

# workers power 4

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## PARTY & PROGRAMME

### 1. Bolshevism vs. Opportunism

The End of the Social Contract ?

The Comintern Theses on Women

Eastern Europe

Ireland

Communism and Women

Reviews: Rosa Luxemburg

IMG on Cuts

# workers power

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# The End of the Social Contract?

The current political situation is characterised by a sense of urgency. For its part the Government is at present drawing up its Budget, the next stage in its campaign to cut the living standards of the working class even further. On the shop floor militancy is developing fast on all three fronts of the Government attack — wages, cuts and redundancy. For many workers the imminent end of phase 2 of the social contract has signalled the possibility of recovering the ground that has been lost over the last two years. Examples of the atmosphere now prevailing are numerous — the massive demonstration at Longbridge against Varley, the resolutions presented to the conferences of many unions, the Leyland toolroom workers strike are only a few examples.

The pressure developing against the effects of the social contract has forced the trade union leaders to speak out against it. However, in so doing they have been at pains to propose policies limited only to the (supposed) short term needs of 'their' section of the working class.

Hugh Scanlon, for example, talks about the dangers of eroded differentials and explains to the bosses that he cannot be expected to hold his members back forever, that it would be better to head them off now with re-established differentials than bring important sections of industry to a grinding halt. He is quick to add that such arguments only apply to workers in the manufacturing sector.

Alan Fisher of NUPE, on the other hand, believes that since some sacrifice has to be made it should be made by the better-paid workers and, therefore, argues for a continuation of the flat-rate policy which has cut everybody's living standards.

It is not only among the trade union bureaucracy that different proposals are being canvassed. The National Coal Board leapt at the chance of a joint letter from themselves and Joe Gormley proposing that miners pay be allowed to rise through the negotiation of a productivity deal. Sir Charles Villiers of the British Steel Corporation has suggested that the take home pay of manufacturing workers could be increased by several pounds a week without endangering the Government's pay policy if tax cuts were introduced.

This proposal, another version of the right wing argument that reserves should be removed from the public sector (education, health, social services) to the 'productive', has actually been echoed, indeed recommended to the Government by the TUC, who know well enough that it would mean buying off one section of workers with money saved by axing the jobs of another.

All these proposals have a common aim — to head off the possibility of a concerted attack on the central principle of the Social Contract, that is, a government imposed

policy of wage cuts enforced by the leaders of the workers' own unions. Nor should it be forgotten that the Social Contract means more than a wages policy — it also means collusion of the Trade Union leaders in rising unemployment and cuts in the social services.

What policies should revolutionaries fight for in this situation — and what dead end solutions have to be nailed for what they are?

Central to our strategy is the question of a fight against the cardinal principle of the Social Contract — That the cost of weathering the current capitalist crisis should be borne by the working class. We have to start from the position that the interest of the class are utterly distinct from those of the employers' and the government. The assertion of working class independence is a fundamental aim of our policy. On the wages issue this means fighting against policies which allow the militancy and energy of one section to be turned against another. The entire working class faces the same problem of falling wages and rising prices — different sections express this differently — skilled engineers as demands for differentials, well organised sections by the demand for free-collective bargaining. WORKERS' POWER believes that the principal planks of a wages demand that can unite the class are:- for lump sum increases protected against inflation by guaranteed increases for every per cent rise in the working class cost of living as calculated by workers' organisations, not the phoney retail price index immediate equal pay for women, for a national minimum wage of £55 take-home, and for full pay for workers layed off by disputes. Why these demands and how should they be fought for? Our greatest fear is that the militancy being

The greatest danger is that the militancy being generated at present will be channelled away from attacking the heart of the government's strategy, and even turned against other workers. This does not mean that other demands raised by workers in struggle are consciously aimed at other sections, but that the unevenness of the class has to be recognised and consciously overcome. For sections of traditionally well-organised workers the demand 'for free collective bargaining' expresses a determination to get rid of wage control and rely on the collective strength of the shop-floor. However, for the less well-organised it can be presented (and Alan Fisher is already busy doing just this) as a selfish demand from those in a position to 'hold the country to ransom'. Although militants in every section would be glad to see strong sections break through the wages policy their ability to bring out their own members on the same demand — or in solidarity with the strong sections cannot be guaranteed.

On the other hand, the demand of a lump sum and guaranteed protection against inflation is immediately generalisable. Any policy aimed at the Government's

strategy has to be. The barrage of press propaganda, the witch-hunts by the Trade Union leaders will be aimed at isolating those who take action. Every possibility of presenting them as scapegoat for the economic crisis will be used to the full. In terms of the morale of those fighting and of the willingness to join the fight of others such isolation could be crucial. The demand in itself does not guarantee success, no demand can, but a determined campaign of direct action— of occupations, strikes, organisation of mass picketing and 100% effective blacking on a demand that is raised because it is in the interest of all workers, can not only overcome isolation but develop the independence of aims and organisation that the class needs. The same is true of demands for equal pay, the minimum wage. To develop the unity we need means strong sections fighting for the interests of the weak.

The demand for full average earnings to those laid off by disputes is of central importance. The bosses' offensive is an all-embracing one affecting every aspect of the working class' standard of living. This means that an attack by workers on one front will immediately produce a counter attack on another. Demands for wage rises in one section will be answered by the argument that they would create unemployment in another. The public sector cuts will be presented as a result of the demands of those in the 'productive' industries. Union leaders will pose one aspect of the fight against the social contract as an alternative to another, for example, 'fight the cuts, not for wages'. To make sure one section's fight is not turned against another's it is necessary to raise demands which stress the class-widenature of any attack on the Social Contract. The demand for full lay-off pay is a concrete application of the slogan 'Work or Full Pay' which, in a general fashion underlines the workers' refusal to pay the cost of the crisis. Given that the bosses will lay-off workers at the slightest chance it is vital, both to the morale of those in dispute and to the development of action in solidarity with them, that full lay-off pay is raised as a central demand.

## THE UNIONS AND THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT

There can be no doubt that a campaign for such demands, using methods of direct action, will be opposed wholeheartedly by the union leaders who see the role of the rank and file as solely that of a stage army, to be used as a negotiating counter. We have already seen how Scanlon has turned on the toolroom workers, more examples will follow as other sections begin to move. Therefore, bound up with the fight against the bosses' offensive there has to be an equally determined fight against the trade union leaders' collaboration with the state and the employers — and not only at national level. Participation schemes are designed to produce the same result — workers taking part in the management of capitalism and thereby accepting responsibility for making it work. Since, in the present time of crisis, capitalism can only work at the expense of the working class, participation means taking part in the planning and execution of attacks on the working class. This is precisely what the leaders of the Trade Unions have done via the Social Contract. The whole Labour movement stands in urgent need of a drastic renovation to clear away those leaders who take part in the attack on their own members. Such a renovation is also necessary to rid the movement of the bureaucratic inertia which prevents it from responding quickly and flexibly to changes in the direction of

attack. The movement to do this can only be built on the basis of the fight against the Social Contract. Rank and file committees formed to organise direct action in defence of the class will also be the bodies which spearhead the movement to democratise the unions. Such democratisation will involve the direct accountability of the leaders to the rank and file, the election of all officials and their recallability, union officials to be paid the average wage of their members and the end of secret negotiations.

The fight to democratise the unions and the fight against the capitalist offensive are both part and parcel of the development of working class independence and both have to be posed in that light.

The strength of the Social Contract over the last two years has rested on the close collaboration of the Trade Union leaders in the drawing up and enforcement of economic policy. The fact that it is a Labour government that has forced down living standards, not only by permission of, but with the active assistance of, the Trade Union leaders, reveals all too clearly the continued hold of traditional political allegiances over the working class. Despite its record the Labour Party is still seen, by the majority of workers, as 'their' party, the one that represents them, as opposed to the Tories who represent the bosses. The strength of this belief, even among the most militant sections can be seen from the leaflet issued by the Leyland convenors inviting delegates to the April 3rd conference, 'Our aim is not to bring down the government. What we seek to do is to ensure its return at the next election by changing its policies to those of the working people who elected them.' The message here is perfectly clear, the policies of the Labour government are an aberration, they can be made to change course, the hope of the the working class still lies in the Labour Party, if disillusion were to set in then disaster would be just around the corner. The logical result of this belief? put pressure on the Left of the Labour Party, so that they will put pressure on the government. (The Labour government have already shown the only kind of pressure they will bow to — the IMF, the City and the CBI.) In this argument the illusion that the Labour government can be made to act against the interests of its political masters, is not to be attacked and dispelled, rather it is to be protected! A clearer example of the absurdities that Stalinism is reduced to in its search for a peaceful, parliamentary, British, road to socialism, could not be found.

## DEMANDS ON REFORMISTS

For the Communist Party and its fellow travellers the downfall of a Labour government, even as a result of the working class defending itself, would be the greatest calamity. Thus they raise, almost to the point of principle, the widely-held belief that the working class will have to put up with the Labour government's attacks because, 'there is no alternative'. The task of revolutionaries is to build a movement that will, itself, generate the alternative. In the present period this means arguing for direct action against the government's policies, even though this would endanger the existence of the government.

If and when the Labour government is put in jeopardy because the working class refuses to accept its capitalist policies any longer, then revolutionaries have to argue that it is the government, not the class, which is faced with the

choice of changing course or continuing in the same direction. The question for the government will be either to fall from power because the ruling class will no longer tolerate a government unable to do its bidding, or, to defend itself from the ruling class by rallying the mobilised working class around itself. Since the latter would mean carrying out pro-working class policies, we do not believe the Labour government will choose that option. It would rather fall from power than attack the bourgeoisie.

The Communist Party, with its 'save the government from itself' line, consciously promotes reformism. Other groupings, in trying to overcome the problem of reformism, end up accommodating to it. Slogans such as, 'Force the Lefts to form a government' (WSL) 'Labour to Power on a Socialist Programme' (WRP) or 'Kick Out Healey/Callaghan' (IMG) are objectively only variants of the CP's line. The comrades of these groups believe they are carrying out the tactic of 'putting demands on the reformist leaders' in order to 'expose' the bankruptcy of reformism to the working class. In their scenario, once the reformists do not carry out the demands the 'revolutionaries' have placed on them, the working class will see through them — and take up revolutionary politics instead.

We can only wonder if the comrades really know what it is they are saying — they are hoping to win the working class to revolutionary politics by — trickery! 'The way forward is to follow the Left reformists', they cry out to the class, amongst themselves they whisper, 'of course we realise it is not the way forward but if we say that the workers might not listen to us — when the reformists have sold them out — then we can put a revolutionary line'. Such an approach is a complete distortion, a total falsification, of the tactic of raising demands on the reformist leaders. Putting reformism to the test is a matter of raising in struggles the policies that the working class needs at the present time and calling on the reformists to support those demands and the struggle to implement them. Calling for a new Labour government made up of different personnel in no way helps the development of revolutionary politics in the working class or of a movement based on the independent direct action of the working class. Reformism is a blind alley because it leads to defeat, a defeat stemming from just the kind of illusions in 'Left' reformists that calls for a 'Left' Labour government will not dispel but on the contrary, will pro-

pagate. We argue that reformism will only be defeated when a movement of millions of workers decides to implement the policies of a revolutionary programme against the opposition of reformist leaders and reformist governments. The task of revolutionaries is to build that movement that can transform resentment at the labour government's not defending the class into realisation that no reformist party can — that the interests of the working class can only be furthered by its taking control of society and transforming it.

In the here and now this means that revolutionaries, whilst fighting alongside reformist workers in all struggles, have to argue for an action programme of those policies vital to the class at the present time. Such a programme would include: nationalisation without compensation and under workers' control of all firms declaring redundancies, nationalisation of the banks and finance houses, restoration of all social service cuts and protection against inflation of social expenditure, immediate implementation of equal pay for women, inflation proofed wages, support for all sections of workers taking action against the attacks of the employers, a programme of public works to give work to the unemployed, the immediate withdrawal of troops from Ireland, the repeal of the Immigration Acts. These policies have to be argued for as what a genuinely pro-working class government would carry out. To those who agree with the policies but believe a Left reformist government would carry them out, we reply, 'We are certain they would not and could not, but join us in a united front to fight for such policies.'

In fighting for these demands we argue for direct action to gain them since this is the only way in which the working class can build the independence of aims and organisation that it needs. We do not call on the reformists to open the books of companies and industries, we call for shop-stewards' committees to force them to be opened, we call for direct action by the rank and file to cut hours, not jobs. It is in the development of such action that workers' control is to be found and a basis for working class power built. Certainly we call on the reformists to support such actions, but we do not rely on their good offices to implement our demands.

Only in this way can a movement be built, based on the needs of the class and able to withstand the inevitable sell-out by the reformists, or, indeed, the rise to power of a right-wing government.

## Crisis in Eastern Europe

The crisis and instability of the world capitalist market is biting deeper and deeper into the plans and projections of the ruling bureaucracies in Russia and East Europe. Confounding all those who see the East European economies as somehow more rational, somehow immune and separate from the world crisis, the bureaucracies are fundamentally revising their plans and strategy to deal with the crisis.

The bureaucratic ruling classes of East Europe see their future, their stability and rule, depending on competitive survival on the world capitalist market. Their 'plans', their investment and the rate of exploitation of Eastern European workers are

structured accordingly. The underlying world inflationary pressure, the new cutbacks on world credit facilities and increases in interest rates have forced the Eastern European bureaucracies to rethink their plans.

