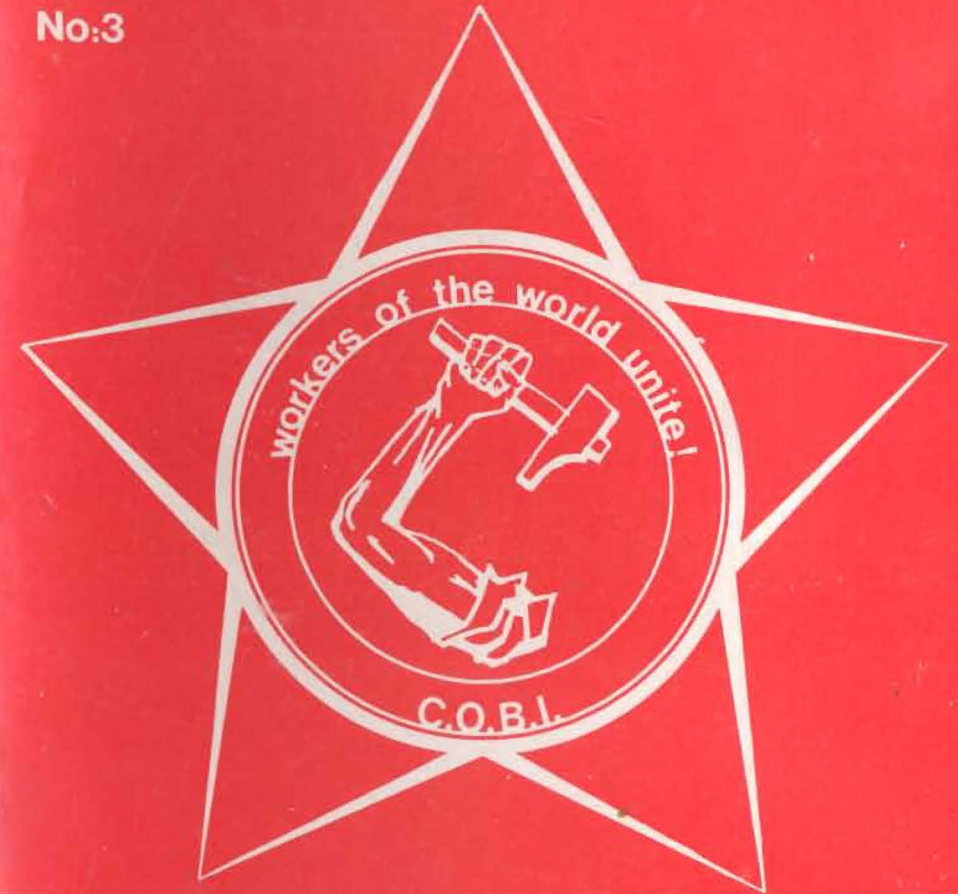


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Towards A
Communist Programme

A natural complement to the economic and political tendencies of revisionism was its attitude to the final aim of the socialist movement. "The movement is everything, the final aim is nothing" - this catch phrase of Bernstein's expresses the substance of revisionism better than many long arguments. To determine its conduct from case to case, to adapt itself to the events of the day and to the chops and changes of petty politics, to forget the basic interests of the proletariat, the main features of the capitalist system as a whole and of capitalist evolution as a whole; to sacrifice these basic interests for the real or assumed advantages of the moment - such is the policy of revisionism. And it patently follows from the very nature of this policy that it may assume an infinite variety of forms, and that every more or less "new" question, every more or less unexpected and unforeseen turn of events, even though it may change the basic line of development only to an insignificant degree and only for the shortest period of time, will always inevitably give rise to one or another variety of revisionism.

The inevitability of revisionism is determined by its class roots in modern society. Revisionism is an international phenomenon.

Lenin: Marxism and Revisionism (1908).

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TOWARDS A

COMMUNIST PROGRAMME

"The communists fight for the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class: but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement."

"The immediate aim of the communists is the same as that of all other proletarian parties: formation of the proletariat as a class, overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat."
(Communist Manifesto)

It is a fact widely recognised on the left, that no genuine communist party exists in Britain. There is no party capable of forming the proletariat into a class politically independent of the bourgeoisie. There is no party capable of leading and organising the working class in the overthrow of bourgeois political power. But the history of modern society shows that such a party is an absolute necessity for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. The stated objective of most left wing groups is to work for the formation of such a party.

There exist at present two basic lines on the question of party formation: one holds that the main obstacles to party formation are organisational, the other holds that they are political. The organisational obstacles are obvious: there are few who consider themselves to be revolutionaries, and these few are organised in groups which, separately and collectively, have little influence upon the proletariat. The organisational problem presents itself as the need to extend the membership of the revolutionary groups, until one or another of them has grown to the point at which it is a viable and influential party.

In opposition to this rather naive view, the second line assigns primacy to political problems. Among the revolutionary groups there as yet exists no clear conception, let alone agreement, as to what would be the strategy and tactics of a communist party in the British Isles. But without clear strategical and tactical conceptions, no communist party could have a viable political practice. Thus according to this second line the prime task in the present stage of party formation must be the clarification of communist doctrines on the strategy and tactics of the party, and following that, a struggle against the distortion of communist politics by bourgeois ideology.

COBI is in full agreement with this line. As we say: "The major reason for this failure (to build a communist party) has been the inability of revolutionaries in the British Isles to make a complete break with capitalist ideology; their failure to break with the pragmatist outlook of the British capitalist class, has led them to underestimate the importance of the Marxist-Leninist theory of scientific socialism. Without the guidance of this theory there can be no communist politics."

"For this reason COBI takes as its immediate tasks: the application of communist theory to the conditions of the British Isles, and ideological struggles against opportunist distortions of communism such as modern revisionism and Trotskyism."

We hold organisational obstacles to party formation to be secondary for the following reason: if the communist party is to be able to represent the future interests of the working class within the day-to-day struggle, then the party must have absolute unity and clarity of purpose. Such clarity and unity does not arise automatically, it has to be fought for. It is an elementary precept of Marxism that communist politics do not spontaneously develop out of the day-to-day struggles of the proletariat. The spontaneous movement is held back by the dominance of capitalist ideas. Under normal, that is to say, non-revolutionary conditions, the ruling class maintains its power by its control over men's thinking. The ideological hegemony of the ruling class is based not only upon the incomparably superior resources available to the bourgeoisie for the dissemination of their ideas and world-outlook, but also upon the very structure of class society. Men's social being determines their consciousness, and, whilst it is true that the position of the working class in capitalist society forces it to struggle for its immediate interests against the employing class, the consciousness that this gives rise to is limited by the framework within which these struggles are conducted. In an advanced capitalist society the most important of these frameworks are commodity exchange (structuring trades unionism), and democracy (producing labourist reformism as the bourgeois politics of the working class).

A communist party's tactics are not based upon the limited, partial consciousness that develops out of the daily struggles of sectors of the working class, but upon a scientific comprehension of the laws of historical development, and of the historic tasks that face the proletariat in its struggle for communism. Any attempt to set up a communist party that lacked such a scientific understanding would be a formal exercise lacking in political substance. For such a party might be communist in name, but no more, for it would not be able to guide the workers' movement in the tortuous struggles to come.

"Without a programme, it is impossible for the party to be a more or less integral political organism, able always to hold a line through each and every turn of events. Without a tactical line, based on an evaluation of the current political moment and giving exact answers to the 'accursed problems' of the present, it is

possible to have a small group of theoreticians, but not an operative political unit. Without an evaluation of the 'active', topical or 'fashionable' ideological-political trends, a programme and tactics can degenerate into dead 'points', which it is unthinkable to realise in life, and to apply to thousands of detailed, concrete and most concrete questions of practice, with an understanding of the essence of things, an understanding of 'what it is all about'." (Lenin: "On the Electoral Campaign and the Election Platform" 1911)

For communists to give the winning of organisational strength priority over the attainment of political clarity and organic ideological unity, is to open the door to opportunism, as the history of the communist movement has repeatedly shown. Active participation in mass work, whilst obviously essential, does not of itself give rise to ideological clarity. The attitude that it is possible first to establish a party organisation, which then as a second step goes out to develop its policies as a result of "learning from praxis", leads inevitably to nothing more than the establishment of yet another opportunist sect or proto-party. The existing groups of this order are already legion and their faults are not accidental, but the results of the pressures of capitalist ideology upon the spontaneous politics of such groups. These same ideological pressures, generating various forms of opportunism, will act upon any new political group, which will inevitably succumb if it lacks an understanding of, and a militant commitment to, scientific socialism.

A communist party's programme is the concise statement of its political doctrine, the doctrinal basis of the party's political unity in action. The struggle against the theoretical and ideological obstacles to party formation can only gain direction and purpose as a struggle for the communist programme. For this reason we are devoting this and future issues of Proletarian to the programmatic debate.

A communist party is the conscious political organisation of the proletariat as a class. It represents within a given area the historic interests of the proletariat as an international class.

"That is why it is quite natural that (Bolshevism) as the party of the revolutionary proletariat is so solicitous of its programme, so meticulously defines its final aim long beforehand - the aim of complete liberation of working people - and looks so jealously at any attempt to trim down this final aim; for this same reason (Bolshevism) is so dogmatically strict and doctrinally unbending in separating small, immediate, economic and political aims from the final aim. Whoever is fighting for all, for complete victory, cannot but be on the lookout lest small gains should bind one's hands, divert one from the path, forget that which is relatively far off and without which all small gains are but the vanity of vanities. On the contrary this care for gradual improvements cannot be understood by and is foreign to the bourgeois parties, even those that are the most freedom-loving and people-loving." (Lenin: "Political Sophisms", 1905)

The dominant ideology in a class society is the ideology of the ruling class; as a result, working class militants who might join the party, will to a greater or lesser extent retain elements of capitalist ideology in their world outlook. This provision applies with even greater force to those of non-proletarian origin or position who seek to join the communist party.

The retention of elements of the bourgeois world outlook by members of the communist party, will tend to prevent the party from truly representing the historic interests of the proletariat. To be a genuine representative of these interests, the party must gain ideological autonomy from the capitalist class as a condition for the political autonomy of the proletariat.

The building of a mass party, whose membership contains a significant proportion of the entire working class, does not by itself ensure such autonomy. A large proletarian membership need not provide, and historically has not provided, a guarantee against the degeneration of a communist party into reformist bourgeois politics. The idea that a large proletarian membership will of itself endorse the revolutionary credentials of a party, is a reversion to democratic (that is to say, bourgeois) conception of politics. It amounts to the assertion that from the aggregate of the opinions of a mass of individual proletarians a politics that necessarily represents the historic-strategic interests of the working class will emerge. But this is no more than the ideology of national democracy (the classic ideology of the capitalist political system in a new guise), whereby the sum of the individual wills of the citizenry is the national will or national interest.

During periods of revolutionary upsurge, large sections of the working class will learn from their own experiences the need for revolutionary measures to solve their problems. Under such circumstances, the greater part of the class may rally behind the communist party. But the struggle for communism takes place over an entire revolutionary epoch, a period of history that has seen and will see both signal victories and grave defeats, periods of revolution, and periods of counter-revolution, like the period from which we are only just emerging. The lessons of past counter-revolutionary periods show that they can result in the demoralisation and disorientation of the whole revolutionary class. If the only guarantee of the party's revolutionary character lay in the fact that its ranks included large numbers of proletarians, then it is doubtful that the party could survive a period of counter-revolution with this character intact.

In opposition to this social democratic conception of the party, communists maintain that a party is able to be the political organisation of the proletariat only if it has a theory, a set of fundamental principles embodied in a programme, which transcends the present day situation in order to express: the historical destiny of the working class, the ultimate objectives and means of struggle of generations of communists and other proletarians, past, present and future, and which transcends the limits of

nationality to represent the interests of proletarians of all nationalities. The programme provides the base upon which the political unity of the communist party is founded. It expresses the principles to which all members subscribe, and on the basis of which they are willing to cooperate in political struggle. Only when there is agreement on the programme can the party realise communist self-discipline and unity in action. Only with such unity can the party operate as a conscious co-ordinated political organism.

What, then, should be the nature and extent of the programme?

Here there exist wide differences between the programmes of previous Marxist parties. These range from short documents such as the famous Erfurt programme of the old German Social Democratic Party, the short-lived 1919 Platform of the Socialist Labour Party of Great Britain, or the 1917 programme of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, to much more extensive and lengthy documents such as the 1928 programme of the Komintern. The different types of programme corresponded to the different types of party. The Erfurt Programme, the model programme of the Second International, corresponded to the type of mass party characteristic of the International. These parties degenerated into electoral ones despite containing within their ranks a considerable section of their respective working classes. For a party whose main political activities are electoral, there is a strong incentive to maximise the party's electoral support by increasing its paper membership. The ideological level and commitment of the members becomes a matter of secondary importance. This tendency is accelerated if the party programme is brief and contains opportunist concessions to bourgeois ideas in the hope that thereby a larger membership may be gained. For a revolutionary party such an approach is impermissible. If all the current deviations that beset the contemporary workers' movement are to be avoided, then the party programme must be explicit in its presentation of both the strategy and tactics of communism. In Britain, where the heritage that communists must renounce: labourism, economism, and modern revisionism, is so insidious and pervasive, the programme must constitute a complete break both in outlook and in practice. It must be explicit and free from any gaps through which the labourite tradition might reassert itself.

A programme must deal with at least the following:

- 1) The general nature of the capitalist mode of production, and the current stage of development of the world capitalist system.
- 2) British society: its modes of production, class structure, the national question, the political superstructure, the "roads" that it may follow in its future development.
- 3) The dictatorship of the proletariat: its nature and tasks.
- 4) The strategy and tactics of communists in the period prior to

the dictatorship of the proletariat.

5) The relationship between the communists and other political parties and tendencies.

It is not our intention at present to produce a draft programme having these sections. This is not yet possible, too many political and theoretical questions remain to be resolved. What can be done is to set terms for the programmatic debate by indicating the problems that must be faced.

PRECEDENTS.

Firstly, there is the matter of precedents; to what extent do the programmes of the past provide an adequate guide to the formulation of a new programme for a communist party operating under the economic and political conditions of modern British society?

The obvious starting points are the Communist Manifesto, the Statutes of the International Working Men's Association, and the critiques of the Gotha and Erfurt programmes - in other words, the programmatic writings of the founders of communism. In these works they laid down its fundamental principles, defined the autonomous politics of the proletariat as a class. The basic principles laid down in the Manifesto remain valid throughout the period during which the proletariat struggles within capitalist society, and to which any communist programme must conform. It has obvious omissions: it could not deal with modern economic developments, its treatment of democracy is confusing in the present context, and it does not point out the need to smash the state and replace it with a proletarian dictatorship; lessons that history has since taught those willing to learn. Besides which, its form is not that required by a modern manifesto, being more in the form of a polemical, popular introduction.

The Statutes of the First International lay down the principles of internationalism that must go into any programme, but again the form is inadequate, due to the diverse coalition which at that time formed the International, being the first stage of the international workers' movement. In a document acceptable both to Marx and English Trades Union leaders compromises were inevitable.

Marx's trenchant criticisms of the Gotha Programme, and the similar criticisms expressed by Engels in his letter to Bebel, 18-28th March, 1875, on the same subject, remain of especial value. Particularly so are Marx's remarks on the dictatorship of the proletariat, and Engels on the withering away of the state. The substance of these, duly developed in the light of historical experience, must be incorporated into the programme.

Our next main reference point must be the Erfurt Programme, often presented by the 2nd International as a Marxist one, and which indeed served as the model for International Social-Democracy. This claim to Marxism is only partially valid. A comparison of the final draft as adopted by the Erfurt Congress with Engels'

criticisms of the first version, reveals that only the preface was fully corrected in the light of his criticisms. Nevertheless it is valuable if only for this preface, which is a very clear and concise explanation of the principal features of the then existing capitalist society. But the Programme also contains errors of omission and commission, which were by that stage in the development of scientific socialism inexcusable, and which, by their acceptance as party doctrine, eased the way for the party's opportunist degeneration. The Erfurt Programme has two main deficiencies: i) it does not deal with the question of the state power, the need to smash it, to replace the existing state power' with a state of the Paris Commune type. In fact so crass was the opportunism of the Social Democratic leadership, that the programme did not even deal explicitly with the establishment of a democratic republic - and that in the political conditions of the junker state of Imperial Germany. ii) Following on from this, whilst the programme deals with the objectives of the party, it says nothing about strategy or tactics. The two omissions are obviously related. The main problem in any communist strategy is that of the transition to the proletarian dictatorship; communist tactics seek to guide the struggles of the proletariat in such a way as to prepare the preconditions (ideological, political, organisational and military) of the workers' power. In the absence of this ultimate objective of the proletariat's struggle under capitalism being realised, it was inevitable that no tactics were dealt with.

Kindred, but worse, errors were made by the Social Democratic Federation in Britain, truly the forerunner of our "modern" CPGB.

Formed as the radical "Democratic Federation" in 1881, two years later it declared itself a component of international Social-Democracy, largely through the impact made on its leader, H.M. Hyndman, by reading Capital in its French edition. One can well see how this would have been traumatic for Hyndman, since he had been born into a wealthy mercantile family and pursued a 'career' of financial speculation before and during his 'revolutionary' leadership.

In The Condition of the Working Class in Britain, Engels observed that "English Socialism arose with Owen, a manufacturer, and proceeds therefore with great consideration towards the bourgeoisie and great injustice towards the proletariat"... Likewise, "English Marxism" arose with Hyndman, the financier, and proceeded in just such "considerate" and "democratic" a fashion.

Thus we find in the opening lines of our truly "reasonable" Federation (not even party!) of British Marxists:

"The socialisation of the Means of Production, Distribution and Exchange, to be controlled by a Democratic State (sic) in the interests of the entire community..."

Lest anyone think this a mere democratic slip in a Programme otherwise adequate for proletarian revolution, Article I reiterates "That the emancipation of the working-class can only be achieved

through the socialisation of the means of production, distribution, and exchange, and their subsequent control by the organised community in the interests of the whole people."

There can be no excuse for such democratic trash after the experience of the Paris Commune - whose bloody lessons were bought a full decade before even the Democratic Federation was formed. It is fundamental that on becoming committed to proletarian revolution, a principled and strategic anti-democratic standpoint be adopted by any scientific socialist organisation. Communists do not strive for more of the same "better, fairer, finer" bourgeois democracy, since the Marxist theory reveals this hallowed democracy to be the most perfect form of capitalist dictatorship.

