fought the Militant dragon.
Since Kinnock came to lead the Labour Party, in 1983, there have been hundreds of expulsions of Militant supporters, including its five editorial board members; but, for every one who is out, ten remain. Having agreed that the left of his own party is the problem Kinnock must continue to attack his own party and impose what will eventually amount to an inquisition ... in August 1990 Kinnock 'victoriously' secured a widening of the witch-hunt; now not only against Militant Tendency but also supporters of Socialist Organiser (something Militant disgracefully and sectarianly kept quiet on; it wants its readers to think of it as unique).

Putting media Militant hype into perspective does not mean that Militant is not important. It is. It is one of the most important barriers that will have to be overcome if we are to reforge the Communist Party of Great Britain our class needs if it is to liberate itself from the shackles of decaying capitalism. Where some, like Militant, use the caucus, the committee room and the lie, the main method Leninists use to combat opponents within the workers' movement is open ideological struggle. It is this time-honoured and always sharp weapon that we now turn on Militant.

Militant Tendency leaders complain that its detractors never mention "our programme" (p4). In the Marxist sense, of course, Militant Tendency has no programme, no democratically arrived at strategic document outlining its principles and minimum and maximum demands. Nothing to compare with the Communist Manifesto, the 1919 Programme of the Communist Party of Russia, or even the British Road to Socialism.

Nevertheless it does have Militant: What we stand for (we will simply call it What we stand for), which although far from being a programme, is the nearest thing Militant has to one. As its title suggests What we stand for is an authoritative and broad-ranging pamphlet. Written by Militant editor, Peter Taaffe, originally published in December 1981, and since then, showing its role, twice updated (February 1986 and June 1990).

While it might be true that the Tories and the Labour leadership ignore this 'programme', we will not. Naturally we like many of the things in What we stand for, the demand for a 35 hour week, an immediate end to the poll tax, trade union independence from the capitalist state, etc. Our intention here, however, is to concentrate on differences. Not because we are bloody minded and simply like an argument for an argument's sake. No, we want to concentrate on
4.1. Labour pains and Militant's origins

Militant calls itself "the Marxist tendency" of the Labour Party. This is wrong on two counts. As the reader will already have gathered we question the Marxism of Militant (what follows will prove it). It is also well known that the Labour Party contains within it a rich diversity of Trotskyites and semi-Trotskyites, all claiming to be Marxist organisations. Pretending to be unique, though, has the advantage of winning the politically inexperienced, and mentally blinkering them against the rival claims of the many competitors in the Labour Party.

But the paramount concern of Militant's leaders is to wall off their supporters from the siren call of those outside the Labour Party. In particular communists, who say that what workers in Britain need, if they are to overthrow capitalism and build socialism, is a Communist Party, not a reformed Labour Party. To poison the minds of its supporters Militant's leaders ludicrously dismiss anyone (except, of course, themselves) not carrying a Labour Party card as being "outside the labour movement". A lie undoubtedly greatly helped by the present disarray in the communist movement caused by the wrecking activity of Euro, CPB and other varieties of 'official communist' opportunism.

Alas, to justify its political theory and practice Militant must lie, not once, but all along the line. For example, the treachery, strikebreaking and imperialist warmongering of the Labour Party, the reason why it has operated as a "second eleven of capitalism", is, according to Taaffe, because the right wing has "infiltrated the labour movement" (p29). It is Militant alone that apparently represents the genuine, original spirit of the Labour Party. "Marxism", maintains Taaffe, "has always been part, and an important part at that, of the Labour Party right from its inception" (p29).

We can easily cut through these falsehoods. Neither the implication that Militant somehow dates back to the origins of the Labour Party nor the idea that the Labour Party has some sort of Marxist ancestry (if not from both parents, then at least from one) has any foundation in truth. The Labour Party was conceived in the bowels of the TUC bureaucracy and was raised to the level of a serious parliamentary party through the recruitment of a bevy of Liberal MPs. It was the TUC and defecting Liberals who were the mother and father of Labourism. There was no right wing "infiltration", the right dominated the Labour Party from the very beginning.

Marxism did not play the sort of role Taaffe and Militant would have us imagine. Marxism and the class struggle had as much to do with the formation of the Labour Party as it did with the election of Britain's first woman prime minister. The Social Democratic Federation, Britain's first Marxist organisation, wrongly or rightly walked out in disgust from the proto-Labour Party, the Labour Representation Committee, in 1901. Why? Because the committee refused to recognise even formally the "class war" let alone have "for its ultimate object the socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange". 66

Clause 4, which Taaffe and Militant think so much of, and go on so much about, is informed by reformism, not Marxism, as any serious historian of the Labour Party would tell us. It was only reluctantly adopted and purely for propaganda purposes in 1918 in a pre-emptive move to stop workers turning to communism. Clause 4 had nothing to do with a genuine conversion to genuine socialism; rather it was "a blueprint for a more advanced, more regulated form of capitalism". 67

That is why, when the newly-formed CPGB applied for affiliation to the Labour Party in 1920, it was bluntly and fearfully refused. As it was in 1921, 1922, 1923, 1924 and on every other occasion it tried. It was the real Marxists of the CPGB who were the first victims of a Labour Party witch-hunt. The Labour leadership went on to expel individual communists who had dual membership and to prevent elected communists from representing their unions at Labour Party conferences. Later it drew up a McCarthyite list of bans and proscriptions to keep the Labour Party free of 'red contamination'.

True, there has always been a Labour left, and it has on occasions been influenced by Marxism; the British Socialist Party
was an affiliate till it helped form the CPGB in 1920. The CPGB itself was behind the influential Left Wing Movement of the 1920s. However the essence of the Labour Party - including its parliamentarian left wing - has nothing to do with the struggle for socialism, which is, and can only but be, the struggle for revolution.

The Labour Party, taken as a whole, is and always has been, a "bourgeois workers' party" (Lenin). When in opposition it promises to run capitalism if only it was given the chance of government; and when in government it does just that. Militant's Labour left loudly protests, but at the end of the day it always gives loyal support to the dominant right wing.

All in all it is quite clear that the main influence Marxism has had on the Labour Party has been marginal, and when more than that, it has been from the outside. As to Militant, it has its origins not in the Labour Party, but in the Trotskyite movement of the early 1930s, which either splintered away or was expelled from the CPGB. Specifically it is the organisational and political continuation of one of the fragments of the Trotskyite movement in Britain which shattered in 1951 (two years after the Revolutionary Communist Party - a united Trotskyite organisation - decided to take the advice of the International Secretariat of the Fourth International to begin "systematic work as a tendency within the Labour Party") 68

Out of the resulting chaos of collapse and disintegration Ted Grant, Militant's founder/leader, managed to keep around himself a small body of former RCP members: originally known as the International Socialist. This later became the Revolutionary Socialist League. It published the journal Socialist Fight, until 1963, when it was closed in order to make way for the launch of Militant in 1964.

Now Grant and Taaffe would have us believe that Militant was purely the product of the Labour Party. That the idea that "Marxists' (ie RCP/RSL/Militant) "infiltrated" the Labour Party is a "legend" (p29). This is dishonesty taken to Brobdingnagian proportions. They deny the RSL with the same hypocrisy the government of the day denies the existence of MI5. It was never publicly dissolved. Of course, there are those who say they are recent ex-members. There is also the history of Militant's leaders, the decision to enter the Labour Party in 1949 and their rewriting history. All this is well known. Yet merely to mention the initials, RSL, in the presence of leading Militant supporters, is like saying Jehovah in ancient Israel; the name of god which was never spoken aloud by Jews (remember what happened to the poor sod who did in the Life of Brian).

We do not know for sure whether or not the RSL still exists. Frankly it doesn't matter either way. What we are interested in is not Militant's internal structure. We are interested in its political origins, current politics and political direction.

The fact of the matter is that Militant has taken Trotsky's organisational entrist tactic to its furthest political point. From being a tactic to overcome the extreme isolation of the Trotskyites, entrism has become, in the hands of Militant, a principle (entrism is entering and then operating within mass reformist parties). That is why it will mystify its own history, original aims and even existence prior to 1964.

There is, as is always the case, a price to pay for such opportunism. Militant's founders might have entered the Labour Party as revolutionaries. But far from changing the Labour Party it is they who have been changed. The pressures and demands necessary to maintain deep entrism on already weak politics, has produced assimilation. In conquering Labour Party wards, constituencies and the LPYS they have themselves been conquered. Militant's leaders (expelled or not expelled) are today, to all intents and purposes, part of the Labour left, they have become Labourised.69

Either that or we are to believe that nothing Militant's leaders say is the result of what they actually believe. People do not do that (at least with consistency). It is not a matter of always expecting the unalloyed truth. Rather recognising that there is always some sort of a connection between word and intention. In spite of what media hacks say to the contrary there is no devious secret master plan which has convinced a group of dedicated revolutionaries to talk, write and act like reformists. They talk, write and act like reformists, because reformists they are.

Those who refuse to recognise the obvious would do well to remember the recent history of 'official communism'. In the late 1960s and early 70s I well remember that sections of the bourgeoisie seriously thought that Eurocommunism was a ghastly plot by the Russians to take over Western Europe. No one says that any more. The Euros really were what they said they were: petty bourgeois democrats.
Militant wants to be thought of as different from the rest of the Labour left. It is. But not in content, only in form. The content of Militant's politics is left reformism. The form this takes, however, is distinct, both in terms of its denial of reformism and its fake revolutionary packaging.

We have already touched upon Militant's origins above. So let's now turn to its politics and ideology.

4.2. Nature of epoch

Militant has no grasp or definition of our epoch, the epoch of imperialism, war and the revolutionary transition to communism. In fact neither imperialism, the inevitability of war (not just the "danger of nuclear holocaust" - p7) under imperialism, nor communism, is mentioned in What we stand for. None of this can be put down to carelessness. If Militant ever did have any Marxism, it has forgotten it all, and needlessly reinvented its own brand of social democratic idealism.

What we stand for does say we "are now moving into a period of unparalleled economic and social disturbances" (p26). We agree. However where we have located a coming new general crisis within the movement of capitalism since the end of World War II from boom, to stagnation and pre-crisis, Grant has been predicting a crash almost every year since 1945 (as opposed to other Trotskyites, he did at least have the virtue of admitting the reality of a post-World War II "recovery" in the late 1940s, although he thought it would not last for more than a few years). Like a clock that has stopped, he is bound to be proved correct eventually. But to call this Marxism is an insult.

What we stand for is decidedly Anglo-centric - its occasional references to internationalism are only for form's sake. With such a starting point any attempt to actually square up to the crisis of Britain is hopeless.