Nowhere is this more clear than in Russia itself. Pravda has announced the results of the scaled down plan for 1976. Coal and steel production did not reach their modest projected targets. The amount of plant in operation in the Russian economy increased by only 1%. Projected targets for the next four years show a dramatic cut back in planned investment. Only a 1% a year increase in investment is envisaged in 1978

and 1979. In 1980 the Russian bureaucracy plans to increase investment by only 0.5%.

With cutbacks in world markets, with the inflationary spiral in world prices, the bureaucracies of Eastern Europe have only limited options to maintain their economic and political stability. They can increase their borrowing from the world banks and western European economies. But there are limits to such a strategy. Already by the end of 1975 Russia owed 13 billion American dollars in foreign debts. The Polish bureaucracy is finding it increasingly difficult to meet the interest repayments on the sums it has already borrowed from the west. Most importantly the bureaucracies of Eastern Europe and Russia are being forced to scale down their investment plans, drop their promises to increase and improve consumer goods for the working masses and step up the repression of the forces of opposition and resistance in the Stalinist States.

The Eastern Europe bureaucracies are not unduly concerned at the disaffection of a small but articulate section of their intellectuals. Handfuls of disaffected intellectuals do not cause nightmares in the palaces and offices of the East Europe States. What concerns the ruling bureaucracies is that this disaffection will take root in the masses themselves. That the examples of the Polish workers in 1976 and 1970 — direct action to thwart the plans and projects of the bureaucrats — and the Hungarian workers in 1956 — will threaten the rule of the Stalinist bureaucracies.

Throughout East Europe, the forces of open dissent and opposition have grown considerably in the last two years. Excepting Bulgaria underground oppositions have made their existence public on a world scale. In the last six months the repression of these forces has grown apace. The obscene exchange of Bukovsky for Chilean Stalinist Corvalan, the expulsion of Bierman from East Germany, one-way visas for Romanian dissenters and the persecution of the Charter 77 signatories in Czechoslovakia are only the surface of increased repression throughout East Europe.

However, the present waves of repression have clearly failed to silence the oppositions. Bierman's expulsion prompted open opposition throughout East German opposition circles. The number of signatories of Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia has increased despite bureaucratic reprisals and attempted expulsions. The Gierek regime in Poland has failed to silence the Workers Defence Committee formed to support the workers of Warsaw and Radom jailed and sacked for their part in the demonstrations and strikes that prevented Gierek from forcing up prices in the summer of 1976.

What should the attitude of revolutionaries to the politics and resilience of the East European oppositions be? Those publicised and broadcast by the Western media have in general restricted their demands to individual rights of freedom of expression, of travel and organisation. Against the bureaucracies of East Europe we say that the workers in the Stalinist States will have to win these rights for themselves in the process of overthrowing the bureaucracies and establishing working class rule. But against the leading oppositionists in East Europe and Russia we say that the workers of East Europe can only achieve those rights and freedoms as part of their struggle for power. The mass strike waves in Poland in 1970 and 1976, the formation of workers councils in Hungary in 1956, represent the only force that can consistently oppose the repression in the Stalinist States. The East European oppositions generally place their hopes in other forces.

In Poland the strength and centrality of working class action is most clearly understood. The Workers Defense Committee has succeeded both in supporting persecuted workers families

and in forcing the Polish courts to cut back some of the harsher sentences on striking workers. However the Workers Defence Committee itself has been used and strengthened by the powerful and reactionary Catholic Church in Poland — itself seeking to assert itself against the bureaucracy. While giving all possible support to the Workers Defence Committee against Gierek, revolutionaries have to argue for the Polish opposition to develop its ideological and organisational independence from the Catholic Church. The only consistent force that can guarantee the freedom to organise against the Gierek regime is the force demonstrated by the Polish workers twice in the last seven years.

It is however to the right wing in Western politics, to the Helsinki deal between the East and West and to the forces of 'Euro-Communism' that whole sections of Eastern European dissidents look in their struggle against repression.

The right-wing turn in the bourgeois political parties, the rhetoric of anti-Sovietism from the politicians of the West has provided the hope for many dissidents. Solzhenitsyn, Sakharov, Bukovsky and Alnarik represent that tendency in the Russian opposition that see Margaret Thatcher, The National Association for Freedom, US President Carter and Kohl in West Germany as their principle allies. Revolutionaries obviously have no illusions that the bourgeois politicians of the West will prove allies of the workers in the Stalinist States. Such a perspective reflects the profound distrust of the masses, the elitist hostility to the working class that characterises whole sections of particularly the Russian opposition.

In their search for collaboration and respectability within Western capitalism the Western European communist Parties have been prepared to distance themselves from the repression of the East European bureaucracies. Carillo of the Spanish CP has committed his party to entry into the Common Market and the maintenance of US bases in Spain. The Italian Communist Party has kept the Christian Democrat based Andreotti Government in power by deliberately not voting against its measures to cut workers living standards. These same 'Euro-Communists' have lent their voice to the defence of the East European opposition . . . in search of respectability and credentials to enter bourgeois governments. It is no surprise that significant sections of the Eastern European "left" look to the strengthening of class-collaborationist Euro-Communism as their principle ally in the struggle in East Europe. This is, for example the view of Roy Medvedev in Russia, of Jiri Pelikan, editor of Listy, the Czech socialist journal.

The Helsinki accords, the strengthening of the Western Communist Parties clearly weakens the hold of the East European Stalinist parties over their own opposition forces at the present moment. The Western European Right-Wing, and the West European Stalinists have their own political capital to make out of opposing the bureaucracies of Russia and East Europe. At a time of economic crisis and paralysis in the East, of drives for price increases and productivity we must say clearly that only the workers of East Europe and Russia have the strength and the interest in breaking once and for all the hold of the Russian and Eastern European bureaucracies. Only a movement that builds on the experience of the Polish and Hungarian workers can settle accounts can win the freedom for workers parties, for workers rights of assembly and organisation, can free the enslaved nationalities of the East. Such a movement would not only face bitter and brutal opposition from the bureaucracies of East Europe. It would be actively opposed by the right wing bourgeois politicians and the new respectable Western Stalinists.

# Ireland ~

## Stalemate North and South

Over seven years of direct military occupation, of internment and perpetual harassment of the nationalist population have not solved the crisis of Britain's rule in Northern Ireland. The renewed bombing campaign of the Provisional IRA and the failure of the 'Peace Movement' to develop and sustain any dynamism independent of the British Army and British Imperialism testify to the failure of the British ruling class.

Britain's crisis in Ireland is a direct result of the attempts of British capitalism to restructure their system of exploitation in Ireland during the mid-1960s. In the interests of more open access to the markets and produce of the Southern Republic the British ruling class was prepared to encourage minor reforms in its Northern sectarian state.

But, however anxious it may have been to 'modernise' and 'rationalise' its exploitation of Ireland, the British ruling class was not prepared to break with its historic state and allies in the North. Britain's aim since 1968 has remained that of conciliating middle class Catholic opinion, or reforming certain of the blatant excess of the Protestant ascendancy in order to undermine nationalist resistance and safeguard the integrity of the Northern State. While wishing to turn its back on certain uncompetitive and anachronistic industries the British ruling class holds massive investments in the North of Ireland. The Orange Ascendancy, the Unionists, have been too vital a component of the British ruling class historically to be jettisoned altogether.

All attempts to undermine nationalist resistance have failed. The Orange Ascendancy, created in its own interests by the British ruling class, would not tolerate power sharing or tampering with their marginal privileges. The horridness of British policy have become increasingly narrow and limited. The British ruling class today has no perspective of a new power sharing bid, or of any significant or new initiative. Through the person of the Minister Roy Mason (the Labour politician most acceptable to Military High Command), the Labour Government has no perspective but a hard continued military push against the nationalist population. This perspective does involve increasing the arms and power of the Protestant Ulster Constabulary — this is what "Ulsterisation" means. But it does not mean any significant withdrawal of British Troops.

The British ruling class are set on a long term course of repression and harassment. They cannot contemplate defeat in Ireland. B defeat for their army would be a profound blow to ruling class morale. Sections of the ruling class — most notably Kitson and Enoch Powell — see Northern Ireland both as training ground and power base for future attacks on the British working class.

This crisis and stale mate in perspectives extends to the Southern Irish bourgeoisie and to the forces of Loyalism.

The ruling coalition in the Southern Republic represents an alliance of the traditional party of the big farmers, Fianna Fail, and the Irish Labour Party. Economically, it is set on holding down real wages, while granting encouragement and massive concessions to International investment. It looks to the EEC to stimulate Irish agriculture and capital investment. Successive National Wage Agreements struck with the Irish trade union bureaucracy have pushed real wages down, the latest deal envisages pay rises of between £4 and £8 over 14 months while the annual inflation rate is running close on 20%.

### REPRESSION IN THE SOUTH

With its strategy hinging on encouraging foreign investment the Southern Government has moved sharply against Republican forces. Repressive emergency legislation, internment and torture are being used in a showdown with Republican forces in the South. In the interests of investment and profit, the Southern Coalition Government is dearly looking for new compromises with British imperialism and with the Orange State in the North. While the prosecution of the British government in the international court serves to maintain the popularity of the Coalition in election year, the members of the Coalition are openly discussing new deals and proposals to disassociate themselves irrevocably from the struggle against British domination in Ireland. Conor Cruise O'Brien, of the Irish Labour Party, has already made it clear that if the Coalition is re-elected he will be proposing deleting all claims to a United Ireland from the Irish constitution.

Against this Fianna Fail the opposition party that perfected and introduced the repressive campaign in the South is trying to play the "Green" card. Faced with declining popularity at the polls the party has gone on record again at its annual conference in February as favouring British withdrawal. Jack Lynch has made it clear that if his party were re-elected, he as Prime Minister, would seek United Nations intervention in Northern Ireland and initiate discussion concerning British withdrawal. Despite the rhetoric of the conference platform, Fianna Fail have given no clear commitment to dismantle the repressive legislation in the South, have done no more than repeat their 1975 call for Britain to withdraw.

While the Southern bourgeoisie is looking to restructure its relations with International capitalism, the Orange ruling class in the North has been plunged into serious dis-

array and disunity by the efforts of British Capitalism to adapt and refine their methods of rule. Since the British ruling class sought to force it to relinquish certain of its traditional privileges and positions, Loyalism has been in relative disarray. Since the Ulster Workers Council Strike against the Sunningdale power-sharing agreement, all proposals for politically re-unifying Loyalism have failed.

The arguments within Loyalism for a UDI bid in Ulster failed to galvanise coherent support. James Molyneux, leader of the UUUC MPs at Westminster, divided the Loyalist camp when he suggested recently that "as a first step", Northern Ireland might be content with administrative rather than legislative government. Ian Paisley's party is riven with conflict between himself and Martin Smyth. Without direct support from the British ruling class the forces of Loyalism have no coherent or unifying programme.

The politics of Irish nationalism do not lay the basis for breaking the hold of British Imperialism and the strategy of the Southern bourgeoisie. Only a leadership that fights for the national independence and unity of Ireland on a revolutionary workers programme — against British Imperialism, against the Southern bourgeoisie, against Loyalism — can galvanise the forces to break that deadlock.

The Provisional IRA have stood in the forefront of the struggle against British Imperialism. The British army has failed to break their organisation and fighting strength. They remain the defenders of the Catholic areas against the harassment and rampages of the British army. The Provisionals have undoubted mass support, but have not conducted their campaign within the framework of building a sustained movement. They remain both reluctant and unable to challenge the politics of the Southern 'Green' bourgeoisie and to relate the military struggle against the British Army to class battles in the north and the South. They have in fact refused, North and South, to work systematically with other republicans and socialists to build united front action committees against repression, against the British Army. While capable of sustaining new campaigns, turning their attention now to Northern Ireland business-men, the Provisionals cannot break the deadlock in the struggle in Ireland.

The Stalinist and reformist Left in Southern Ireland focus their attention away from the struggle in the North. The Left Alternative current — composed of Official Sinn Féin, the Communist Party of Ireland and the Liaison of the Left in the Labour Party — have formed a propaganda bloc on the basis of economic nationalist politics. Their campaign hinges on opposition to the EEC with the central demands focusing on the nationalisation of Ireland's resources, on an investment programme to establish an Irish processing industry for the abundant resources and raw materials. This programme, statist through and through, cannot mobilise the working class. It can offer no action or campaign, only lobbies and romantic scheme building. It serves however as a fundamental diversion to the real problems facing the Irish working class. It substitutes for campaigning on the national struggle against the British army and on the struggle against unemployment, inflation and declining real wages.

The Irish left remains dominated by the politics of nationalism on the one hand, and syndicalist abstention from the national struggle on the other. The IRSP failed to

break with the politics and traditions of republicanism — it has been riven with its own splits and internal conflict. The SWM (the fraternal organisation of British IS [SWP]) remains predictably on the sidelines offering militant economic and trade union struggle as its alternative to the republican and reformist traditions.

All new attempts to lay the basis for a revolutionary leadership in Ireland are foredoomed unless they can pose a thoroughgoing programmatic alternative to the politics of nationalism and the traditions of economism and syndicalism.

#### THE TASKS OF BRITISH SOCIALISTS

As the Left Faction in the International Socialists and as Workers Power we have always argued that the crisis of the British ruling class in Ireland poses the sharpest of tests for revolutionaries in Britain. We must do all in our power to hasten the defeat of our ruling class in Ireland. A victory for the British Army in Ireland would be a blow against the working class movement internationally and in Britain itself. A defeat for the army is a defeat for the British ruling class, its strategy and perspective.

