

# BOLDLY COMBAT SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

## IN THE STRUGGLE TO OVERTHROW CAPITALISM

### Introduction

There have been serious, and at some times dominant right opportunist errors in the Federation on the question of Social Democracy. The ideological errors have been those of liberalism, empiricism, economism and tailism. To fail to boldly combat Social Democracy when it is very clearly fulfilling its role of the principal prop of the bourgeoisie is tantamount to surrendering leadership of the working to the Social Democrats.

Right opportunist errors on Social Democracy must be ruthlessly exposed in the CFB. We must build the Marxist-Leninist Party in bold relentless struggle against Social Democratic and all other forms of bourgeois ideology within the working class.

### Section 1

Fierce class struggles are inevitable between the working class and the bourgeoisie, but they cannot result in socialist revolution until the working class is led ideologically, politically and organisationally by the proletarian party

### Section 2

"The principal task in Britain today is to build the Marxist-Leninist party of the proletariat. Marxist-Leninists in Britain must struggle to accomplish what Lenin called the 'first historical task' in revolution: that of winning over the 'class conscious vanguard' to 'Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat'. Until this task is essentially completed it is an opportunist error to attempt to carry out the second historical task, that of being able to lead the MASSSES to the new position that can ensure the victory of the vanguard in the revolution'.

### Section 3

"One of the main obstacles to the socialist revolution is the influence of bourgeois ideology within the working class. Lenin pointed out that the proletarian party could not win over the class conscious vanguard without the complete ideological and political victory over opportunism:

"One of the indispensable conditions for the preparation of the proletariat for its victory is the protracted, determined and merciless struggle against opportunism, reformism, social-chauvinism and the influences of the bourgeois currents of this kind, which are inevitable as long as the proletariat acts in conditions of capitalism".

(The Constituent Assembly Elections and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat)

The Albanian comrades have further elaborated this thesis by pointing out that:

"Without this struggle, without the complete preliminary victory over opportunism in the labour movement there can be no question of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Only by uniting under the revolutionary banner of the Marxist-Leninist parties can the working class realise its historic world mission, the revolutionary destruction of the capitalist order and the construction of the new socialist society."

### Section 4

4.1 "Bourgeois ideology penetrates the working class in many forms. Social Democracy is a bourgeois ideological trend. Although revisionism is a serious enemy within the working class, the most serious ideological and political enemy is Social Democracy. Lenin pointed out long ago that the Social Democratic parties are detachments of the bourgeoisie, its agents in the working class.

movement and its principal social prop.

- 4.2 Social Democracy purports to struggle on the behalf of the workers but makes the workers believe that they can hope only for reforms within the existing capitalist system. In other words it preaches bourgeois reformism, while the working class remain wage slaves. Social Democracy opposes the idea of the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Instead it preaches "pragmatism"-complete surrender to the daily requirements of capitalism-or alternatively, that society will be changed not through revolution but by the ethical re-education in bourgeois "socialist" values. Social democracy opposes the vanguard role of the proletariat. In stead it talks of the national interest and preaches class conciliation between the working class and the bourgeoisie. In other words it defends the right of the bourgeoisie to exploit the labour of the workers.
- 4.3 The Marxist-Leninist Party must liquidate the ideological influence of Social Democracy in the working class.