Because of his theoretical blindness to the importance (or existence) of imperialism Taaffe can only explain Britain's historic decline through its "colossal expenditure on arms" compared with Japan (p10) ... What we stand for goes on to attack Kinnock for his "admiration" of Japan (p22). In spite of this the implication is clear: British capitalists should follow the example of Japan (incidentally, given the nature of imperialism, it is much more likely in the medium to long term that Japan will be forced to match and then overtake British levels of arms spending).
That is no doubt why Militant's 'programme' contains a plaintive call for "massive arms cuts" (p7). Lenin dismissively called such slogans a "dream". In opposition to Militant's pacifistic hopes, Lenin's militant communist slogans remain as fresh and true as ever: Not a man, not a penny for the bourgeois army! Arm the proletariat to defeat, disarm and expropriate the bourgeoisie! (see VI Lenin, The military programme of the proletarian revolution).

Unlike Militant's version of the permanent arms economy 'theory', Lenin's theory of imperialism gives a profound insight into the reasons behind the rise and fall of various capitalist powers. Lenin analysed imperialism as the highest and last stage of capitalism. It represented the triumph of monopoly over competition, the growing importance of the export of capital as opposed to commodities, the merger of banking and industrial capital, and the emergence of finance capital. All this and imperialism's creation of a fluid world money market greatly exacerbates uneven development within a country and between countries. This is the key to a real scientific explanation of Britain's relative decline, not arms expenditure; certainly not the "rotten" stewardship by "British capitalists", or the "ruinous policies" of Thatcherism (pp 10,11). Relative decline is due to the internal laws and dynamics of capitalism itself. It has nothing to do with the subjective failings of Britain's, or anyone else's, capitalists.

The reason Militant does not want to use Lenin's theory of imperialism is transparent. It wants us to believe that reversing Britain's decline simply depended on replacing Thatcher's "ruinous policies" with "radical socialist measures" which would be carried through in parliament by the Labour Party (p39). Naturally by closing its eyes to the existence, effect and reality of imperialism Militant will not/cannot see the capitalist world as being split into oppressed and oppressing nations. This is no abstract or sentimental question. It is crucial when it comes to politics in Britain and political practice. What we stand for only contains a passing reference to Ireland ... in 1914! Nothing about the presence of British troops in the Six Counties today, let alone a call for the unconditional defence of the forces of national liberation. Such silence speaks volumes about the 'Marxism' of Militant.

Given the pivotal nature of Ireland to politics in Britain - how the occupation is used by the ruling class as a training ground for oppression and to rally the masses behind it - Taaffe's silence is an act of political cowardice and inchoate pro-imperialism (hardly an exaggeration, it should be remembered that during the Falklands War in 1982 Militant called for a Labour government 'socialist' war against Argentina).

Furthermore, by ignoring imperialism, Militant is able to ignore the split in the working class movement. Buying off "certain sections" of the working class and the labour and trade union bureaucracy with "morsels of the loot" from imperialism's table is one of the main political consequences of imperialism in the metropolitan/oppressing countries. Again the reason for such determined refusal to use the Leninist theory of imperialism is transparent: Militant looks to the labour and trade union bureaucracy (namely the Labour Party and the TUC) as the force that will take the lead in the socialist transformation of Britain.

### 4.2.1. Socialist countries

The October Revolution and the resulting Soviet Republic represented a historic gain for the world's working class; a gain that had to be defended unconditionally, be defended no matter what. The horrible backwardness, deprivations and bureaucratic perversions that deformed socialism in the USSR, the spread of a version of that deformed, bureaucratic socialism into Eastern Europe with the victory of the Red Army over the Nazi war machine, while necessitating a critical approach, does not for one moment mean that communists should have relaxed or moderated their defence of these countries. No, critical but unconditional defence of the international gains of the working class remains a matter of the highest principle.

Not for Militant, at least as evidenced by their 'programme' What we stand for. Nowhere is there any sort of call for workers, internationally, to defend what remained of the socialist countries. What we stand for outlines measures of democratisation it favours in the "Stalinist states": no official to receive a higher wage than a skilled worker, for an armed people, for an end to one party regimes,
etc (p8). All of which we agree with. But clearly Militant’s position is one-sided and therefore wrong. It included nothing about its duty to defend these states as they were, in order to advance them to what they should be. Militant’s desire not to be associated with the socialist countries as they were led it straight into the opportunist quagmire.

Thus when Eastern Europe was swept by counterrevolution (albeit peaceful and democratic), Militant wholeheartedly welcomed it as a vindication of the naive Trotskyite belief that all spontaneous movements in the socialist countries would produce an anti-bureaucratic political revolution.71 Militant has always maintained that there were only two possibilities in the socialist countries: there "will either be totalitarian control under a one-party state ... or there will be control of industry and the state by the workers".72

Against this we always warned of the third possibility - the reversal of socialism. Socialism is after all, a transitional society between capitalism and communism, containing features of both, not least the state - according to Marx and Lenin a carry-over from capitalism. Given this, the alienation of the masses and the fact that socialism was built on very backward foundations - the foundations of backward capitalism - there was an ever-present danger of the bureaucracy developing independent sectional interests and slowly transforming itself into a capitalist class.

Because of this we declared that reversal (counterrevolution) in the socialist countries could come from above, as well as from below and without. This danger could only but be exacerbated by the economic crisis that developed in the USSR during the Brezhnev years. As we have argued for a number of years now in The Leninist, the bureaucracy in the USSR is no longer a relative fetter on the development of the productive forces. In the 1980s it became an absolute fetter. Unwilling and unable to abolish itself, as historical progress demands, the economically and socially privileged bureaucracy, or at least its technocratic wing, sought salvation for itself through turning towards capitalism and transforming itself into a fully fledged capitalist class.

The political personification of this was Gorbachev. His promise to the west never again to do a Hungary ‘56 or Czechoslovakia ‘68, to abandon the so-called Brezhnev doctrine for the so-called Sinatra doctrine, unleashed counterrevolution in an already overripe Eastern Europe.

Taaffe has the cheek to claim that "in the past Marxists ruled out this [restorationist] possibility" (p45). Obviously Marxists did not. Militant did. After all it was only a short time ago that Taaffe was saying - because of his one way mechanical world view - that talk of "capitalist restoration" in the socialist countries was a "chimera"73, that "Gorbachev’s coming to power signified the beginning of the political revolution" and that we are entering the "Red 90s".74

In What we stand for he at least admits that "there is now a real possibility of some or all" the socialist countries "returning back to capitalism". Of course, the USSR and all of the countries of Eastern Europe have already returned to capitalism. It is no mere possibility. It has happened.
We have always insisted that what was necessary for a genuine political revolution was the leadership of a genuine Communist Party. Without this, as What we stand for now admits, the masses in Eastern Europe were swept behind pro-market (read pro-capitalist) forces.
4.3. The capitalist state and socialism

Militant comes from a different tradition to the 'official communists' who produced the various editions and versions of British Road to Socialism. It is from the Trotskyite stable, of that there is no doubt. Despite this there can be no doubt that after travelling along its own narrow path for many decades it has arrived back on the same social democratic highway as 1990s 'official communism'. Thus its split from 'official communism' has proved to be nothing more than a detour. Today Militant has many of the same ideological positions held by 'official communism' circa 1978. Nowhere can this be seen more clearly than when it comes to the capitalist state and the transition to socialism.

For real Marxists socialism begins with the smashing of the bourgeois state through revolution and ends with the dawn of communism. Socialism is a transitional society between capitalism and communism; in this sense it is therefore the first, lower, stage of communism (to avoid mentioning the terrible word, 'communism'), Taaffe talks about abundance being reached with the "highest stage of socialism" - a theoretical contortion which is a bit like calling a mature adult the highest stage of a fetus (p38).

Socialism, unlike full communism, is characterised by the continued existence of the state - the dictatorship of the proletariat - built on the ruins of the old state through the transformation of working class organs of class struggle into organs of working class state power. All this is basic Marxism. That in the name of 'Marxism' Militant takes a very different, indeed opposite position, again says everything about its supposed 'Marxism'.

Some bourgeois authors have tried to paint Militant in lurid revolutionary colours, that lurking behind its respectable Labourite facade are plans for insurrection; an insurrection which will see parliament "superseded by workers' councils or soviets" and possibly even the Labour Party and the trade unions "outlawed". In spite of this everything we know about Militant’s theory and practice tells us different.

The real, as opposed to the fictional or left posing, Militant maintains that socialism will come, not through revolution and smashing the state power of the bourgeoisie, but "through an Enabling Bill in parliament". Parliament will nationalise "the top 200 monopolies with minimum compensation on the basis of proven need, with one third of places on the management board elected from unions in the industry, one third elected from the TUC representing the working class as a whole and one third nominated from the government ... This would then allow a socialist plan of production to be democratically drawn up and implemented by committees involving trade unions, shop stewards, unwaged and small business men and women" (p8).

That is the true programme of Militant. There are differences between it and the Euros’ 1978 BRS. But the differences are of detail not substance. For example Militant tries to distinguish its reformist schema from other reformist schemas by emphasising speed. Where the 1978 BRS fantasises about introducing socialism through a series of ever lefter Labour and then Labour/communist governments Militant fantasises about introducing socialism in one fell parliamentary swoop via a Labour government and an enabling bill.

The "precedent" Militant quotes for enabling legislation is the Tories' rescue of the bankrupt Rolls Royce in 1971 and their "rushed" entry into the European Community in 1972 (p40). This is fully in the spirit of BRS parliamentary cretinism. As with the BRS the emergence of a revolutionary situation does not enter into Taaffe’s scheme of things. As with the BRS the expropriation of the bourgeoisie will be the result of parliamentary legislation, not carried out through a revolution. As with the BRS (and Margaret Thatcher and John Major for that matter) he equates nationalisation with socialism.

With great flourish Militant, as with the BRS, likes to refer to the role of the masses: "we have stressed" says Militant leader Rob Sewell, "that a socialist Britain can be accomplished through parliament backed by the mobilised power of the labour movement outside".
Except for those who refuse to be convinced by facts it is perfectly clear from this that parliament is central for Militant, the masses supportive and secondary. The liberation of the working class is, according to Militant, not an act of the working class. On the contrary it will come through an arm of the bourgeois state ('transformed' because of a ‘socialist' Labour majority). Rosa Luxemburg pointed out that the real difference between the parliamentary road of those like Militant, and the revolutionary road, was not two ways to get to the same end: ie, socialism. No, these different strategic approaches (means) lead to very different conclusions (ends). The reason is simple. Communists - that is genuine Marxists - seek to mobilise the working class to smash the bourgeois state, including parliament (to do that we fully accept the need to stand candidates and get MPs elected). Reformists on the other hand regard parliament as something to treasure and protect. Is it not the instrument which will be primarily responsible for ushering in the socialist order? No wonder Militant leaders insist that "the idea ... that we want to 'smash parliamentary democracy' is completely untrue". 77

Serious revolutionaries should believe them. This does not mean that Militant's leaders are harmless, safe, nice people. At least, as far as the working class goes, it means that Militant is dangerous and must be fought and ideologically destroyed.