We must therefore campaign in the Labour movement actively for solidarity with all those republicans and socialists fighting our ruling class and its army. We have our criticisms of the leading detachments in that struggle — The Provisional IRA — and it would be an abdication of our international duty to refuse to make those criticisms. But we have not right to criticise except on the basis of our clear and unqualified support for the struggle against the British army and the Northern State it seeks to defend.

But we do not confine ourselves to propaganda in solidarity with the Irish struggle. British socialists must campaign to build an Internationalist Troops Out current within the British labour movement. We must build a current that can campaign actively against the British Army's presence in Ireland and argue that position amongst the mass of workers.

The existing 'Troops Out Movement' has the avowed aim of building such a campaign. But its record to date shows that its leadership puts publicity seeking, winning 'influential' supporters, before building a real campaign at the base of the labour movement. In order to maintain their own credibility, the TOM leaders were prepared to decorate the platform of the SWP (IS) Bloody Sunday rally — even though IS had once expelled one of the TOM leaders who fought in that organisation against the IS line on Ireland. They were prepared to bloc with the IS to stop other socialists speaking at the rally. They unashamedly boosted the pretence that IS have ever or will ever, seriously support the struggle in Ireland.

The tight control of this same 'TOM' leadership threatens the possibilities afforded by the LMDI to extend the campaign into the labour movement. Workers Power and its supporters will do all in their power to ensure that the Labour Movement Delegation initiates a serious and principled campaign for the withdrawal of British Troops from Ireland Now. We will work alongside all other socialists who are prepared to push that Troops Out campaign into the trade unions, into the workplaces, into the Labour Parties.



# PARTY and

# PROGRAMME

## 1903 ~ 12

# Bolshevism vs. Opportunism

by Dave Hughes and Dave Stocking

This article is the first of a series which 'Workers' Power' will publish over the coming months. It is devoted to the debate on the political and organisational heritage of Trotskyism and Leninism to which the Workers' Socialist League, the International Marxist Group and the International Communist League have contributed. The IMG have centred the debate around their own current 'unity offensive'. In the series of articles on 'Party and Faction' they have developed the thesis that 'neither Lenin nor Trotsky launched a new party until both the social-democrats and the Stalinists had passed definitively into the camp of the counter-revolution' in 1914 and 1933. That such 'historic betrayals' are the only 'principled basis for a split'. The WSL on the other hand have nailed their flag to the mast of Zinoviev's pushing back the Communist/Social Democrat split to 1903. This latter method, allowing its practitioners all the cocksureness and infallibility of hindsight, is a bad guide to practice in the here and now. Because seen in retrospect, Martov's formulation on membership is related to the whole subsequent development of Menshevism. It does not, therefore, follow that one must effect a pre-emptive split with anyone who defends a weak or erroneous formulation.

It should be no surprise that this debate - what is the basis for a unification of the shattered fragments of Trotskyism - should generate considerable attention at the moment. Not only have the last two years in Britain been a dramatic decline in the combativity of workers within the context of a sharp economic crisis, but the far left has fragmented even further.

In this situation the recipe of the IMG and the United Secretariat of the Fourth International may seem an attractive proposition. Their very heterogeneity, multiplicity of tendencies happily (?) existing under the FI umbrella and that of its national sections is offered as a haven from the horrors of 'sectarianism'. The defence meetings organised to answer the slanderous accusations of Healy and the WRP have been used by the United Secretariat spokesmen to hammer home the message - the alternative to the USFI is Healyite degeneration.

The IMG theorists have decided to re-interpret the whole revolutionary tradition since 1903 in the light of their 'new' organisational discoveries. We choose to reply to

this revision, not because of its inherent ideological strength, but because on a world scale the USFI 'involves' the largest number of subjectively revolutionary cadres and because the issues involved are central to a rediscovery of the Marxist method and a re-elaboration of revolutionary strategy and tactics.

Our series will include articles on Bolshevism, 1903-1914; the Russian experience and the Third International, 1914-1923; from the Third to the Fourth International, 1923-1940; the disintegration of the Fourth International, 1940 to the present day.

In the first article of this series, we will look at the development of Lenin's organisational theory and practice in the context of the programmatic and tactical development of Bolshevism. This development occurred in the class struggle and in battle against the opportunist currents in the workers' movement.

We will see that Lenin was not some sort of organisational fetishist. Indeed, he neither fetishised one particular form of organisation - as the German Social Democrats undoubtedly did - nor was he the wild eclectic that Tony Cliff conjures up in the pages of his three volume biography. Commentators often - falsely - contrast Lenin, the organiser, to Marx, the theorist. The essence of Lenin's Leninism was the organising of a cadre in the struggles of the working class around clear concrete strategy and tactics. Not only was Lenin a better party organiser than any of his contemporaries (including Luxembourg and Trotsky) in his grasp of tactics, and strategy, he was more ruthlessly relentlessly precise than any of them - a precision that many of the best of them mistook for dogmatism and sectarianism, and which the petty-bourgeois moralists and philistines took for ambition or amorality.

The IMG have revolted against the picture of Lenin as a fanatical splitter cultivated by Healy. They have, however, simply turned this erroneous conception on its head to show us Lenin, the unity fetishist.

Lenin's one consistent aim was to organise a solid and disciplined party around a consistent revolutionary programme and tactics, and to make that party the leadership of the Russian working class - questions of size, democratism, factions, norms of election or selection were means to achieving this aim in given historical

conditions - as were the relations Lenin maintained with the various opportunist currents: Economism, Menshevism, Liquidationism.

The IMG reduce the whole history of Bolshevism to a question of organisation in the most crass sense of the word.

The 1903-1906 period of open factional split is explained and reduced to a problem of Menshevik indiscipline. The 1906-1908 unity perspective of Bolshevism is turned into a series of timeless and abstract organisational principles - not viewed in the light of Bolshevism's political perspective, strategy and tactics. Only in 1914 do the IMG recognise any political base for a split in the party - four years after the last joint plenum had taken place. This split was political, they say, because it placed one faction in the camp of the world bourgeoisie, the other at the head of the international workers' movement! On the 1912 expulsion of the Menshevik Liquidators, they say, 'Furthermore, the actual split into two different parties through the expulsion of various elements did not take place because of the Mensheviks political views, but because of a rejection and violation of the organisational principles of the party. The carrying out of acts incompatible with party membership by these particular elements.' (1)

At each stage the IMG strip Bolshevism and the inner party conflict of its political and programmatic content.

We, therefore, make no apology for having to re-examine in outline the political evolution of Bolshevism and its opponents. Only thus can we discover the organisational method of Lenin and his attitude to unity and splits.

In order to put across our arguments against the tendencies involved in the Faction and Party argument it is necessary to present a serious account of the history and evolution of Bolshevism. Such a historical account will reveal the distortions, omissions and fundamental revisions of Bolshevism that have been perpetrated in the debate so far.

## THE ORIGINS OF BOLSHEVISM

The traditions of Bolshevism have their roots in the work and struggle of Iskra prior to the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Party. Before the Second Congress of 1903, there did not exist a united party organisation or party programme in Russia. The movement was politically and organisationally divided and disparate.

Lenin from 1900 sought to forge an organisational and political unity in Russian Social-Democracy. His weapon was the paper, Iskra, a paper that sought to rally the forces of Russian socialism ideologically and programmatically into a coherent unified political party. From this early period, Lenin made no mistake of confusing organisational unity with ideological lack of clarity and heterogeneity. While not prescribing in advance who could and who could not be in the party, Lenin, from 1901 to 1903 waged a relentless war to ensure that the political line of Russian Social Democracy was free of all opportunism. The central core of the arguments of Lenin and Iskra lay in premising the real unification of the party on solid, principle, revolutionary social democratic politics.

It is on this context

It is in this context that we can understand the battle with 'the economists', with their paper Rabochee Dyelo, in the period up to 1903. Writing later Lenin was to trace the origins of Leninism to the fight with the economists ... a fight that he waged alongside Martov, Plekhanov and Dan.

'The origin of Bolshevism is inseparably linked with the struggle of what is known as economism (opportunism which rejected the political struggle of the working class

and denied the latter's leading role) against revolutionary social-democracy in 1897-1902. (2)

The economists' opportunism rested in their argument that Russian social-democrats should not raise, agitate or propagandise for political demands in the working class movement. Instead, Russian socialists should aid and assist the Russian working class to wage its economic struggle with the employers and the Tsarist autocracy. The economists argued that, as the working class developed its economic, industrial strength, so it would spontaneously develop political ideas and forms of struggle. Until that day the question of 'politics' - of the Russian autocracy, of the repression of the nationalities in the Russian empire, etc. - should be left to the liberals and bourgeois constitutionalists. (3)

Against this tendency in Russian social-democracy, Lenin replied both programmatically and organisationally. From the pages of Iskra, and in the pamphlet 'What is to be Done?', Lenin (supported by his future opponents, Martov and Plekhanov) argued that a revolutionary programme is not spontaneously and gradually generated by the masses themselves. Instead, revolutionary social-democrats, constituting a conscious vanguard of the working class and intelligentsia, would have to fight to inject their demands and programme into the mass struggle. To the spontaneous economism of Rabochee Dyelo Lenin counterposed a conscious revolutionary vanguard armed with its own programme and tactics, struggling for leadership in the working class movement.

Organisational differences necessarily flowed from the political differences between the Iskraits and the economists. The conscious vanguard of revolutionary social-democrats operating in conditions of repression and secrecy required military organisation and discipline. Against the call of the economists for a flabby and undisciplined party, Lenin, writing in the specific situation of repression, exile and illegality, argued for an organisation structured from above, on clear social-democratic politics, able to mobilise and direct every individual party cadre.

In the period before the 1903 conference, we also see developing another key element in the heritage of the Bolsheviks their argument as to the specific nature of the coming revolution in Russia, and of the programme of Russian Social Democracy. The Bolshevik programme for revolution certainly did not exist by 1903. It was not, in fact, to be finally clarified until April 1917. Until that date, Bolshevism developed a perspective of workers' revolution in Russia, in the light of their specific analysis of Russian capitalism in a national and international context the specific experience of the workers' movement in Russia (most importantly the 1905 revolution) and argument with their opportunist opponents in Russian social-democracy.

## PLEKHANOV'S DRAFT

In the period before the second Congress, the debate on the coming revolution, on the perspectives and tactics of Russian Social-Democracy, centred on the party programme presented by Plekhanov. Now Plekhanov's draft was an attempt to outline the general laws of capitalism as 'The principal economic feature of present day society' (4) It explained the general contradictions of capitalism as an

1. Faction and Party, R.W. 26.2.76. RW's emphasis.

2. Lenin CW Vol 18, p. 485.

3. The closest British equivalent to Economism is SWP (IS)

4. CW 6 p. 19.

economic system and the inevitable sharpening of the class struggle as those contradictions developed and grew. The draft presented by Plekhanov remained true to the traditions of European Social-Democracy in that it placed the achievement of socialism as the ultimate, maximum goal of the social democrats. But it distinguished itself from the Erfurt Programme of Social Democracy, for instance, by its unambiguous declaration that the goal of the party was the dictatorship of the proletariat. This was a specific merit of Plekhanov's draft compared with those of European Social-Democracy. Plekhanov then sought to outline an immediate minimum programme of the objectives of Russian Social Democracy. These were centred on the dismantling of the remnants of the pre-capitalist social system. Again Plekhanov's draft had its specific merits; it placed the 'overthrow of the monarchy' (5) as the 'immediate political task' of the Russian Social-Democrats. This distinguished it from the programme of German Social-Democracy, which did not even openly call for the revolutionary overthrow of the Junker monarchy in Berlin.

Writing in late January, early February Lenin outlined an alternative draft and his criticisms of Plekhanov's draft. He did not reject the positions adopted on the dictatorship of the proletariat, or the overthrow of the autocracy. But in his criticisms we can see the developing programmatic method of Bolshevism.

In his notes on Plekhanov's draft, Lenin pointed to basic shortcomings in the draft. The most important were:

- 1 extreme abstractness of many of the formulation, so that they might seem intended for a series of lectures rather than for a militant party.
- 2 Evasion and obscuring of the question of specifically Russian capitalism are a particularly serious shortcoming, since the programme should provide a compendium and guide for agitation against Russian capitalism. We must come out with a direct appraisal of Russian capitalism and with an open declaration of war against it specifically.' (6)

He criticised the absence of any analysis of the particularities of Russian capitalism and social structure not from the point of view of a purely national programme. What is important is that Lenin - unlike Plekhanov and the essential tradition of Menshevism - understood that the mechanical and abstract transposition of the programme of Western-European Social Democracy to Russia, obscured the particular tasks and perspectives of Social-Democracy in Russia.

In this way Lenin was unconsciously reacting against the restrictions placed on revolutionaries by the maximum/minimum model of Social-Democratic programme.

Lenin argued that, if a programme was to be 'a manual of action' - 'the programme of a party engaged in practical activity' rather than 'a programme for students ... more over for first year students', (7) then it had to start with the specific terrain that revolutionaries were fighting on. Hence, Lenin's alternative draft starts with the increasing dominance of the capitalist mode of production in Russia. From this Lenin went on to explain both the maximum programme and a far more detailed and broken down series of minimum demands. From the positions adopted by Plekhanov, extremely abstract and mechanistic there was a logical conclusion that the coming revolution would be, indeed had to be, a bourgeois one.