"A democratic republic is the best possible political shell for capitalism, and, therefore, once capital has gained control of this very best shell ... it establishes its power so securely, so firmly, that no change, either of persons, of institutions, or of parties in the bourgeois-democratic republic, can shake it." (Lenin, State and Revolution, pp.15-16)

The extension of democracy is neither a long nor a short term strategic objective for the proletariat. In the long term the objective is communism, a classless, and thus stateless, society. With the withering away of the state, democracy as a potential form of state also withers away. In the short term, the objective is not a change or "improvement" in the form of government, but the replacement of the rule of one class by the rule of another. It is the replacement of the bourgeois dictatorship (whatever its constitutional form), by the proletarian dictatorship. An immediate objective of proletarian power is the liquidation of the bourgeoisie as a class, whereas the bourgeois dictatorships never seek anything more than the subordination of the proletariat (they obviously cannot liquidate the class they require to exploit). The proletarian dictatorship may thus be every bit as ruthless towards its own class enemies as any bourgeois dictatorship.

Unlike bourgeois politicians, communists need not conceal their aims: we openly declare all states, whatever their constitution, to be forms of class dictatorship: the state power established by the proletariat will be no exception. Why such a (socialist) state is an 'improvement' in civilisation then, is NOT because it provides 'more' or 'better' of what bourgeois democracies already dish up, but because for the very first time in history the interests of the (working) majority are being effected through class dictatorship, and that form of class rule itself is the historically final form of class rule as such.

Criticising the Gotha Programme of 1875, that unified (on an unprincipled and unscientific basis) the radical-democratic General Association of German Workers ("Lassalleans") with the ostensibly Marxist Social-Democratic Workers' Party of Germany ("Eisenachers") to form the Socialist Workers Party of Germany, Marx blasted its democratic prejudices thus:

"Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. There corresponds to this also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat." (original emphasis)

Neither did Marx/Engels leave the SPD leaders (Bracke, Geib, Auer, Bebel and Liebknecht) in any doubt about the scientific attitude towards a "Democratic State", undertaking "the socialisation of the Means of Production, Distribution and Exchange":

"As, therefore, the state is only a transitional institution which is used in the struggle, in the revolution, to hold down one's adversaries by force, it is pure nonsense to talk of a free people's state: so long as the proletariat still uses the state, it does not use it in the interests of freedom but in order to hold down its adversaries, and as soon as it becomes possible to speak of freedom the state as such ceases to exist." (original emphasis, Engels to Bebel, March 18-28, 1875).

It is truly apposite then that Khrushchevite revisionism should have replaced the theory of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" in the USSR, with the boast that it had become "a state of the whole people"; despite Marx's explicit demonstration that for so long as the state exists it serves as the instrument of ruling class dominance (bourgeois or proletarian) but never an all-class bloc. It is after all a forcible means for administering "society as a whole", i.e., all the non-ruling classes.

The following, therefore, will go down in the annals of historical materialism, marked NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE:

"... the Stalin personality cult had an unfavourable effect on the improvement (!) of the socialist state and interfered with the complete implementation of the genuinely democratic principles of the USSR Constitution.

"The 20th CPSU Congress (1956) had changed the situation radically. Our Party, having restored the Leninist norms of state life, thereby provided vast prospects for the people's initiative and for the improvement of socialist democracy. The life of society proper (! propriété?) and political practice gave birth to new state forms, to a new style of management of state affairs, and helped to determine ever more the nature of state power as that of the entire people...

"The state which earlier embodied the dictatorship of one class, becomes an organ of the unity and cooperation of all working classes and segments (!) directly expressing popular will and popular interests.

"... The nature of the party changed accordingly: from a party of the working class it turned into a party of the whole people." (Thus spake Pravda on December 6, 1964).

And thus we have the full organic link between Revisionism old and new, when we read Klugmann ("one of the foremost theoreticians of the British Communist Party ... editor of the Party's theoretical journal Marxism Today") claiming (in the CP's official history) the SDF/BSP, replete in its "democratic state of the whole people", as the true progenitor of the CPGB:

"It was the BSP that was the principal initiator, the most steady and patient negotiator for the foundation of the CP, and its members formed the majority of the new Party once established." (Volume 1, p.17; the SDF became the S-D Party in 1908, and the British Socialist Party in 1911, with the adherence of some ILP branches. For more on the history of the CPGB's formation see Proletarian Pamphlet No:2 and Ray Challinor's forthcoming book on the Socialist Labour Party).

In the light of the above quote, it cannot be said that Klugmann's "Histories" contain no true statements.

We have not thought it necessary to undertake a wholesale critique of the CPGB's 'British Road To Socialism' here, since even to a newcomer to Marxism, it is obvious that the British Road does not even begin to approximate to a Marxist programme. We have, in addition, criticised the CPGB's programmatic practice in Proletarian No:1. Anyone wishing a more comprehensive critique should see Bill Warren's article: "The British Road to Socialism" in New Left Review No:63.

In the British context, two further documents must be taken into account in the future programmatic debate: the 1903 'Manifesto to the Working Class', and the 1919 Platform of the Socialist Labour Party. The 1903 Statement was a short, sharp crystallisation of the split of revolutionaries from the SDF, on the basis succinctly described by GDH Cole:

"In 1903 a part of its [SDF] Scottish membership seceded and formed the Socialist Labour Party, on a basis adapted from the American Socialist Labour Party founded by Daniel De Leon. The SLP, reacting against the compromise involved in parliamentary action, took the view that the workers' revolutionary struggle must be carried on primarily in the industrial field, and that the first task was to create an inclusive revolutionary Industrial Union. It attempted to found such a body on the model of the American Industrial Workers of the World, not however repudiating political action, but holding that it should be secondary to revolutionary industrial activity, and that Parliament should be used only as a platform for the spreading of Socialist ideas, and not as an instrument for effective reform. The SLP did not secure a large membership; but it became a body of some influence in the Clyde area, where it was later to furnish many of the leaders of the shop stewards' movement during the Great War, and thereafter to merge itself in the Communist Party of Great Britain." (GDH Cole: British Working Class Politics 1832-1914, pp.176-7)

The 1919 Platform was initiated by members of the SLP who had been

actively involved in the Shop Stewards' and Workers' Committee Movement, and who drew directly from their experience in that movement to delineate the strategic orientation of their party's future activity. The Platform was shortlived, however, its demise being speeded up by the involvement of its authors in the negotiations towards the CPGB, and in 1920 the SLP reverted to its previous Platform, a call for Industrial Unionism alongside electoral activity by party members. The 1919 Platform is very short and could not serve as a direct model for a future communist programme; for one thing it lacks the theoretical analysis which would be required in a present programme. Its importance for communists in Britain lies in the fact that it arose specifically from the British situation, delineating a strategic orientation for communists within British bourgeois democracy; and in the fact that it is the only programmatic document in Britain which has explicitly posed the question of state power and the need to build the future proletarian state structure within the shell of capitalist society, i.e., the need to create a situation of 'dual power' before the proletarian dictatorship can be realised.

The first modern communist programme was the 1917 draft RSDLP programme of the Bolsheviks. Here we have a programme, drawn up by Lenin, whose preamble describes capitalism in its imperialist phase, that explicitly calls for a workers' dictatorship, and whose programme of 'democratic' objectives amounts to a state of the Paris Commune type. Moreover, in the political situation that existed after the overthrow of the autocracy, but prior to the stabilisation of capitalist power, these 'democratic' demands constituted the programmatic expression of the principal strategic task of the party, i.e., the prevention of the consolidation of a state apparatus of the old type in the hands of the capitalist class.

We are also reproducing the early programmatic documents of communism in Italy; in this issue the Theses of the Communist fraction in the Italian Socialist Party, 1920, and in a separate pamphlet we will shortly reproduce the Rome and Lyons Theses of the PCI. All of these are made available for the first time in English. Their value lies in the way that they try to distinguish clearly between communist and reformist and anarchist tendencies; they also try to spell out what tactics are, and what are not, compatible with communism. They are directed against deviations that arose in the Italian movement in the early 1920s, but since capitalist production and democracy exist both there and then, and here and now, the same deviations are generated in both cases. Written in the '20s in Italy, they could be applied almost completely to Britain in the '70s.

PROBLEMS.

We have mentioned a number of texts which may be considered as models, positive or negative, in the task of developing a programme for a new communist party. We now mention some of the programmatic problems which will have to be resolved before communists in Britain can achieve a principled unity.

1. Capitalist production; what it is. Whilst it is easy to define this in general as a system of universalised commodity production, in which the individual producers do not possess any of the means of production, political issues arise when the definition is concretised. The political problem here is how to define capitalism in such a way as to give an adequate account of forms of commodity production, other than the traditional private firm. In particular, the state socialist and syndicalist deviations must be countered by showing the capitalist character of workers' cooperatives and nationalised industries.

2. What forms of capitalist production exist in Britain (e.g. private capital, joint stock, state, cooperative), and which of these represent rising tendencies?

3. To what extent can capital still develop the forces of production, and what effect are new technologies having upon the production relations and property relations?

4. What non-capitalist elements exist in the British economy, e.g. small scale commodity production, small trading, remnants of family economy (housework), and are there any incipient forms of socialist economy?

5. Britain and the world economy; what is meant by British imperialism, and what are the effects of the internationalisation of technological development; pressures tending towards and against integration of the British economy into the EEC?

6. What are the main contradictions of contemporary capitalist production, market anarchy, falling profits, exchange rate crises, inflation, etc?

7. What classes and strata exist in British society; what are their places in the economy; which are productive and which are parasitic? What contradictions exist between these classes and what should be the attitude of the proletariat towards them?

8. The origin, function, and present development of the state and its various organs must be explained, with particular reference to its historical tendency under capitalism.

9. The national question in the British Isles; what nations exist; what state structure allows for the democratic resolution of the national question?

Tendency towards a European state; advantages/disadvantages in this for the working class; ability/inability of the bourgeois regimes to achieve this.

10. Historical explanation of patriotism and racism; unity of interests of all workers of all races and nations and the need to combat all forms of patriotism, nationalism, national prejudice and racism.

SECTION ON PROLETARIAN DICTATORSHIP.

Need to refute erroneous notions. These range from obvious distortions, such as the notion that it may be exercised through the medium of the existing state machinery, if only the present bourgeois functionaries could be replaced by communists - to left deviations according to which a system of workers' councils can, of themselves, constitute a workers' state. In opposition to the right opportunist line, it must be stressed that it is the structure of state power itself, whether democratic or dictatorial, that renders it a support to capitalist power. In opposition to the left deviation, it must be stressed that soviets only provide the basis for a workers' state if they are dominated by communist revolutionaries. The workers' dictatorship must be a dictatorship of the proletarian party, a dictatorship that is exercised via the institutions of workers' democracy, but a party dictatorship none the less. So long as workers' councils remain dominated by reformist tendencies they do not provide a foundation of workers' power. Against all democratic or libertarian notions, it must be asserted that the workers' dictatorship is a dictatorship in the most literal sense of the word. It is the rule of one class over another, a rule unrestricted by any forms of legality, under which the bourgeoisie would be deprived of their civil liberties, and, if necessary, subjected to arbitrary and terroristic measures that aimed to liquidate them as a class. The workers' state, like any other, would maintain the means of suppression (bodies of armed men, etc.) needed to defend the proletariat against its enemies.

"Without a people's army the people have nothing." (Mao: On Coalition Government, April 24, 1945).

Problems to be resolved in this context: what are the differences between the organs of proletarian state power, and those of the bourgeoisie?

In particular: how do the forms of political representation differ? Does the proletarian state require a standing army, as opposed to a workers' militia; if modern technology does necessitate such a force, how is proletarian political control over it to be maintained?

How is the proletarian dictatorship in the cultural field to be established; how is bourgeois ideology to be extirpated from society?

What is the economic programme of the proletarian revolution; the interrelation between workers' control, commodity exchange and centralised planning needs to be explained.

Finally, a point of cardinal importance, what is the nature of the class struggle under the workers' state, i.e., under what conditions can the old, exploiting class survive as a social group and thus pose the threat of a return to capitalism? Secondly, what circumstances (economic, political, cultural) allow the formation of a new bourgeois class capable of usurping the workers' power?

"After the enemies with guns have been wiped out, there will still be enemies without guns; they are bound to struggle desperately against us, and we must never regard these enemies lightly. If we do not now raise and understand the problem in this way, we shall commit the gravest mistakes." (Mao: Report to the Second Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, March 5, 1949).

Until the communists in Britain have reached agreement on the nature of the objective dialectics of contemporary British society, i.e., the developmental tendencies in the base and superstructure, and on the nature of the workers' state that will replace it, no possibility exists for them to reach a principled agreement on tactical questions. Tactics simply serve strategy, and the latter requires an objective understanding of the present, plus an informed anticipation of future struggles that must presently be prepared for.

SECTION ON STRATEGY AND TACTICS.

The ultimate aim of communists is the general liberation of mankind through the establishment of communism, a classless, stateless society, embracing the whole globe. But the struggle for communism must pass through various phases or stages, during which Communists must fight for more immediate aims. These immediate objectives are, at any one time, the minimum programme of the Communist Party. The overall programme must include this minimum programme and must also lay down certain guidelines as to the tactics necessary to realise this minimum programme.

The communists seek to unite the mass of the proletariat, and any of its potential allies, around the objectives laid down in the minimum programme in the struggle for the overthrow of the existing state power. The overall, or maximum, programme is the ideological and political cement binding the vanguard, the party, in the struggle for communism. The minimum programme provides the basis for the political unity of the masses in the immediate struggle for power.

The nature and function of a communist minimum programme was illustrated by Marx and Engels in 1848 in the works: 'The Manifesto of the Communist Party' and 'The Demands of the Communist Party in Germany'. Subsequently, the whole issue of the minimum programme was obscured and confused due to the reformist interpretations given to it by most of international Social Democracy. This confusion has been perpetuated by Trotskyism, which accepts the reformist interpretation, and seeks instead to substitute a 'Transitional Programme', an amalgam of immediate tactics and demands, for both maximum and minimum programmes.

Social Democratic reformism (we specifically exclude revolutionary Social Democracy of the Bolshevik variety), misrepresented the minimum programme as a series of demands for economic and political reforms directed at the existing state. They generally consisted of two sections: a set of demands for economic reforms in the

interest of the proletariat, and a series of demands for political liberties. The Social Democratic misuse of the minimum programme was the more insidious, in that it did not stem from an overt repudiation of the revolutionary conception advanced by the founders of communism. Instead the damage was done through the retention of a form of minimum programme that had once been correct, but that had since lost its revolutionary vitality.

A minimum programme of democratic 'demands' was quite correct and revolutionary at a certain stage in the struggle. The 'Demands of the Communist Party in Germany' included just such a democratic programme. Whilst political power remained in the hands of absolutism, as in Germany in 1848, or in pre-1914 Russia, the immediate objectives of the proletarian party had to be the overthrow of that constrictive form of state, and the introduction of democracy under the terms most favourable to the workers. Only this could allow the free development of proletarian class organisation and allow the class struggle to come to the forefront of political life. The democratic revolution could thus be a step on the road to socialist revolution.

In a bourgeois democracy, on the other hand, democratic reforms can have no place in the communist programme. To include them distracts from the immediate task, the overthrow of democracy and the establishment of the workers' dictatorship.

Nor can demands for state protection of the working class be included in a minimum programme. These had a justification under conditions in which the proletariat was too weak to directly impose restrictions upon capitalist exploitation. But in the mature capitalist democracy, where the working class has long experience of effective economic struggle and organisation, such demands become redundant; and the bourgeoisie is itself hard at work re-forming, in order that their social production relations remain intact through all changes in production techniques. In this regard it is instructive to note that virtually all the Erfurt Programme's demands are now operational in Federal Germany (and Britain). It is clear that where landlordism has long since disappeared as a significant feature of agriculture, the need for a specific agrarian programme appealing to an oppressed peasantry also disappears.

These three, the democratic, economic, and agrarian sections of the minimum programme formed its substance during the period of the first two internationals: but now they can be done away with. What then remains of the minimum programme?

NOTHING REMAINS OF THE OLD TYPE. Instead, in the capitalist democracies at least, a wholly new type of minimum programme is required: THE MOBILISATION PROGRAMME, designed to lay the basis of class action in, and through, economic struggle, but supplanting the traditional defensist trades union struggle by developmental industrial unionist struggle, that intrinsically requires the awakening of class political consciousness for its very operation.

Dialectically linked into the struggle for, and of, industrial

unions (in a Confederate structure) is the promotion of the Workers' Council/Committee movement on the shop-floor, to displace economism and politicise the point of production by its encroaching control over the production process, toward the point of outright expropriation. (For full elucidation see Proletarian No:1 and Proletarian Pamphlet No:2). In parallel must develop Residential Committees to secure control of the whole social situation. Thus the proletariat emerges combative, standing on the two legs of residential and industrial organisation, developing through an integrated conciliar structure that encroaches upon and expropriates bourgeois production relations in a pincer movement - at the point of production and at the point of citizenship.

The Programme for industrial unions and the industrial/residential conciliar structure, all led by the Communist Party, completely displace any old minimum programme "demands" that are put to higher authority to ameliorate the condition of their subordinates. The addressing of demands merely confirms their formulators' status as subordinates, in the way Marx has shown:

"Whomever one seeks to persuade, one acknowledges master of the situation." (Eighteenth Brumaire)

As socialism is not an "improved", "more just" version of the system of wage labour, but a wholly new mode of production, what have to be broken through are the social relations intrinsic to capital, for it is the immanent laws of capital as a social relation that makes capitalism a self-sustaining mode of production.

"On the other hand, if the capitalist mode of production presupposes this definite social form of the conditions of production, so does it reproduce it continually. It produces not merely the material products, but reproduces continually the production relations in which the former are produced, and thereby also the corresponding distribution relations." (Capital III, p.879)

Instead the working class develops its ruling muscles, by asserting itself here and now. Instead of asking, petitioning, voting, it takes: control over working conditions in the factory, control over living conditions in the streets and estates, and control over ideological production through the Communist Party. All this towards the actual seizure of state power, with tasks that then fall under the head: Socialist (ie Minimum) Programme.

The Socialist Programme must be an explicit programme for the proletarian dictatorship. This does not, however, make it identical with the maximum programme, for the goal of that is world communism: the abolition of classes, nations and states on a world scale. But this maximal goal will only be achieved as the end result of an epochal historical process. The proletariat in each state must first settle accounts with their own bourgeoisie. It must first seize political power within the territory of one state and then devote itself to the twin tasks of the socialist reconstruction of society, and promoting the international revolution.