When the question of the state and parliamentary rule goes from the realm of theoretical dispute and is posed point blank in a revolutionary situation the leaders of reformism are inevitably propelled pell mell in a counterrevolutionary direction. After all the major threat to 'parliamentary democracy' in such periods comes, at least initially, from the left, from the revolutionary parties and the revolutionary proletariat organised in workers' councils and workers' militias.

This in essence was the case in 1917 Russia. The Mensheviks and Right Socialist Revolutionaries - who in terms of theory are far to the left of Militant - saw in the Provisional Government a vehicle for social progress. Quite rightly they considered that the biggest threat to this body - which, although cobbled together, eventually looked to securing its authority through a parliamentary Constituent Assembly - came from Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

That is why after the July Days, which saw armed workers' demonstrations demanding a second revolution, the Mensheviks

\[textit{Militant: What we stand for 217}\]
but the organs of mass revolutionary action. Making revolution is not a romantic luxury, which we fight for because of some strange desire to reenact Sergei Eisenstein's *October*. It is a matter of life or death.

As we have said in a revolutionary situation the first threat to an existing bourgeois government comes (or at least should come) from the left, from the forces of revolution. If, however, for one reason or another the proletarian vanguard fails to make revolution the forces of reaction will resolve the revolutionary situation negatively through fascist counterrevolution. That was the case in Italy in the 20s, Germany and Spain in the 30s, Greece in the 60s, Chile and Turkey in the 70s.

Precisely because Militant believes the election of a left reformist government in a revolutionary situation would be a fulfilment of its programme, it would oppose Bolshevik-style moves to overthrow it. To the extent that this took an active form, Militant would go over to the camp of counterrevolution. A revolutionary situation can only have one of two outcomes; revolution or counterrevolution. Those in the workers' movement who do not fight for the revolution can only but pave the way for the counterrevolution.

In the same way that it dismisses the need for revolutionary violence Militant complacently plays down the danger of counterrevolutionary violence. Taaffe claims that "all the scheming and conspiracies of the capitalists can come to nothing on the basis of a bold socialist policy backed by mass mobilisation of the labour movement. An entirely peaceful transformation of society is possible in Britain, but only on the condition that the full power of the labour movement is boldly used to effect this change" (p43).

Hence for Taaffe there is no need at all for the working class movement in Britain to arm itself. If by chance the generals move to carry through a military coup, Militant believes it can scotch any such attempt by a simple "appeal to the ordinary soldiers" (p46). In another work, Taaffe actually says that "by offering the perspective of a new society, the officer caste can be neutralised, or a section -even a majority - can be won over to the side of working people". We are all in favour of appeals to "ordinary soldiers". Appeals to turn guns on officers and to join the revolution. But it cannot be emphasised too strongly that such appeals will only be taken seriously, the wavering "ordinary soldiers" will only have the courage of their convictions, if the forces of revolution are utterly determined and look as though they are going to win. Having arms - even of the most rudimentary sort - is an essential aspect of this. It shows we mean to win.

Although it is nowhere mentioned in *What we stand for* workers' violence has been considered legitimate for Britain by various Militant leaders. But, and it's a big but, only as a defensive not offensive action. It is considered legitimate only as a response to an "illegal" Tory or military coup attempt after the election of a socialist government. Frankly such bold promises of "ferocious resistance" are not worth the proverbial brass farthing (p46). Militant's "ferocious resistance" would be a rerun of the slaughter of Chile.

It is criminal to tell the working class that socialism will come peacefully, through parliament and that the "best equipped and largest armies" can be brought to the point of disintegration by "appeals to ordinary soldiers". For when the other side predictably turn out their bodies of armed men, the last minute call for "ferocious resistance" can only but lead to disaster.

The class struggle will inevitably grow more and more fierce and at a certain point the question of a revolutionary insurrection will be posed. Therefore in order to be capable of overcoming the "ferocious resistance" of the bourgeois state the working class must be prepared, first, through propaganda and agitation, and then as quickly as possible through organisation, for violence. Yes, we must systematically imbue the working class with the understanding that violent revolution is inevitable. Lenin said that "this view of violent revolution lies at the root of the entire theory of Marx and Engels" (State and Revolution). Who can doubt that Militant has betrayed this theory?
4.3.2. Bolsheviks and peaceful revolution

Militant tries to give its peaceful parliamentary road to socialism some sort of orthodox status by quoting Marx, Engels and Lenin. Their arguments and the quotes are exactly those used by the 'official communists' of the mid-1960s to give their opportunism some sort of orthodox status. Rob Sewell, for example, claims that Lenin's attempts to secure a peaceful handing over of power from the Provisional government to the Bolsheviks and the soviets can be generalised because in Britain the "balance of class forces is overwhelmingly in favour of the working class". Letting pass what we must assume to be Sewell's crass equation of the size of the working class in Britain, with the balance of class forces, let us see what he has to say about the aims of the Bolsheviks. The "aim of the Bolsheviks in 1917" writes Sewell "was to secure peaceful change in society". This is hardly true of the whole of 1917. Nonetheless it is certainly the case that from April to July 1917 the efforts of the Bolsheviks were directed to making possible a peaceful change of power through the soviets.

Within Russia there existed a dual power situation. Beside the Provisional government, workers', peasants' and soldiers' soviets had emerged from below. It was because there was a rapid shift within these soviets - organs of the armed revolution - from the Mensheviks and Right Socialist Revolutionaries to the Bolsheviks and the parties of the revolutionary left that Lenin held out the "last chance" of a peaceful hand over. The main reason the Provisional government had any authority was because of the support it was given by the Menshevik and Right SR majority in the soviets; once this body peacefully changed hands it could be peacefully dissolved. As the Menshevik/Right SR majority was steadily whittled down and looked like quickly giving way to a Bolshevik majority, a peaceful second revolution was conceivable. But, as we know, it was not to be. In the face of Menshevik and Right SR stubbornness and the danger of an imperialist-backed military strike against the heartlands of the revolutionary proletariat in Russia, the Bolsheviks acted. In late October old style/early November new style, organised as Stalin said "under the immediate leadership of the chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, Trotsky", the Military Revolutionary Committee carried out an almost bloodless, but nonetheless violent, insurrection. Dual power was ended positively with the toppling of the Provisional government and handing of power to the Congress of the Soviets, which by that time had a Bolshevik majority. Ironically the quote that Sewell uses from Lenin to justify Militant's parliamentary dreams utterly undermines his claims that there exists some sort of parallel between Militant's parliamentary cretinism and the Bolsheviks of 1917. Sewell quotes an article by Lenin written just before the Bolshevik insurrection in early October 1917 as offering "to help to do everything possible to secure peaceful development of the revolution." What comes later in the article sends Militant's schemes crashing about its ears: "Having seized power" says Lenin "the Soviets could still at present - and this is probably their last chance - secure a peaceful development of the revolution, peaceful election of deputies by the people, a peaceful struggle of parties inside the Soviets, a testing of the programme of the various parties in practice, a peaceful passing of power from one party to another" (our emphasis).

It is worth noting that while we have emphasised "soviets" in the above quote, Sewell emphasised the word "peaceful" throughout. Even more revealingly he completely fails to draw any distinction, let alone see a contradiction, between soviets and parliament. The reason Lenin could envisage any sort of peaceful transfer of power was that a revolution had already taken place in February 1917 which was not only violent, but had created a dual power situation. It was not because he had any illusions in parliamentary democracy or a peaceful transfer of class power through parliament. This is something Lenin vehemently denied and consistently polemicised against throughout his politically active life.
We expect that Grant, Taaffe, Sewell and other leaders of Militant know all this full well. But now that they have gone from being revolutionaries to reformists, and yet still claim to be revolutionaries, they have to engage in all sorts of distortions, double talk and downright lying to keep their supporters in the dark about the gulf that separates the politics of Militant and the politics of Lenin and Leninism.

4.3.3. Miners' strike

The 1984-5 miners' Great Strike put all the theories and programmes of the left organisations in Britain under the microscope. It was unquestionably "a decisive turning point in the post-war history of Britain" (p18). It also brilliantly showed the creativity of the masses. New organs of working class struggle were thrown up which owed nothing to reformism in inspiration; support groups, hit squads, women against pit closures.

The significance of these organs is not frozen in a particular moment of time, as in aspic. Like the Councils of Action of 1920 (which Lenin called "embryonic soviets") and the Councils of Action and Workers' Defence Corps of 1926, they give us a glimpse of the future proletarian state in Britain. Everything we know about dialectics tells us that if the bodies created in 1984-5 were allowed to go to full development they would have been transformed into bodies that would have stood in parallel and in opposition to the bourgeois state, parliament included.

Hardly surprisingly given its commitment to the bourgeois parliament and the peaceful, reformist road to socialism, none of this seems even to occur to Militant. The miners' Great Strike is seen purely in the negative, seen as a warning of "the long term measures which the ruling class are preparing against the working class" (p 18).

Although Militant wrongly declares as a matter of doctrine that the balance of class forces is overwhelmingly in favour of the working class, it at least admits that the "miners were defeated" (many for their own reasons refuse to admit this obvious truth). But what did Militant do, itself, during the 1984-5 strike? What we stand for is quiet on this. Again not surprisingly.

According to Taaffe the miners were defeated "only because the right wing dominated TUC failed to organise effective support and solidarity from other unions" (p 18). This is simply not true. The trade union bureaucracy, right and left, failed to organise effective solidarity. But what do we expect from such as these? Primarily the miners were defeated because there existed no vanguard party in Britain, no genuine Communist Party capable of breaking, or at least seriously challenging, the stranglehold the TUC and the Labour Party have over the working class. From what we have seen thus far, Militant is hardly a candidate for the job.

In 1984-5, like many others on the left, Militant devoted itself mainly to telling miners and other workers what they already knew. Worse, it tried to pull the wool over the eyes of militants by repeating the NUM leadership's 'official optimism' about imminent power cuts and coal stocks being reduced to molehills etc. Not once did it set tasks for the workers' movement which would really take the struggle forward on to a qualitatively higher stage, which was vital if the miners were going to win.

With Liverpool, moreover, Militant had the opportunity to link the fight against rate-capping to the miners' strike in practice. Militant supporters were in positions of the highest authority within the council, and the council's workforce. Derek Hatton did talk a lot of rubbish about Liverpool being Britain's Petrograd, yet nothing was done to mobilise the city's workers into a united front with the miners.