This was indeed the conclusion that Plekhanov was to draw in 1905 and in 1917. Lenin's position at this time had no clearly developed alternative characterisation of the coming revolution. Such a characterisation was to mature in 1904 and 1905. But we cannot understand the history and evolution of Bolshevism unless we understand that it was forged both in the debates with the economists and with the

scholastic stage theory of the coming revolution implicit within the argument between Plekhanov and Lenin on the Party programme.

In the period up to 1903 Lenin was an indefatigable fighter for organisational unity. But the unity was to be achieved by the sharpest of political battles, the struggle for the ascendancy of revolutionary Marxist programme and tactics against opportunism. The organisational forms advanced by Lenin in this period were aimed at ensuring and guaranteeing a revolutionary content to the work of Russian social democracy under the direction of the party leadership.

Bolshevism was not a finalised or completed political entity by 1903. This needs to be stated against those within the Stalinist and Healyite traditions who fail to understand this. Many of the methodological questions that Bolshevism later embodied, were, in 1903, only implicit in Lenin's arguments.

#### THE SECOND CONGRESS OF THE RSDLP: THE BIRTH OF BOLSHEVISM

The Second Congress was prepared by Iskra. At the Congress the Iskraites won an overwhelming majority against the opportunists of the economists and Jewish Bund. But the bloc of Iskraites itself disintegrated at the Congress. The forces that had rallied to Iskra's campaign for unity and against opportunism broke into two factions: the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks around Martov.

The immediate pretexts for the split were organisational, the two major disputes being on the questions of the party rules and the composition of the editorial Board and the Central Committee. The Bolsheviks secured their majority to the editorial Board, Martov opposed Lenin's nomination of three with a proposal for a broader editorial board of six. Lenin's supporters secured all three places on the Central Committee. The most significant Menshevik (Martovite) victory was on the party rules. Martov succeeded in winning Congress support for a definition of the party member which included the qualification of 'personal association under the direction of one of the party's organisations' as opposed to Lenin's formulation 'personal participation in one of the party's organisations'.

Now, Lenin at the time saw the differences in organisational terms. A clear majority had been won, he considered, to the politics of Iskra. There was, of course, no question of expelling or excluding 'the economists' - there was a majority party line which they would be expected to carry through. Discipline for Lenin was never an abstract question of organisational loyalty - as the IMG attempt to portray it. It meant subordination to political direction by the leading bodies of the party.

As for the differences between the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks, Lenin saw them as lacking in political content and certainly laying no basis for a split by the Bolsheviks who had a majority on the Central Committee and their nominees on the editorial board. Lenin was to look back on the open split that developed from 1903 to 1906 as having its origins in organisational questions. He was to characterise the struggles of 1903 - 1904 with the Mensheviks as the struggle with opportunism 'in questions of organisation' (8)... to maintain the position he argued in 1903 and 1904 'the disagreements that divide the two wings at the present time for the most part concern, not questions of programme or tactics, but only organisational questions.' (9) or again, 'Formerly we used to differ over major issues such as might in some cases even justify a split; now we have reached agreement on all major and

5. *Ibid.* p. 26.  
6. *Ibid.* p. 57.

7. *Ibid.* p. 37.  
8. *CW* 18 p. 485.  
9. *CW* 7 p. 206.

important points, and are only divided by shades about which we may and should argue, but over which it would be absurd and childish to part company'. (10)

Two points must be understood if we are to understand the development of the split in Russian social-democracy from such beginnings. Lenin was not himself immediately aware of the political implications of the differences. This is not to excuse the IMG who have not understood the political implications to this day. Within six months of the conference, Lenin was arguing in 'One Step Forward, Two Steps Back' that the argument on Rules had a political and social relevance. He talks of 'the individualism of the intellectual, which already manifested itself in the controversy over Paragraph I, revealing its tendency to opportunist argument and anarchistic phrasemongering...' (11) The 'broad party' arguments used by Martov to support his rule proposals implied a softness on the radical intelligentsia and its milieu that was in direct contradiction to Lenin's view of proletarian independence and political discipline.

The implications of this orientation within Menshevism become clearer during 1904. Now under their control Iskra took a line on the campaigns and activities of the liberals (particularly the autumn 1904 campaign of banqueting organised around the Zemstvo local government organs) which sharpened the differences. Iskra argued a position of subordinating the workers' movement to the liberal campaigners rallying around the Zemstvos - to party members they declared:

'We should be making a fundamental mistake if we tried by strong measures of intimidation to force the Zemstvos or other organs of the bourgeois opposition to give here and now, under the influence of panic, a formal promise to present our demands to the government, such a tactic would discredit the social-democrats, because it would make our entire political campaign a lever for reaction.' (12)

On the other hand, Lenin and the Bolsheviks argued that clear warning of the cowardice and reactionary nature of the liberal bourgeoisie should be the major task of revolutionary social democrats. They should seek to ensure the organised political independence of the working class from the middle class campaigners. Within one year, crystallising around the Zemstvo campaign, 'tactical differences became the most important' (13) Vital differences of programme and tactics were hiding behind the organisational disputes of the Third Congress. They were to be brought to the surface, made clear and public in the year following.

#### THE 1903 SPLIT

The actual split was deepened and provoked by the Mensheviks themselves. Martov refused to serve on the editorial board of Iskra unless three of his supporters - Axelrod, Zasulich and Potresov - were co-opted. When Plekhanov yielded to Martov in the Autumn of 1903 Lenin refused to serve on Iskra any longer, leaving it in the hands of the Mensheviks. (14)

Now the IMG take this as ample evidence for their view that it was the Mensheviks who were the real splitters, arguing that Lenin's campaign for a new party congress shows his credentials as a unifier at all costs. Unfortunately for them they distort the history and nature of Lenin's campaign for a new conference and against the Mensheviks. The campaign against the Mensheviks during 1904 concentrated sharply on the political differences that emerged.

Lenin's campaign for a new conference is argued for on formal grounds by the IMG ... the Mensheviks had usurped power on the editorial board. In fact the Party Central Committee (with a Bolshevik majority) denounced Lenin's call and called on him to rejoin the editorial board. Rather than submit to formal discipline and thus subordinate revolutionary politics to opportunism, Lenin went ahead organising outside the Central Committee.

The object of a new conference for Lenin was simple. It was not to reaffirm organisational unity. It was to reassert revolutionary politics against the opportunism of the new Iskra. Lenin organised for it through those local party committees which sided with the Bolsheviks, establishing in December 1904 the Bureau of Majority Committees as an alternative leadership to the conciliating and wavering Central Committee. It was from this body that the call came for a Third Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party. Before that Congress met the Bureau of Majority Committees launched their own newspaper - Vperyod, quite rightly called by Zinoviev, 'the first Bolshevik newspaper'.

By early 1905 the RSDLP was publicly and openly split. The two major factions were organised separately with their own organs - in the spring of 1905, they both held Congresses claiming to be the RSDLP. That the split was political, was programmatic, is quite clear if we look at the two open factions' response to the year 1905.

#### THE BOLSHEVIKS AND THE MENSHEVIKS AND 1905

The response of the two factions, their agitation and propaganda flowed from clearly distinct views of the nature of the coming revolution and of the tasks of the proletariat in it.

Trailblazing for the Menshevik Iskra board, Axelrod in late 1903 and early 1904 had begun to question the wisdom of the pro-Iskra centralising bloc at the Third Congress. By their Spring 1905 conference, again at the prompting of Axelrod, the Mensheviks were discussing the proposal to build a workers' congress, embracing the entire working class, regardless of political allegiance to speak in the name of the working class within the movement for liberal reform, the future bourgeois revolution.

Martov likewise outlined a clear position of subordination of the working class in the coming period - of the working class preventing the bourgeois from compromising in their own revolution by pressure and organisation from below.

'Under the leadership of social-democracy, the Russian proletariat will save the bourgeois revolution from all attempts to wreck it by timely compromises.' (15)

Martynov - now a Menshevik, but an ex-economist - formulated the tasks in the following way:

'We are on the eve of the political self-liberation of Russian bourgeois society, on the eve of a bourgeois revolution. Anyone who takes stock of the conditions involved in bringing about a revolutionary dictatorship will see that to advise Social-Democracy to prepare for revolutionary dictatorship or even for a 'temporary seizure of power' in that kind of revolution is to advise it to prepare for its own bankruptcy and to discredit the socialist flag in the eyes of the proletariat for a very long time ... It means, moreover, betraying the true business of the revolution, for in attracting the proletariat onto the road of fantastic adventures we distract it from its real revolutionary task ...' (16)

10. *ibid.* p. 257.

11. *ibid.* p. 37.

12. *ibid.* p. 501.

13. CW 18 p. 485

14. Hence the development of Iskra into a Menshevik paper.

15. Martov, Iskra No. 79.

16. Martynov, 'Two Dictatorships'.

Martynov saw the task for socialists as being to prepare the proletariat as 'the party of extreme opposition' ... (17) after the successful bourgeois revolution.

The logic is clear, if Russia is going through its prelude to bourgeois revolution - its own 1847, as the Mensheviks chose to call it - then the proletariat's role was to push that revolution from below ... ready to organise independently against the bourgeois after their revolution.

The polemics of the Bolshevik paper *Vperyod* in the early months of 1905 were openly directed against the Menshevik formulations. The Third Party Congress, convened by the Bolshevik supporters against the political opportunism of *Iskra* and the Mensheviks. The IMG choose to view the April 1905 London Congress as a unity congress. Their discussions of it do not even examine the political content of that congress and the fight for it.

'The culmination of this attempt of the Bolsheviks to carry on the struggle against the Mensheviks within the confines of a united party was the call for the Third Party Congress' ...

'He considered that a new congress, the real alternative to the policy of boycotts and splits of the Mensheviks, was the only way to safeguard the unity of the Party.' (18)

A number of points need to be made against the formalism and apoliticism of the IMG. Firstly, Lenin did not lay the same formalistic claims to his rights for the Conference as do the IMG - he was not such a pedant. In fact, constitutionally it required three quarters of local committees to call a Congress - Lenin failed to secure that proportion of local committees. Secondly, Lenin considered that the Bolshevik faction represented the party ... its continuity of revolutionary social democratic politics. The Bolshevik fight was waged to reaffirm those politics and to uphold the party on the basis of those politics.

Only if we grasp this can we understand why Lenin urged the Petersburg Bolsheviks to split with the Mensheviks when they held back the independent action of the working class, sought to subordinate it to the reform movement. Only if we grasp this can we understand the political content of Lenin's letter to Bogdanov and Gusev urging them on :

'We bring the split into the open, we call the *Vperyodists* to a Congress, we want to organise a *Vperyodist* party ...' (19)

### THE THIRD CONGRESS

Only if we grasp this can we understand both the call for unity under the banner of revolutionary social democracy raised at the Third Congress, and *Vperyod's* characterisation of the politics of *Iskra* :-

'Both the old *Rabocheye Dyelo* and the new *Iskra* talk absolute nonsense with an air of profundity about the special significance of tangible and evident results, and about a concrete contraposition of bourgeoisie and proletariat, thereby diverting the attention of the proletariat from the increasingly pressing task of a direct onset upon the autocracy, at the head of a popular uprising, towards playing at parliamentarianism ... We have had enough

of this new revision that leads to the old rubbish! ...; it is time in workers' demonstrations to accentuate and advance to the foreground those features that tend to bring them closer to the real, open struggle for freedom.' (20)

What was the political content of the Third Party Congress? The IMG do not even ask themselves that question so infatuated are they with ferretting for quotes by Lenin on organisational unity and loyalty.

In the Draft Resolution for Congress we do find condemnation of Menshevik indiscipline and splitting. But more important we find a characterisation of, and condemnation of, the politics of *Iskra*:

'The Congress considers it of imperative necessity to combat the theoretical position of the Mensheviks, or new-*Iskras*, who have deviated from Revolutionary Social Democracy towards opportunism' (21). When Lenin wrote to Greulich on February 3rd, 1905 saying, 'Hence, in actual fact, there are now two RSDLP's' (22) this was a political as well as an organisational characterisation.

The programmatic and tactical positions of Bolshevism were reformulated and further developed at the Congress. The political essence of Bolshevism became clearer, sharpened by the experience of mass struggle in 1905, by the experience of cowardice and retreat by the liberal bourgeoisie and the open fight with the other opportunist, social democratic party. There were two vital programmatic and tactical developments - (1) the Revolutionary Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasantry; (2) the question of the armed uprising.

### THE DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

Lenin's position on the nature of the coming revolution changed and became more precise during 1905. Firstly, Lenin clearly characterised the spineless stillborn nature of bourgeois democracy. He condemned the opportunists who looked to the liberals to give a decisive lead. In this his position flowed from a clear analysis of objective conditions in Russia.

'The objective conditions differ from those in France as night differs from day. Objectively, the historical course of events has now posed before the Russian proletariat precisely the task of carrying through the democratic bourgeois revolution (the whole content of which, for brevity's sake, we sum up in the word Republic). (23)

It fell to the working class, the most energetic revolutionary class in the Russian nation - leading the peasantry in an assault on the autocracy - to lead the coming democratic revolution. That the coming revolution would be bourgeois Lenin did not doubt. This was spelt out in *Vperyod* Number One:

'It is one of our most widespread and tenacious illusions in Russia that ... the coming revolution ... is not a bourgeois revolution' (24)

But the leadership of the proletariat in the coming revolution necessitated certain tactics and meant a particular programmatic content for that revolution

20. *Ibid.* p. 34.  
21. *Ibid.* p. 195.  
22. *Ibid.* p. 130.  
23. *Ibid.* p. 298.  
24. *Ibid.* p. 24.