### Section 5

- 5.1 Social Democracy is at present organised politically in Britain in the Labour Party and among the trade union leadership. Marxist-Leninists must win the ideological leadership of the working class from the Social Democratic Labour Party by a prolonged ideological and political struggle. The Labour Party must be unrelentingly exposed at all times as an agent of the monopoly capitalist bourgeoisie.
- 5.2 When in opposition the Labour Party opposes particular policies of the bourgeoisie only in words and from an entirely reformist standpoint. It disarms the workingclass ideologically and politically and thus prevents it from defending itself from attacks by the bourgeoisie
- 5.3 In power the Labour Party serves the interests of the monopoly capitalist bourgeoisie and launches fierce attacks on the working class on behalf of the bourgeoisie. In the course of these attacks the Labour government tries the hamstring of the working class by posing as a genuine government of the class, and by bringing pressure on all reformist trade union leaders to accept its anti-working class policies.
- 5.4 The increasing dependence of the bourgeoisie on state monopoly capital means that the Social Democratic Labour Party is being transformed from an alternative party of the bourgeoisie into its principal party. The growing corporate state and the erosion of bourgeois democratic rights shows that "objectively Social Democracy is the moderate wing of Fascism" (Stalin)
- 5.5 What limited concessions Labour governments make to the working class have almost always already been won by the working class through their own struggle, and would have had to be conceded by the monopoly capitalist class in any case. This was so for the repeal of the Industrial Relations Act.
- 5.6 Other apparent concessions introduced by the labour government in fact serve the interests of the state monopoly capitalist wing of the bourgeoisie, in taking further steps towards the state monopolization of the means of production. Examples of this are the Labour governments policy of bourgeois nationalisation and of providing increased investment in monopoly capitalist companies by using large sums of money taken from people through taxes, or by massive budget deficits which cut the living standard of workers through inflation and on which large interest payments have to be made to finance capital.
- 5.7 On the few occasions when reforms introduced by the Labour government do not serve the se purposes they are trivial changes which in no way transform the relative strength of class forces in the country, and are the absolute minimum necessary for the Labour Party still to be able to pose as a party of the working class, so that it can continue its prime political service to the bourgeoisie of winning acceptance by the working class to the continued existence of the capitalist system.

- 5.8 The working class, including its more militant industrial sections, still look to the Labour Party for guidance and reforms. The majority are though now disappointed in the Labour Party because it does not serve their interests or solve their problems. However their understanding is from within the limits of bourgeois ideology: in a reformist way they vote Labour as the "lesser evil" rather than for the Conservative Party. In addition, Social Democratic and revisionist trade union leaders ensure that the trade union movement is closely bound to the Labour Party.
- 5.9 We must relentlessly and vividly expose the bourgeois nature of the Labour Party and actively call on the vanguard of the working class to support the building of the Proletarian Marxist-Leninist Party.

### Section 6

- 6.1 A major arena for struggling for political and organisational leadership of the working class is at the place of work and in the trade unions. Here the Marxist-Leninist Party must give a consistent and far-sighted leadership in both the short and long term in interests of the working class. The Party members must be tribunes of the people and not merely good trade union secretaries. They must energetically criticise the service of the bourgeoisie of the Social Democratic trade union leaders and deprive these leaders of their following.
- 6.2 A specific campaign must be waged in trade unions against giving support to the Labour Party. Campaigns must be waged for the unions to disaffiliate from the Labour Party and to end their support in the form of the political levy.

### Section 7

- 7.1 In the relentless struggle against Social Democratic ideology, politics and organisation, Marxist-Leninists must be skilled in uniting the advanced elements around the leadership and must guide them to raise the level of the intermediate elements and win over the backward elements. The advanced elements are characterised by their class consciousness, by their firm understanding of the bitterness of the exploitation and oppression of the working class by the bourgeoisie. Advanced elements are not characterised by their present level of activity.
- 7.2 Many active leaders in the workers' movement are at present active only because of their Social Democratic desire for reforms within the continuing capitalist system. Their Social Democratic politics and style of work are directly opposed to and are OBSTACLES IN THE WAY of mobilisation of the broad masses of the working class. It is essential that these activists members are not described as advanced elements. Their 'activism' is in fact an impediment to the active participation in the class struggle of the mass of the workers, because their ideology, politics and organisation are bourgeois.

### Section 8

- 8.1 These general strategic principles for the struggle against Social Democracy must at all times be energetically carried out and related to concrete practice. They must also be applied at election time.
- 8.2 The tactics of carrying out this struggle must be subordinate to, support and illustrate the overall strategic principles. Tactics must not be used as an opportunist excuse for going diametrically against the main strategic principles. As Stalin said, "Tactics are a part of strategy, subordinate to it and serving it."