The most notable thing about Militant was its determination to channel the anger and militancy of the miners in to the dead end of the Labour Party, and the lame call for a 24 hour general strike: a tactic all very well as a protest, but hardly what was needed to see the miners to victory. What was needed was the organisation of a general strike. Only then could the Tories' anti-working class offensive be halted and replaced by a workers' anti-capitalist offensive.

While it was vital not to let the TUC off the hook, while it was vital to demand that it called a general strike, it was more than likely it would do everything in its power to sabotage such an action. That is why we Leninists raised the necessity of organising working
class resistance in an alternative centre, namely a National Council of Action. We argued that such a National Council of Action could be created through basing it on transformed local support groups (making them into bodies of elected and recallable delegates from all working class organisations). With a National Council of Action, and bold, decisive, daring leadership, the balance of class forces really could have been shifted in favour of the working class.

A general strike 'with or without the TUC' would have had to be in support of the miners, that goes without saying. But it would also have to encompass the interests of the mass of workers if it was to be sustained and carried through successfully. Hence we linked the call for a general strike to the smashing of the Tories' anti-trade union laws; laws which have crippled one strike and one union after another, not only the NUM. Militant was, and is, incapable of thinking such dangerous, but practical and necessary thoughts.

Let us turn again to the question of violence. This time briefly. As the temperature of the class war rises social peace melts and with it the state and its monopoly of violence begins to be challenged. The miners' strike certainly saw ruling class state violence on both scale and methods reminiscent of the Six Counties. This met its answer from below in the miners' hit squads. It must be said that Militant liked them just as much as it likes the IRA. In other words it loathed them.

Although they were ripe for expansion into Workers' Defence Corps, by drawing in other workers, Militant could hardly make any such call. Its belief that the police are nothing but 'workers in uniform', that socialism will come via the Labour Party and parliament, peacefully and without any fear of counterrevolutionary coup, meant that Militant was paralysed. What hope for it in a revolutionary situation?

4.3.4. Poll tax

The fight against the poll tax provides an even greater expose of the true nature of Militant's politics. In What we stand for Militant tells us how wrong Thatcher was to try and push through the tax and pats itself on the back for its ability to predict the "widespread revolt" against it. Militant is also understandably proud that its supporters are the "backbone" of the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation" (p 19).

Despite this it never had a plan to develop the local Anti-Poll Tax Unions, no tactic beyond non-payment, no aim to smash the poll tax through an indefinite general strike. And where we say no taxes on the working class; because its main preoccupation is staying within the Labour Party and being seen as loyal Labourites, Militant came out first in support of Labour's 'roof tax', now its 'fairer rates'.

As well as thoroughly exposing its Labourism, the struggle against the poll tax again thoroughly exposes Militant's pacifism. After all what happened when the police attacked the ABAPTF March 31 1990 anti-poll tax demonstration in London's Trafalgar Square? Did Militant leaders respond by organising the construction of street barricades and co-ordinating the defence of the demonstration? No! Instead with the unerring instinct of the reformist they appealed to "a very senior police officer" to pull his men back. That proved unsuccessful. So as 3,000 actively and bravely fought back - without weapons or co-ordination but with the encouragement and sympathy of the overwhelming majority of the 200,000 strong demonstration - the Militant ABAPTF leaders quietly and cowardly pulled their 650 stewards out and headed home.

Having seen "mounted police officers charge the crowd, including elderly protesters and mothers with young children" it was frankly disgusting for Militant leaders to then blame the violence on "anarchists and lunatics". Worse, its Steve Nally went on TV and
promised to "name names" ... in other words line people up for arrest and imprisonment by the bourgeois state.

A genuine revolutionary organisation would expel any leader who said such a thing (Militant isn't and hasn't). A genuine revolutionary organisation would at least learn the lesson of Trafalgar Square and make the call for Workers' Defence Corps to ensure that in the future our demonstration are defended, along with non-poll tax payers under threat from bailiffs (Militant isn't and hasn't).

4.3.5. Dangerous words

For a supposedly 'Marxist' 'programmatic' document *What we stand for* is remarkably lacking in basic Marxist concepts. We have already noted its refusal to face up to the Leninist theory of imperialism, its contorted formulation to avoid the word 'communism' and its denial of the inevitability of violent revolution. Hence, especially given its parliamentarianism, it is hardly surprising that *What we stand for* contains no reference to the dictatorship of the proletariat.

It is not that Militant is engaging in a conspiracy of silence. Elsewhere Militant comes out against the term dictatorship of the proletariat. Writing in the already quoted *Militant International Review* No33, Rob Sewell says that "the events of the last forty years have indelibly stained the term." Apparently "the monstrous totalitarian dictatorships that have arisen in Germany, Italy, Spain and also the Stalinist regimes, the connotations of totalitarian repression associated with the word 'dictatorship' have blotted out the meaning intended by Marx: "predominant rule" (p11). In place of proletarian dictatorship Militant therefore substitutes "proletarian democracy" as the "correct term".

This is old as the hills revisionism. There has been a long line of 'Marxists' - stretching back to Bernstein in the 1890s - who have repudiated, or as they say 'corrected', Marx's scientifically precise term to describe socialism: the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Militant could just as well argue that events of the last 40 years (and bourgeois propaganda) have indelibly stained the terms socialism, revolution and Marxism. How quickly Militant will take to arrive at that well-trod conclusion is not easy to predict. Yet its fawning before bourgeois respectability today surely gives us more than a clue. Because Militant is tied to one person one vote, who will misrepresent us this time, bourgeois democracy, it must reject the dictatorship of the proletariat and pretend that socialism is merely the "predominant rule" of the working class.

Only for philistines such as Militant do democracy and dictatorship stand as opposites. For Marxists it is elementary that democracy is merely a *form* of the state, and that *all* states are class dictatorships. However democratic, all are ultimately based on the use of force by one class against another. The socialist state is no exception. It is the *dictatorship* of the proletariat, "the organisation of the proletariat as the ruling class", the rule of the working class unrestricted by any laws, not the "predominant rule" of the working class.

Compared with bourgeois democracy the dictatorship of the proletariat - with its soviets, workers' militia and subordination of the bureaucracy - is a thousand times more democratic. Nonetheless it cannot be denied that democracy itself means the suppression of the minority: under socialism the suppression of the old ruling class, the expropriated capitalists. This can be peaceful. But if needs must it will be ruthless and violent.

Quite clearly the term dictatorship of the proletariat is central to the Marxist world view. That is why Lenin insisted: "Only he is a Marxist who *extends* the recognition of the class struggle to the recognition of the *dictatorship of the proletariat."
4.4. The affiliation tactic and the entrist strategy

For Lenin it was a principle that communists should always, no matter what the circumstances or difficulties, organise themselves independently and, if need be, against other trends and forces within the workers' movement. Firstly, so as to openly declare and spread their politics, and secondly, to begin the slow, painful but necessary task of building a genuine Communist Party capable of uniting, training and organising the vanguard of the proletariat and successfully leading the mass of the working class to the conquest of political power. Only with a Communist Party, not a 'radical' Labour Party, can we hope to see socialism. Naturally there is no universal blueprint detailing how to build such a party. Tactics have to be developed that take full account of the tempo of the class struggle in each country and all other national peculiarities. It was with this in mind that when it came to Britain - and only Britain - Lenin sided with those who called for the newly-formed CPGB to seek affiliation to the Labour Party; a party of the Second International from which he was doing his utmost to lever away the communist and revolutionary forces in order to win them to the banner of the Third International.

Wanting to affiliate to the Labour Party did not mean having or fostering illusions in it. Lenin called the Labour Party a "bourgeois workers' party" which "exists to systematically dupe the workers". However, given the small size of the CPGB and the strength of Labourism, it was vital to open up an active dialogue within the working class between the advanced, communist, minority and the backward, Labourite, majority. If the CPGB was unable to do this and establish close links with the mass of workers, "then it is not a party, and is worthless in general" (Lenin). What made the 'British exceptionalist' tactic of affiliation viable was the unique federal structure of the Labour Party. Before 1918 it was not a party in any full sense of the term; membership came through its affiliated trade unions or cooperative or socialist organisations. After 1918, when the Labour Party began to organise individual members, affiliation remained the source of most of Labour's support and finance. Of course, such 'British exceptionalism' was very limited. Affiliation was always viewed as a tactic, and a short term tactic at that. There was never any Militant-style idea of winning the Labour Party, let alone winning it to take the lead in the fight for socialism. As far as Lenin was concerned, CPGB affiliation to the Labour Party would give the communists a far wider audience, indeed affiliation could only have been the result of successful communist mass work in the trade unions and Labour Party wards and constituencies. On the other hand if the CPGB were turned down, Lenin said that "we shall gain more, for we shall at once have shown the masses that [the Labour Party leaders - JC] prefer their close relations with the capitalists to the unity of all the workers."

The tactic of affiliation was very much of its time. Conditions change and so must communist tactics; in 1946 for example the Labour Party put a bar on any new affiliations. That does not mean that conditions could not change again or that in the future the Communist Party should refuse on principle to consider the affiliation tactic again. Nonetheless because of the wrecking activities of the 'official communists' the main task today is not for communists to gain mass influence but to reforge our Communist Party.

Militant, at least in private, likes to draw a direct correspondence between the Leninist tactic of affiliation to its strategy of entrisim. Yet the very fact that it does not openly admit it is an entrist organisation says the opposite. It is said that it circulates the pamphlet Entrism to new recruits, but it will never publicly admit this strategy. It prefers to keep its history and perspectives secret.

Such entrisim is by definition uncommunistic. Where Marx insisted that communists deign not to conceal their views, the Trotskyites entered the parties of social democracy slyly and dishonestly. We say this not because as individuals they kept their organisational secrets close to their chests, rather because their organisations and press made no declarations of revolutionary
intent. Instead they pretended to be products of left reformism. The supposed real views of these entrist organisations were kept concealed, as were their criticisms of left reformism. Of course, we Leninists defend the right of revolutionaries to organise in the Labour Party. But there is all the difference in the world between conspiracy and secrecy in organisation, and conspiracy and secrecy in politics and ideology. One is principled, the other unprincipled.

The affiliation tactic predisposed as a matter of the highest principle that the CPGB openly demand from the Labour Party that it would have "full freedom of criticism and is able to conduct its own policy". The CPGB would openly say that it would support the Labour Party leadership like a "rope supports a hanged man", have its own independent organisation, democracy and international links, namely the Third (Communist) International.