17. *Ibid.*  
18. 'The Battle for Ideas'.  
19. *CWS*, p. 144.

For Lenin the tactics involved were clear. Absolute independence of the working class, for it to put itself at the head of the mass struggle.

'No! You step aside you generals and magistrates, professors and capitalists! The proletariat is setting out to build your bourgeois revolution for you, and it will build it in a way that will make it easiest to rebuild on socialist lines when the longed-for hour comes.' (25)

The democratic revolution was to be led by a revolutionary alliance of the workers and peasants establishing a revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry. At the Third Congress, this position was affirmed. The programmatic content of the revolutionary dictatorship was to be the minimum programme of social democracy. Lenin argued on the eve of the Congress in his article 'Social Democracy and the provisional Revolutionary Government' that:

'we shall succeed, standing as we do on the shoulders of a number of revolutionary generations of Europe, in realising all the democratic transformations the whole of our minimum programme, with a thoroughness never equalled before.' (26)

Lenin clearly distinguished between the leading role of working class in the coming bourgeois revolution and the actual socialist transformation of society. Only Trotsky, with the theory of Permanent Revolution, argued that the working class at the head of the revolutionary nation would not limit itself to democratic changes, but would march immediately on to commence the socialist transformation of society. At the time he accused the Bolsheviks of being far better than the Mensheviks up to the seizure of power but of seeking to hold back the working class once power was in their hands. (27)

The 'Self limitation' of the proletariat, exercising its dictatorship with the peasantry, to democratic tasks was on occasions seen by him as only momentary.

Lenin's view was contradictory. He was able to talk in September, in the Bolshevik paper, *Proletarii*, of:

'From the democratic revolution we shall at once begin to go on . . . to a socialist revolution. We are for a continuous revolution. We shall not stop halfway.'

On other occasions a clearer demarcation of stages is upheld. In October in the same paper:

'It is absurd to ignore the democratic, that is, the basically bourgeois, character of the present revolution . . . absurd to confuse the tasks and conditions of a democratic and a socialist revolution which are disparate both in their character and in the social forces participating in them.'

This contradiction was not resolved in Bolshevik politics until 1917. It was only then that the Bolsheviks, after an internal struggle, adopted a position that placed the construction of socialism immediately on the agenda for the working class having seized state power.

' . . . under the leadership of Comrade Lenin, the Bolsheviks changed their policy line on this most important matter (not without inner struggle) in the spring of 1917, that is, before the seizure of power.' (28)

Not only did the Third Congress break from the opportunist characterisation of the coming revolution, it clarified the vital

question of the seizure of power - the armed insurrection. While the Mensheviks were at sea chasing the tail of the Russian liberals the Bolshevik Congress devoted considerable time to the question of the armed seizure of power.

'Therefore, the Third Congress of the RSDLP holds that the task of organising the proletariat for direct struggle against the autocracy by means of armed uprising is one of the major and most urgent tasks of the Party at the present revolutionary moment.' (29)

It was the armed insurrection, led by the working class, that was to inaugurate the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. The Bolsheviks had concretised their programme and tactics for the coming revolution based on an analysis of Russian society, its contradictions and the period it was going through.

The call for unity issued from the Congress was a call for all social democrats to break with the opportunists, with the liberals and subordinate themselves to the discipline of Party politics - reaffirmed and concretised by the Third Congress - the first unanimously Bolshevik conference.

#### THE BOLSHEVIKS AND UNITY AFTER THE THIRD CONGRESS

Lenin and the Bolsheviks began a vigorous campaign to unify the party after the Congress. This was particularly the case from the autumn of 1905. Now the IMG again view this period from the vantage point of timeless organisational principles - Lenin the unifier. The period, in fact, is much more complex and demands a real understanding of the political method of Bolshevism.

For Lenin, party unity, unity with the Mensheviks was always conditional on the revolutionary line of the Party remaining intact. There were a number of reasons why in late 1905 Lenin saw that unity was possible under the banner of revolutionary social democracy. Firstly, we have to start with Lenin's assessment of the period, that Russia was passing

with Lenin's assessment of the period that Russia was passing through. The Bolsheviks, from the Third Congress, right up until 1907, saw the period as one of mass struggle, where the armed insurrection was on the immediate agenda. In that period the opportunists and waverers would split and fragment under the pressure of mass struggle, seeing the Mensheviks as an uneven coalition of reformist and revolutionary social democrats, Lenin saw a clear imperative to win those elements who were moving back towards revolutionary positions.

The Mensheviks were in a state of advanced political disarray by the middle of 1905. Plekhanov maintained solidly the perspective of subordination of working class interests in the coming revolution. But this view was not shared by all Mensheviks. Trotsky is right to say that

' . . . the Mensheviks' view of the Russian revolution was never distinguished by great clarity . . . ' (30)

Martynov and Martov flirted with ideas of 'revolution to the end' although never characterising the end or content. By the autumn of 1905, the Menshevik paper, *Nachalo*, was being edited by Trotsky and Parvus, the theorists of 'Permanent Revolution'.

Viewing the Mensheviks in essence as 'centrists' Lenin believed that the pressure of events, most importantly the

25. *Vperyod* No. 10 - no signature.

26. CWR p. 287.

27. See 'Our Differences' L. Trotsky, 1905.

28. *ibid.*

29. Trotsky, 1905, p. 317.

30. CWR p. 373.

pressure of the masses, would propel many of them leftwards:

'... the tactics adopted in the period of 'whirlwind' did not further estrange the two wings of the social democratic party, but brought them closer together'. (31)

It was a unity, Lenin argued, based on the spontaneous instincts of the class. In a period of mass struggle, the prelude to armed insurrection, it was this mass pressure that would force the centrists to a clear choice between revolutionary and opportunist politics.

'The Menshevik comrades will ... go through the purgatory of blocs with the bourgeois opportunists and return to Revolutionary Social Democracy.' (32)

In this situation Lenin argued that a West European type Social Democratic party, with clearly defined right and left wings, could be built ... under certain conditions. Firstly, the party would have to be open to spontaneously revolutionary social democratic workers:

'Therefore, our duty at the present time is to avoid intellectualist hysteria and preserve party unity, trusting to the staunchness and sound class instinct of the revolutionary proletariat.' (33)

Organisationally the Bolsheviks were to fight to ensure that the party unity placed no restraints on the revolutionary pressure of the masses in a period of mass upheaval and armed insurrection.

At the Stockholm Unity Congress of 1906 the Mensheviks were in a majority on the Central Committee, and on the editorial board. The IMG claim Lenin called:

'for strict party discipline on the part of the Bolsheviks even though they were now in a minority.' (34)

They quote Lenin on the decision of the conference, against the votes of the Bolsheviks to sanction electoral alliance with the Cadet party (a reforming capitalist party).

'Does the sanction by Social Democrats of blocs with the Cadets necessitate a complete severance of organisational relations, i.e. a split. We think not, and all the Bolsheviks think the same way.' (35)

'At this conference the Bolsheviks bound themselves to abide by the decision of local organisations.' (36)

But the significance of this totally evades the IMG.

In his report on the Unity Congress of the RSDLP to the workers of St. Petersburg, Lenin argues that there is a clearly defined left and right wing in the party. He calls on workers to join the party to support and strengthen the left. Ideological struggle will be necessary to defeat the right, but this will be possible in the context of a united party.

'But in the united party, this ideological struggle must not split the organisations, must not hinder the unity of action of the proletariat. This is a new principle as yet in our party life, and considerable effort will be needed to implement it properly.' (37)

Lenin and the Bolsheviks argued that unity with the Mensheviks must not be allowed to constitute a brake on the fighting spirit of the working class movement. For that

reason they proposed exceptional and unprecedented organisational forms. Most importantly the line of the congress on electoral blocs with the Cadets was not to be binding on local organisations. Such decisions should be left to the local committees where the Bolsheviks clearly expected advanced workers to reject such compromises. That is why Lenin and the Bolsheviks talked of abiding by the decisions of local committees. It was in the local committees, at that time, in that specific period, that the Bolsheviks expected revolutionary social democracy to be at its strongest. Lenin did say:

'A Bolshevik in Odessa must cast into the ballot box a ballot paper bearing a Cadet's name even if it sickens him.' (38)

... the IMG make much of this. But he clearly understood that class conscious workers would not stomach for long the collaborationist line of the Menshevik majority.

It was in this situation, where the official majority was tailing the class conscious sections of the class, that Lenin advocated a reversal of the centralised organisational methods he had advocated up to 1905. Lenin's proposals are worth quoting at length.

'There remains an important, serious and extremely responsible task: really to apply the principles of democratic centralism in Party organisation, to work tirelessly to make the local organisations the principle organisational units of the Party, in fact, and not merely in name, and see to it that all the higher-standing bodies are elected, accountable, and subject to recall. We must work hard to build up an organisation that will include all the class conscious social-democratic workers, and will live its own independent political life. The autonomy of every party organisation, which hitherto has been largely a dead-letter, must become a reality.' (39)

#### "PLENTY OF SCOPE"

No timeless organisational principles can be drawn from these proposals. We have to grasp their political significance. A right and left wing existed in social democracy. The right was characterised thus:

'The right wing of our party does not believe in the complete victory of the present, i.e. bourgeois democratic revolution.' (40)

The left's perspective was based on imminent victory, on preparing the class for that victory. Lenin's view was that the Congress had not closed the door to either the right or left.

'Thus we have a very wide field. The resolutions of the congress provide plenty of scope.' (41)

But one position - clause one of the Congress resolution defined the immediate line of the party:

'The Unity Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party has recognised that the immediate task of the movement is to wrest power from the autocratic government. Whoever forgets about this immediate task, whoever attempts to push it into the background, will infringe the will of the congress; and we shall fight all who are guilty of this in the sternest fashion.' (42)

The party had embraced and accepted the essential strategic task of the particular period. That was the political basis

31. Trotsky, 1905 p. 311.

32. CW 10, p. 251.

33. CW 11 p. 325.

34. *ibid.* p. 321.

35. *Struggle for Ideas*, p. 2.

36. CW, 11 p. 321.

37. CW 12 p. 121.

38. CW 10 p. 380.

39. CW 11 p. 323.

40. CW 10 p. 376.

41. *ibid.* p. 377.

of unity which the IMG fail to comprehend. The organisational forms to be taken by unity were those than enabled the most effective fight for revolutionary social democracy by the class conscious vanguard. Hence decentralisation and local autonomy. Hence the secret formation of a Bolshevik organising centre in Stockholm during the Congress . . . an organising centre that was to direct its own supporters, was to direct expropriations to raise funds for Bolshevik operations.

This period baffles most tendencies that try to explain it. For T. Cliff it is a simple example of brilliant eclecticism, of inspired manoeuvre. For the IMG it is dissolved into a series of object lessons about the need 'for unity' - with whom and on what basis never being discussed. For the Stalinist tradition and their 'Trotskyist' descendants, the Bolshevik party was formed in 1903 and the 1905/6 unity drive is played down or simply ignored.

We can only understand it in the light of the development of the Bolshevik programme and tactics, their assessment of the tasks of the period and the direction of the mass struggle. On this political basis the unity drive was a fight for the ascendancy of revolutionary social democracy over the revolutionary masses and the waverers and centrists. Zinoviev describes the period thus:

'It was a situation where two parties were seemingly operating within the structure of one.' (43)

He was only half right. At the time the fight for the revolutionary party took the form of a battle with opportunism within a mass based social-democratic party - a party expanding rapidly under the pressure of the masses and the period of upheaval.

#### UNITY AND REACTION

A period of dramatic downturn in class struggle followed the arrest of the St. Petersburg soviet in December 1905 and the defeat of the Moscow insurrection of January 1906. The Bolsheviks were, in fact, slow to recognise the changing situation. A period of reaction and repression lasted until 1910, when the class struggle in Russia began to revive. It was a period when the class struggle in Russia began to revive. It was a period when the mass membership secured by social democracy evaporated to a large degree. In March 1908 Lenin was writing :

'Wavering, disunity and disintegration - such have been the general feature of this half-year.' (44)

In mid-May 1906 the Moscow party organisation had 5,320 members, this number had dropped to 150 by the end of 1908.

In the period of mass repression of downturn in class struggle and party size, the immediate perspective of Bolshevism since 1905 - wrestling for power with the autocracy - was no longer on the agenda.

The unity of the party remained, formally, organisational. But the party split once again into open, public warring factions. Never from reading the material of the IMG would one grasp the notion of a party openly split between factions with their own organs, their own organisation and discipline.

This was actually the case for considerable periods in the history of 'united' Russian Social Democracy.

Writing in 1912 to Polish workers, Lenin explained the priorities of the period from 1908 - 1911:

'The task of the RSDLP was to preserve the revolutionary social-democratic party of the working class by adapting itself to the new conditions of work.' (45)

The new conditions of work opened up from 1907 new and sharp differences both between and within the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. On June 3rd the Stolypin coup d'etat dissolved the Duma which had been wrung from the autocracy by the mass struggle of 1905. Social democratic deputies to the Duma were arrested. Anti-semitic 'Black Hundred' pogroms were unleashed.

Meeting in June 1907, the 5th Party Congress addressed itself to the new problems. The Mensheviks had generally responded to the downturn of 1906, the possibilities of circumscribed but legal work in the Duma by a turn towards 'legalism' towards Parliamentary (Duma) and legal work. Writing in 1906 Larin publicly signalled the new swing of Menshevism to opportunism. In a pamphlet 'A Broad Labour Party and a Labour Congress', he revived Axelrod's demands for a mass workers' party open to all tendencies based on mass and passive membership. The Mensheviks focused their perspective on legal work and participation in the Duma.