It is in this sense that a programme for workers' power can still be said to be minimum, because it is the absolute minimum that communists in any one bourgeois state can aim for. Such a minimum programme, like the old one, would have both political and economic sections each covering immediate destructive and constructive tasks of the workers' state. The political section would be a programme for the dismantling of the bourgeois state and the erection of the institutions of soviet power. The economic section would include measures for the expropriation of property owning classes and their state, plus the first steps towards the establishment of a planned socialist economy.

The minimum programme is the key to communist tactics, since it defines the immediate strategic aim, but it is not enough to leave the matter at that. In order to guard against opportunism the party programme must lay down guidelines on the tactics and types of struggle needed to achieve these aims. Without prior agreement on such issues, the dangers of opportunist degeneration, characterised precisely by its lack of guiding principles, is greatly enhanced.

The substance of the party's programme of immediate measures, and of its tactical principles, must be amongst the key issues in the programmatic debate, which, it is to be hoped, will soon develop among the communists in the British Isles; but this will be (as it is now) but empty 'tacticising' if the theoretical groundwork has not been done.

A glaring example of the old mistakes re-appearing and masquerading as a Scientific Programme, has recently manifested itself in the shape of the Programme of the Communist League of West Germany. Not only has no account been taken of contemporary reality in advanced capitalist countries in framing this document, but it is merely a paraphrase of the Erfurt Programme with bits of the Communist Manifesto chucked in for good measure, where it is not a wholesale crib of these Programmes (and even the very demands have been lifted!)

Engels was not in two minds about the adequacy of the Erfurt Programme for 1891; how much more obsolete, not to say obstructivist, is such a programme in modern conditions?! That the publication (5,000 copies in English alone!) of such a retrogressive document should be met with general rejoicing in the international ranks of "anti-revisionism", only goes to show the bankruptcy to which revisionism reduces everything, including its mirror image. And the final irony is that "anti-revisionists" should copy line for line one of the seminally revisionist programmes, holding it up as the truly communist way forward, just like Kautsky and Bebel, professing it to be a model for all genuine Marxist Programmes!

The first time tragedy, the second farce, as Marx himself said.

DOCUMENTARY

SUPPLEMENT

1. 1891 Erfurt Programme

The economic development of bourgeois society leads with the necessity of natural law to the decline of petty enterprise, the basis of which is the worker's private ownership of his means of production. It separates him from his means of production and transforms him into a propertyless proletarian, while the means of production become the monopoly of a relatively small number of capitalists and large landowners.

Hand in hand with this monopolisation of the means of production go: the suppression of the fragmented petty enterprises by colossal large enterprises, the development of the tool into the machine, and an enormous growth of the productivity of human labour. But all the advantages of this transformation are monopolised by the capitalists and large landowners. For the proletariat and the sinking middle-layers - petit bourgeois, peasants - this means the increasing growth in the insecurity of their existence, of poverty, of oppression, of servitude, of humiliation, of exploitation.

Ever greater grows the number of proletarians, ever more massive the army of surplus labourers, ever more bitter the class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat, which divides modern society into two hostile camps and is the common characteristic of all industrial countries.

The abyss between haves and have-nots is widened still further by the crises rooted in the nature of the capitalist mode of production, which become ever more extensive and devastating, which elevate general uncertainty to the normal state of society and deliver the proof that private property in the means of production has become incompatible with their purposeful application and full development.

Private property in the means of production, which was formerly the means of ensuring the producer ownership of his product, has today become a means of expropriating peasants, craftsmen and small traders, and putting non-workers - capitalists, large

landowners - in possession of the workers' product. Only the transformation of capitalist private property in the means of production - land, mines and collieries, raw materials, tools, machines, means of transport - into socialist production carried on for and by society, can bring it about that large enterprise and constantly growing profitability for social labour become, from a source of misery and oppression for the hitherto exploited classes, a source of the highest welfare and all-sided harmonious development.

This social transformation means the emancipation not only of the proletariat, but of the whole human race suffering under the present conditions. But it can only be the work of the working class, because all other classes, despite the conflicts of interest among themselves, stand on the basis of private property in the means of production and have as their common goal the maintenance of the basis of present society.

The struggle of the working class against capitalist exploitation is necessarily a political struggle. The working class cannot wage its economic fights and develop its economic organisation without political rights. It cannot achieve the passing of the means of production into the possession of the collectivity without having acquired possession of political power.

To shape this struggle of the working class into a conscious and unitary one, and to point out its necessary goal, is the task of the Social-Democratic Party.

The interests of the working class are the same in all countries with a capitalist mode of production. With the extension of world trade and production for the world market, the position of the workers of every country is becoming ever more dependent on the position of the workers in other countries. The emancipation of the working class is therefore the task in which the workers of all developed countries participate equally. Recognising this, the Social-Democratic Party of Germany feels and declares itself one with the class-conscious workers of all other countries.

The Social-Democratic Party of Germany is therefore fighting not for new class privileges and exclusive rights, but for the abolition of class rule and of classes themselves and for equal rights and duties of all without distinction of sex or race. From this standpoint, it combats in present society not only exploitation and oppression of the wage labourers, but every kind of exploitation and oppression, whether directed against a class, a party, a sex, or a race.

On the basis of these principles the Social-Democratic Party of Germany demands in the first instance:

1. Universal, equal and direct suffrage with secret ballot for all citizens over twenty without distinction of sex for all elections and votes. A proportional electoral system; and until its introduction a legal redistribution of the electoral districts

after every census. Two year legislative periods. Elections and votes to be held on a legal holiday. Compensation for elected representatives. Abolition of any restriction of political rights except in case of specific disenfranchisement.

2. Direct legislation by the people through the right of initiative and referendum. Self-determination and self-administration of the people in Reich, state, province, and parish. Election of all officials by the people, responsibility and answerability of same. Annual voting of taxes.

3. Education of all in the capability to bear arms. People's militia in place of standing armies. Decision on peace and war by popular representatives. Settlement of all international disputes by arbitration.

4. Abolition of all laws which restrict or suppress free expression of opinion and right of association and assembly.

5. Abolition of all laws disadvantaging women in relation to men in public and private law.

6. Declaration of religion as a private matter. Abolition of all spending from official funds for church and religious purposes. Church and religious communities are to be regarded as private associations, running their affairs completely independently.

7. Secular education. Compulsory attendance at public primary schools. Education, teaching material and board in public schools to be free, as also in higher educational institutions for those pupils, male and female, regarded by virtue of their abilities as capable of further education.

8. Administration of justice and legal aid free of charge. Justice to be administered by judges elected by the people. Appeal in criminal cases. Compensation for those innocently accused, arrested and condemned. Abolition of the death penalty.

9. Medical help including midwifery and medicines free of charge. Burials free of charge.

10. Progressive income and wealth tax to cover all public expenditure, insofar as these are to be covered by taxation. Self-assessment obligation. Inheritance tax, progressively increasing with the size of the estate and the degree of relationship. Abolition of all indirect taxes, duties and other measures of economic policy which sacrifices the interests of the collectivity to the interests of the privileged minority.

For the protection of the working class the Social-Democratic Party of Germany demands in the first instance:

1. An effective national and international labour protection law on the following basis:

a) fixing of a normal working day of at most 8 hours;

- b) prohibition of paid labour for children under fourteen;
- c) prohibition of night work, except for those industries which by their nature require night work for technical reasons or for reasons of public welfare;
- d) an uninterrupted rest period of at least 36 hours in each week for every worker;
- e) prohibition of the truck system;

2. Inspection of all industrial enterprises, investigation and regulation of working conditions in town and country by a state labour office, district labour offices and labour chambers. Thorough hygiene in enterprises;

3. Legal equality for agricultural workers and servants with industrial workers; abolition of the laws relating to servants;

4. Guaranteed right of combination;

5. All labour insurance to be taken over by the state with decisive participation by the workers in its administration.

2. SDF Programme (1903 edition)

OBJECT

The Socialization of the Means of Production, Distribution and Exchange, to be controlled by a Democratic State in the interests of the entire community, and the complete Emancipation of Labour from the Domination of Capitalism and Landlordism, with the establishment of Social and Economic Equality between the Sexes.

The economic development of modern society is characterised by the more or less complete domination of the capitalistic mode of production over all branches of human labour.

The capitalistic mode of production, because it has the creation of profit for its sole object, therefore favours the larger capital, and is based upon the divorcement of the majority of the people from the instruments of production and the concentration of these instruments in the hands of a minority. Society is thus divided into two opposite classes: one, the capitalists and their sleeping partners, the landlords and loanmongers, holding in their hands the means of production, distribution and exchange, and being, therefore, able to command the labour of others; the other, the working-class, the wage-earners, the proletariat, possessing nothing but their labour-power, and being consequently forced by necessity to work for the former.

The social division thus produced becomes wider and deeper with every new advance in the application of labour-saving machinery. It is most clearly recognisable, however, in the times of industrial and commercial crises, when, in consequence of the present chaotic conditions of carrying on national and international industry, production periodically comes to a standstill, and a number of the few remaining independent producers are thrown into the ranks of the proletariat. Thus, while on the one hand there is incessantly going on an accumulation of capital, wealth and power into a steadily diminishing number of hands, there is, on the other hand, a constantly growing insecurity of livelihood for the mass of wage-earners, an increasing disparity between human wants and the opportunity of acquiring the means for their satisfaction, and a steady physical and mental deterioration among the more poverty-stricken of the population.

But the more this social division widens, the stronger grows the revolt - more conscious abroad than here - of the proletariat against the capitalist system of society in which this division and all that accompanies it have originated, and find such fruitful soil. The capitalist mode of production, by massing the workers in large factories, and creating an interdependence, not only between various trades and branches of industries, but even national industries, prepares the ground and furnishes material for a universal class war. That class war may at first - as in this country - be directed against the abuses of the system, and not against the system itself; but sooner or later the workers must come to recognise that nothing short of the expropriation of the capitalist class, the ownership by the community of the means of production, distribution, and exchange, can put an end to their abject economic condition; and then the class war will become conscious instead of unconscious on the part of the working-classes, and they will have for their ultimate object the overthrow of the capitalist system. At the same time, since the capitalist class holds and uses the power of the State to safeguard its position and beat off any attack, the class war must assume a political character, and become a struggle on the part of the workers for the possession of the political machinery.

It is this struggle for the conquest of the political power of the State, in order to effect a social transformation, which International Social-Democracy carries on in the name and on behalf of the working-class. Social-Democracy, therefore, is the only possible political party of the proletariat. The Social-Democratic Federation is a part of this International Social-Democracy. It, therefore, takes its stand on the above principles, and believes -

1. That the emancipation of the working-class can only be achieved through the socialisation of the means of production, distribution, and exchange, and their subsequent control by the organised community in the interests of the whole people.
2. That, as the proletariat is the last class to achieve freedom, its emancipation will mean the emancipation of the whole of

mankind, without distinction of race, nationality, creed or sex.

3. That this emancipation can only be the work of the working-class itself, organised nationally and internationally into a distinct political party, consciously striving after the realisation of its ideals; and finally,

4. That, in order to ensure greater material and moral facilities for the working-class to organise itself and to carry on the class war, the following reforms must immediately be carried through :-

IMMEDIATE REFORMS

Political

Abolition of the monarchy.

Democratisation of the Governmental machinery, viz. abolition of the House of Lords, payment of members of legislative and administrative bodies, payment of official expenses of elections out of public funds, adult suffrage, proportional representation, triennial parliaments, second ballot, initiative and referendum. Foreigners to be granted rights of citizenship after two years' residence in the country, on the recommendation of four British-born citizens, without any fees. Canvassing to be made illegal.

Legislation by the people in such wise that no legislative proposal shall become law until ratified by the majority of the people.

Legislative and administrative independence for all parts of the Empire.

Financial and Fiscal

Repudiation of the National Debt.

Abolition of all indirect taxation and the institution of a cumulative tax on all incomes and inheritance exceeding £300.

Administrative

Extension of the principle of local self-government.

Systematisation and co-ordination of the local administrative bodies.

Election of all administrators and administrative bodies by equal direct adult suffrage.

Educational

Elementary education to be free, secular, industrial and compulsory for all classes. The age of obligatory school attendance to be raised to 16.

Unification and systematisation of intermediate and higher education, both general and technical, and all such education to be free.

Free maintenance for all attending State schools.

Abolition of school rates; the cost of education in all State schools to be borne by the National Exchequer.

Public Monopolies and Services

Nationalisation of the land and the organisation of labour in agriculture and industry under public ownership and control on co-operative principles.

Nationalisation of the trusts.

Nationalisation of railways, docks, and canals, and all means of transit.

Public ownership and control of gas, electric light, and water supplies; as well as of tramway, omnibus, and other locomotive services.

Public ownership and control of the food and coal supply.

The establishment of State and municipal banks and pawnshops and public restaurants.

Public ownership and control of the lifeboat service.

Public ownership and control of hospitals, dispensaries, cemeteries and crematoria.

Public ownership and control of the drink traffic.

Labour

A legislative eight-hour working-day, or 48 hours per week, to be the maximum for all trades and industries. Imprisonment to be inflicted on employers for any infringement of the law.

Absolute freedom of combination for all workers, with legal guarantee against any action, private or public, which tends to curtail or infringe it.

No child to be employed in any trade or occupation until 16 years of age, and imprisonment to be inflicted on employers, parents, and guardians who infringe this law.

Public provision of useful work at no less than trade-union rates of wages for the unemployed.

Free State insurance against sickness and accident, and free and adequate State pensions or provision for aged and disabled workers.

Public assistance not to entail any forfeiture of political rights.

The legislative enactment of a minimum wage of 30s. for all workers. Equal pay for both sexes for the performance of equal work.

Social

Abolition of the present workhouse system, and reformed administration of the Poor Law on a basis of national cooperation.

Compulsory construction by public bodies of healthy dwellings for the people; such dwellings to be let at rents to cover the cost of construction and maintenance alone, and not to cover the cost of the land.

The administration of justice to be free to all; the establishment of public offices where legal advice can be obtained free of charge.

Miscellaneous

The disestablishment and disendowment of all State churches.

The abolition of standing armies, and the establishment of national citizen forces. The people to decide on peace and war.

The establishment of international courts of arbitration.

The abolition of courts-martial; all offences against discipline to be transferred to the jurisdiction of civil courts.

3. SLP: Manifesto to the Working Class (1903)

Fellow-Workers,

The most significant feature of the political development of this last ten years is the growing dis-satisfaction of the working-class with the existing political parties. The defection of the workers from the capitalist parties has for long been the theme of orthodox politicians. Very few of their speeches at the present time fail to conclude with a querulous expostulation with the workers for their desertion of those whom they had previously trusted, or a tearful entreaty to return to the fold. The causes of this phenomenon are pretty well known. The ruthless attacks made upon the workers striving by means of strike or boycott to obtain slightly better conditions of life, as evidenced by the

actions of capitalist Home Secretaries at Featherstone, Broxburn, Motherwell, Hull and Grimsby; the suppression of Trade Union organisation by the legal decisions in connection with the Taff Vale Railway dispute, and the case of Quinn versus Leatham - these and other occurrences for which all parties at present represented in the British House of Commons are equally responsible have induced in the workers the belief that their interests as a class are menaced by their present legislators, and that the welfare of their masters alone meets with consideration. The need for a party representing the working class and defending its interests is generally felt and expressed. Class feeling in short is becoming increasingly manifest. But what is not clearly recognised is the necessity for such a party having a clear, definite and practical basis, and an intelligent conception of its position, method and goal. There is considerable danger that honest aspirations of the workers and their sincere endeavours to better their lot by political activity may be frustrated and led into a blind alley by the efforts of crafty and unscrupulous politicians self-styled Labour Leaders. Therefore in calling upon you to give us your support in forming the party of the workers we lay before you our methods and our aim, together with the attitude which we intend to adopt towards the existing political parties, "Labour" or otherwise.

The SOCIALIST LABOUR PARTY differs from all parties at present in existence in that it appeals to the working class and the working class alone for support. Whether it be in the city or the nation, in Town Council or in Parliament, it is the one section of the population that has any right to consideration. They alone produce the wealth of society, and it is our aim that they alone should possess it. Our attack upon the present constitution of society in both its political and economic aspects is due to the fact that the class that dominates the state, to whose interest and advantage all our social institutions are directed, is the useless, obsolete and parasitical capitalist class. The power to rob and exploit, which is vested in this class, rests upon their political supremacy. It is thus they are enabled to bring all the powers of the state, police and military, to bear upon those workers who strive to decrease their master's spoils by increasing their miserable wages. It follows then that all efforts of the workers to better their conditions must be centred in the task of overthrowing the supremacy of the master class in the state, and of using the power so gained to seize the means of life to be used by the workers and their dependents, in short, to obliterate the capitalist class as a social and political entity.

By this we do not mean what is variously called "State Socialism", "Public Ownership", or "Municipalism" - that is the ownership of certain public utilities by a community in which capitalism is still dominant. A worker is as much exploited by a capitalist state or corporation as by a private capitalist employer - as post-office or municipal employees can testify. We insist upon the political overthrow of capitalism as an absolutely necessary preliminary to the emancipation of the working class, and the establishing of the Socialist Republic. Otherwise an industry controlled by a capitalist state differs only from one controlled

by an individual capitalist in the superior powers of the former to rob and oppress those under its thralldom.

This is precisely the point that has been hitherto ignored by organisations appealing to the working class. At the present time there are certain bodies of this nature named respectively, the Independent Labour Party, the Labour Representation Committee, the Social Democratic Federation, and the Fabian Society - parties differing only in name and in phraseology, but almost identical in principles and tactics. All these organisations are dominated either by middle-class men or working men influenced by middle-class habits and thoughts.

As contrasted with all such compromisers and confusionists who would lead the working class to destruction, we desire to lay before you the principles of political action on which our party will proceed. We intend wherever possible to contest on behalf of the working class, and against all other political parties, every election, municipal or national. We do not cater for the support of those workers who do not recognise the goal, nor agree with us as to the means whereby it is to be attained. These means, we repeat, are the conquest of political power by the working class and in the interests of the working class, manifesting itself through an avowedly Socialist organisation.

This explains alike our policy and our name, Socialist Labour Party. Socialist, because through Socialism alone can the workers be emancipated; Labour, because by the labouring classes alone can Socialism be attained; Party, because we are not merely an educational or propagandist body, but stand for the political expression of our class interests for the formation of the Socialist Republic.

SOCIALISM IS THE ONLY HOPE OF THE WORKERS. ALL ELSE IS ILLUSION.