The affiliation tactic was not only short term. It was also without the slightest illusion in the Labour Party. Entrism, in contrast, involves feeding on and reinforcing the existing illusions workers have in Labourism and social democracy in general. After all the Trotskyites applied it to all social democratic parties throughout the world. Revealingly, showing its direction, the Militant brand of Trotskyism has extended this to include bourgeois organisations such as the People's Party of Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan and the African National Congress in South Africa.

4.5. In conclusion

Militant's claims to be revolutionary and its reformist practice defines it as a centrist organisation. What is important about such organisations is their direction. Are they going to the left or the right? Having examined Militant's origins, its revisionist denial of elementary Marxist truths and concepts, its assimilation by the reformist left, there can be no doubt that it is a right centrist organisation: and as such an obstacle to the forces of genuine communism and a danger to the revolutionary proletariat.
4.6. Postscript

As we have long predicted, Militant Tendency has developed open divisions along left-right lines. The trigger was obviously the Walton by-election in July 1991 when Militant supporter Lesley Mahmood stood against the official Labour candidate, Peter Kilfoyle.

Our position was clear. This was more than an internal Labour Party squabble. We opposed those sectarians who called for a boycott and those Trotskyoid and CPB and NCP 'official communists' who lined up behind the bosses' "second eleven". Instead we urged all partisans of the working class to support Mahmood; a victory for her would be a "victory for struggle over passivity, a victory for those who call themselves socialists against the explicitly pro-capitalist policies of the Labour Party, a victory of the future over the past." Of course, we could not give Mahmood and Liverpool Real Labour anything other than critical support. We wanted to see Mahmood win in order to show those who supported her that we need go further.

Unfortunately Mahmood lost, and lost badly. Nevertheless because it had broken from its programme, in practice Militant found itself strategically adrift; What we stand for was useless as any sort of a guide to action. Some of its leaders wanted to backtrack. They wanted to keep heads down in the Labour wards and hope for better days. For them the 2,613 votes in Walton was no "pointer to the future". Rather it was a dire warning that the whole 40 year entrist project was about to be wrecked. The majority disagreed. They wanted to generalise from Walton Real Labour anything other than critical support. We wanted to see Mahmood win in order to show those who supported her that we need go further.

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Militant's central committee split 46:3 over the question. In numerical terms a minority of three is nothing. But the three are not any old three. They consist of Ted Grant, the organisation's founder and leading theorist, Rob Sewell, national organiser and Alan Woods, editor of Militant International Review.

They were prepared to remain silent as long as Walton was a one-off. When it became clear that the majority had no such intention they went public. In a document leaked to The Guardian, the three make clear their opposition to Militant's New Turn, describing it as "ultra-left adventurism". They argue that with the "active base of the Tendency in Britain and internationally" shrinking, Kinnock's purge and a general downturn on the left means that there are "objective difficulties" for Militant, that now is the time to retreat not attack.

Argument has been bitter and personal. The minority complain of a "clique" operating "outside formal structure of the Tendency" which has attempted to shield "individuals form criticism" and "gag" dissidents. The majority imply that Grant is getting crusty, if not senile. That with Kinnock's shift to the right a vacuum exists on the left: "It would be criminal to pass over an immediate opportunity for expansion in order that we may cling to our few remaining points of support within the Labour Party.

Such a split was easy to predict. Militant is an organisation which long ago abandoned the revolutionary theory that once gave it a sense of cohesion. It has become social democratised. Such politics inevitably engender a tendency to split along left-right lines. The present contradictory dynamics of the Labour Party moving to the right on the one hand and the experience Militant had of fronting the truly mass anti-poll tax movement only speeded up the schism that was already there.

The more Militant recruited and was successful the more it, and its members, were accused by Kinnock and the Labour Party mainstream of being the problem. For a Militant rank and file, impatient to fight the system, the Labour Party was becoming the problem.

From our point of view this development is good. We want militants and Militant to break from the Labour Party. Outside the Labour Party there is one real question: the necessity of building a Communist Party. Only with such a Party can our class smash this rotten capitalist system and build a real new world order, socialism. Those who refuse to face this question are doomed to permanent sect-like status or vicarious Labourism.

Because we recognise the importance of Militant as a group, the roots it has in the working class and the good comrades it has in its ranks we have done our utmost to encourage a break from the Labour Party and the taking up of the one task worthy of genuine partisans of the working class: reforging the Communist Party of
Great Britain along the ideological and organisational lines it was founded on in July 1920.

The "communism has collapsed" Socialist Workers Party has a different project. It wants a half way house centrist party. A few years ago it made a great song and dance about an 'open letter' proposing a straight organisational merger with Militant. Nowhere was the necessity for scientific Marxist ideology mentioned, nowhere was the need for a "party of a new type" even touched upon. Not surprisingly the SWP ended up losing members to Militant and the Labour Party.

Now the SWP reckons things will be different. With Militant in turmoil, Kinnock burying the last vestiges of Bennism, it has launched its 'open letter' mark two. This calls for the building of a "socialist alternative" whose only defining feature seems to be that it is "outside the Labour Party". This is not only a cynical recruiting attempt, it stands witness to the SWP's inability to build a party of the new type. Not only does the SWP automatically vote Labour at every election, but its organisation is becoming thoroughly soft, inactive and social democratic.

What workers in Britain need is their Communist Party.

Appendix I: The communist programme

1. What is the communist programme?

The need for a communist programme arises from the needs of the movement itself. Lenin made this point time and time again during the course of his struggle to equip the working class in Russia with a revolutionary party. Indeed the prime purpose of his famous paper Iskra could be described as the struggle for the communist programme. The struggle we have conducted in The Leninist, our Party's central organ, has exactly the same purpose. So what is the communist programme? The communist programme is not an ivory tower plan for refashioning society. It is not out to convince the capitalists and their hangers-on that the lot of the poor needs improving. Nor is it the icing on the cake, or the equivalent of an election manifesto. The communist programme is a guide to revolutionary action based wholly on the scientific world outlook of Marxism-Leninism. It represents the crystallisation of the Communist Party's principles and overall strategic approach to the conquest of state power by the proletariat. The programme is the foundation for the building of the Communist Party and developing its strategy and tactics. It firmly links our continuous and all encompassing agitational work with the ultimate aim of communism; it represents the dialectical unity between revolutionary theory and revolutionary practice. The communist programme thus establishes the basis for agreed revolutionary action and is the standard, the reference point, around which the voluntary unity of Party members is built and concretised.

Every clause of the programme must be easily assimilated and understood by advanced workers. It must be written in an acces-
sible style, whereby passages and sentences can be used for agitational purposes and even turned into slogans. Here we must learn from the Communist Manifesto, the Erfurt Programme, the First and Second programmes of the communists in Russia, and the programme of the Communist Party of Turkey. (We intend to utilise what is good in these programmes, though naturally because we recognise the specific features of Britain, and that the communist revolution begins on the national terrain, we cannot copy any of them).

Clearly the programme is, for every genuine Communist Party, a matter of supreme importance. It is therefore quite natural for communists to take such pains in formulating their programme, and then to jealously guard it against any attempt to water it down.

2. The structure of the programme

The structure of the communist programme is closely connected with its content. The programme follows an inner logic; each section, each statement, each demand logically leads to another, and to the final conclusion that communists must unite in a democratic centralist party.

Broadly we can divide the communist programme we need into five sections:

1. A brief preamble giving a general outline of the history of the communist movement in Britain, from its origins to the decision of the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB to produce a programme.
2. The principal appraisals from which everything else follows.
3. The practical (concrete) demands of the Party under capitalism.
4. The character of the revolution in Britain and the transition to communism.
5. The Communist Party.

Leaving aside the preamble, let us expand on the other four sections. The principal appraisals of the programme should begin with a broad description of the nature of our epoch. This section of the programme must be written with particular care so that it avoids textbook definitions. It is also essential not to go in for explanations which seek to answer the question 'why?'. The reasons for the appearance and development of all processes, crises and events should be left to interpretation outside the programme, to propaganda.

When dealing with the nature of our epoch - the epoch of the revolutionary transition from capitalism to communism - it is important to emphasise that while capitalism remains, war is inevitable, along with the growing "misery, oppression, slavery, degradation and exploitation" of the masses. Here we must show that only through the leadership of the working class can war and the pauperisation of the masses be put to an end. Logically flowing from a description of the epoch comes an examination of capitalism in Britain and the social and political consequences of its imperialist development.

This leads us to the immediate demands of the Party. It goes without saying that with us the minimum programme of communists is not calls for an improvement in the workings of capitalism and capitalist society. Our immediate (minimum) demands are aimed at the revolutionary overthrow of the existing state machine.

Communists must singlpermsidedly, with almost dogmatic strictness, keep their eyes on the aim of revolution. We must not allow the pursuit of minor gains to divert from our goal of revolution. Our minimum demands can theoretically be met under capitalism. But they are not based on what we, or anyone else for that matter, thinks capitalism can afford or finds practicable - Lenin showed convincingly in his polemic with Rosa Luxemburg, when the latter complained of the 'impracticality' of the Bolshevik demand for Polish independence, that practicality had nothing to do with it. Communists, he said, do not limit their "demands to the narrow bounds of what is possible at a given moment or under given conditions." 86

No, our starting point is what the working class and oppressed sections of the population need. Precisely because capitalism is a decadent system, based on profit, not need, the logic of the struggle for immediate demands poses the necessity of revolution. What this logically brings us to is the character of the revolution in Britain and the transition to communism.

This is done first and foremost by appraising the main enemy: monopoly capitalism. The immediate political task of the Commu-
nìst Party is to overthrow this main enemy. Primarily this involves securing the unity of the working class around the communist programme. We will also make it clear, however, that communists will support all those who are prepared to fight monopoly capitalism in a revolutionary way - which is in fact part and parcel of our struggle to achieve working class hegemony over all oppressed sections in society. Here we will also deal with the relationship between the various classes and the revolution. Although the revolution will be directed against monopoly capitalism all other sections of the bourgeoisie will line up in defence of capital. Here we will make it clear that there is no progressive section of the bourgeoisie in Britain; all sections of the bourgeoisie are thoroughly reactionary and anti-democratic. The middle classes are another matter. The revolution could involve at least sections of the middle classes - who are being increasingly proletarianised - but only because they have been won to accept the leadership of the working class. It has to be emphasised that there can be no revolution in Britain that is not a proletarian revolution. From this follows the revolutionary government and constitution. Basing ourselves on the experience of the Paris Commune, the revolutions in Russia, Germany and Hungary, as well as the fierce struggles in Britain in 1920, 1926 and 1984-5, the programme will show that the socialist state does not emerge from parliament, nor from the pen of constitutional lawyers. It comes from the fire of the class war which sees organs of working class struggle transformed into organs of working class state power (we will emphasise that we accept the possibility, and likelihood, of a multi-party workers’ council system). Such a transformation can only take place on the ruins of the smashed bourgeois state machine. Finally in this section comes the transition from the first stage of communism, socialism, which begins with the revolution, and lasts until full communism.