When the mass struggle had been on a high level, in 1905 and 1906 the Bolsheviks were for a boycott of the Duma counterposing to it the task of organising the working class for the armed insurrection. But,

'A Marxist must base his arguments on tactics on an analysis of the objective course of the revolution.' (46)

As the tide of revolution ebbed so Lenin, by the Fifth Congress, was in favour of revolutionaries participating in the Duma as a platform for the programme of revolutionary social-democracy. The Bolsheviks, with the support of the Bund, Latvian and Polish social democrats, had a tenuous majority at the congress, but Lenin voted with the Mensheviks against the majority of the Bolsheviks on the question of participation in the Duma.

The question of participation in the Duma, of legal opportunities for work, opened up splits within the Menshevik bloc and the Bolshevik faction. Significant sections among the Mensheviks were to argue that the Party should concentrate itself entirely on these legal openings for work.

This position, that of the Liquidators, meant restricting the agitation and propaganda of the party to demands acceptable to the autocracy and their police. It meant liquidating the revolutionary programme of social democracy.

#### THE EXPULSION OF THE BOGDANOVITES

A significant proportion of the Bolsheviks insisted on boycotting the Duma and other forms of legal work. Legal work with no compromise on programme, no hampering of illegal party work was the formula adopted by the Leninists. The new situation called for new tactics opened up new differences and called for new conceptions of unity. While winning a majority at the 1907 London Congress, the Bolsheviks maintained their independent organising centre - and

43. *ibid.*  
44. Zinoviev, 'History of the Bolshevik Party' p. 143.  
45. CW 15, p. 17.  
46. CW 18 p. 151.



the paper, *Proletary*, as their own public factional voice: although a united party organ, *Sotsial Demokrat*, was also maintained.

The essential thrust of Bolshevism in the years 1908-1910 was to defend the principles of revolutionary social democracy against the opportunism of the ultra-left in Bolshevism, and the majority of the Mensheviks. *Proletary* conducted a merciless, constant and absolutely public struggle against the Liquidators of the right who wished to dissolve the party as a revolutionary vanguard organisation of the class and the ultra-left boycotters. The organisational form of this struggle was an open faction fight which publicly divided the party. In 1909, the Bolsheviks expelled from their ranks Bogdanov and the ultra-left grouping. This was seen as perfectly legitimate by the Leninists. The Bolsheviks were a faction to defend the politics of revolutionary social democracy:

'The fact is that right from the beginning we declared: we are not creating a special 'Bolshevik' trend, always and everywhere we merely uphold the point of view of revolutionary social democracy.' (47)

In such a faction there was no room for disunity on essential questions of perspective and tactics. Lenin explained the expulsion of the Bogdanovites thus:

'We have exhausted all possibilities and all means of convincing the dissenting comrades, we have worked at this for over eighteen months. However, as a faction, i.e. an association of like-minded people in the Party, we cannot work without unity on fundamental issues. Splitting away from a faction is not the same as splitting away from the Party. Those who have split away from our faction are not all deprived of the opportunity of working in the Party. Either they will be 'free lancers' i.e. members of no faction, and will have to be drawn in by the general circumstances of the Party work, or they will try to form a new faction - that is their legitimate right, if they want to uphold and develop their particular shade of views and tactics.' (48)

The Bogdanovites did form their own faction around the paper, *Vperyod*. The fight between them and the Bolsheviks, within the fragmented RSDLP, was to be open - revolving around fundamental questions of perspectives and tactics.

## THE LIQUIDATORS

A far more obdurate and lasting deviation from the politics of revolutionary social democracy, from Party politics, was posed by the Liquidators, and their open factional organ. The IMG pose the problems of the fight between the liquidators and the Bolsheviks as fundamentally a split between indiscipline and unity:

'... so clearly did this split not arise from the political grounds of the incompatibility of Menshevism with the Party, but instead on the organisational basis of the refusal of various elements to submit to the discipline of the party ...' (49)

Who were the liquidators, what did they stand for?

The politics of the liquidators were the predominant politics in the journal *Golos Sotsial-Demokrata* - a paper under Menshevik tutelage. Except for a brief (by Russian

Social-democratic standards ... only six days) Congress in 1908, Party life primarily centred around the editorial boards of the factional papers - it was around the editorial board of *Proletary* that Lenin built the Bolshevik organisation. The Golosists put over politics that were increasingly incompatible with revolutionary social-democracy. (50) These politics are never examined by the IMG. The 'extreme' liquidators opposed the entire existence of the illegal party apparatus, it was this that they wished to 'liquidate' all the better to carry out legal work. These political ideas, liquidating as they did the revolutionary programme of social-democracy, were argued openly in *Golos Sotsial-Demokrata*, which argued for the dissolution of the illegal organisation.

By 1912 the liquidators were clearly advocating the opportunist politics of the economists defeated by the Iskraites at the Third Party Congress. As the mass strike wage developed this was the position of one of their papers, *Nevsky Golos*:

'A period of economic strikes is ahead of us. It would be an irreparable mistake to allow them to become intertwined with political actions of the workers. Such a combination would have a harmful effect on both the economic and the political struggle.' (51)

These are the positions adopted by those that the IMG characterise as having 'organisational' differences with Bolshevism. The Menshevik old guard, Martov, Dan, Axelrod, under the pressure of the period of reaction, gave protective cover, implicit and explicit support to the liquidators. In no way did Lenin see this as a discipline problem.

'Liquidationism is a deep-seated social phenomenon, indissolubly connected with the counter-revolutionary mood of the liberal bourgeoisie, with disintegration and break up in the democratic petty-bourgeoisie.' (52)

He invited the Martovites to join with the Bolsheviks in a fight with the liquidators, a fight to defend the programme of the party.

'... The Golosists (from whom the Party asks no more than an honest, straight fight, without reservation against the liquidators) by their prevaricating are doing the liquidators a service. Menshevism is put in difficulty by the history of counter-revolution: it must either fight liquidationism or become its accomplice.' (53)

## UNITY

Lenin was prepared to campaign for unity once again in Russian Social Democracy. But his fight for unity, against the liquidators, was conditional on the reaffirmation of the revolutionary tasks of the proletariat, as the line of the party, as the basis of the party's discipline. Against those who refused to recognise the illegal RSDLP he waged a campaign to reassert the revolutionary mission of social democracy. Certain Mensheviks, Plekhanov most notably, sided with Lenin, seeing the position adopted by the liquidators as being a question of organisation and discipline. Lenin bloced with Plekhanov and these pro-party Mensheviks while totally disagreeing with their characterisation of the problem.

50. Red Weekly, 26.2.76

51. Meaning as we have said the tailoring down of the demands of the programme to legally acceptable demands.

52. CW 18 p. 116.

53. CW 16 p. 100.

47. CW 11 p. 341.  
48. *ibid.* p. 361.  
49. CW 15 p. 422.

'Plekhanov depicts the split within the Menshevik ranks over liquidationism as a split over an organisational question. At the same time, however, he provides data which show that the matter is far from being confined to a question of organisation.' (54)

'The question here is not at all one of present day organisational problems ... it is a question of the fundamental ideas of the social democratic programme and tactics, which are being 'liquidated' by the collective Menshevik 'work' issued under the collective Menshevik editorship of Martov, Maslov, Potresov.' (55)

Only a political fight could lay the basis for unity, could draw the lines between Party and non-Party positions. From the editorial board of the all-party organ *Sotsial Demokrat*, Lenin sketched out a resolution on the prerequisites for Party unity. His argument has nothing in common with the organisational, apolitical explanation advanced by the IMG.

'The editorial board of the Central Organ recognises that the consolidation of our Party and of its unity may at the present time be achieved only by the rapprochement which has already begun, between definite factions that are strong and influential in the practical workers movements, and not by moralising, whining for their abolition. Moreover, this rapprochement must take place and develop on the basis of revolutionary social-democratic tactics and an organisational policy aiming at a determined struggle against liquidationism both of the 'left' and of the 'right', especially against the latter, since 'left' liquidationism, being already routed, is a lesser danger.' (56)

#### THE 1910 PLENUM

In January 1910 the plenum of the Central Committee took place. It set itself the task of achieving party unity ... on certain clear political conditions. Lenin considered that the plenum did lay down a basis for Party unity and the Bolshevik faction were prepared to commit themselves to close down Proletary, if *Golos Sotsial Demokrata* was closed, and on the guarantee of a speedy convocation of a Party Conference. But if we look at Lenin's written report of the plenum - the last united plenum to take place - we find that Lenin's argument depends on certain political positions having been reaffirmed at the plenum. These positions were outlined in *Sotsial-Demokrat* in February 1910.

Firstly, Lenin stressed that the plenum had arrived at agreement that the character of the coming period could not be calculated precisely. The Party must prepare either for 'a relatively unchanging situation' or 'rapid breakup'. (57) The plenum underlined clearly against the politics of the liquidationists that the ...

'Party's tasks must prepare the proletariat for a new, open, revolutionary struggle (without this we should lose the right to belong to revolutionary social democracy.)' (58)

Against the boycotters, the plenum resolved to:

'Offer the proletariat the possibility of utilising for itself all the contradictions of the unstable regime of counter-revolution (without this our revolutionary character would become a mere phrase)...(59)

To Lenin the plenum laid the basis for unity precisely because it designated the politics of the liquidators and the ultra-left outside the politics of the party. It was this that

'put the work on such a footing as to make impossible any vacillation to one side for the other.' (60)

A conference could, therefore, be convened of all pro-Party organisations and groups 'actually engaged in local work.' (61) The Bolshevik approach to the unity plenum shows a ruthless subordination of unity arrangements, organisational terms to political principle and to a concrete assessment of tasks, and tactics in the coming period.

The Unity plenums called for conference never took place. In 1912 a Bolshevik dominated conference declared the Mensheviks to be outside the party. For the IMG this decision was based on organisational crimes by the Mensheviks.

'In 1912 he (Lenin-WP) supported expelling Mensheviks from the party - but because they refused to submit to party discipline. At this point in time advocacy of the political line of Menshevism within the party was perfectly permissible provided it accepted organisation and discipline.' (62)

If we actually examine the final rupture, we find it took place on the basis of the clear political chasm that opened between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, the Mensheviks reduced 'unity to naught' by openly condoning politics that had been condemned by the unity plenum of the Central Committee. In the Spring of 1910 an article by Martov (63) was turned down by the *Sotsial Demokrat* editorial board, and submitted instead to the party's internal bulletin, *Diskussionny Listok*. It argued for the equality of legal and illegal party bodies - clearly against the line of the plenum, of the political terms for unity accepted by the Bolshevik faction. Even at this stage we find Lenin declaring that the legalists are politically outside the party:

'they are being called back to the party on the definitely expressed condition that they break with liquidationism (i.e. legalism at all costs), and come over to the Party standpoint, to the 'Party way of Life'' (64)

The Menshevik leaders placed themselves in the camp of the liquidators, politically outside the party, by their continuation to produce *Golos Sotsial Demokrata* as an organ of pro-liquidator politics.

A small section of the Mensheviks, the party Mensheviks, sided with the Bolsheviks. The Menshevik faction in fact split during 1910. Plekhanov designated the legalists to be liquidators, for this he was attacked by the Menshevik Centre, not that the Party-Mensheviks, or the IMG understood this to be the case. Trotsky and the Viennese *Pravda* likewise saw the conflict as organisational, explaining that it would not intervene in the dispute :-

'because organisational conflicts require organisational and not literary intervention ...' (65)

Lenin roundly opposed Trotsky's non-intervention and characterisation:

'the principle is correct. But the pro-Party Mensheviks 'intervened' as any Party member should, in the appraisal of an ideological and not an organisational conflict.' (66)

54. *ibid.*  
55. *ibid.* p. 19.  
56. *ibid.*

57. *ibid.* p. 77.  
58. *ibid.* p. 150.  
59. *ibid.*

60. *ibid.*  
61. *ibid.*  
62. *ibid.*  
63. *Red Weekly*, 4.3.76  
64. 'On the Right Path' (sic!).  
65. *CW* 16 p. 157.

66. *ibid.* p. 150.

And when did this argument take place? After 1914, when many Mensheviks had lined up with the autocracy and Martov and Trotsky wavered. No! It took place in 1910 and had a principled programmatic content. The Bolsheviks protected the programme and organisation of the party by refusing any compromise or leeway on the programme and tactics of the Party.

#### THE SPLIT IN 1910

From the Spring of 1910, the Bolsheviks refused to work any longer on a joint editorial board with the Liquidators of their patrons on *Golos Sotsial Demokrata*. The Bolsheviks considered that they had compromised at the January plenum. They had accepted resolutions which they considered not forceful enough so as to ensure that there was a clear demarcation on points of political principle. (67) The sharpest political clarification, rather than coalitional unity, had been the object of the Bolsheviks at the plenum. The continued cover to liquidationism proffered by the Mensheviks in *Golos Sotsial Demokrata* placed them outside the party, outside the revolutionary line affirmed at the plenum. In refusing to work any longer with the Golosites,

'We for our part declare that we are definitely not in a position to conduct the Party organ in collaboration with the Golosists, for it is impossible to carry out work exclusively by means of a mechanical majority over people with whom we have no common Party ground.' (68)

The Leninists saw their tasks as drawing together all those elements who stood against liquidationism - who saw it as outside the politics of the party - and of fighting the conciliators who refused to countenance a break. Lenin did not see the question of unity with those Mensheviks who had split with the majority of their bloc - the party Mensheviks - as a purely organisational question. While they stood with the Bolsheviks in the fight against the 'legalists', the Plekhanovites had no immediate or coherent political alternative. Lenin brought this out in a letter to Kamenev, written in April 1910.