4. SLP Platform (1919)

The Socialist Labour Party is an organisation seeking to overthrow Capitalism, and the establishment of a Socialist Communist Republic. To accomplish this objective, the Socialist Labour Party endeavours to secure Political and Industrial Unity of the working class.

We affirm that so long as one section of the community own and control the instruments of production, and the rest of the community are compelled to work for that section in order to obtain the means of life, there can be no peace between them.

The Communist form of organisation, which we regard as the most effective machinery whereby the workers can wage the conflict, and

essential for Socialist Communism, is dual in character, i.e., industrial and residential. The unit of organisation industrially is the Workshop or Yard Committee wherein the workers are organised as workers irrespective of craft, grade or sex. These Committees are coordinated by the formation of the Works or Plant Committees, composed of delegates from each Workshop or Yard Committee. The Plant or Works Committees are coordinated by delegates from each of these Committees in a village, town, city, or district, forming a Workers' Council, in which there are also delegates from the Residential Committees, these latter being the units of the social aspects of the organisation.

The Residential or Ward Committees, the unit of organisation at the point of residence, is composed of delegates elected in the Ward where they reside to focus the needs, etc., associated with this part of communal life. The electorate for the Ward Committees consists only of those who render social service to the community.

The Workers' Council, which thus unites within itself all phases of social activity, forms internally whatever Departmental and Executive Committees the complexities of the administration demand.

The Regional or National organisation is formed by the convening of Congresses of delegates of all the Workers' Councils, which elect the Regional or National Administrative Committees in similar manner to the local councils.

Such is the skeleton outline of the communal organisation desired. It is, therefore, obligatory upon the adherents to Communism, to expedite the development of the organisation in industry as described and to establish Communist branches in the Wards.

The recognition of the class struggle being the determining factor in our attitude to the Capitalist Class, the Communist structure being the form of organisation essential for the efficient waging of the Class struggle and the establishment of Communism, the Socialist Labour Party should attack the capitalist class in every direction, industrial and political, as occasion demands. Every member of the organisation is, therefore, invested with the responsibility of doing their best to propagate Communism, to help along independent working class education, and to wage the industrial and political fight.

5. RSDLP Programme (Bolshevik ~1917)

The development of exchange has established such close ties between all the nations of the civilised world that the great movement of the proletariat towards emancipation was bound to become - and has long since become - international.

Russian Social-Democracy regards itself as a detachment of the world army of the proletariat, and is working towards the same ultimate goal as the Social-Democrats of all other countries. This ultimate goal is determined by the character of modern bourgeois society and by the trend of its development. The principal specific feature of this society is commodity production based on capitalist production relations, under which the most important and major part of the means of production and exchange of commodities belongs to a numerically small class of persons while the vast majority of the population is made up of proletarians and semi-proletarians, who, owing to their economic position, are compelled permanently or periodically to sell their labour-power, i.e., to hire themselves out to the capitalists and to create by their labour the incomes of the upper classes of society.

The ascendancy of capitalist production relations extends its area more and more with the steady improvement of technology, which, by enhancing the economic importance of the large enterprises, tends to eliminate the small independent producers, converting some of them into proletarians and narrowing the role of others in the social and economic sphere, and in some places making them more or less completely, more or less obviously, more or less painfully dependent on capital.

Moreover, this technical progress enables the employers to make growing use of female and child labour in the process of production and exchange of commodities. And since, on the other hand, it causes a relative decrease in the employers' demand for human labour-power, the demand for labour-power necessarily lags behind its supply, as a result of which the dependence of wage-labour on capital is increased and exploitation of labour rises to a higher level.

This state of affairs in the bourgeois countries and the steadily growing competition among them in the world market make it more and more difficult for them to sell the goods which are produced in ever increasing quantities. Over-production, manifesting itself in more or less acute industrial crises followed by more or less protracted periods of industrial stagnation, is an inevitable consequence of the development of the productive forces in bourgeois society. Crises and periods of industrial stagnation, in their turn, still further ruin the small producers, still further

increase the dependence of wage-labour on capital, and lead still more rapidly to the relative and sometimes to the absolute deterioration of the condition of the working class.

Thus, improvement in technology, signifying increased labour productivity and greater social wealth, becomes in bourgeois society the cause of greater social inequality, of widening gulfs between the rich and poor, of greater insecurity, unemployment, and various hardships of the mass of the working people.

However, in proportion as all these contradictions, which are inherent in bourgeois society, grow and develop, so also does the discontent of the toiling and exploited masses with the existing order of things grow; the numerical strength and solidarity of the proletarians increase and their struggle against their exploiters is sharpened. At the same time, by concentrating the means of production and exchange and socialising the process of labour in capitalist enterprises, the improvement in technology more and more rapidly creates the material possibility of capitalist production relations being superceded by socialist relations, i.e., the possibility of bringing about the social revolution, which is the ultimate aim of all the activities of international Social-Democracy as the conscious exponent of the class movement.

By introducing social in place of private ownership of the means of production and exchange, by introducing planned organisation of social production to ensure the well-being and many-sided development of all the members of society, the proletarian social revolution will do away with the division of society into classes and thereby emancipate the whole of oppressed humanity, for it will put an end to all forms of exploitation of one section of society by another.

A necessary condition for this social revolution is the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e., the conquest by the proletariat of such political power as will enable it to suppress all resistance on the part of the exploiters. Aiming at making the proletariat capable of fulfilling its great historic mission, international Social-Democracy organises the proletariat in an independent political party opposed to all the bourgeois parties, guides all the manifestations of its class struggle, reveals to it the irreconcilable antagonism between the interests of the exploiters and those of the exploited, and explains to the proletariat the historical significance of and the necessary conditions for the impending social revolution. At the same time it reveals to all the other toiling and exploited masses the hopelessness of their position in capitalist society and the need for a social revolution if they are to free themselves from the yolk of capital. The Social-Democratic Party, the party of the working class, calls upon all sections of the toiling and exploited population to join its ranks insofar as they adopt the standpoint of the proletariat.

World capitalism has at the present time, i.e., about the beginning of the twentieth century, reached the stage of imperialism. Imperialism, or the epoch of finance capital, is a high stage

of development of the capitalist economic system, one in which monopolist associations of capitalists - syndicates, cartels, and trusts - have assumed decisive importance; in which enormously concentrated banking capital has fused with industrial capital; in which the export of capital to foreign countries has assumed vast dimensions; in which the whole world has been divided up territorially among the richer countries, and the economic carve-up of the world among international trusts has begun.

Imperialist wars, i.e., wars for world domination, for markets for banking capital and for the subjugation of small and weaker nations are inevitable under such a state of affairs. The first great imperialist war, the war of 1914-17, is precisely such a war.

The extremely high level of development which world capitalism in general has attained, the replacement of free competition by monopoly capitalism, the fact that the banks and the capitalist associations have prepared the machinery for the social regulation of the process of production and distribution of products, the rise in the cost of living and increased oppression of the working class by the syndicates due to the growth of capitalist monopolies, the tremendous obstacles standing in the way of the proletariat's economic and political struggle, the horrors, misery, ruin, and brutalisation caused by the imperialist war - all these factors transform the present stage of capitalist development into an era of proletarian socialist revolution.

That era has dawned.

Only a proletarian socialist revolution can lead humanity out of the impasse which imperialism and imperialist wars have created. Whatever difficulties the revolution may have to encounter, whatever possible temporary setbacks or waves of counter-revolution it may have to contend with, the final victory of the proletariat is inevitable.

Objective conditions make it the urgent task of the day to prepare the proletariat in every way for the conquest of political power in order to carry out the economic and political measures which are the sum and substance of the socialist revolution.

The fulfilment of this task, which calls for the fullest trust, the closest fraternal ties, and direct unity of revolutionary action on the part of the working class in all the advanced countries, is impossible without an immediate break in principle with the bourgeois perversion of socialism, which has gained the upper hand among the leadership of the official Social-Democratic parties. Such a perversion is, on the one hand, the social-chauvinist trend, socialism in word and chauvinism in deed, the defence of the predatory interests of "one's own" national bourgeoisie under the guise of "defence of the fatherland"; and, on the other hand, the equally wide international trend of the so-called "Centre", which stands for unity with the social-

chauvinists and for the preservation or correction of the bankrupt Second International, and which vacillates between social-chauvinism and the international revolutionary struggle of the proletariat for the achievement of a socialist system.

In Russia at the present moment, when the Provisional Government, which is part and parcel of the capitalist class and enjoys the confidence - necessarily unstable - of the broad mass of the petty-bourgeois population, has undertaken to convene a Constituent Assembly, the immediate duty of the party of the proletariat is to fight for a political system which will best guarantee economic progress and the rights of the people in general, and make possible the least painful transition to socialism in particular.

The party of the proletariat cannot rest content with a bourgeois parliamentary democratic republic, which throughout the world preserves and strives to perpetuate the monarchist instruments for the oppression of the masses, namely, the police, the standing army, and the privileged bureaucracy.

The party fights for a more democratic workers' and peasants' republic, in which the police and the standing army will be abolished and replaced by the universally armed people, by a people's militia; all officials will be not only elective, but also subject to recall at any time upon the demand of a majority of the electors; all officials, without exception, will be paid at a rate not exceeding the average wage of a competent worker; parliamentary representative institutions will be gradually replaced by Soviets of people's representatives (from various classes and professions, or from various localities), functioning as both legislative and executive bodies.

The constitution of the Russian democratic republic must ensure:

- 1) The sovereignty of the people; supreme power in the state must be vested entirely in the people's representatives, who shall be elected by the people and be subject to recall at any time, and who shall constitute a single popular assembly, a single chamber.
- 2) Universal, equal, and direct suffrage for all citizens, men and women, who have reached the age of twenty, in the elections to the legislative assembly and to the various bodies of local self-government; secret ballot; the right of every voter to be elected to any representative institution; biennial parliaments; salaries to be paid to the people's representatives; proportional representation at all elections; all delegates and elected officials, without exception, to be subject to recall at any time upon the decision of a majority of their electors.
- 3) Local self-government on a broad scale; regional self-government in localities where the composition of the population and living and social conditions are of a specific nature; the abolition of all state appointed local and regional authorities.
- 4) Inviolability of person and domicile.

5) Unrestricted freedom of conscience, speech, the press, assembly, strikes and association.

6) Freedom of movement and occupation.

7) Abolition of the social estates; equal rights for all citizens irrespective of sex, creed, race, or nationality.

8) The right of the population to receive instruction in their native tongue in schools to be established for the purpose at the expense of the state and local organs of self-government; the right of every citizen to use his native language at meetings; the native language to be used in all local public and state institutions; the obligatory official language to be abolished.

9) The right of all member nations of the state to freely secede and form independent states. The republic of the Russian nation must attract other nations or nationalities not by force, but exclusively by voluntary agreement on the question of forming a common state. The unity and fraternal alliance of the workers of all countries are incompatible with the use of force, direct or indirect against other nationalities.

10) The right of all persons to sue any official in the regular way before a jury.

11) Judges and other officials, both civil and military, to be elected by the people with the right to recall any of them at any time by decision of a majority of their electors.

12) The police and standing army to be replaced by the universally armed people; workers and other employees to receive regular wages from the capitalists for the time devoted to public service in the people's militia.

13) Separation of the church from the state, and schools from the church; schools to be absolutely secular.

14) Free and compulsory general and polytechnical education (familiarising the student with the theoretical and practical aspects of the most important fields of production) for all children of both sexes up to the age of sixteen; training of children to be closely integrated with socially productive work.

15) All students to be provided with food, clothing, and school supplies at the cost of the state.

16) Public education to be administered by democratically elected organs of local self-government; the central government not to be allowed to interfere with the arrangement of the school curriculum, or with the selection of the teaching staffs; teachers to be elected directly by the population with the right of the latter to remove undesirable teachers.

As a basic condition for the democratisation of our country's

national economy, the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party demands the abolition of all indirect taxes and the establishment of a progressive tax on incomes and inheritances.

The high level of development of capitalism already achieved in banking and in the trustified branches of industry, on the one hand, and the economic disruption caused by the imperialist war, everywhere evoking a demand for state and public control of the production and distribution of all staple products, on the other, induce the Party to demand the nationalisation of the banks, syndicates (trusts), etc.

To safeguard the working class from physical and moral deterioration, and develop its ability to carry on the struggle for emancipation, the Party demands:

- 1) An eight-hour working day for all wage-workers, including a break of not less than one hour for meals where work is continuous. In dangerous and unhealthy industries the working day to be reduced to from four to six hours.
- 2) A statutory weekly uninterrupted rest period of not less than forty-two hours for all wage-workers of both sexes in all branches of the national economy.
- 3) Complete prohibition of overtime work.
- 4) Prohibition of night-work (from 8p.m. to 6a.m.) in all branches of the national economy except in cases where it is absolutely necessary for technical reasons endorsed by the labour organisations - provided, however, that night-work does not exceed four hours.
- 5) Prohibition of the employment of children of age (under sixteen), restriction of the working day of adolescents (from sixteen to twenty) to four hours, and prohibition of the employment of adolescents on night work in unhealthy industries and mines.
- 6) Prohibition of female labour in all branches of industry injurious to women's health; prohibition of night work for women; women to be released from work eight weeks before and eight weeks after child-birth without loss of pay and with free medical and medicinal aid.
- 7) Establishment of nurseries for infants and young children and rooms for nursing mothers at all factories and other enterprises where women are employed; nursing mothers to be allowed recesses of at least half-hour duration at intervals of not more than three hours; such mothers to receive nursing benefit and their working day to be reduced to six hours.
- 8) Full social insurance of workers:
 - a) for all forms of wage-labour;
 - b) for all forms of disablement, namely, sickness, injury, infirmity, old age, occupational disease, child-birth,

- c) all insurance institutions to be administered entirely by the insured themselves;
- d) the cost of insurance to be borne by the capitalists;
- e) free medical and medicinal aid under the control of self-governing sick benefit societies, the management bodies of which are to be elected by the workers.

9) The establishment of a labour inspectorate elected by the workers' organisations and covering all enterprises employing hired labour, as well as domestic servants; women inspectors to be appointed in enterprises where female labour is employed.

10) Sanitary laws to be enacted for improving hygienic conditions and protecting the life and health of workers in all enterprises where hired labour is employed; questions of hygiene to be handled by the sanitary inspectorate elected by the workers' organisations.

11) Housing laws to be enacted and a housing inspectorate elected by the workers' organisations to be instituted for the purpose of sanitary inspection of dwelling houses. However, only by abolishing private property in land and building cheap and hygienic dwellings can the housing problem be solved.

12) Industrial courts to be established in all branches of the national economy.

13) Labour exchanges to be established for the proper organisation of work-finding facilities. These labour exchanges must be proletarian class organisations (organised on a non-parity basis), and must be closely associated with the trade unions and other working-class organisations and financed by the communal self-governing bodies.

In order to do away with the relics of serfdom, which are a heavy yoke on the necks of the peasants, and to enable the class struggle to develop freely in the countryside, the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party

- 1) Fights with all its strength for the immediate and complete confiscation of all landed estates in Russia (and also crown lands, church lands, etc.).
- 2) Stands for the immediate transfer of all land to the peasantry organised in Soviets of Peasants' Deputies or in other organs of local self-government elected on a truly democratic basis and completely independent of the landowners and bureaucrats.
- 3) Demands the nationalisation of all lands in the country; nationalisation implies that all property rights in land are vested in the state, while the right of disposal of the land is vested in the local democratic institutions.
- 4) Encourages the initiative of those peasant committees which, in various localities of Russia, are turning over the landowners'

livestock and agricultural implements to the peasants organised in these committees for the purpose of their socially regulated utilisation in the cultivation of the land.

5) Advises the rural proletarians and semi-proletarians to strive towards turning every landed estate into a sufficiently large model farm, to be conducted on a communal basis by the local Soviet of Agricultural Labourers' Deputies under the direction of agricultural experts and with the aid of the best technical appliances.

The Party under all circumstances, and whatever the conditions of democratic agrarian reform may be, will unswervingly work for the independent class organisation of the rural proletariat, will explain to the latter the irreconcilable antagonisms that exist between it and the peasant bourgeoisie, will warn it against the false attraction of the system of petty farming, which, while commodity production exists, can never do away with the poverty of the masses, and, finally, will urge the need for a complete socialist revolution as the only means of abolishing poverty and exploitation.

6. Abstentionist Theses

(Communist Fraction, P.S.I. ~ 1920)

1. Communism is the doctrine of the social and historical pre-conditions of the emancipation of the proletariat.

The elaboration of this doctrine began in the period of the first proletarian reaction against the bourgeois system of production; it took shape in the Marxist critique of the capitalist economy, the method of historical materialism, the theory of class struggle and the conception of the form assumed by the historical process of the fall of the capitalist regime and the proletarian revolution.

2. It is on the basis of this doctrine, whose first and fundamental expression was the Communist Manifesto of 1848, that the Communist Party constitutes itself.

3. In the course of the present historical period, the situation created by bourgeois relations of production, based on the private ownership of the means of production and exchange, on the private appropriation of the products of collective labour, on free competition in private trade in all products, becomes more and more intolerable for the proletariat.

4. To these economic relations correspond the political institutions proper to capitalism: the State based on democratic and parliamentary representation. In a society divided into classes, the State is the organisation of the power of the class which is

privileged on the economic plane. Although the bourgeoisie represents a minority within society, the democratic State represents a system of armed force organised to preserve the capitalist relations of production.

5. The struggle of the proletariat against capitalist exploitation assumes a succession of forms: from the violent destruction of machines to the organisation of crafts to improve working conditions, to factory councils and to attempts to take possession of enterprises.

Through all these particular actions, the proletariat directs itself towards the decisive revolutionary struggle against the power of the bourgeois State, which ensures that the present relations of production shall not be broken.

6. This revolutionary struggle is a conflict between the whole proletarian class and the whole bourgeois class. Its instrument is the class political party, the communist party, which achieves the conscious organisation of the vanguard of the proletariat which has understood the necessity to unify its action, in space, by transcending the interests of particular groups, categories or nationalities, in time, by subordinating the extents of partial gains and advantages, which do not modify the essentials of bourgeois structure, to the final outcome of the struggle.

It is therefore only organisation into a political party which constitutes the proletariat into a class struggling for its emancipation.

7. The objective of the action of the Communist Party is the violent overthrow of bourgeois rule, the conquest of political power by the proletariat, the organisation of the latter into a ruling class.

8. While parliamentary democracy based on the representation of citizens of every class is the form assumed by the organisation of the bourgeoisie into a ruling class, the organisation of the proletariat into a ruling class will be achieved through the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is, in a type of State in which representation (the system of workers' councils) will be selected only by members of the working class (industrial proletariat and poor peasants), the bourgeois being excluded from the franchise.