The programme will state that socialism is the dictatorship of the proletariat, that the class struggle continues under socialism and that socialist democracy is vital if the transition to communism is to be made. We must also state that socialism is reversible, that the victory of communism is not automatic or spontaneous. It relies on the creativity of the masses and our determination and ability to complete the world revolution. There can be no communism in one country.

Everything that has been stated above logically leads to the conclusion that what the working class needs, if it is to fulfil its historic mission of liberating humanity from the shackles of class society, is a Communist Party. The section on the Party will conclude the programme.

3. Some general points

From what we have seen so far it is clear that the communist programme is no place for long historical explanations or passing facts and details relevant only to the immediate situation. The programme must be as short and concise as possible. Everything that is not essential should be kept out. Engels made the point that: "All that is superfluous in a programme weakens it". The programme should therefore consist where possible of pithy statements, statements that are so well honed that they can, as we have already said, become slogans. The programme deals with principles. Again because of this it should give no space to tactical tasks or explanations; this should be left to pamphlets and our press. As Lenin insisted: “The programme should leave the question of means open, allowing the choice of means to the militant organisations and to Party congresses that determine the tactics of the Party. Questions of tactics, however, can hardly be introduced into the programme (with the exception of the most important questions, questions of principle such as the attitude to other fighters against the autocracy). Questions of tactics will be discussed by the Party newspaper as they arise and will be eventually decided at Party congresses.”

Our programme will therefore not of necessity need rewriting every couple of years as with the programmes of the opportunists, let alone go out of date even before it has come off the press as was the case with the CPB’s version of the BRS.
4. Conclusion

It goes without saying that "every step of the real movement is more important than a dozen programmes", as Karl Marx said. But neither Marx nor any other genuine communist has ever denied the tremendous importance of a programme. There are of course, as is well known, plenty of 'parties' which have failed to produce a programme - the SWP, RCP and NCP being cases in point. (Though few go as far as the NCP, which actually makes a virtue of its inability. At the NCP's 5th Congress its general secretary, Eric Trevett, actually declared that the NCP should "avoid the danger of adopting a programme"). We agree with Lenin when he insisted that a programme was not a "danger" but a "necessity". Indeed with the Euro/Democratic Left twilight we can only emphasise again that reforging the CPGB is bound up with the struggle for a communist programme. It was in this spirit that the 4th Conference of the Leninists of the CPGB, meeting in December 1989, passed the following resolution:

"Neither the 1978 edition of the British Road to Socialism, nor the CPB's updated version, nor the Euros' Manifesto for New Times represent any sort of communist programme. All are thoroughly imbued with opportunism and revisionism. Hence none of them can serve as any sort of guide to revolutionary practice.
"The essence of the struggle being conducted by the CPGB (The Leninist) is to equip our Party with a Marxist-Leninist programme. The provision of the CPGB with a Marxist-Leninist programme depends on reforging the Party and then convening a congress.
"Taking this into consideration our conference resolves that the Leninist wing of the Party must:
a) Prepare a draft programme.
b) Establish a commission for this purpose.
c) Present the draft programme for discussion in Party organisations and in our working class.
d) Present the draft programme in the form of a proposal to the congress of the reforged CPGB."

Appendix II: Outline of a draft programme

We need to start with a general outline of the history of the communist movement in Great Britain.

1. The formation of the CPGB and its significance.
2. Its early years.
3. The liquidation of the CPGB by a thousand opportunist cuts.
4. Launch of The Leninist and open ideological struggle.
5. The formation of the Leninist wing of the CPGB.

Then we need to turn to the nature of our epoch with statements on the following:

1. Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism.
3. Imperialism retards world development. It leaves the majority of the world in abject poverty and imposes neo-colonialism.
4. Socialist revolutions and capitalist counterrevolutions.
5. The counterrevolutionary role of 'official communism': the necessity of defeating opportunism.

Next should come a statement on the development of capitalism in Britain.

1. Britain, the first capitalist country.
2. Britain, the first imperialist country.
3. The long decline of British imperialism.
5. Integration into the EC.

The programme should now turn to the social and political consequences of Britain's imperialist development.

2. Britain's standing as a leading world power is now in danger. Special relationship with the US, and the EC. It relies increasingly on parasitism and the City, its industry is decidedly second rate. 'De-industrialisation', the decay of domestic industry.

From this follows the question of minimum (immediate) demands, demands that can theoretically be met within the confines of capitalism, but in practice pose the necessity of going beyond capitalism if they are to be fulfilled. We can sum up the communist approach to minimum demands with the slogan: fight for what the working class needs, not what the system can afford! Here we rely on a concrete examination of the needs, cultural level and specific problems of the people of Britain. The logic of this programme leads to a challenge to capitalism and its state, to revolution.

1. Why demands for full democracy can be met under capitalism in theory but not in practice. How communists connect the struggle for democracy with the struggle for revolution.
2. The working week and the working day. Holidays.
3. The rights of unemployed workers - the right to work or receive benefit at the level of the minimum wage. At what level should a minimum wage be set?
5. The right to join a trade union and strike. No state control or supervision of trade unions and other workers' organisations etc.
6. Combat trade union bureaucracy. Election, re-election and recallability of all officials. Their pay to be no higher than the average of their membership.
7. The need for industrial unions. For all-embracing workplace committees. Uniting workers in and out of trade unions and workers whatever their trade. The necessity of overcoming sectionalism.
8. Councils of Action/soviet. They come from the class struggle itself. The examples of Russia, Germany, Britain (1920, 1926 and 1984-5). Dual power.
9. For Workers' Defence Corps. They grow out of the class struggle. A workers' militia which, depending on the conditions, will arm itself with the most advanced, destructive weapons available. For an armed people. Against a standing army. Election of officers. Trade union and full civil rights for soldiers. The army must not be isolated from the people.
15. The rights of migrant workers to speak and be educated in their own languages. Against separate education. The right to learn English.
16. Question of immigration and immigration controls. The right to immigrate into Britain and the right to leave. How the bourgeoisie uses migration as a source of cheap labour and to divide the working class. Against immigration controls. For the right of migrant workers to become citizens (how quickly?). The communist attitude towards assimilation.
17. Racism and chauvinism. Racism is a form of chauvinism that
grows out of the development of the capitalist system itself. The main
source of racism is the capitalist state. For the right of self defence, for
working class defence of all oppressed sections of the population.
18. Women. The liberation of women is bound up with the struggle for
communism. The women's question is not a question for women alone.
For equal rights. For equal pay for equal work. The question of positive
discrimination, housework, job sharing, maternity/ paternity rights,
childcare, abortion, contraception and divorce rights. For women in
the workers' militia. Women in state and workers' institutions.
19. Youth. The right to work. The right to access to education
throughout life. Real training, not slave labour. Homelessness and the
right to housing for all, including 16 year olds. Voting age 16. Those
still at school or college to receive benefit at national minimum.
Democracy in schools and colleges. Against the age of consent.
20. Pensioners and the elderly. An increasingly large section of the
population is over 60. Right to stop work at 60. No automatic compulsory
retirement age. Pension to be at level of minimum wage.
21. The rights of homosexuals. Homosexuals are not to blame for
Aids; they are not a problem. No discrimination against homosexuals.
22. Small businesses and farmers. Help for cooperatives. Debts to them
from big business. Credit facilities.

This brings us to the character of the revolution in Britain.
1. The main enemy is at home: British monopoly capitalism.
2. The revolution will have social as well as political tasks. Britain is ripe
for socialism.
3. The ability of the working class to overthrow capitalism and build
socialism depends on securing its own unity around the revolutionary
programme and winning the battle for democracy. The working class
must champion the rights of all the oppressed.

Now we turn to the position of classes in the revolution.
1. Although the revolution will primarily be directed against mo-
nonopoly capital all other sections of the bourgeoisie will oppose it.

Appendix II 245

Non-monopoly capital is tied to imperialism by a thousand golden
strings. All sections of the bourgeoisie are thoroughly reactionary and
anti-democratic.
2. The revolution could involve at least sections of the middle classes.
But there can be no revolution in Britain that is not a proletarian
revolution. Proletarianisation of the mass of the population. The
middle classes after the revolution.

We can now deal with the revolutionary government and constitution.
The best example we can base ourselves on is the practice of Russia. There
organs of popular struggle (councils of workers, peasants and
soldiers) became organs of the new state power. This reality reflects the
logic of the class struggle; it is far more valuable than any number of
constitutional blueprints drawn up by lawyers.

1. Why communists fight to smash parliament? Why it cannot be made
into an organ of the revolution.
2. The transformation of organs of popular struggle into organs of popular
power. The examples of Russia. Germany, Britain (1920, 1926 and
1984-5).
3. For democracy. Why a bureaucracy will be necessary? How will it be
controlled and supervised? The election and recallability of all popular
delegates. Combating careerism. The pay of the people's delegates
(including those at the highest level of the state) to be no greater than
that of the average skilled worker.
4. As we base ourselves on the idea that organs of workers' struggle will
become organs of state power, we also accept the existence of a
multi-party system. For proportional representation. All parties which
accept the revolutionary laws will be free to operate. But clearly only
workers' (in the main revolutionary) parties will find themselves
operating within the revolutionary (soviet-type) system.
5. There must be an acceptance of elections. There should be the
possibility of one revolutionary party or coalition of parties replacing
another peacefully.
6. There must be openness in state affairs. Referendums.
7. For a new proletarian army. Question of a standing army. Army
councils will be an integral part of the new state's democratic
structure. A workers’ militia must be able to act as a counterbalance to the army. Arms to be held under the control of workers in factories and other workplaces, equipped with the most destructive and advanced equipment.

We will then turn to economic demands.

1. Pace of nationalisation of all foreign and domestic monopolies (including banks) will be determined by progress made by the world revolution. Nationalisation of the land. Large farms to become state farms. Small farmers to be encouraged to enter cooperatives and given generous help in purchasing modern farming equipment etc.
3. The right to inherit must be restricted. How tough should income tax be?
4. For a democratic national economic plan.

War, peace and foreign policy. Here we need to bring out the idea that peace and revolution are linked, how communists seek peace through revolution and how imperialism always has a tendency towards war. In relationship to this it must be emphasised that communists wage not only a struggle against capitalism but also against its agents inside the workers’ movement, eg the social chauvinists and social pacifists.

1. The struggle for revolution is the struggle for peace. Communists must show that peace cannot be secured under capitalism. Against social pacifism. Against fake anti-imperialists. Only the working class can defend and advance universal human values.
2. Against such capitalist combinations as Nato, the EC, etc. For a peaceful and independent foreign policy.
3. Support the world revolution.