'What is the purpose of our policy now, at this precise moment? To build the Party core not on the cheap phrases of Trotsky and co, but on genuine ideological rapprochement between the Plekhanovites and the Bolsheviks. Whether this will work out, I do not know. If it doesn't, then back to the Bolshevik Centre. If it does, it will be a substantial step forward'. (69)

The Party Mensheviks, in fact, were drawn in to cooperate on the Bolshevik based paper produced from October 1910 - *Rabochay Gazeta*. The paper specifically broke with undertakings of the January plenum. But it was produced because neither Trotsky's Vienna-based *Pravda* or the ultra-left *Vperyod* were arguing the positions and the policy of the Party.

In fact a long term rapprochement between the Party Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks proved impossible. Politically Plekhanov was to 'cross class lines' far more dramatically than many of those around Golos with his chauvinist support for the Russian war effort in 1914. However, lasting political cooperation broke down by 1912 between the Bolsheviks and the Party Mensheviks. The IMG dust-up Party-Menshevism, using it as a prop to prove that only discipline and organisational questions split the party until 1914. They revive the explanations and arguments of the Party Mensheviks. They do not mention that Lenin fought against

those arguments and that long-term political cooperation between the Bolshevik and the party Mensheviks proved impossible in the accelerating class struggles of 1912 to 1914.

Lenin's arguments with the 'conciliators' with those who fought against a split are an object lesson to those who see 'unity' as a question of a-political alliances and diplomacy. The Viennese based paper, *Pravda*, edited by Trotsky, refused to take sides in the dispute campaigning instead for the maintenance of unity in the ranks of Russian Social Democracy. We make no apologies for attacking the position put forward by Trotsky at this time. He was later to admit that it was a wavering conciliationist line (70). Trotsky called for the 'conciliation' of 'persons, institutions and groups', ignoring, and avoiding, the political differences dividing the Russian Social Democrats. Lenin attacked this position in the *Discussiony Listok* article, *Notes of a Publicist*.

'There is another view on this unity, namely, that long ago a number of profound objective causes, independently of the particular composition of the 'given persons, groups and institutions' (submitted to the plenum and at the plenum) began to bring about and are steadily continuing to bring about in the two old and principle factions of social democracy changes that create sometimes undesired and even unperceived by some of the 'given persons, groups and institutions', ideological and organisational bases for unity. These objective conditions are rooted in the specific features of the present period of bourgeois development in Russia. (71)

Unity was possible then only on the basis of shared political line and only on the basis of 'objective conditions' breaking up the old factions (obviously Lenin here is referring to the fragmenting of the Mensheviks in 1905-1910) and thus opening up the possibility of winning party of old factions back to the revolutionary line of the party. That revolutionary line, its maintenance, defence and development, was, in fact, the basis of Bolshevism. It represented the continuity of revolutionary social democracy's fight with opportunism. In particular, objective circumstances sections of ex-opportunists could be won back to the line of the party. This conception lies at the heart of Lenin's understanding of, and tactics towards, unity in Russian social democracy.

#### TWO FACTIONS

In November 1910, the Bolsheviks published in *Rabochaya Gazeta* 'an open letter to all pro-party social democrats'. There is a new situation in the class struggle and the party is hopelessly weak and divided. That was the starting point of the article '... we must do away with hypocrisy and frankly say what actually exists, frankly admit the conduct of party work by two factions' (72). This factional division opened up two possibilities: either the party would be built by the Bolsheviks and party Mensheviks who represented the line of the party, or by a bloc of Golosists *Vperyodists* (ultra-left ex-Bolsheviks) and Trotsky. There was no in-between path. By November 1910 the Bolsheviks clearly saw themselves and their supporters within the RSDLP as the party, and, resolved to build independent of the conciliators, ultra-left and liquidators. The choice for all party members was to stand with the Bolsheviks or to see the party disintegrate. Bolshevik groups were now urged to break all links with the ultra-left, to build the party around *Rabochaya Gazeta* ... '... to set about preparing those meetings and conferences which are essential for restoring

67. *ibid.* p. 224  
68. *ibid.* p. 194.  
69. *CW* 43, p. 243.

70. See L. Trotsky, 'Our Differences' in 'Challenge of the Left Opposition'.  
71. *CW* 16, p. 213.  
72. *ibid.* p. 537.

the party and which, owing to the present state of affairs, must inevitably begin with modest, unofficial and informal attempts.' (73)

Lenin's struggle against the Liquidators was not, as the IMG suggest, over organisational matters divorced from political issues. Lenin in no way regarded the Liquidators' views as legitimate social-democratic opinions providing they accepted discipline. For him their refusal to recognise or abide by conference decisions, their refusal to work within the illegal party organisations, their advocacy of a 'broad' 'European' Labour Party was inseparably tied to their rejection of the programme and tactical positions of revolutionary social democracy. This because a legal, 'Stolypin Labour Party', one which accepted the limits of Tsarist legality would, of a necessity, be a non-revolutionary party. Lenin could thus write in an introduction to a pamphlet by the man who was to oversee the party's work in St. Petersburg until the outbreak of war,

'Kamenev has proved conclusively that, in point of fact, the liquidationist group represents a separate party, not the RSDLP ... That 'amorphous legally existing, federation of Potresov, Larin, Levitsky and co. (with Mr. Martov and the Golos group abroad, trailing behind) has now fully revealed itself. It is a group of literary men who have nothing in common with the RSDLP and who pursue, not a social-democratic, but a liberal-labour policy. They are the leading lights of a 'Stolypin Labour Party'. (74)

Again, writing in August 1911, Lenin could conclude, 'Membership of the party means fighting for the party. All talk about 'agreement' with the liquidators who are building a non-social-democratic party, is a violation of the duty deriving from party membership.' (75)

## THE SIXTH CONGRESS

In the autumn of 1911, Lenin stepped up the campaign against the Bolshevik conciliators and began preparations for a party conference, a decision he had no 'legal' or 'constitutional' right to take.

In January 1912 the 'Sixth All-Russia Conference of the RSDLP' met in Prague. The meeting of delegates, all Bolsheviks except two Plekhanovites, was denounced by all the other fractions and trends of the old party, the conciliators, the Liquidators and the Vperyodists. Even Plekhanov refused to attend. The conference, therefore, had to justify its 'usurpation' of the party. It did so in terms of 'the extremely urgent practical tasks of the working class movement' the vital need to 're-establish a competent, practical party centre, closely linked with the local organisations' and the fruitless two year campaign to convene a conference. The urgency of doing this in 1912 flowed from the revival of the working class movement and the need to revive the illegal organisation in preparation for the revolutionary upheavals ahead.

The Prague conference expelled the Liquidators. Was this, as the IMG claim, an organisational split? Or was it, as the Healeyite tradition maintains, doctrinal? The folly of such a distinction should now be obvious. As early as 1908 the party conference had defined Liquidationism as, 'renunciation of the programme, traditions and tactics of the party'.

To so divide programme and tactics, politics and organisation, tells us nothing about Lenin's method, though it may tell us a lot about those of the IMG and USFI.

As for the IMG contention that the Mensheviks had not, 'crossed the class-line' in 1912, were still, 'on the side of

the working class' this likewise has no foundation whatsoever in Lenin's actual tactics. He clearly characterised Liquidationism (not Menshevism because this tendency had split into pro- and anti-party wings) as having, 'nothing to do with a working class party or a working class policy' and as, 'preaching by Liberal publicists who take a Liberal's attitude to the workers'. (76) Sociologically, Lenin explained the trend as due to the defection of the intelligentsia under the blows of the reaction.

The struggle against Liquidationism was pursued relentlessly by Lenin over the succeeding two years. He continued to flay all those who sought to 'conciliate' between the Liquidators and the Bolshevik-centred party. The 'conciliators', including most prominently Trotsky, organised the famous 'August Bloc' conference in Vienna in 1912 - a motley collection of Liquidators and conciliators brought together only by their hostility to Bolshevism. Other vacillators were some right-wing Bolsheviks, the Vperyodists and most of the non-Russian nationalities. Most conciliators were 'politically' in agreement with Lenin, yet refused absolutely to fight Liquidationism to the finish. Thus, Lenin characterised them Trotsky in particular, as 'phrase-mongers' and 'windbags' etc. Their bloc against the Prague conference was politically unprincipled, hence the particular venom of Lenin's denunciation of them. As a tendency, Lenin characterised them as what he would later dub, 'centrists',

When there is a split and in general when there is a bitter struggle between trends, it is inevitable that groups should appear which base their existence on a continuous darting from one side to the other and on petty intrigue.'

Lenin characterised these centrists thus,

'I condemn Liquidationism - but I don't say plainly who are the overt and consistent Liquidators. I admit that Liquidationism endangers the very existence of the party - but I don't say plainly whether or not such and such a group ought to be in the party!' (77)

## AGAINST "UNITY"

The Liquidators and conciliationists rushed to the International Socialist Bureau, the highest body of the Second International. There Lenin fought a two year war against them, a battle against one form of unity, the cobbling together of opportunist (i.e. non-Marxist tendencies) with the revolutionaries to the destruction of a clear revolutionary line (programme and tactics) and a disciplined party. However, Lenin never ceased to point out that this battle, this split, was essential to the really vital unity, the unity of the class-conscious workers around this programme and party. This split and this unity he was prepared to defend against nearly all the recognised leaders of International Social-Democracy. Kautsky, and Rosa Luxemburg included, arguing tirelessly that they were wrong in imagining that all that was needed was an agreement to differ within a 'united' Russian Social-Democracy. Such an agreement would have been politically unprincipled and also practically disastrous. By June 1914 a powerful alliance of the various Russian fragments and the nationalities, with the sponsorship of Camille Huysmans, Kautsky and Luxemburg called a conference in Brussels to 'unify' the Russians. Lenin, who refused to attend in person, gave strict instructions to the Bolshevik representative, Inessa Armand to make no

73. *ibid.* p. 344.  
74. CW 17, p. 225.  
75. *ibid.* p. 328.

76. *ibid.* p. 519.  
77. CW 18, p. 408.

concessions and agree to nothing. Unity from below with the Menshevik workers was the only unity Lenin would countenance. Lenin's verdict on the Brussels meeting was uncompromising.

'Huysmans and Vandervelde have unleashed all threats. Wretched diplomats! They thought they could scare us (or you). Of course, they have failed. Grigory and I agreed it would have been wiser not to go at all, but the Russian workers would not have understood this, now they have a living example to teach them.' (78)

The intervention of the ISB was to be cut short by the out-break of the war and the collapse of the Second International. Lenin and the Bolsheviks, by ruthless political struggles, had built a party rooted in the working class which survived the debacle as an instrument of revolution. It did this because, as Lenin wrote during the war,

'The Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party has long parted company with its opportunists.' (79)

## CONCLUSION

The history of Bolshevism can be understood neither in terms of its emergence, fully-fledged, in 1903 nor in terms of it being 'merely a faction' until 1912 (the organisational split) or 1914 (the historic crossing of class lines by Menshevism). Bolshevism cannot be defined in terms of 'faction' or 'party'. As we have shown what was involved was a struggle to build a party around a common programme and tactics — a disciplined cadre party. From 1903 there was a split in the ranks of the Iskra grouping. The non-Iskristas (the Economists, the non-Russian nationalities etc) tended to gravitate towards the Martov, Potresov, Axelrod grouping, forming the heterogeneous alliance that was Menshevism. Lenin and the Bolsheviks, though formally a 'faction' were the only disciplined framework the 'party' had. They alone steadfastly defended the programme and developed tactics consistent with it. Lenin's attitude to his faction was not that it was just a 'trend within the party'. He was clear that it represented the core of the RSDLP. He made certain that the working class could always hear the clear, unfalsified voice of the party by keeping in existence a Bolshevik organ, or a 'party' organ that was dominated by, or open to, that voice.

From 1910 onwards Lenin became increasingly certain that not only would the party be built around the Bolshevik faction, a position he held from the outset, but that it would have to be built against the opportunists — the great majority of the former Menshevik faction who had become Liquidators. This was, as we have seen, not a purely organisational question. It centrally involved the very ideological nature of the party.

In the course of this struggle Lenin was obliged to extend his attack to the conciliators, those willing to pass motions against Liquidationism but not to take action against it, i.e. exclude the Liquidators from the party. He counterposed the principled unity with Plekhanov to defend the old programme and the old party to the rotten bloc around Trotsky. Plekhanov also proved to be what Lenin called a 'wobbler'. The real unity of a really revolutionary party was achieved between 1912 and 1914 when 80% of the organised Russian workers were rallied around the illegal network of the party and its legal representatives, the six Duma deputies, and the daily newspaper Pravda.

The Zinovievite/Healeyite interpretation of Bolshevism is based on hindsight. The IMG approach, however, relies on forgetting or obscuring all the lessons Lenin learned from this struggle, lessons which 1914 confirmed and gener-

alised. To attempt to derive 'rules' or 'norms' of party life from the situation of a party that was openly split, that existed only as public factions, or temporary co-operations is to collapse Lenin back into a conciliator with Menshevism — to unlearn the lessons which Trotsky learnt in 1917.