9. After the old, bureaucratic, police and military machine has been destroyed, the proletarian State will unify the armed forces of the labouring class into an organisation, whose duty will be to repress all counter-revolutionary efforts by the dispossessed class and to effect measures of intervention into bourgeois relations of production and property.

10. The transition from the capitalist to the communist economy will be an extremely complex process and its phases will differ according to differing degrees of economic development. The final

end of this process will be the total achievement of the possession and management of the means of production by the whole unified collectivity, together with the centralised and rational distribution of productive forces between the different branches of production, and the central administration by the collectivity of the allocation of products.

11. When the relations of capitalist economy have been entirely eliminated, the abolition of classes will be an accomplished fact and the State, as a political apparatus of power, will be progressively replaced by the rational, collective administration of economic and social activity.

12. The process of transforming relations of production will be accompanied by a long series of social measures deriving from the principle that the collectivity takes charge of the material and intellectual existence of all its members. In this way, all the corruption and degeneration which the proletariat has inherited from the capitalist world, will be progressively eliminated and, in the words of the Manifesto, to the old society divided into hostile classes will succeed an association in which the free development of each will be the condition for the free development of all.

13. The preconditions for the victory of proletarian power in the struggle for the realisation of communism consist less in the rational use of skills in technical tasks, than in the fact that political responsibilities and the control of the State apparatus are confided to men who will put the general interest and the final triumph of communism before the particular and limited interests of groups.

Precisely because the communist party is the organisation of proletarians who have achieved such a class consciousness, the aim of the party will be, by its propaganda, to win elective posts within the social organisation for its adherents. The dictatorship of the proletariat will therefore be the dictatorship of the Communist Party and the latter will be a party of government in a sense totally opposed to that of the old oligarchies, for communists will assume responsibilities which will demand the maximum of sacrifice and renunciation and will take upon their shoulders the heaviest burden of the revolutionary task, which falls to the proletariat in the hard labour in which a new world will come to birth.

II.

1. The communist critique, remorselessly elaborated from the basis of its fundamental methods, and the propagation of the conclusions to which it leads, have as their objective the extirpation of those influences upon proletarians exercised by the ideological systems proper to other classes and other parties.

2. In the first place, communism sweeps away idealist conceptions, according to which the material of the world of thought is the base,

and not the result, of the real relations of the life of humanity and their development. All religious and philosophical formulations of this type must be considered the ideological baggage of classes whose supremacy, which preceded the bourgeois epoch, rested on an ecclesiastical, aristocratic or dynastic organisation, warranted only by an alleged super-human investiture.

One symptom of the decadence of the modern bourgeoisie is the re-appearance in its midst, under novel forms, of those old ideologies which it had itself destroyed. A communism founded on idealist bases would be an unacceptable absurdity.

3. In still more characteristic fashion, communism is the critical demolition of the conceptions of liberalism and bourgeois democracy. The juridical assertion of the freedom of thought and the political equality of citizens, the notion that institutions founded on the rights of the majority and on the mechanics of universal electoral representation are a sufficient base for a gradual and indefinite progress of human society, are ideologies which correspond to the regime of private economy and free competition, and to the interests of the class of capitalists.

4. It is one of the illusions of bourgeois democracy to believe that an improvement in the living conditions of the masses can be obtained through a development of education and training by the ruling classes and their institutions. On the contrary, the raising of the intellectual level of the masses, demands as a pre-condition, a better standard of material life, which is incompatible with the capitalist regime; on the other hand, through its schools, the bourgeoisie tries to broadcast precisely the ideologies which tend to prevent the masses from perceiving in present institutions the very obstacle to their emancipation.

5. Another of the fundamental affirmations of bourgeois democracy lies in the principle of nationality. The formation of States on a national basis corresponds to the class necessities of the bourgeoisie at the moment when it establishes its own power, for it can thus avail itself of national and patriotic ideologies which, in the initial period of capitalism, correspond to certain interests common to those of the same race, language and customs, in order to delay and attenuate the confrontation between capitalist State and proletarian masses.

National irredentism is thus born of essentially bourgeois interests.

The bourgeoisie itself does not hesitate to trample on the principle of nationality as soon as the development of capitalism drives it to the often violent conquest of external markets and precipitates conflict between great states over them. Communism transcends the principle of nationality, in that it demonstrates the identical predicament in which workers unreservedly find themselves face-to-face with employers, whatever their nationality; it proclaims international union to be the type of political organisation which the proletariat will create when it, in turn, accedes to power.

In terms of the communist critique, therefore, the recent world war was engendered by capitalist imperialism. This critique rips to shreds those various interpretations which, from the standpoint of one or other bourgeois state, try to present the war as a vindication of the rights of certain peoples or as a struggle of democratically more advanced states against those organised on pre-bourgeois forms, or finally, as a necessity of alleged self-defence against enemy aggression.

6. Communism is equally opposed to the conceptions of bourgeois pacificism and Wilsonian illusions on the possibility of a world association of states, based on disarmament and arbitration and having as its pre-condition the Utopia of a sub-division of state units by nationality. For communists, war will become impossible and national questions will be solved only when the capitalist regime has been replaced by the International Communist Republic.

7. In a third respect, communism presents itself as the transcendence of those systems of Utopian socialism which sought to eliminate the faults of social organisation by planning new constitutions for society whose possible realisation was in no way related to the real development of history and which were to be realised by the actions of potentates or the preaching of philanthropists.

8. The elaboration by the proletariat of its own theoretical interpretation of society and history, capable of directing its action against the social relations of the capitalist world, continuously gives rise to a multiplication of schools or currents, influenced to a greater or lesser degree by the very immaturity of the conditions of struggle and by the most diverse bourgeois prejudices.

From all this flows errors and reverses in proletarian action; but it is out of this material of experience that the communist movement succeeds in defining with ever greater precision, the central features of its doctrine and its tactics, in differentiating itself clearly from all the other currents active in the midst of the proletariat itself, and in openly combating them.

9. The formation of producers' cooperatives, in which the capital belongs to the workers who work in them, cannot be a route towards the suppression of the capitalist system, since the acquisition of raw materials and the distribution of products are effected according to the laws of the private economy, and ultimately credit and therefore private capital, exercises control over the collective capital of the cooperative itself.

10. Economic organisations on a trade basis cannot be considered by communists as organisations sufficient for the struggle for the proletarian revolution or as organs basic to the communist economy.

Organisation in trade unions serves to neutralise competition between workers of the same trade and to prevent wages falling to the lowest level; but it cannot lead to the elimination of

capitalist profit, still less to the unification of workers of all trades against the privilege of bourgeois power. Further, the simple transfer of property in enterprises from the private owners to the workers' union could not achieve the economic essentials of communism which requires that property be transferred to the whole proletarian collectivity, since this is the only way to eliminate the characteristics of the private economy in the appropriation and distribution of products.

Communists consider the union as the location of an initial proletarian experience, which permits the workers to go further towards the idea and the practice of political struggle, whose organ is the class party.

11. In general, it is an error to believe that the revolution is a question of forms of organisations of proletarians in accordance with the groups they form from their position and interests within the framework of the capitalist system of production.

It is not a modification of the structure of economic organisations, then, which can provide the proletariat with an effective instrument for its emancipation.

Factory unions and factory councils emerge as organs for the defence of the interests of the proletarians of different enterprises at the point when it appears possible to limit capitalist arbitrariness in the management of the latter. But the winning of a greater or lesser degree of the right to exercise a control over production by these organisations is not incompatible with the capitalist system; for the latter, it could even be a last resort for its preservation.

Even the transfer of factory management to factory councils would not (any more than to the unions) mean the advent of the communist system. According to the true communist perspective, workers' control over production will not be achieved until after the overthrow of bourgeois power, and it will be a control exercised by the whole proletariat unified in the state of the councils over the running of every enterprise; communist management of production will be the direction of every branch and every productive unit by rational collective organs which will represent the interests of all workers associated in the labour of building communism.

12. Capitalist relations of production cannot be modified by the intervention of the organs of bourgeois power.

This is why the transfer of private enterprises to the State or to local administrations does not correspond in the slightest to the communist conception. Such a transfer is invariably accompanied by the payment of the capital value of the enterprises to the former owners who thus integrally retain their right of exploitation; the enterprises themselves continue to function as private enterprises within the framework of the capitalist economy; they often become useful instruments in the work of class preservation and defence undertaken by the bourgeois State.

13. The idea that capitalist exploitation of the proletariat can be gradually diminished and then eliminated by the legislative and reformist action of present political institutions, which can be elicited from within be representatives of the proletarian party inside those institutions or even by mass agitation, leads only to complicity in the defence of the privileges of the bourgeoisie, which will on occasion pretend to cede a minimum in order to try to appease the anger of the masses and to divert their revolutionary efforts directed against the bases of the capitalist regime.

14. The conquest of political power by the proletariat, even considered as the total objective of its action, cannot be achieved by the winning of a majority within bourgeois elective organs.

Thanks to the executive organs of the State, which are its direct agents, the bourgeoisie very easily ensures a majority within the elective organs for its delegates or for those elements, which in order to get there, individually or collectively, fall under its influence or manipulation. Moreover, participation in such institutions implies an undertaking to respect the juridical and political bases of the bourgeois constitution. The merely formal value of this undertaking is nevertheless sufficient to free the bourgeoisie from even the slightest embarrassment of an accusation of formal illegality at the point when it will logically resort to its real means for armed defence rather than abandon power and permit the proletariat to smash the bureaucratic and military machine of its control.

15. To recognise the necessity of insurrectionary struggle for the seizure of power, while at the same time proposing that the proletariat exercise its power by conceding representation to the bourgeoisie in new political organisations (constituent assemblies or combinations of these with the system of workers' councils) is a programme unacceptable and in opposition to the central objective of communism: the dictatorship of the proletariat. The process of expropriating the bourgeoisie would be immediately compromised if it retained a means to influence in some way the formation of the representative organs of the expropriating proletarian State. This would permit the bourgeoisie to use the influence it will inevitably retain because of its experience and its intellectual and technical training to deploy its political activities towards the re-establishment of its power in a counter-revolution. The same consequences would result if one allowed to survive the slightest democratic presupposition on an equality of treatment which the proletarian power ought to apply to the bourgeois in such matters as freedom of association, of propaganda and the press.

16. The proposal of an organ of political representation based on delegates of the professional categories of all the social classes is not even in form a road leading to the system of workers' councils, since the latter is characterised by the exclusion of the bourgeois from electoral rights and its central organisation is not designated by profession but by territorial constituency.

The form of representation in question is, on the contrary, an inferior stage even in comparison with present parliamentary democracy.

17. Anarchism is profoundly opposed to the ideas of communism: it tends towards the immediate installation of a society without a state and political order and advocates, for the economy of the future, the autonomous functioning of units of production, rejecting any concept of a central power to organise and regulate human activities in production and distribution. Such a conception is close to that of the private bourgeois economy and remains alien to the essential content of communism. Moreover the immediate elimination of the State as an apparatus of political power would be equivalent to a failure to resist the counter-revolution or would pre-suppose the immediate abolition of classes, the celebrated revolutionary expropriation contemporary with the insurrection against bourgeois power.

Not the slightest possibility of this exists, given the complexity of the tasks imposed on the proletariat by the substitution of the communist for the present economy, and the necessity that such a process be directed by a central organisation which represents the general interest of the proletariat and subordinates to the latter all the local and particular interests whose interaction is the principal conservative force within capitalism.

III.

1. The communist conception and economic determinism do not make communists into passive spectators of historical destiny but on the contrary into indefatigable fighters. Struggle and action, however, would be ineffective if divorced from the lessons of communist doctrine and critical experience.

2. The revolutionary work of communists is based on the organisation into a party of proletarians, who are conscious of communist principles, and who decide to consecrate all their efforts to the cause of the revolution. The party, organised internationally, functions on the basis of discipline towards the decisions of the majority and of the central organs designated by that majority to direct the movement.

3. Propaganda and proselytism - which on the question of the admission of new members must be based on the most cast-iron guarantees - are fundamental activities of the Party. Although it bases the success of its action on the propagation of its principles and its final objectives and although it struggles in the interest of the immense majority of society, the communist movement does not make the approval of the majority a pre-determining condition of its action. The criterion which determines the occasion to launch a revolutionary action is the objective evaluation of our own forces and those of our enemies in all the complexity of their relationships, in which the numerical element is not the sole or even the most important determinant.

4. The communist party, internally, develops an intense labour of study and criticism, closely related to the exigencies of action and historical experience, while striving to organise this work on an international basis. Externally, in all circumstances and with all the means at its disposal, it works to diffuse the lessons of its own critical experience and to refute enemy schools and parties. Above all, the party conducts its activity of propaganda and conversion in the midst of the proletarian masses, particularly at those times when they are set in movement in reaction against the conditions capitalism inflicts upon them, and in the midst of the organisations formed by proletarians to defend their immediate interests.

5. Communists therefore penetrate proletarian cooperatives, unions, factory councils, and within them, form groups of communist workers, striving to win a majority and posts of leadership, so that the mass of proletarians mobilised by these associations subordinate their action to the highest political and revolutionary ends of the struggle for communism.

6. The communist party, on the other hand, remains outside all institutions and associations in which bourgeois and workers participate in common, or worse still, which are led and directed by bourgeois (societies of mutual assistance, cultural schools, popular universities, Freemasons' Lodges, etc.); in combating their action and influence, it tries to divert proletarians from them.

7. Participation in elections to the representative organs of bourgeois democracy and parliamentary activity, while presenting the endless danger of deviation could be exploited for propaganda and for the formation of the movement during the period in which there existed no possibility of overthrowing bourgeois rule and in which, as a consequence, the task of the party was restricted to criticism and opposition. In the present period, which began with the end of the world war, with the first communist revolutions and the creation of the Third International, communists pose, as the direct objective of the political action of the proletariat in every country, the revolutionary conquest of power, to which end all the power and all the preparatory work of the party must be devoted.

In this period, it is inadmissible to participate in these organs which function as a powerful defensive instrument of the bourgeoisie operating within the ranks of the proletariat itself; it is precisely in opposition to these organisations, to their structure as to their function, that communists demand the system of workers' councils and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Because of the great importance which it assumes in practice, it is not possible to reconcile electoral action with the assertion that this is not the means of achieving the principal objective of the party's action: the conquest of power; and it is not possible to prevent it absorbing all the activity of the movement and deflecting it from revolutionary preparation.

8. The electoral conquest of communes and local administrations, which entails the same inconveniences as parliamentarism but to an even greater degree, cannot be accepted as a means of action against bourgeois power, on the one hand because these organs have no real power but are subjected to the state machine, on the other hand because such a method, though it can today cause the bourgeoisie some embarrassment in its assertion of the principle of local autonomy, itself however contrary to the communist principle of centralised action, will prepare a support point for the bourgeoisie in its struggle against the establishment of proletarian power.

9. In the revolutionary period, all the efforts of communists concentrate on endowing mass action with the maximum of intensity and efficacy. Communists accompany propaganda and revolutionary preparation with great and frequent proletarian demonstrations above all in the major centres and strive to use economic movements for demonstrations of a political character, in which the proletariat re-affirms and strengthens its will to overthrow the power of the bourgeoisie.

10. The Communist Party carries its propaganda into the ranks of the bourgeois army. Communist anti-militarism is not based on a sterile humanitarianism but seeks to convince proletarians that the bourgeoisie arms them to defend its own interests and to employ their force against the cause of the proletariat.

11. The Communist Party trains itself to act as the general staff of the proletariat in the revolutionary war; that is why it prepares and organises its own network of intelligence and communication; above all, it supports and organises the arming of the proletariat.

12. The Communist Party concludes no agreement or alliance with other political movements which share with it a determinate contingent objective, but diverge from it in their programme of further action. It must equally refuse all alliance - otherwise called a 'united front' - with all working-class tendencies which accept insurrectionary action against the bourgeoisie but diverge from the communist programme in the development of subsequent action.

It serves no purpose to strengthen forces working for the overthrow of bourgeois power when those forces are still insufficient which are working for the creation of a proletarian power under communist direction, which alone can ensure its survival and success.

13. The soviets or councils of workers, peasants and soldiers, constitute the organs of proletarian power and can exercise their true function only after the overthrow of bourgeois rule.

Soviets are not in themselves organs of revolutionary struggle; they become revolutionary when the communist party wins a majority within them.

Workers' councils can also arise before the revolution, in a period of acute crisis in which the power of the State is subjected to serious threat.

In a revolutionary situation, it may be necessary for the party to take the initiative in forming soviets, but this cannot be a means of precipitating such a situation. If the power of the bourgeoisie is strengthened, the survival of councils can present a serious threat to revolutionary struggle, that of conciliation, of a combination of proletarian organs with the institutions of bourgeois democracy.

14. What distinguishes communists is not that, in every situation and every episode of the class struggle, they call for the immediate mobilisation of all proletarian forces for a general insurrection, but that they maintain that the phase of insurrection is an inevitable outcome of the struggle and that they prepare the proletariat to face it, in conditions favourable to the success and the further development of the revolution.

According to circumstances, which the party can better assess than the rest of the proletariat, it can find itself confronted with the necessity to act in order to precipitate or to postpone the moment of the final clash.

In any event, the specific task of the party is to combat equally those who, wanting revolutionary action at any price, could drive the proletariat into disaster, and those opportunists who exploit every occasion on which decisive action is discounted finally to block the revolutionary movement by deflecting it towards other objectives. The Communist Party, on the contrary, must always lead mass action towards an effective preparation for the final and inevitable armed struggle against the defences of the bourgeois principle.

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* William Paul: "The State: Its Origin and Function." *

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* Preface by Harry McShane. *

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Comments on the TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMME

We do not consider that the Transitional Programme of the Fourth, or Trotskyist, International can be considered a valid model for a communist programme. This document is ruled out of court by virtue of its many confused and non-Marxist formulations.

First there is the matter of its structure. A communist programme must scientifically spell out the objective tendencies and contradictions existing in society's economic base. In the case of a party that operates within the confines of a single state, it must deal with the development and articulation of the various modes of production that exist within the territory of that state.

In the case of a global party or international, it must explain the contradictory combination of modes of production that goes to make up the world economic system. The Transitional Programme (henceforth TP) contains neither of these. It does not even contain a scientific characterisation of capitalism and its internal contradictions. Far less does it attempt to explain the inter-relationships between the various modes of production existing in the various parts of the globe: feudal, capitalist, state capitalist, socialist, etc. Instead it makes do with a series of journalistic phrases and unsubstantiated assertions.