At last we arrive at the transition to communism.

1. Socialism is the dictatorship of the proletariat. The class struggle (in different forms and conditions from those under capitalism) continues until communism. Why the socialist state is needed.

Administration, repression, defence, advancing production. The proletarian dictatorship is directed against bourgeois remnants and attempts at restorationism. Work will be compulsory except for those who are ill or too young or old. Those who resist.

2. Socialism is not a mode of production. It is a transitional society between capitalism and communism, and as such contains elements of both. The law of value and the law of planning.

3. Until communism is achieved society will operate according to the principle "to each according to work done". This is, said Marx, bourgeois right. Why money, the division of labour, commodity production and the law of value continue to operate under socialism. How to make working class ownership and control of the means of production real. The aim of the working class is to end the contradiction between mental and manual labour, town and country and national differences. For a cultural revolution. The aim of the working class is to raise production to the point of abundance.

4. Socialist democracy is vital for the transition to communism. The importance of shortening the working day to achieve this. The communists must rely not on rule through consent, but mass active democracy. Semi-state (carryover from bourgeois society which will last from the revolution to communism). Trade unions and the state. Party and state. Workers’ militia.

5. Socialism is not irreversible. The victory of communism is not automatic or spontaneous. A socialist society can either go back to capitalism, stay still or go forward. Its fate depends on the balance of class forces nationally and internationally and the policy of the working class and its communist leadership. Only with the World Union of Socialist States can we say that we have passed definitively from the epoch of imperialism, wars and revolutions to the epoch of communism.

6. Why there can be no communism in one country.

Pen ultimately we turn to the specifics of socialism in Britain.

1. Socialism in Britain once established will advance rapidly. Does not need to be formal socialism. Taking power will be hard. Building socialism easy.
2. Scotland and Wales. Right to secede. Should a socialist Britain
have a federal structure, a Canada with *its* Quebec? This would not necessarily contradict centralism.

3. How smooth will the advance to communism be? The combination of developments in Britain and the world as a whole.

Lastly we turn to the Communist Party.

1. The Communist Party is united on the basis of Marxism-Leninism. It is a voluntary union. It is a class party, the vanguard of the working class.

2. The Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB insists that communists always support the organisation of the proletariat in the largest and most powerful and most centralised units. This is a requirement of proletarian internationalism. Whither a CP of the United Kingdom - ie a party aiming to organise the proletarian revolution against the existing state, the state of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland?

3. The struggle in Britain is subordinate to the worldwide struggle of the proletariat. We stand for a new communist international. Capitalist integration, the world economy, the EC and the liberation of the working class. A world class.


5. Criticism and self criticism. Democratic centralism and communist discipline.


7. Legality and illegality.

8. Party leadership. The need for professional leaders, talented and trained over a long period. Vanguard of the party.

9. Communists and trade unions.

10. Communists and religion.

References

Chapter 1.


5. VI Lenin, *Collected Works* (1977), Vol 28 pp245-6, original emphasis.


22. See my supplement Nation and class in the British Isles in The Leninist No 93 (August 3 1990).
23. Again see my supplement in The Leninist No93.
27. CPGB leaflet reporting the joint statement of the CPGB, IWP and CPNI, August 3 1969.
30. S Allende, Chile's Road to Socialism (1973) p135.
31. Programme of Unidad Popular.
36. Draft Programme (1939) p60.
37. After "keeping quiet for 40 years" George Matthews, former deputy general secretary of the 'official' CPGB has recently decided to "put the record straight" on the extent that Stalin was responsible for the main ideas in the first draft edition of the British Road. Far from it being a mere matter of "general support" it was Stalin who throughout 1950 was the main mover behind the "sharp and pungent formulations" which gave the BRS its "distinctive character."

Indeed it was Stalin who put forward the original suggestion that the CPGB should adopt a "long term programme" ... without it our opponents will say "we wanted to impose the Soviet system." "It is clear to me", writes Matthews, completely ignoring the opportunist programmes of communist parties in other western countries, that "without the intervention of Stalin nothing like the original British Road to Socialism would have been produced, and it is doubtful whether there would have been a long term programme at all.” (Changes September 14 1991)

38. Max Adereth, op cit.
40. Socialist Challenge was the paper in Britain of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. Since those days its British followers have split into yet more factions - almost as many as the 'official communists'.
42. Our emphasis, BRS 1951 p22.
43. Ibid p9.

Chapter 2.

44. Mike Hicks, CPB part time general secretary, still "claims a membership of 1,500" (The Guardian September 7 1991). Our estimate is more like 400, and very few of them are active.
45. The re-establishment of the Communist Party, p9.
47. Interviewed by The Guardian, Mike Hicks showed "no great concern for what happens elsewhere", ie the collapse of the Soviet Union. But he did show his ignorance of Stalin's leading role in the writing of the first edition of the BRS and extreme narrowness when he boasted that: "Britain was the first country (sic) to write its own road to socialism (sic) ...
252 Which Road?

Since 1951 we've had our own model - the British Road to Socialism. We have written our programme in line with the traditions of our country, the traditions of our working class and organisations, that's what we base it on and not a model of somewhere else" (September 7 1991).

48. There was an interesting report to this effect in the Morning Star itself by Fred Weir on August 10 1991. According to him the old nomenklatura "freed from the communist hypocrisies about concealing and moderating privilege is growing more prosperous by the day".


51. For our most extensive critique of the AES see Frank Grafton's The Road from Thatcherism, or the road from Marxism, The Leninist No 1 (1981).

Chapter 3


54. Ibid p86.


57. 7 Days, November 18 1989.

58. Ibid.


61. The Euros' vision of the future certainly owes more to Aldous Huxley and his Brave New World than to Marxism.


References 253


64. Source: UN Industrial Statistical Yearbook 1983.

65. Incidentally, this claim is echoed by the Revolutionary Communist Party's alternative to Marxism Today: Living Marxism.

Chapter 4.


69. We need only look at the programme of Militant's Real Labour front when it stood against the official Labour candidate in the Walton by-election. Where Kilfoyle stood for traditional right wing Labourism, nothing Lesley Mahmood offered went beyond traditional left Labourism.

70. See VI Lenin, The collapse of the Second International.

71. When the same process climaxed in the August counterrevolution Militant knew it was not Trotsky's political revolution. All the same it welcomed the counterrevolution with a totally fallacious non-class argument: "All over the world workers will see this [Yeltsin's counter-coup - JCI as people's power reducing the threat of dictatorship to a poorly scripted farce. Every dictator will tremble at the prospect of his own subjects taking such action" (August 22 1991). On a mundane level just who was trembling could be seen in Militant's letters column a few weeks later. An "East Midlands seller" wrote in the following terms - "Dear comrades ... for years now I've been selling the paper every Saturday. In all that time no-one has ever tried to hit me or start any trouble. Lately though I've been getting some dodgy responses such as 'You must be joking! ... Get back to Russia! ... I don't read comics ... I'm a Tory ... If any
comrades have any ideas on how to answer people who have a go at us on the streets I'd appreciate it if they'd write in" (September 20 1991).

72. Ted Grant, *Militant* October 3 1980 - quoted as an example of how "Militant was absolutely correct and born out by events", by John Pickard in his May 1989 glowing introduction to Ted Grant's selected works, *The unbroken thread*.


80. *Ibid*.

81. What a contrast Militant's pacifism makes with the real militancy of the Communist Party-led unemployed movement of the 1920s and 30s. Here is a snatch from Allen Hutt's 1937 book *The post-war history of the British working class* dealing with Glasgow in 1931. "There a demonstration of 20,000 on September 23 clashed with the police: next day a second demonstration was called and 50,000 turned out, among them a defence corps 500 strong, carrying heavy sticks; this time no clash with the police was reported. On October 1 an unemployed demonstration of similar magnitude rallied at Glasgow Green. What took place is described by Wal Hannington, the leader of the National Unemployed Workers Movement, as follows: 'The police tried to ban the demonstration, and as the ranks were being formed for a march through the city mounted and foot police charged into the multitude of unarmed workers. The workers, however, fought back ferociously; iron railings around the Green were torn up and used as weapons. The fighting spirit of the Glasgow workers had been stirred by the unprovoked attack, and they fought their way out of the Green on to the main roads; the battle, which had started at the Green, rapidly extended throughout the centre of the city. For hours it raged, shop windows were smashed and extensive damage was done, and not until after midnight did the struggle come to an end." (pp218-9). No doubt Militant would denounce such unlawful behaviour.


**Appendix I.**

Index

Affiliation to Labour Party 128, 228-230
African National Congress (ANC) 62, 230
Aglietta, Michel 168
Allende, Salvador 120-124, 217
Alliances 39, 67-69
Alternative Economic (and Political) Strategy 11, 20, 117, 138, 144,
160, 161, 193
Anglo-Irish Agreement 156
Anti-monopoly alliance 38, 138, 161
Armed people 79
Army 48, 74, 98-102, 123-124, 210, 218-219
Attlee, Clement 120, 158
Basle Manifesto 100, 105
Belfast 194
Benn, Tony 48, 50, 155, 234
Bernstein, Eduard 5, 71, 103, 171, 226
Black workers 41-42, 115
Bolsheviks 15, 71, 79, 81, 85-86, 100, 101, 220-221
Boom 6-7, 18-20, 140-144, 179, 189-190, 195, 209
Bourgeois democracy 13-17, 75-78, 96-98, 191-192, 195, 217, 227
Brezhnev 23, 24, 212
British army 107, 155
258 Which Road?