### Section 9. The Lesser Evil Argument.

- 9.1 Two right opportunist arguments have been put forward to provide excuses for us to tail behind the labour Party and call on workers to vote Labour. One is the argument that workers should support the Labour Party as "the lesser evil". In other words, in

a situation "where no British Party represents working peoples' real interests and ambitions", the working class must look for temporary, limited and even trivial reforms from one bourgeois party or the other. Instead of stressing that the only real gains for the working class result from the exercise of working class power and strength, this line surrenders hopelessly to and propagates reformism, looking for reforms within the existing capitalist system. It is an example of economism, of bourgeois trade union consciousness as described by Lenin in 'What Is To Be Done'. In fact it is only from the narrowest economist viewpoint that the Labour Party seems to be the "lesser evil". Objectively the Labour Party is a greater danger than the Conservative Party because it presents itself as the friend of the workers and cripples their capacity to fight the capitalists attack. It is for this reason that the Labour Party is the principal social prop of the bourgeoisie.

- 9.2 This economist error of calling the Labour Party the "lesser evil" goes hand in hand with right opportunist defeatism about the prospect of building the Marxist-Leninist Party, and lack of boldness in fighting Social Democracy. Instead of saying defiantly "our own right hands our chains shall sever" in the words of the "Internationale", this line abjectly advises workers to rely on saviours from on high to deliver one or two crumbs to the working class. Instead of giving the working class and in particular the advanced elements leadership in breaking out of their economist views of the Labour Party as the lesser evil, this line tails after them and plays back to them what they think already. It forgets Stalin's words, "The Party cannot be a real party if it limits itself to registering what the masses of the working class feel and think".

#### Section 10. The Expose Labour Argument.

- 10.1 The other right opportunist argument for calling on workers to vote at election time is that it is easier to expose the Labour Party when it is in power. But the main factor in helping the workers comprehend that the Labour Party is a bourgeois Party is whether Marxist-Leninists make correct, bold, lively and concrete exposures of the labour party. By contrast this right opportunist line says that the main factor in exposing the Labour Party lies within the realm of bourgeois politics and in the hands of the bourgeoisie; it pins its hopes on adjustments within the bourgeois party political system which will put and keep the Labour Party in government. This line fails to carry out the task of bold uncompromising exposure of the Labour Party for fear of being in a temporary minority. It fears that the masses will never come over to a correct proletarian line. It shows a lack of faith in the masses.
- 10.2 The line of using elections to support the return of a Labour Government prevents Marxist-Leninists from waging all-round attacks on Social Democracy's ideology and political record. As always right opportunism attempts to "bind one's hands, divert one from the path, force one to forget what is relatively far off and without which small gains are but the vanity of vanities." (Lenin - The Proletarian Revolutionary Party of a New Type, p10)

#### Section 11. The Labour Party and Lenin's Advice in 'Left Wing Communism'

- 11.1 Although in 1920 the advanced elements of the working class had been rallied in and around the new Communist Party, Communists often found it hard to get a hearing from the mass of the workers. The middle elements of the working class were militant supporters of the Labour Party.
- 11.2 At that time the Labour Party was in essence a bourgeois Party on account of its bourgeois ideology and leadership. But because of the class conscious militancy of the members and the relatively open federal structure of its organisation, it could be an arena

For mobilising the MASS of British workers around the Communist Party, which already contained the vanguard of the workers.