For example, in the first section entitled "The objective pre-requisites of socialist revolution" we find such gems as:-

The economic pre-requisite of the proletarian revolution has already in general achieved the highest point of fruition that can be achieved under capitalism. Mankind's productive forces stagnate. Already new inventions fail to raise the level of material wealth.

This passage bears all the marks of that superficial impressionism that we have come to expect from the Trotskyist movement. The first sentence would still be false 35 years later. It implies that capitalism was already the preponderant mode of production throughout the world. But this is, and was, preposterous. It ignored the survival in large areas of the globe: Asia, Africa, and Latin America, of small scale pre-capitalist production with its accompanying feudal and even pre-feudal relations of production. Such an 'oversight' is inexcusable for an organisation claiming to be a communist international. For the great majority of the worlds population, the development of capitalist production would have constituted a great advance over the feudalism which still predominated.

In this sentence we can see a typical Trotskyist error: to mistake the existence of a world market for a world capitalist system of production. It is true that there did exist a world market in the 1930s, but only in a few industrial nations was this accompanied by a capitalist system of production. China and India, for instance, produced commodities for the world market. But commodity exports from the third world countries were based either upon feudal exploitation of small scale peasant farmers or upon the exploitation of semi-servile labour on plantations and latifundia.

Secondly, this statement would have been false even within those nations with developed capitalist industry. The potential of the capitalist system for economic development was far from exhausted as the enormous developments in technology, and improvements in living standards, in the last decades have demonstrated (to the inevitable bewilderment of all such soothsaying 'Marxists').

Quite apart from such empirical inaccuracies, the assessment of the economic situation reveals a conception of economic development that is alien to Marxist dialectics. The forces of production are presented as if they had some self-sufficient force that generated their own development. The impression given is of the forces of production developing autonomously until they meet an absolute barrier in the capitalist relations of production. But this notion of a self-sufficient motive force of history, the subject of history, derives from idealist dialectics not materialist dialectics. Idealist explanations of natural process invariably rely upon such a self-sufficient force or spirit. The terms for it vary: in idealist psychology it is the will; in idealist social theory it is the subject; in political theory the citizen/subject or alternatively 'human nature'; in bourgeois economics it is the 'economic man' whose rational decisions and preferences are held to determine all prices, etc. In history the same role is played by such notions as the 'concept of the epoch', the 'spirit of the age', or national character. There are passages in Marx that are subject to this idealist interpretation if read out of context. The most common of these is the 1857 preface to the Critique of Political Economy. In this we find the following passage:-

At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or - this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms - with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins the era of social revolution.

For some Marxists the temptation has been to interpret this as a simple inversion of the Hegelian dialectic of history - Hegel on his head - in which the development of the productive forces replaces the development of the 'notion' or absolute idea. But this is too simplistic. In the Hegelian dialectic, the notion undergoes autodevelopment, that is to say, it is responsible for its own development. The notion develops as a result of its internal contradictions. The notion contains within itself the

motor of historical progress, in the form of its contradictions, potential and actual. The Hegelian interpretation of Marx makes the productive forces play this same role.

But a closer examination of the relevant texts by Marx (in particular the section of Capital devoted to the production of relative surplus value) shows that the Marxist idea of the development of the productive forces is more complex. In the Marxist case, the productive forces are not an autodeveloping motor of history; instead their development has itself to be explained. Marx showed that under the capitalist mode of production the development of the productive forces was an effect of the relations of production; specifically, the forces of production develop as a result of the attempts by the owners of capital to maximise their rate of surplus value and thus their rate of capital accumulation. The tendency of capital to accumulate gives rise to the development of technology, not vice-versa. The relations of production do not play a merely permissive role with respect to the development of technology - they don't just allow the development of technology, they force it to develop. It follows that a capitalist crisis is not the result of technology meeting some external and insuperable obstacle in the form of capitalist production relations. Technology does not develop as a rising tendency to reach a stagnant plateau when it reaches the limits permissible within capitalism. But this is the perspective on capitalist development presented in the TP - technology can develop thus far and no further under capitalism. Its second sentence says: "The economic pre-requisite for the proletarian revolution has already in general reached the highest point of fruition that can be achieved under capitalism."

For the Trotskyists, therefore, capitalism was in its death agony and the only question that remained was how it would end. They presented only two alternatives: either socialism or a catastrophe that would threaten the "whole culture of mankind". A formulation that verges upon the idiotic alternative of socialism or barbarism proposed by certain left communists. The foolishness of this alternative becomes evident as soon as we look behind this stirring phrase to see just what it implies.

For Marxism barbarism is not just some slogan or catchword but as used by Engels and Morgan it designates a scientific concept. It is a stage in the evolution of society in which horticulture, but not field agriculture, has developed and in which society is still organised upon a gentile or tribal basis. Under barbarism there is no division of society into classes and no territorial states exist, since these require the existence both of field agriculture (implying the possibility of private ownership of land) and a sizeable surplus product, which both permits and necessitates the growth of a state apparatus. Barbarism would only be possible now if all the developments of technology that have occurred over the past two or three millenia were to vanish without trace, which could not happen even in the event of an atomic war. The whole notion of a catastrophe wiping out the whole culture of mankind and causing the collapse of civilization is based upon a facile analogy with the collapse of ancient civilization. Rome fell

before the barbarian invaders, and centuries passed before society in Western Europe regained the level of economic and cultural development that it had achieved in the first century AD. But this was possible because the slave economies of antiquity not only failed to advance the productive forces, but actually destroyed them, causing depopulation and soil exhaustion etc. The collapse of ancient civilisation took place when its already narrow technical advantage over barbarism had been eroded by centuries of slavery. Unlike those of antiquity, modern capitalist civilisation is based upon the constant revolutionisation of the mode of material production. The capitalist relations of production constantly prove themselves incapable of sustaining the new technologies that they themselves have engendered. But this does not result in technical advance coming to a halt to await in suspended animation the advent of socialism or a descent into barbarism. The two possible exits from the crisis are not socialism or barbarism, but socialism or reformed capitalism. Either the proletariat is sufficiently organised politically, militarily and ideologically to seize power and abolish capitalism, or, in the absence of proletarian initiative, history does not stand still: capitalism reforms itself.

The description of the economic situation in the TP was not based upon objective investigation and analysis, but upon subjective and impressionistic assessment. This cannot be allowed in a communist programme.

Further on this same section of the programme characterises the New Deal merely as a 'special form of political perplexity' which it is said will open no exit from the 'economic blind alley'. But once again the cause of this 'blind alley' is not identified. One is forced to conclude that the leadership of the 4th International had little more of an understanding of the economic crisis than had the majority of capitalist statesmen. But without the necessary understanding of the situation it was entirely reckless to say that there was no way out under capitalism from the economic blind alley. In fact the work of Keynes and the Polish Luxemburgist economist Kalecki had by then shown that it was possible for capitalism to escape from the slump. The success of Keynesianism was soon proved in practice with the post-war boom, and indeed its potential had already been hinted at in the fascist economies.

The use of Marxist theory to examine the situation would have shown that the crisis was not so much a crisis of the capitalist system of production, as a crisis of the ideological, fiscal and monetary superstructure that monopoly capital had inherited from the period of liberal capitalism. The adoption of the appropriate fiscal and monetary policies by the state could, and eventually did, regenerate economic growth. Before this could occur, ideological obstacles would have to be surmounted as would the political resistance of sections of the bourgeoisie (especially bank capital). Marx had already provided a basis for the analysis of the form of the crisis that developed during the 30s with his writings on the British banking legislation. That fact that this

was ignored in the TP in favour of 'revolutionary' phrasemongering about the total inability of capitalism to escape from the economic crisis, is evidence of the low priority that the Trotskyists assigned to a scientific analysis of the base (this does not imply that the Comintern had a better analysis).

In its understanding of economic events the 4th International proved itself inferior to the social democratic advocates of Keynesianism. The 4th International said that this was the final crisis of capitalism, that socialism was the only way out, etc., etc. Following the war the Social Democrats introduced Keynesian reforms under the guise of socialism. These restore economic prosperity, improve living standards, etc. Conclusion: both on the arguments of the Trotskyists and on those of the Social Democrats, workers would have been justified in thinking that the introduction of socialism was indeed what the SD's were up to. Admittedly, since the Trotskyists had very little influence within the proletariat, whatever they said would have very little effect, but they claimed to be organising the most conscious vanguard elements in the proletariat. Such inaccurate forecasts by those who claimed to be the representatives of communism could only discredit communism in the eyes of these elements.

What follows in the first section of the TP is more overblown and imprecise rhetoric in the same style.

From inaccurate interpretation of the economic situation there follows in the next section: 'The Proletariat and its Leadership', an extremely over-optimistic assessment of the political situation. The entire world is seen as being in a pre-revolutionary state, and the only thing preventing world revolution is said to be the opportunist leadership provided by the Comintern and Social Democracy.

According to Freud, dreams provide a means of wish fulfilment for the subconscious mind. For isolated political sects as the 4th International then was, (and largely remains), programmatic documents sometimes seem to act as dream substitutes. The Trotskyists' desire to become the leaders of a revolutionary workers' movement, led them to claim that the working class was everywhere 'instinctively' striving for revolution. It was only held back by its opportunist leaders, so the new leaders had but to present themselves to be acclaimed. Put of course, besides being over-sanguine, this interpretation verges upon idealism. For instance it says:

The unprecedented wave of sitdown strikes and the amazingly rapid growth of industrial unionism in the United States (the CIO) is the most indisputable evidence of the instinctive striving of the American workers to raise themselves to the level of the tasks imposed upon them by history.

To seek to explain historical developments in terms of instincts has nothing in common with Marxism. Examination of the period shows that it is not necessary to have recourse to instincts to

explain the American developments in the economic class struggle. Far from being instinctive, these developments were a response to material conditions. The new technical conditions of production (assembly-line mass-production) brought together large numbers of semi-skilled workers in new industries - primarily those associated with automobile production. The outdated craft unionism of the AFL was unwilling and unable to organise these workers, thus making it possible for auto-workers, etc., to organise themselves into new industrial unions. The sit-down strike was not adopted as a result of instinctive strivings towards proletarian revolution, but because it was a good tactic in these new forms of industry. The Trotskyists committed the old economist error of pretending that spontaneous syndical struggles were incipient socialist revolution. The subsequent development of the CIO has proved how wrong they were.

THE PROGRAMME OF "TRANSITIONAL DEMANDS".

According to Trotskyism, it was a fault of classical social democracy that it divided its programme into two parts: a minimum programme of reforms within bourgeois society, and the maximum or socialist programme. According to Trotsky, whilst this was possible during the period of progressive capitalism, it was now impossible as capitalism was in decay and there could be no discussion of systematic social reforms and the raising of living standards, as "every serious demand of the proletariat and even every serious demand of the petty bourgeoisie inevitably reaches beyond the limits of capitalist property relations and of the bourgeois state." Because of this new situation, the day to day work of the party could now be carried on indissolubly from the actual task of revolution. This enabled the minimal and maximal programmes to be merged into the Transitional Programme, whose demands, stemming from "today's conditions and today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat", were incorporated in the programme of the 4th International.

This is heady rhetoric, but anti-Marxist. It constitutes a reversion to the tailist politics criticised by Lenin in "What Is To Be Done".

First, the claim that every serious petty bourgeois demand reaches beyond capitalist property forms and the capitalist state is so grotesque that it is scarcely credible that anybody with Marxist pretensions could make it. The whole burden of the attacks on petty bourgeois socialism that had occupied much of the attention of Marx, was that the supposedly socialist demands of the petty bourgeoisie were no more than a plea for the enforcement of capitalist property relations in an idealised form. The specific demands of the petty bourgeoisie are for the establishment of an idealised commodity-producing society, where the "universal justice" of the exchange of "strict equivalents" will prevail. But in his economic writings, Marx went out of his way to make clear that it is precisely the full and fair enforcement of the law of equivalent exchange, i.e., the exchange of equal values, that

results in capitalist production. It is the law of value, i.e., bourgeois property in motion, that allows capital accumulation and the proletarianisation of the petty bourgeois. The demands of the latter are progressive only with respect to feudalism, against which they constitute the main force in all democratic revolutions. With respect to capitalism, the specific demands of the petty bourgeois are reactionary. They seek to turn back the clock to the 'golden age' of free competition. Insofar as they come into conflict with capitalism it is because capitalism is too advanced for their liking, not because it is backward. They thus provide material for all sorts of reactionary populist movements. The National Socialists in Germany were able to win mass support by playing upon this petty bourgeois opposition to monopoly capital and finance capital. Further, through their claim that the spontaneous demands of the petty bourgeois were now objectively revolutionary, the 4th Internationalists anticipated the creative 'Marxism' of the modern revisionists with their populist strategies of anti-monopoly alliances.

Second, the idea of transitional demands is only tenable within a catastrophist outlook, which sees even the most minimal progress as being impossible whilst capitalism continues. But to the extent that the mode of production remains capable of further development, the whole notion of transitional demands falls. As we have said, the capitalist relations of production still held considerable potential for development. Moreover, this was possible because capitalism did carry out a number of serious social reforms. Keynes advocated reforms, which were carried through almost in their entirety (at least in the Anglo-Saxon countries) and which, far from being incompatible with capitalism, were the precondition both for further capitalist development, and for the amelioration of the conditions of the working class under capitalism. They were reforms in the way that the state operated: specifically, reforms in the way taxation, government spending, and the banks were utilised. They in no way changed the basis of the mode of production itself, which remained capitalist commodity production; but they were reforms all the same, as the developments of the productive forces and in popular living standards showed.

Economic crises arise when the social relations are incapable of sustaining a development of the forces of production. To understand a crisis one must know precisely in what way the social relations are preventing development; and further, know what changes aggravate the crisis and just what changes would clear the block upon the development of production. One must find out what are the minimal measures for the removal of the block. For it is these minimal measures, the minimum necessary reforms, that the ruling class will eventually institute, provided of course that they are compatible with the fundamentals of the existing relations of production. Unless this is done, one is not able to say if the crisis is terminal.

If, on the contrary, reforms are still possible within the framework of the existing order, then the whole justification for transitional demands vanishes. If it is not true that every

serious demand of the proletariat reaches beyond the limits of capitalist property, then such demands, far from being transitional, far from leading to the inevitable abolition of private property, are a mere dressed up version of the old minimum programme of social democracy. But whereas a minimum programme was not incompatible with revolutionary social democracy, for instance the 1917 Bolshevik Programme contained a minimum programme; revolutionary social democracy did not claim that a minimum programme could of itself enable a transition to socialism, nor did it claim that these would lead unalterably to the conquest of power by the proletariat.

The minimum programme was advanced on the grounds that it was compatible with the continued existence of capitalism, and thus could be effected before the seizure of state power by social democracy. But the measures of the minimum programme would, if enacted, allow the further material and organisational development of the working class. For instance, the shortening of the working day (an element of the 1917 Bolshevik programme) aided the development of a strong labour movement. It would leave more time free for political/organisational activity. The transitional programme is presented as something more than a struggle for improved conditions under capitalism. But insofar as many of the transitional demands are no more than this, it constitutes an opportunist attempt to dress-up reformism as revolutionary struggle.

If on the other hand the TP does contain demands that cannot possibly be realised under capitalism, the format is still opportunist. If it contains demands for measures that would entail the abolition of capitalism, then a precondition for these demands being met would be proletarian state power. But in that case, the whole notion of advancing 'demands' is absurdly reformist. If you demand something then you acknowledge, as Marx put it, that you are not the master of the situation. A 'demand' is made by those who lack the power to achieve what they desire.

It is a contradiction in terms for the proletariat to demand measures that entail the abolition of capitalism. This can only be achieved by the working class relying upon its own efforts; it can only be achieved by the working class organising itself as ruling class. As the masters of society the workers will have no need of demands - instead of demanding, they will act. Here we can see the opportunist essence of the Trotskyist programme: the belief that the reformist practice of advancing demands can, by the simple escalation of these, be transformed into revolutionary practice. The duty of communists is not to demand impossible reforms, but to show the working class that a revolutionary solution to its problems is both necessary and possible.

An examination of just a few of the specific transitional demands bears out the validity of our general criticism of the transitional programme.

The sliding scale of wages. This demand is in no way revolutionary,

the struggle for a sliding scale of wages being a specific syndical tactic. It is no more than the adaptation of normal trades unionism to inflation. Workers organise in unions to prevent the employing class reducing the price of the only commodity that they have to sell - labour power - below its value. As the value of labour power is always expressed in terms of money, a fall in the value of money requires a rise in money wages to stop the price of labour power falling below its value. A sliding scale of wages is just the best way of preventing wages falling below the value of labour power. As such it is essentially defensive, not offensive, not revolutionary. In going for a sliding scale of wages the unions are just doing the same as every other seller of commodities in conditions of inflation. They do the same as capitalists who raise the price of their commodities when the value of money falls. As sellers of a commodity in a commodity-producing society, the working class must be as ruthless as any other seller in its application of the laws of the market, but a struggle over commodity prices can never per-se be revolutionary.

In the transitional programme this tactic is combined with another: the demand for a sliding scale of hours to combat unemployment, i.e., work-sharing. It proposes that whilst working hours are to be reduced, wages are not. Despite the reduction in the working week, the weekly wage is to stay the same. Here we have the other side of the transitional coin. The sliding scale of wages is a feasible tactic, but is just standard trades unionism: in combination with a sliding scale of hours it is transformed into an impossible utopia. During a slump, capitalists lay off workers because sales are falling, and consequently they are unable to meet their wages' bill. A cut back in production and wages becomes their only means of avoiding bankruptcy. If workers in fact succeeded in cutting the length of the working week whilst maintaining real wages constant, this would still not be enough to prevent unemployment. Instead, it would lead to the more rapid bankruptcy of the firm for which they worked, thus producing in the end yet higher unemployment.

As Marx showed in Chapter III of Capital, the possibility of an imbalance between total supply and total demand, leading to an interruption in commodity circulation, is built into the very nature of commodity production. As the working class under capitalism are sellers of a commodity in a commodity-producing system, they cannot hope to escape its logic so long as the system itself remains unaltered. Trades union struggle can never prevent the anarchy of commodity production. Recessions arise from an interruption of the circulation of commodities and thus of capital: from the inability of value in commodity form to complete its meta-morphosis into money. Their remedy requires an increase in the monetary circulation, which only the state can do. It requires centralised intervention in the economy. When it came to fighting unemployment, the Keynesian programme of the reformists proved more effective than the Trotskyist transitional one.