Broad Democratic Affiance 38-40, 45, 66, 68, 83, 138
Bukharin, NI 196
Butler, RA 7
Butskellism 7, 158

Callaghan, James 50, 154, 194-195
Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) 76, 158
Capitalism, cycles of 18-20, 140-141
Centrism 36, 131
Chaplin, Charlie 178
Charity 192, 198
Chater, Tony 60, 134-135
Chile 116, 120-125, 218, 219
Christ, Jesus 133
Christianity 64, 126
Churchill, Winston 31, 191
Class Against Class 127, 131
Class collaboration 11, 47, 52-53, 128, 165, 167, 171
Cold War 31, 72, 146, 150
Colonialism 182
Comecon 23-24
Communism, primitive 152
Communist Campaign Group (CCG) 134, 136
Communist International (Comintern) 27, 62, 74-76, 99, 165, 228, 230
Communist Manifesto (Marx and Engels) 142, 198, 202
Communist Party - essential characteristics 58-62
Communist Party of Britain (CPB) 11, 30, 45, 59-60, 112, 126, 130, 133, 141, 145-162, 163
Communist Party of Chile 120, 125
Communist Party of Great Britain (Euros) 8, 27, 36, 60, 96, 105, 125, 126-131, 134-136, 165, 206, 229, 230

CPGB - Provisional Central Committee 76, 80, 202, 204, 228, 229, 233-234
Communist Party of France 117
Communist Party of Ireland 105
Communist Party of Italy 197
Communist Party of Northern Ireland 105
Communist Party of the Soviet Union 22, 61, 148, 217
Communist Party, New see New Communist Party
Communist programme 5, 55, 61, 97, 127, 137-138 162, 164, 166
Conservative Party see Tory Party
Constituent Assembly 74, 85, 216
Cook, A J 198
Controlled market 192
Cooperatives 79, 88
Councils of Action 79-80, 222, 224
Counterrevolution 26, 123, 145-147, 189, 197, 212, 218
Credit system 19-20, 141-143
Crisis 6-7, 11, 18-20, 30-32, 140-143, 179-180, 189-190, 209
Christian Democratic Party of Chile 120, 123, 125
Cromwell, Oliver 86
cuba 24, 91, 151
Culture 36, 176, 182
Czechoslovakia 25, 130-131, 147, 151, 212

Daily Worker 130-131
Democracy 13-17
Democratic centralism 28, 58-60
Democratic counterrevolution 25, 85, 93, 145, 148, 212
Democratic Left 56, 59-60, 135
Democratic rights 65-66, 76, 81, 100
'Democratic solution' to crisis in Ireland 103, 105, 156

Index 259
Dialectics of Nature (Engels) 176
Dictatorship of the proletariat 48, 74-75, 166, 185, 214, 226-227
Doyle, Charlie 129
Dutt, R Palme 130-131
Eastern Europe 25-26, 28, 72, 146-147, 189, 197, 211-213
Economism 51-52, 66
Eden, Anthony 191
Education 27, 108, 114, 127, 182-183
Elections 13, 84-85, 92, 94, 96-100, 217, 221, 232
Engels, Frederick 19-20, 36, 64, 98, 121, 176-177, 187, 198
Entrism 207, 228-232
Environment 152-153, 163, 176-177,
European Community 8, 24, 163, 197, 215
Export of revolution 70, 72
Faith in the City 192
Falklands War 211
Fascism 113-115, 122, 128, 198, 218
February (1917) Revolution 79, 124, 221
Feminism 66, 111, 182
Finance capital 33, 71, 210
Feudalism 40, 152, 168, 179, 185, 187
For Soviet Britain 126-127, 131
Fordism 133, 167-170, 171-174, 176-179, 192, 196-197
Fourth International 206
France 12, 15, 23, 71, 81, 86, 116-119, 192
French, Sid 130-131
Friedman, Milton 189
Gaitskell, Hugh 7, 158

General Strike (1926) 190
German Democratic Republic (GDR) 23-26, 151
Germany 23, 31, 43, 90, 115, 142-143, 190
Glasgow 178
Gollan, John 130-131
Gorbachev, Mikhail Sergeyevich 23, 25-26, 29, 32, 112, 137, 148-150,
164-165, 167, 182, 212-213
Gramsci, Antonio 14, 168
Grant, Ted 206, 209, 222, 232-233
Greater London Council (GLC) 194
Greece 192, 218
Gulf War 142
Hatton, Derek 223
Heath, Edward 191, 194-195
Heffer, Eric 50
Hicks, Mike 135
Hilferding, Rudolf 196
History of BRS 126-131
Hitler, Adolf 31, 194
Homosexuals 63, 66, 68
Humanitarian socialism 167
Imperialism 12, 18, 20, 23-24, 30-31, 32-37, 42-43, 103-107,
114, 121-122, 141-151, 154-157, 182, 196, 209-211, 221, 226
Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism (Lenin) 12 International,
The - see Second International, Communist
International (Comintern) or Fourth International
Internationalisation of production 87, 163-164
Intermediate strata 45-46
Iraq 23, 31
Ireland 16, 52, 81, 90, 103-107, 155-157, 210
Irish Republican Army (IRA) 106-107, 157, 224
Jacques, Martin 163, 197
Japan 23, 143, 174, 209
Kautsky, Karl 5, 15, 154
Kerensky, Alexander 73, 81, 85, 124
Keynes, John Maynard 20, 189
Kinnock, Neil 50, 158-159, 192, 201-202, 209, 233-234
Krushchev, Nikita 150
Labour bureaucracy 35, 40, 42, 51-55, 59, 78, 115, 143, 197, 211, 223
Labour left 51, 58, 68, 158, 205-206, 208
Labour Party 36, 38, 47, 56-58, 68-69, 96, 164, 191, 201, 204-7, 233
Language 89, 176, 184
Law of value 26, 93
Lenin, VI 12, 15, 33, 57, 76-77, 206, 210, 219, 227
The Leninist 212
Levellers 165
Liberal Democrats 196
Liverpool 201, 223
Livingstone, Ken 48, 50
Local democracy 7, 155, 160
Luxemburg, Rosa 111, 216
MacManus, Arthur 63
Macmillan, Harold 191
Major, John 7, 34, 215
Manchester 178
Manifesto for New Times 8, 163-199
Market 31, 118, 142, 173, 210
Market socialism 26, 165
Marx, Karl 11, 80, 110, 185, 226, 229
Marxism 165, 178, 183, 205, 209, 214
Marxism Today 9, 59, 60, 66, 158, 166, 180, 197
Matthews, George 130
McLennan, Gordon 134-135
Mensheviks 85, 124, 135, 216, 220
Middle class 38, 45-46, 67, 111, 185
Militant Tendency 201-234
Mitterand, Francois 116-120
Millerrandism 71
Miners' Great Strike (1984-5) 16, 73, 80, 92, 101, 195, 222-224
Minimum demands 106
Mondism 171
Monopoly capitalism 12, 33, 42-44, 144, 175, 210
Morning Star 60, 117, 130, 134-135, 163
Morris, William 165, 174
Mosley, Sir Oswald 178
Multinationals 11
Mussolini 198-199
National Health Service (NHS) 6, 195
Nationalisation 10, 81, 117, 193, 215
National liberation movements 28-29
National Unemployed Workers Movement 190
Nations 11, 13, 62, 89-91, 157, 181, 210
Nato 156, 197
Neocolonialism 35, 144
New Realism 165, 167, 192
New Communist Party (NCP) 130-131, 134, 232
Nicaragua 29, 51
Nicholson, Fergus 129
Nixon, Richard 191

October Revolution 18, 72-74, 78, 81, 85-86, 211
One party system 72-73, 94
Open ideological struggle 202-203
Opportunism 28, 30, 35, 76, 125, 126, 131, 136, 150, 207
Overaccumulation 179
Owen, David 164

Pacifism 89-91, 143, 192, 225
Parliamentary democracy 7-8, 14, 48, 73, 78, 96-98, 215-216, 221
Pauperisation 11, 179
Peace 31-32, 66, 151
Peaceful coexistence 89
Perestroika 112, 149
Perryman, Mark 9
Pilsudski, Marshall 198
Pinochet, Augusto 122
Planning 26, 88, 93
Poland 26, 117-119, 141, 147, 151, 198
Polish United Workers Party 147
Pollitt, Harry 130-131
Poll tax 9, 194-195, 201-202, 225-226, 233
Population 23, 38, 40, 152-3
Post-Fordism 167-171, 173, 176-178, 189, 192, 196-197
Post-Marxism 166
Prevention of Terrorism Act 194
Primitive communism 152

Proletarian internationalism 32, 41-62, 72, 85, 148, 157, 209
Proletarianisation 46, 181
Provisional Central Committee - see CPGB

Racism 96, 113-115
Red Army 72, 102, 211
64, 92, 167, 168
Revolution, general laws of 71, 73-74, 78
Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) 206
Revolutionary situation 44, 57-58, 70, 84-86, 120, 122-124, 215-218
Russia 41, 67, 76, 77, 85, 101-102, 124, 216, 220-221
Russian Revolution see October Revolution, or February (1917)
Revolution

Scargill, Arthur 48, 198
Scotland 63, 91, 160
Second International 27-28, 99-100, 105, 228
Sewell, Rob 215, 220-222, 226, 232
Sinn Fein 62, 103, 194
Slump 6-7, 20, 141, 179, 189
Skilled workers 169-170, 186, 211
Small businesses 88
Social democracy 28, 117, 147, 169, 189-193, 196-197, 229-230
Social Democratic Party (SDP) 164, 196
Social forces and movements 63-66, 108
Socialism (definition) 214
Socialist Challenge 129
Socialist democracy 26, 65, 69, 73, 75, 87-93, 149
Socialist Organiser 202
Socialist Workers Party (SWP) 9, 52, 80, 234
Solidarnosc 147
South Africa 71, 104
South Korea 174
Soviets 74-76, 79-80, 86, 92, 215, 220-222, 227
Soviet Union 22-24, 36, 90, 148-151, 211-213
Sraffa, Piero 185
Stalin, Joseph Vissarionovich 25-27, 36, 131, 221
Straight Leftists 60, 129-130
Superprofits 35, 114
Surplus capital 179
Surplus value 10, 19, 33, 142, 184, 186
Sweden 191-192
Tactics 44, 48, 57-58, 96, 136, 194, 228-229
Taaffe, Peter 201-223
Temple, Nina 59, 163-165, 197
Thatcher, Margaret 141, 154, 164, 169, 193, 194-195
Thatchnockism 158
Third International - see Communist International (Comintern)
Tory Party 7, 38, 154, 195
Trade Union Congress 54, 205, 211, 215, 223-224
Trade union bureaucracy 42, 53, 55, 197, 211, 223
Transnationals 10-13, 55, 141, 160
Trevett, Eric 130
Trotsky, Leon 71, 218
Trotskyism 230
Turkey 71, 218

Underclass 170, 172

Unemployment 189, 190, 194
Uneven development 34, 142, 210
United Nations 25
United States of America (USA) 8, 12, 20, 23, 71, 140, 168-169, 190
Universal suffrage 78, 98
USSR - see Soviet Union

Vietnam 23-24, 29, 71, 104

Wales 63, 91, 160
War 15-16, 30, 37, 72, 100, 120, 190
Warsaw Pact 23
Waste 153
Whitney, Eli 173
Wilson, Harold 50, 105, 158, 194
Working class 40-42
Workers' defence corps 222, 224, 226
Workers' militia 100-102, 112, 216, 227
Workers Power 126
World economy 24, 31, 34, 144, 150, 160, 174, 180
World revolutionary centre 22
World War 131, 99, 141, 143
World War II 6-7, 20-21, 33, 128, 140-141, 143, 189-190

Youth 115, 194