- 11.3 The rightist line opportunistically makes use of Lenin's arguments in "Left Wing Communism", while distorting some of them and not bothering to examine whether those arguments apply to the concrete conditions of today. Lenin never said "vote Labour or smash Labour". Nor did he say that it was necessary to support the Labour Party as a rope supports a hanged man. He said it was necessary to support Henderson as a rope supports a hanged man, and the difference is significant.
- 11.4 In 1920 the Labour Party had never yet been in power, and therefore it would have been considerably more difficult for the mass of the working class to become disillusioned in Labour leaders like Henderson until they had seen him in power. However Lenin did not argue that the working class needed prolonged experience of a state capitalist regime before they could grasp the necessity to seize state power. In fact he never proposed simply voting for the Labour Party. He proposed also the offer of an ELECTORAL ALLIANCE with a division of the seats and the right of freedom of criticism and propaganda. He argued this in a situation when the masses needed to be convinced of the essentially bourgeois nature of the Labour Party, and where the Liberal Party in its death throes, was proposing an electoral pact with Conservatism as a means of unifying a divided ruling class.
- 11.5 In addition in 1920 the extremely severe post-war crisis of capitalism and the stirring example of the Soviet revolution made rapid progress towards the British revolution not only possible but probable. Lenin wrote in "Left Wing Communism" (pg 286):  
"conditions for a successful proletarian revolution are clearly maturing".
- 11.6 None of these conditions apply today. It is incorrect to mechanically apply the line of 1920 to the changed conditions of today. To apply the line of 1920 today is objectively right opportunist. It provides an apparently Marxist excuse for tailing behind the Labour Party and failing to attack it boldly. It is an example of revisionism, for revisionism is precisely the twisting of Marxism to serve bourgeois politics.

## Section 12. Guard Against "Left" Opportunism.

While actively combating these right opportunist lines, we must guard against the danger of 'left' opportunism. The 'left' opportunist line makes the general agitational call to the masses of "Don't Vote" at election times. This is left in form only. It appears revolutionary - making a break with reformism - but is right in essence. It makes use of the disillusionment of the masses in bourgeois democracy, but without giving bold leadership to the ADVANCED ELEMENTS. It helps push them in the arms of Fascism. It enforces bourgeois pessimism without struggling for its revolutionary alternative. We must get the advanced workers to break with Social Democratic ideology and embrace Communism.

## Section 13. The Correct Line

- 13.1 The line on Social Democracy must correctly serve the present central task for the socialist revolution in Britain. That is, the building of the Marxist-Leninist Party. We are confronted with the "first historical task". Therefore the correct line must concentrate on propaganda work in rallying the advanced elements, on smashing the chains - ideological, political and organisational - binding them to Social Democracy, and specifically the Labour Party.
- 13.2 As part of a constant unity and struggle with these elements, the leadership we give at election times must be in essence: "Don't Vote Labour - Build The Revolutionary Communist Party". During elections, as at all times, we struggle to get them to break with Social Democracy, while uniting with them in the fight to build the proletarian party which will lead and serve the

working class. At this stage, before the first historical task is even partially completed, a general "Vote Labour" call is right opportunist and a general "abstentionist" call is "left" opportunist.

Section 14. The Historical Task in 1920 and Today.

- 14.1 The incorrect right and 'left' lines on the tactics of fighting Social Democracy have not made a concrete analysis of concrete conditions. The ESSENTIAL difference between Britain in the 1920s, when Lenin wrote "Left Wing Communism", and Britain today is that we have a QUALITATIVELY different "historical task" confronting us now, than then.
- 14.2 As Lenin says the FIRST historical task, that of winning over the vanguard, "could not be accomplished without a complete ideological and political victory over opportunism and social-chauvinism" (LWC., p98). Today we would say "opportunism and Social Democracy". Communists in Britain have not accomplished this. We will only do it by building the proletarian Marxist-Leninist Party, having a base in the working class and boldly combating Social Democracy.
- 14.3 Britain in the 1920s had reached its "second" historical task, Lenin then said that Communists have to "LEAD the masses (his emphasis) to the new position that can ensure the victory of the vanguard in the revolution". This meant eliminating "Left doctrinairism". (LWC, p98).
- 14.4 We are not now at that stage in the struggle to build the Marxist-Leninist Party: because of the degeneration of the CPGB and its capitulation to revisionism we have to accomplish the first historical task once again. We cannot give practical political leadership to the masses until we have struggled with and largely won over, the advanced elements in the working class to Communism.

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