Business Secrets and Workers' Control. The first theses in this

section deny the possibility of economic planning under capitalism, especially under monopoly capital. "In their cowardly experiments in 'regulation', democratic governments run head on into the invincible sabotage of big capital." The assertion that the state as the collective representative of capital is unable to carry out any regulation of private industry does not accord with the facts. In Britain, state regulation of capitalist enterprise dates back to the Ten Hours Act of 1847. Such regulation forced through under proletarian pressure, was opposed initially by the industrial capitalists, but, as Marx has shown, this regulation was in the long term interests of the bourgeoisie themselves. Since then the scope of state regulation has been greatly expanded. War provided an extra-strong impulse to this. During WWII the British state took over almost complete control of production in the "national interest". This was directed at producing maximum military production. Since then, non-military application of capitalist planning has proved its potency in the more progressive bourgeois states like France and Japan. In their attempt to introduce indicative planning, the French government did not meet the "invincible opposition" of big capital; on the contrary, the latter welcomed it, as big capital realised that planning brought the prospect of greater stability and higher profits.

Capital is not averse to planning as such, so long as it remains a means towards the accumulation of capital. In fact, the evolution towards a greater degree of state control and planning is an inevitable stage in the centralisation of capital, e.g. nationalised industries.

The attitude of communists towards such capitalist state planning and control of industry should be the same as towards any other progressive development within the capitalist mode of production. If the advance is objectively required by the development of the forces of production, and if, as in the case of capitalist planning, it modifies at least to a certain extent the system of 'pure' commodity production, then communists should welcome it. They should not on the other hand commit the working class, or attempt to commit it, to an alliance with that section of the bourgeoisie that seeks to introduce the reform. The reform should only be actively supported and fought for, if the struggle for it will aid the development of the working class as an autonomous political class capable of acting in its own right. Such advances should nevertheless be welcomed, since they show the extent to which modern technology is incompatible with the principles of commodity exchange upon which capitalism is based. As such they are yet another practical argument for socialism. The reforms that the bourgeoisie make under force of economic circumstances are the best evidence of the historical inevitability of socialism. For they often go against every precept of classical capitalist ideology, and as a result, it cannot be claimed that the measures have been artificially imposed upon society as a result of some utopian scheme. Such reforms produce ideological effects not only within theoretical debate but also within the popular consciousness. Keynes not only forced capitalist economic theorists to admit that a capitalist economy was not self-regulating - not automatically

capable of maintaining full employment - the practical effect of his policies also registered upon the consciousness of the masses. Their attitude to unemployment has changed as a result. What was once seen by the mass of workers (as opposed to the vanguard with a socialist education) as some sort of 'natural' catastrophe, now is instead a crime. To allow unemployment is now considered to be little less than a criminal negligence on the part of government. As a result, the immediate demand of the unemployed is not for "full maintenance" but for the state to intervene to guarantee the "right to work". The historical developments and transformations of capitalist production, tend to produce an ideological climate which is increasingly favourable to the communists' propaganda.

But in addition to these aspects of capitalist reforms which in the long run benefit the proletarians, there are other short term effects, which produce immediate political gains to the bourgeois.

We have argued that the 4th International programme was wrong to take a catastrophist attitude towards capitalism in the 1930s, that it was incorrect to see capitalism as incapable of further reform. However, it is the case that when it does prove necessary for the capitalists to reform their system, this is only done after a struggle. The reforms that are recognised by the more progressive among the bourgeoisie to be a regrettable but inevitable necessity, are seen by the less far-sighted members of that class as 'creeping socialism', etc. Since, in order to survive, capitalism must increasingly mimic socialism, such accusations may appear to have some substance. The New Deal, a very mild version of what was later to become the capitalist orthodoxy, was greeted with hysterical opposition from conservative circles of the ruling class who believed that it was some kind of socialist plot. The struggle within bourgeois politics could not but have an effect upon the proletariat. The opposition to reform by the more backward sections of the bourgeoisie would add credibility to the idea that the reforms were really fundamental, leading to the masses putting their faith in populist political leaders, and coming to believe that some kind of socialism was being introduced. For this reason it is foolish to deny that capitalism has any capacity to reform itself. Communists, whilst admitting the possibility of capitalist reform, should rather point out the limited extent of such reforms and how they differ qualitatively from socialism.

Looking again at the 4th International programme, we can see that it completely misread the situation by presenting the bourgeoisie as being utterly opposed to any form of state intervention in the economy. It claimed that this opposition was put into effect by the capitalist firms denying the government access to their "business secrets". To these secrets it attached a quite inflated importance claiming that: "The business secrets of the present epoch are part of a persistent plot of monopoly capitalism against the interests of society."

These notions have more in common with the demagoguery of US Anti-Trust Law campaigners than with Marxism. It contains that standard stock in trade of the demagogue; the conspiracy against.

the interest of "society". Marxism lends no credence to the conspiracy theory of history, nor does it recognise any such thing as the interests of society. Except under communism the interest of society is a myth, what really exists are the conflicting interests of different classes. In general the 'interests of society' are just the interests of the ruling class in disguise.

Predating the emergence of science, all primitive societies develop a system of magic enabling them to come to terms with the forces of nature, of which they can have no real comprehension, and over which they have no real control. Having no conception of nature as an objective material process, primitive peoples are constrained to explain the 'otherness' and power of Nature by anthropomorphic devices, i.e., ascribing to it 'human' properties on a greater, 'super-human', transcendental scale.

Likewise, those lacking comprehension of scientific socialism - failing to see history as the unfolding of objective process fuelled by the internal contradictions of class struggle - must resort to magic for their worldview. They too, in their turn, are forced back upon Anthropomorphism; in this case the ascription of historical change to 'great individuals'. This approach spans the 'Caesar-Napoleon' complex of bourgeois individualism to the 'Cult of Personality' of Revisionism/Trotskyism, through the permanent swamp of petit-bourgeois demagogy.

Hence if individuals, more or less great, more or less arbitrarily 'make history', then of course a few such individuals 'conspiring together' can drastically alter its course. Thus in the system of Populist/Nationalist demagogy taken to its ultimate logic - Nazi Germany - it comes as no surprise to find that the vital interests of the German People (Volk) are being undermined by an 'internationalist, Communist, Jewish conspiracy': truly the antitheses of populist nationalism. The whole 'Anti-Monopoly Alliance' fetish of Revisionism/Trotskyism is but the 'Left' inversion of such hysterical petit-bourgeois demagogy. Not for them Marx's view that the 'Monopolists' are but the agents of the forces inherent in capital; rather the 'monopolists' bestride history like Colossi, and for them capital is a mere plaything of the rich, in the view of history so mercilessly ridiculed by Marx:

"Victor Hugo confines himself to bitter and witty invective against the responsible publisher of the coup d'etat. The event itself appears in his work like a bolt from the blue. He sees in it only the violent act of a single individual. He does not notice that he makes this individual great instead of little by ascribing to him a personal power of initiative such as would be without parallel in world history."

"As ever, weakness had taken refuge in a belief in miracles, fancied the enemy overcome when he was only conjured away in imagination, and it lost all understanding of the present in a passive glorification of the future that was in store for it and of the deeds it had in petto but which it merely did not want to carry out as yet."

This is Marx commenting on the flopped French Revolutions of 1848-52, in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.

Business secrets are not in fact part of a secret conspiracy against society, arising as they do out of the exigencies of capitalist competition. It is quite incorrect for the Programme to claim that: "In reality the trusts keep no secrets from each other." Quite the opposite, as the number of firms operating in an industry falls the importance of commercial secrecy rises, and the growth throughout this century of industrial espionage underlines this fact.

If 100 firms compete to produce a commodity the financial strength of any one of these 100 is of little interest to the remaining 99. To them it makes no difference whether the 100th firm remains within the industry or leaves it. When on the other hand a few giant firms dominate the market, the strength and intentions of any one of them is of vital concern to all of the others. The motivation for business secrecy increases with the centralisation of capital.

"Workers no less than capitalists have the right to know the secrets of the factory, of the trust, of the whole branch of industry, of the national economy as a whole. First and foremost, banks, heavy industry, and centralised transport should be placed under an observation glass."

"The immediate tasks of workers' control should be to explain the debits and credits of society, beginning with individual business undertakings; to determine the actual share of national income appropriated by individual capitalists and by the exploiters as a whole; to expose the behind-the-scenes deals and swindles of the banks and trusts; finally, to reveal to all members of society that unconscionable squandering of human labour which is the result of capitalist anarchy and the naked pursuit of profits."

"The working out of even the most elementary economic plan - from the point of view of the exploited and not the exploiters - is impossible without workers' control, that is without the penetration of the workers' eyes into all open and concealed springs of capitalist economy. Committees representing individual business enterprises should meet at a conference to chose corresponding committees of trusts, whole branches of industry, economic regions and finally of national industry as a whole. Thus, workers' control becomes a school for planned economy. On the basis of the experience of control, the proletariat will prepare itself for direct management of nationalised industry when the hour of that eventuality strikes."

These quotes, from the same section, contain proposals that would be excellent if carried out as presented. Unfortunately, as set out the proposals are voluntarist and one-sided. They describe what 'should' be the 'tasks' of workers' control. The development of workers' control is presented as the unfolding of some pre-arranged plan, rather than as an objective process that revolutionaries might seek to influence.

This is typical of the Trotskyist tendency to adopt a teleological view of events, that we saw in their estimation of industrial unionism in the USA. From the teleological viewpoint, present events are not seen as the result of past and present causes. Instead one views occurrences in terms of some purpose or design that they are claimed to serve. For instance, US industrial unions were presented not as the result of their real cause - conditions of contemporary US class struggle and technical development - but as the expression of an ulterior purpose: "The instinctive striving of American workers to raise themselves to the level of the tasks imposed on them by history."

The treatment of workers' control is teleological because it speaks of tasks workers' control should carry out. In other words it presents workers' control as a purposeful and orderly process that works towards the achievement of some definite goal. This, of course, is a very convenient, satisfying approach to history. It saves you the trouble of trying to understand the dialectics of the evolutionary development and revolutionary transformation of society. With this approach it is unnecessary to look in detail at what workers' control would be in a capitalist society, and how it would in fact function. Instead, you just decide upon some desirable future outcome - in this case the building of a planned economy - you then say that the 'task' of future historical events is to achieve this outcome.

This approach is, of course, idealist. Unfortunately for its proponents, the historic tasks and objectives exist only in their minds as hopes and aspirations. But hopes and aspirations will not change history if they go against the force of material events. Instead of this idealist procedure, the Marxist world outlook of dialectical and historical materialism abolishes all teleological notions of final causes or historical purposes, and examines the objective contradictions governing developments. These contradictions give rise to opposed developmental tendencies. Communists must identify these and struggle to reinforce those which are in the long term interests of the proletariat.

Thus, to take the concrete example of workers' control, communists cannot proceed by the abstract method of declaiming what should be the tasks of workers' control. The programme should explain what is meant by workers' control, what social relations and property relations it entails. On the basis of this it should identify the contrary tendencies existing in a system of workers' control, those tendencies acting to preserve capitalist production relations, which must be fought (The Yugoslav example shows these can be very powerful), and those developing towards socialism, which must be reinforced. This approach to workers' control is lacking in the Transitional Programme.

The central problem in communist strategy is that of the transition to the workers' dictatorship. A correct strategy towards workers' control is in its turn vital to a transition to the proletarian dictatorship in advanced capitalist countries. Because of its undialectical approach to workers' control, the 4th International

programme does not as it stands provide a basis for a communist programme on workers' control.

"The socialist programme of expropriation, i.e., of political overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the liquidation of its economic domination, should in no case during the transitional period hinder us from advancing, when the occasion warrants, the demand for the expropriation of several key branches of industry vital for national existence or of the most parasitic group of the bourgeoisie."

The above quote (from section 8 of the TP) reveals that the Trotskyists, for all their scorn of the minimum programme, have adopted in disguised form the old reformist policy of nationalisation. The 4th International apparently demands the expropriation of the corporations holding monopolies of war industries, railroads, the most important sources of raw materials, etc. The 4th International has of course the right to demand whatever it likes, but these demands have no political significance unless it is in a position to enforce them. Towards whom are these demands directed?

In the context the only answer to that must be the capitalist state. In that case, are these realistic demands to expect the state to fulfill?

That state will at times take into its hands bankrupt companies or industries, if and when the state ownership of these is helpful to the continuation of capitalist production as a whole; i.e., when it is "vital for national existence". In the specific case of bankrupt firms, it is perfectly legitimate even in bourgeois juridical terms not to indemnify the shareholders. The state will also take over branches of industry which, if not bankrupt, are of low profitability, and as a result are unable to attract sufficient capital to modernise. These will be nationalised if their stagnant condition threatens overall economic development; the British Steel Corporation being a clear example. In these cases indemnification will occur. The property of foreign nationals, however, is fair game for confiscation, since the nation state exists by, and for, its own national bourgeoisie exclusively. The state will definitely not, on the other hand, nationalise without compensation profitable, key branches of industry belonging to its own nationals.

The demand that the bourgeois state do precisely this is utopian. It thus comes as no surprise to discover that this section of the transitional programme reflects the practical impossibility of its proposals by being internally grossly inconsistent. At the beginning the demand for the expropriation of separate groups of capitalists is presented as a pre-revolutionary measure, a measure to be carried out prior to the political overthrow of the bourgeoisie. In practice, however, only in the limited cases mentioned above could it be carried through before the seizure of state power.

Effectively recognising this the programme goes on to say:

"(3) we call upon the masses to rely upon their own revolutionary strength; (4) we link up the question of expropriation with that of the seizure of power by the workers and farmers."

To call on the masses to rely upon their own revolutionary strength to carry out expropriations is tantamount to admitting that these measures are impossible short of the proletarian dictatorship. But this will expropriate not only the most "parasitic group of the bourgeoisie", rather the whole of it. What then was the point of demanding the expropriation of only a portion of the capitalists, other than to confuse the masses as to the nature of state power.

We have here presented criticisms of only a few aspects of the Transitional Programme. We have dealt only with those aspects which have either a general significance, or else, are of particular importance in advanced bourgeois states like the UK. Other sections of the programme have been neglected since, either they were acceptable in any communist programme, or they were relevant only to the specific historical situation existing in the 1930s; or finally, they were dependent for their validity upon an acceptance of the Trotskyist analysis of the USSR, which forms part of quite another debate. On these last sections we are unable to comment, without falling into subjectivism. Until a proper Marxist-Leninist history of the USSR has been prepared there is no scientific basis for a critique of the Trotskyist analysis.

We have devoted attention to the Transitional Programme here, because it has had a considerable influence upon the thinking of the British Left. The Marxist-Leninist groupuscules, whilst loud in their criticisms of Trotskyism, have been noticeably reticent in their criticism of its programmatic basis. Hopefully, this can provide the starting point for a polemic that will differentiate Trotskyism from Marxism-Leninism.

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How COBI Proceeds~

THREE LETTERS ON C.O.B.I.'s PERSPECTIVES:

Not a barrage of criticism, but a stupefied silence greeted the formation of COBI as of 1st January, 1974. That a revolutionary organisation could commit itself to scientific socialism as a fundamental perspective, and in so doing, repudiate the whole British empirical, nose-following 'labour movement' tradition, stunned all the organised left into the silence of incomprehension - such an against-the-grain approach was after all 'so unrealistic and contrary to common sense' that it was best ignored.

However, uneven development is an absolute law, and COBI received a considerable amount of correspondence from thinking individuals, anxious in the main to clarify what was unclear in their own minds and in our formulations.

- This correspondence tended to fall into three broad categories:
- 1) scientific socialism and what is required for its development, i.e., on the leading role of theory and its relationship to practice;
 - 2) how COBI sees itself as developing (on the basis of Proletarian No:1) and recruiting its cadres;
 - 3) vanguardism versus elitism in the development towards the Leninist Party.

Obviously all these three aspects are interrelated parts of the process leading to the formation of the class party. Accordingly, most of the letters ranged over each of these aspects, but emphasised different parts. So to clarify (briefly) 'what COBI is all about' in relation to the three basic areas, we sought and received permission to reproduce three items of correspondence (along with our replies), each stressing a different area of concern, thus to clarify our perspectives.

LETTER 1.

Dear Comrades,

I was recently sent a copy of Proletarian by a friend and I have also just read the recent issue of the N.E.R. on Gramsci.

The article by Williams in N.E.R. seems a very solid piece of work and the review of Hinton's book in Proletarian seems interesting, balanced and sensitive, though I lack the specialised knowledge which would enable me to agree or disagree with your assessment of the S.L.P. or Bordiga. In any case it is a major reassessment of our Marxist tradition.

I must add that I have known of the B&ICO group for some time, in fact I remember that I just met Brendan Clifford sometime in 1962 or 63 in a cafe off Soho Square! I have disagreed with many of the B&ICO's analyses while admiring the very solid work that they seem to have done on a whole number of what I consider to be rather peripheral issues such as dealing with some peculiar Irish trendies in the academic world.

However I must say that despite the excellent research you seem to have done and I am sure are now doing, I consider your main orientation as laid down in your editorial of 1.1.74 in Proletarian to be lunatic. Your line on workers' control is obviously correct. B&ICO are now quite clearly to RIGHT not merely of Scanlon but the TUC!! To enter your group one has to pass an exam (a) write a dissertation (b); start a PhD (d) and start two subsidiary subjects (e)!!! All in Marxism! You must all be academics and I seem to remember a certain text by Karl Marx dealing with being and consciousness which seems apposite! Of course there is a gesture towards practice in (c). If you continue like this though you are bound to degenerate. The SLP was after all thoroughly working class if skilled working class (not to say Proletarian!)

In any case I would like to subscribe to N.E.R. while you control it! and Proletarian...

Yours fraternally,
T.C. (London, 16.5.74)

COBI REPLY:

Thanks for your interesting letter. We are glad to see you found NER so worthwhile under its current management, and likewise Proletarian with the reservation over "academic elitism".

You will note that we make (and often) a very firm distinction between bourgeois academic education and education for proletarian self-consciousness. In so doing we will use bourgeois disciplines for all they are worth, and thus subsume its usefulness in the development of the proletarian world outlook.

You point to the obvious danger of us going the way of the B&ICO, and also Theoretical Practice, in our stressing the priority for theoretical work. We think this by no means follows as: a) it was the very awareness of such degeneration which alienated us both from B&ICO and TP; b) more importantly, out of this consciousness we have structured a methodological framework and series of perspectives which should enable us as an organisation to keep the correct dialectical balance between theory and practice; c) consequently our members are engaged in tenants' associations, rank and file work and trade union activity, but all this to develop and enrich their theoretical grasp of social realities.

So we unashamedly maintain that our premise of theoretical advance being the priority for the foreseeable future, is the correct one. Not only does vanguardism not equate to elitism (a fundamental

point of Leninism in its cleavage from economism and trotskyism; (cf. What Is To Be Done) but the fact that you have found the practical results of our perspectives rewarding, we would think is sufficient proof of our approach's validity. So if you find "our line on workers' control is obviously correct", on reflection you'll probably agree that like the rest of the British Left, you still haven't broken from what Engels described exactly 100 years ago: "Without a sense of theory among the workers, this scientific Socialism would never have entered their flesh and blood as much as is the case. What an immeasurable advantage this is may be seen, on the one hand, from the indifference toward all theory which is one of the main reasons why the English working-class movement crawls along so slowly in spite of the splendid organisation of the individual unions." You must admit the British malaise hasn't been cured these hundred years.

In a society as developed, complex, insular (mentally) and stable as this, there can be no other way forward than by becoming more conscious in over-view and skilled operationally than its currently most competent element, i.e. the ruling class. How else but by the failure to do this, can one explain the singular lack of success (or even impact) by British revolutionaries?

So it has to be back to the drawing-board; back to doing it the hard, boring, unglamorous way; back to doing our homework; back to the British Museum!

LETTER 2.

I am writing for further information about COBI. I am a twenty year old T.U. Engineer and shop steward in the EEPTU. Until recently I was a member of the Labour Party Young Socialists but having read Proletarian No.1, Programmatic Documents, Proletarian Pamphlet No.1, Communism, The Labour Party and the Left, and also the B&ICO document - The Economics of Partition, I found I could no longer reconcile working for and within the Labour Party with the tasks of Marxism-Leninism as adumbrated by the COBI in the above documents.

I was, however, slightly perturbed by some of the 'entrance qualifications' of the COBI. Whilst appreciating the necessity of developing a homogeneous, theoretically adroit Marxist-Leninist organisation I felt that some of the pre-conditions for membership would lead to the exclusion of even the most conscious worker, the consequence of this being the inevitable degeneration of the COBI into an 'academic vanguard'.

I will be interested to hear from you and appreciate a consideration of the above points.

Yours fraternally,
J.P. (Banbury, Oxon, 18.6.75)

COBI REPLY:

Your letter was doubly interesting. In the first place you were

able to correctly identify the fundamentally different perspectives of the B&ICO (before degeneration) and subsequently COBI, in relation to the rest of the Left: the scientific adumbration of the tasks of Marxism-Leninism to supplant the myth and magic that goes under the name of Marxism in British Left organisations. Specifically, you correctly perceive that COBI's membership requirements are designed to develop 'a homogeneous, theoretically adroit Marxist-Leninist organisation'.

In the second place, again correctly, you point the possible dangers of stiff entry requirements as being the potential 'exclusion of even the most conscious workers, the consequences of this being the inevitable degeneration of the COBI into an "academic vanguard"'. This is well put, and we are not unaware of the dangers. These lie chiefly in a rigid adherence to a purely formal set of entrance qualifications. Now, some formal structure is necessary so that an objective standard is posited - one designed explicitly to keep both 'pure and simple' academics and 'pure and simple' T.U. militants out. So the entry requirements (for full members) are set such that the theoretical/practical development demanded of associates continues to advance after the acceptance into full (voting) membership, and they don't get the attitude that having 'passed the entry test' they can sit back and coast, or be passengers. At no level whatsoever will COBI tolerate passengers, and full membership in particular is much more onerous than just voting and 'taking decisions'.

Turning now to the entry requirements themselves (in Proletarian No:1, p.8): Point 10 calls upon "all those who regard themselves as revolutionary socialists whether organised or not to work with us as associates". This is the only entry requirement for associates. Having worked satisfactorily with COBI for some time, and having covered the reading required, associates can be admitted as full members upon the writing of something of substance in the field of Marxism-Leninism. This is not the PhD some spontaneists have suggested, and neither is it just any essay-subject that takes the fancy, but a meaningful treatment of a significant theme agreed in advance between the organisation and the associate. And that in sum is the substance of the formidable-looking items (a) to (d) of point 11.

Item (e) only seems remarkable in Britain. Throughout Europe a second language (at least) is standard and multilinguality is common. If we are real internationalists in fact, and not just in phrase, then the little effort to learn a European language - to which the term 'foreign' scarcely applies - is the minimum required to break from British insularity, and exchange revolutionary experience, within and outwith, Europe. Neither is learning another language difficult once the British fetish against 'other languages' (an Imperialist hangover) is overcome. In this (ideological) as well as in the technical regard, the first 'foreign' language is always the hardest, each thereafter becoming easier as general linguistic skills are acquired. And all that point (e) demands of associates becoming full members is that they undertake to learn at least one foreign language; i.e. fluency at

the time of entry is preferable but not mandatory.

Item (e) likewise calls on all those who would be full members to familiarise themselves with a natural science, which can be anything from Astronomy to Zoology. This does not mean that the prospective member should upon winning full membership be ready or able to get a job in an observatory or research lab; but it does mean that he/she should understand the inner workings of some body of natural science if his/her claim to scientific socialism (grasp of objective process) is to have any substance.

If items (a) to (e) are largely designed to overcome ouvrierism, philistinism and academic specialism endemic in the British Left, then items (f) and (g) can be regarded as attempts to root out the carry-over of the bourgeois division of labour into revolutionary practice:

(f) means that every single member must (at least in the field of practical work) be able to perform the tasks that every other can. Thus we won't have the situation where 'specialists' in 'theory' (as per Klugmann, Dutt, Cornforth, etc.) do the thinking while the rest just see to 'getting it out' or popularising 'the line' from the 'experts' on high. Further, by such interchangeability, no member is enabled to become indispensable.

(g) 'mens sana in corpore sano' has been an overworked cliché, but it has validity nonetheless. One thinks better when one's physical state is good; the lack of which in Gramsci's case he always lamented. Further, when the time comes for the translation of 'combative' words into deeds, physical fitness and the mental aggressiveness thus prepared are the fundamental prerequisites for any real mass leadership. This does not mean, as some spontaneists/dilletantes have alleged, that you need at least one conviction for Grievous Bodily Harm to be even considered for membership. It does mean that members must get and stay fit, not get drunk or blown out of their minds by dope (no matter how 'soft') and cut down/out smoking.

So what COBI Entry/Membership requirements really demand is that all 'intellectuals' work and all workers 'intellectualise' in a continuous learning process designed to break down the barriers between mental and physical labour, between thinking and actually doing. No aspect of this can be a once and for all 'achievement' upon which to rest, but only part of a continuous dialectical interaction between theory and practice, with each informing and correcting the other.

And surely that is the least that can be expected of those who would take upon themselves the vanguard role of leading the class as a whole toward standing capitalist society on its head?

LETTER 3.

I have read your document 'The Crisis of British Capital' which I bought in Colletts while in London. I can't find a publishing date so I'm not sure how recent it is; have you considered writing and published anything on your attitude to the need for a Marxist-Leninist Party? I think this is the paramount question for us at the moment.

On your document - I agree more or less with your analysis of the Labour Party et al, and of the Trade Unions - but your attitude to Industrial Unionism seems open to a Syndicalist interpretation, and unfortunately there is a great deal of Economism in the British 'M-L' Groups (e.g. CPB(M-L), Feds, etc) who would leap onto such a bandwagon as an alternative to political struggle. Your last full paragraph on page 37 fully exemplifies the attitudes I have found within many M-L Groups - their economism and opportunism is rife.

I agree completely with the points listed at the end of your pamphlet as follows:- SUMMARY, points 5, 6, +7 - WHAT IS COBI - points 3, 5 + 6.

Again, the main point of my letter is to find out your attitude to the formation of the Party.

Yours fraternally,
O.B. (Ormskirk, Lancs. 6.9.75)

COBI REPLY.

Proletarian Pamphlet No.2 - The Crisis of British Capital - is our most recent publication, having appeared about 6 weeks ago. You don't mention whether you've seen either number of the (two) issues of the theoretical journal Proletarian to have appeared to date. No.1 is largely concerned with the nature of the role of the Communist Party, while section IV of Pamphlet No.2 systematises this, and ends with formulations as to how (upon what basis) the Party is constituted. Going to press this month is Proletarian No.3 which analyses the Programmatic requirements for the proper constitution of the party upon strategic principles.

I agree with your statement that British M-L groups are permeated through and through with Economism. But for precisely that reason will they not jump on the bandwagon of industrial unionism, because:

- a) the latter is part of a strategy for qualitatively altering the whole basis of Left politics in Britain
- b) as permanent tailenders and empiricist massworkers, the groups have no other perspective than being radical ginger-groups for working-class institutions and politics spontaneously thrown up in economic/defensist struggle.

As the development of industrial unions requires conscious building

by militants of organs in opposition to the established Trades unions, no bandwagoneers could jump aboard, as the whole programme (including e.g. the replacement of Trades Councils by local Workers' Committees) means embracing a wholly new integrated perspective antithetical to everything the Left now does. Likewise, we may be accused of syndicalism, but only by those seeking to pull out of context one plank in an integrated platform. And as you have noticed we stress the leading and initiating function of the Party throughout.

All of which goes to indicate our attitude to party-building: the Party is not something which can simply be called into existence by just recognising the paramountcy of having, and therefore creating, the vanguard party. To be a real leading party of the class, the party must emerge from work that is seen to be of crucial relevance to the class: e.g. the analysis of inflation and the need to build industrial unions, to mention but two aspects. When a party was just called into existence by subjectively perceived 'need', we got the glorious CPB(M-L); and we will always get still-birthe like that unless the Party is gestated of labour; it cannot be conjured up out of the ground fully-fledged but grows from the struggle to do substantive work.

Proletarian Reprint No.2

WHAT IS A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY?

(S.L.P. ~ 1903)

"As in private life the distinction is made between what a man thinks of himself and says and that which he really is and does, so, all the more, must the phrases and notions of parties in historic struggles be distinguished from their real organism, and their real interests, their notions from their reality." Eighteenth Brumaire.

The extraordinary success of the German Socialist Party, as evidenced by the recent voting for the Reichstag, raises at once the question as to the character of the support vouchsafed to them. Generally speaking, the entire capitalist press has been eulogistic towards the German Socialists for their devotion to principle, their unbounded enthusiasm, and the thoroughness with which they undertake the task of organising the working-class on socialist lines. That is, of course, right and proper for mere Germans, not for "common Englishmen" or the Heaven-inspired "Anglo-Saxon". The growth of the Socialist Party in Germany is indeed the phenomenon which thinking men will examine with care. Bertrand Russell, a bourgeois critic of German socialism, describes them as "Not a party of mere economic reformers, but a party whose faith in their principles amounts to a religion." Springing immediately from the embers of the revolutionary fires of 1848, we have presented to us a party growth, a political organisation, that is equalled by none in Europe, casting, as they now do, nearly three million votes. It is impossible for this extraordinary growth to go on without in the immediate and near future compelling the German ruling class to

realise that capitalism has run its course. What then will be the position of the militant socialist party in Germany? It has often been declared by the ministers of the Kaiser from their official places, that the soldiery of the empire would be turned on to the audacious socialists at the first good opportunity. It has as often been answered from the socialist benches that they are not to be provoked into any four pas of meeting armed soldiery with naked arms. Therein lies the struggle and how best it will be played. We are reminded, however, that the Germans who vote socialistic are not all prepared to fight for socialism; that even within the organised socialist party, as represented by their congresses, there has appeared a large and seemingly growing section who have declared in favour of the most moderate and bourgeois-like minds amongst them. As far gone as 1890, Vollmar, one of the aristocratic leaders of the South German party tried conclusions with the veteran revolutionaries of the German party. Bismarck, then in his full power, thought to steal the socialist thunder by evincing an apparently anxious interest in the working class and its welfare. The reformers were overthrown. We have since had a considerable change in the temper of the party toward the revolutionary ideal upon which the party has been built. It is now not merely Vollmar, but Bernstein, Von Kol, and a host of other bourgeois radicals who have hitherto been compelled to march in the rank and file of the socialist army who now rear their heads openly and demand that a pact be made. So much is this the case that we even have the editor (Kurst Eisner) of the chief party organ, Vorwärts, explaining in the London Morning Leader of June 26 that the three million votes polled were "republican, democratic, socialist, anti-military, and anti-protection votes." This lumping of opinion and diversity of interest is to our mind the beginning of the undoing of German socialism. Hitherto the success of the proletarian movement in Germany has been founded upon an almost fanatical faith and rigid belief. Under the hope that only by completely overthrowing capitalism will the worker have his economic and social freedom immense difficulties have been overcome. Now in the hour of battle, while the pamphlets, the leaflets, and general articles in the party press may have the old religious tone, yet, nevertheless, it is not to these that the people have looked in voting the socialist ticket. It is rather because the revolutionary party in Germany has become the saviours, not of the proletariat, first and alone, but of the entire bourgeoisie itself, which has no other means of support or chance of expression. Thus it is that a party, fed and nurtured on the revolutionary tradition, has become the ghost of its former self.

The mere mass of constantly increasing supporters at the polls is the most dangerous ground that a revolutionary party can accept, and unless that vote be the class-conscious intelligent vote of a people who have a clear conception as to their ideal, it is always within the immediate possibilities that the mad Kaiser may yet save his empire for the ruling class by the bayonet. Who then dare say that the voters will be the fighters? According to Eisner's own showing, the composition of the socialist vote is of the most mixed kind. It is, therefore, incumbent upon us here to learn from our comrades abroad all they can teach us in the manner of organising the working class, but it is also necessary that we

avoid their mistakes. Regarded, then, from this point of view, the German socialist party has ceased to be revolutionary, and has become reformatory.

The revolutionary essence is not expressed in words but in deeds. "In the first French Revolution", says Marx, "upon the reign of the 'Constitutionalists' succeeds that of the 'Girondins', and upon the reign of the 'Girondins' follows that of the 'Jacobins'. Each of these parties in succession rests upon its most advanced elements. So soon as it has carried the revolution far enough not to be able to keep pace with, much less march ahead of it, it is shoved aside by its more daring allies, who stand behind it, and it is sent to the guillotine. Thus the revolution moves along an upward line." That is the point. With the mob voting for socialist candidates while not thinking socialism we see clearly that it is but rushing to the point where immediate relief is expected. Then begins the bargaining with the ruling class for what amount of ameliorative measures they shall allow the workers, and thereby is blunted the edges of the working class sword of emancipation. Society is again saved. The sun of the revolutionary party in Germany, as present composed, is set. The paeans of praise from the continental press on their behalf, the fact that English radical papers can induce their chief editor to write a "column" for them, shows how far already is the decline. We in England of the Socialist Labour Party must learn the lesson of mere political success, if we desire that in England there be formed a real militant class conscious working class. Not like some sections of social democrats as are here exhibited in England, who try hard to shine with the reflected glory of the revolutionists of the continent, men who mouth mere phrases and catchwords, and take themselves as if they were of importance. They are a hindrance to the growth of a real revolutionary party. A party which concedes nothing to the other side, a party which should pursue its object with the determination of fixed faith, that also realises that any concession to or sympathy for the opposing class strengthens its enemies - that party is the real revolutionary party. It is the ambition of the Socialist Labour Party to achieve to the full and earn that distinction.

It is no coincidence that the Socialist Labour Party constituted itself a distinct entity in 1903, just when the Bolsheviks did, but with neither having any real knowledge of the other.

The qualitative rupture between Bolshevism and Menshevism, that was to become the gulf separating the 3rd from the 2nd International, has often, and rightly, been stressed.

What has never been stressed is that it was not initially the Bolsheviks, but the SLPs of Britain and the US, which first spotted, and assaulted wholesale, the cancer of reformism within International Social Democracy.

The SLP began to nail reformism while still a tendency within the Social Democratic Federation, when George Yates - who was to become the first editor of the SLP organ, The Socialist - at the Paris Congress (1900) denounced the entry of Millerand into the French bourgeois cabinet.

The SLP never let up - and the perspicacity of their vision is indicated by the above critique of the Social Democratic Party of Germany - undertaken in 1903 in terms Lenin was to use over a decade later, but against the party which until 1914 was uniformly (with the exception of the SLP) held to be the jewel of the 2nd International.

WHAT IS C.O.B.I.?

1. COBI is a Marxist-Leninist collective, formed on 1st January, 1974, in secession from the British and Irish Communist Organisation, now become revisionist. Its purpose is to integrate Marxist-Leninist theory with the concrete conditions prevailing in the British Isles, and guided by this concrete development of Marxism-Leninism, to promote the development of communist politics among the working class. It aims, through its activities, to help bring about political and ideological conditions in which the formation of a new communist party will be a meaningful step in the development of communist politics as a link in the chain of proletarian internationalism.

2. We take the natural economic unit of the British Isles as the area of our organisation and oppose any attempts by bourgeois or populist nationalism to fragment working class organisation within the above economic unit. We resolutely base ourselves on the proletariat of the whole British Isles without exception. As a European state develops we shall extend ourselves accordingly.

3. In terms of the development and strength of its economic organisation, the working class of Britain is second to none in the capitalist world; its political and ideological development is, however, much less advanced. In particular it lacks its own political party. Without such a party, a real communist party, it will be unable to decisively defeat the capitalist class, build socialism and advance to communism.

4. The history of the struggle to build such a party in the British Isles has been largely one of failure. The conspicuous exception to this was the Socialist Labour Party of Great Britain, whose emblem COBI has adopted, and whose valuable experience we intend to assimilate.

5. A major reason for this failure has been the inability of revolutionaries in the British Isles to make a complete break with capitalist ideology; their failure to break with the pragmatist outlook of the British capitalist class has led them to underestimate the importance of the Marxist-Leninist theory of scientific socialism. Without the guidance of this theory there can be no communist politics.

6. For these reasons COBI takes as its immediate tasks: the application of communist theory to the conditions of the British Isles, and ideological struggles against opportunist distortions of communism, such as modern revisionism or Trotskyism.

7. COBI demands the maximum ideological unity amongst its members. All members, in addition to engaging in practical work, must improve their understanding of scientific socialism and contribute to the ideological struggle. Nobody will be admitted to full membership of the organisation unless they have demonstrated their commitment to the class struggle and their understanding of scientific socialism.

8. To supplement the efforts of its full membership, COBI encourages a wider group of associate members to work in cooperation with it

For full elucidation of these premises see Proletarian No:1, and if you wish to know more about COBI contact:

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