We say this not merely in the interests of abstract fidelity to the revolutionary tradition. The IMG's method may well bring Lenin into line with the 'more profound' organisational discoveries of the IMG and USFI, but it obscures the vital lessons the struggle of Bolshevism against opportunism has to teach us about how to unite a cadre internationally around a consistent programme and tactics.

These lessons are that the heart of revolutionary practice is a programme that outlines a concrete strategy for working class power — not in timeless abstraction but for a given period, comprehending its major features and distinguishing this strategy from those of the misleaders of the class. That a disciplined cadre capable of carrying out the tactics of the party is vital and that serious and persistent (uncorrected) errors of tactics lead to liquidation of the programme. The programme is thus not a set of general principles with tactics a quite separate matter, as the IMG maintain. The prerequisites for unity are a concrete programme and agreement on fundamental tactical questions. Co-operation on specific issues, on the basis of the united front principle of marching separately but striking together has to be clearly distinguished from forming coalitions of factions and calling them parties, or an International.

In the next article in this series we will deal with the experience of the process of splits and fusions which created the Comintern as a revolutionary democratic-centralist International.

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# The Comintern Theses on Work Amongst Women

This is the first of a series of archive articles in which we aim to reprint articles, theses and short pamphlets from the Communist movement which are no longer easily available or have remained untranslated into English. We aim to reprint material which is relevant to the ongoing task of developing anew Communist programme and organisation today.

The Comintern Theses on women adopted at the Third Congress in 1921 represent the codification of the experience of the Marxist women's movement up to that time - particularly that of the German Social Democratic women's movement. The international socialist women's movement grew up alongside the socialist parties and Trade Unions, a movement of theoretical uncertainties and organisational variety strongly influenced by feminist ideas. The German Socialist women's movement with their paper *Die Gleichheit* (Equality), which became the international organ of the movement, took the lead in the process of clarification and unification of the movement - developing a Marxist analysis of the women's question. It is a tribute to the sound theoretical and organisational work conducted, that women Social Democrats took the lead in opposing their parties' support for the war. *Die Gleichheit*, before Clara Zetkin was forced to resign as editor, was internationally recognised as the organ of women opposed to the war, the German Socialist women took the lead in organising the International women's conference at Berne in 1915 (an action not only "outlawed" by the Social Democratic Party committee but also reported to the Government by them) which declared its opposition to the war. By 1921, the best elements among Social Democratic women had rallied to the banner of the Third International, while the Second International rapidly relegated the women activists in the party to the sphere of community and social work. The Comintern Theses re-stated the Marxist analysis of women's oppression, distinguished the socialist from the bourgeois feminist positions and outlined the aims and methods of Communist work amongst women. We reprint these theses not because we believe they contain the last word possible on the subject but because in the present ideological flux in the women's movement, the position of Communism before the Stalinist 'counter-revolution' is a vital rallying point for all those fighting to build a communist women's tendency in the working class.

1. The Third Congress of the Comintern in conjunction with the Second International Women's Congress confirms the decision of the First and Second Congresses on the necessity for increasing the work of all the Communist parties of the East and West among proletarian women. The masses of women workers must be educated in the spirit of Communism and so drawn into the struggle for Soviet Power and into the construction of the Soviet Labour Republic. In all countries the working classes, and consequently the women workers, are faced with the problem of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The capitalist economic system has got into a blind alley, for there is no room for the further development of industrial forces within that system. The general impoverishment of the workers, the impotence of the bourgeoisie to revive produc-

tion, the development of speculative enterprises, the decay in the production system, unemployment, the fluctuation of prices out of keeping with wages - all this leads inevitably to the deepening of the class struggle in all countries. This struggle is to decide who shall conduct, administer, and organise production, and upon what system that should be done - whether it should be in the hands of a clique of bourgeois exploiters, and be carried on, on the principles of capitalism and private property, or in the hands of the producing class and carried on, on a Communist basis.

The newly-rising class, the class of producers, must in accordance with the laws of economic production, take the productive apparatus in its own hands, and set up new forms of public economy. Only in such a way will it be possible to create the necessary impetus for the development of the economic forces to the maximum and for the removal of the anarchy of capitalist production.

So long as the power of government is in the hands of the bourgeois class, the proletariat has no power to organise production. No reforms, no measures, carried out by the democratic or socialistic governments of the bourgeois countries are able to save the situation. They cannot alleviate the sufferings of the working women and working men, sufferings which are due to the disorganisation of the capitalist system of production, and which are going to last as long as the power is in the hands of the bourgeoisie. Only by seizing the power of government will the proletariat be able to take hold of the means of production, and thus secure the possibility of directing the economic development in the interests of the toilers.

In order to hasten the hour of the decisive conflict between the proletariat and the degenerating bourgeois world, the working class must adhere to the firm and unhesitating tactics outlined by the Third International. The most fundamental and immediate goal determining the methods of work and the line of struggle for the proletariat of both sexes, must be the dictatorship of labour.

As the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat is the vital question before the proletariat of all the capitalist countries, and the construction of Communism is the important task of those countries where the dictatorship is already in the hands of the workers, the Third Congress of the Communist International maintains that the conquest of power by the proletariat, as well as the achievement of Communism in those countries where the capitalist state has already been overthrown, can be realised only with the active participation of the wide masses of the proletarian and semi-proletarian women.

On the other hand the Congress once more calls the attention of all women to the fact that without the support of the Communist parties in all the tasks and undertakings leading to the liberation and enfranchisement of the women, this task is practically impossible of achievement.

2. The interest of the working class, especially at the present moment, imperatively demands the recruiting of women into the organised ranks of the proletariat, fighting for Communism.

The economic ruin throughout the world is becoming more acute and more unbearable to the entire city and country poor. Before the working class of the bourgeois-capitalist countries the question of the social revolution rises more and more clearly, and before the working class of Soviet Russia the question of reconstructing the public economy of the land on a new Communist basis becomes more and more vital. Both these tasks will be more easily realised, the more active and the more conscious and willing the participation of the women.

3. Wherever the question of the taking of power arises, the Communist parties must consider the great danger to the revolution represented by the inert, unformed masses of women workers, housewives, employees, peasant women, not liberated from the influence of the bourgeois church and bourgeois superstitions, and not connected in some way or other with the great liberating movement of Communism. Unless the masses of women of the East and West are drawn into this movement, they inevitably become the stronghold of the bourgeoisie and the object of counter-revolutionary propaganda. The experience of the revolution in Hungary, where the ignorance of the masses of women, played such a pitiful part, should serve, in this case, as a warning for the proletariat of all other countries entering upon the road of social revolution.

On the other hand, the experience of the Soviet Republic showed in practice how important the participation of the women workers and peasants has been in the civil war in the defence of the Republic, as well as in all other activities of the Soviet construction. Facts have proven the importance of the part which the women workers and peasants have already played in the Soviet Republic in the organisation of defence, strengthening the rear; the struggle against desertion, and against all sorts of counter-revolution, sabotage, etc. The experience of the Workers' Republic must serve as a lesson to all other countries.

Hence, the direct task of the Communist parties: to spread the influence of the Communist Party to the widest circles of the women population of their countries within the Party; organising a special party body and applying special methods; appealing to the women outside of it, to free them from the influence of the bourgeoisie and the compromising parties, and educating them to be real fighters for Communism, and therefore for the complete enfranchisement of the women.

4. Putting before the Communist Parties of the East and West the direct task of extending the activity of the Party among the women proletariat, the Third Congress of the Comintern declares also to the women of the entire world that their emancipation from age-long slavery and inequality depends upon the victory of Communism.

What Communism offers to the women, the bourgeois women's movement will never afford her. So long as the power of capitalism and private property continue to exist, the emancipation of woman from subservience to her husband cannot proceed further than her right to dispose of her property and earnings as she sees fit, and also to decide on equal terms with her husband the destiny of their children.

The most definite aim of the feminists - to grant the vote to the women - under the regime of bourgeois parliamentarism, does not solve the question of the actual equalisation of women, especially of those of the dispossessed classes. This has been clearly demonstrated by the experience of the working women in those capitalist countries where the bourgeoisie has formally recognised the equality of the sexes. The right to vote does not remove the prime cause of women's enslavement in the family and in society. The substitution of the church marriage by civil marriage does not in the least alleviate the situation. The dependence of the proletarian woman upon the capitalist and upon her husband as the economic mainstay of the family remains just the same. The absence of adequate laws to safeguard motherhood and infancy and the lack of proper social education render entirely impossible the equalisation of women's position in matrimonial relations. As a matter of fact, nothing that can be done under capitalism will furnish the key to the solution of the problem of the relationship of the sexes.

Only under Communism, not merely the formal, but the actual equalisation of women will be achieved. Then woman will be the rightful owner on a par with all the members of the working class, of the means of production and distribution. She will participate in the management of industry and she will assume an equal responsibility for the well-being of society.

In other words, only by overthrowing the system of exploitation of man by man, and by supplanting the capitalist mode of production by the Communist organisation of industry will the full emancipation of woman be achieved. Only Communism affords the conditions which are necessary in order that the natural functions of woman-motherhood-should not come into conflict with her social obligations and hinder her creative work for the benefit of society. On the contrary, Communism will facilitate the most harmonious and diversified development of a healthy and beautiful personality that is indissolubly bound together with the whole life and activities of the entire society. Communism should be the aim of all women who are fighting for complete emancipation and real freedom.

But Communism is also the final aim of the proletariat. Consequently the struggle of the working women for this aim must be carried on in the interests of both, under a united leadership and control, as 'one and indivisible' to the entire world movement of the revolutionary proletariat.

5. The Third Congress of the Comintern confirms the basic proposition of revolutionary Marxism, i.e., that there is no 'specific woman question' and no



'specific women's movement', and, that every sort of alliance of working women with bourgeois feminism, as well as any support by the women workers of the treacherous tactics of the social-compromisers and opportunists leads to the undermining of the forces of the proletariat, delaying thereby the triumph of the social revolution and the advent of Communism and thus also postponing the great hour of women's ultimate liberation.

Communism will be achieved not by 'united efforts of all women of different classes', but by the united struggle of all the exploited.

In their own interests the masses of proletarian women should support the revolutionary tactics of the Communist Party and take a most active part in all mass-actions and all forms of civil war on a national and international scope.

6. Woman's struggle against her double oppression (capitalism and her home and family subservience), at its highest stage of development, assumes an international character, becoming identified with the struggle of the proletariat of both sexes under the banner of the Third International for the dictatorship of the proletariat and the Soviet system.

7. While warning the women workers against entering into any form of alliance and co-operation with the bourgeois feminists, the Third Congress of the Comintern, at the same time, points out to the working women of all countries that to cherish any illusions of the possibility of the proletarian women supporting the Second International or any of the opportunistically inclined elements adhering to it without causing serious damage to the cause of women's emancipation - will prove infinitely detrimental for the liberating struggle of the proletariat. The women must constantly remember that woman's present-day slavery has grown out of the bourgeois order. In order to put an end to women's slavery it is necessary to inaugurate the new Communist organisation of society.

Any support rendered to the Second and the Second-and-a-Half Internationals hampers the social revolution, delaying the advent of the new order. The more resolutely and uncompromisingly the women masses will turn away from the Second and the Second-and-a-half Internationals, the more certain will be the triumph of the Social Revolution. It is the sacred duty of all women Communists to condemn those who flinch from the revolutionary tactics of the Comintern and to demand their expulsion from the ranks of the Comintern. The women ought to remember that the Second International never created and never attempted to create any organ whose task would be to carry on an active struggle for the complete emancipation of woman. The organisation of an international alliance of women socialists was started outside the Second International by the initiative of the men workers themselves. The women socialists who devoted themselves to work among women had neither representation nor a decisive vote in the Second International.

At its first Congress, in 1919, the Third International defined its attitude towards enlisting the support of women in the struggle for the dictatorship. On its initiative, the first conference of women Communists was convened in 1920 and an International Secretariat for work among women was constituted with a permanent representation in the Executive Committee of the Comintern. It is the duty of all class-conscious women workers to break unconditionally with the Second and Second-and-a-half Internationals and support whole-heartedly the revolutionary tactics of the Comintern.

8. The support of the Comintern by the women workers of all occupations should, first of all, express itself in their willingness to enter into the ranks of the Communist Party of their respective countries. In those countries and parties where the struggle between the Second and Third Internationals has not yet come to a head, it is the duty of women workers to support by all means, the party and groups that stand for the Comintern and carry on a relentless warfare against all vacillations and avowedly treacherous elements, irrespective of any authorities holding a different view. The class-conscious women who are striving for emancipation should not remain in any parties which have not joined the Comintern. Those who are opposed to the Third International are the enemies of the emancipation of women.

The place of conscious working women in Eastern and Western countries is under the flag of the Communist International and in the ranks of the Communist

Parties of their own countries. All wavering on the part of the working women and the fear to sever connection with the parties of compromise, and the hitherto acknowledged authorities, have a pernicious influence on the satisfactory progress of the great proletarian struggle, which is assuming the nature of an open and relentless civil war on a world scale.

#### METHODS AND FORM OF WORK AMONG WOMEN

Owing to all the above-mentioned reasons, the Third Congress of the Comintern holds that the work among the proletariat women should be carried out by the Communist Parties of all countries, on the following basis:

1. Women must be enlisted as full-fledged members of the Party, on the basis of equality and independence, in all militant class organisations, trade unions, co-operatives, factory committees, etc.

2. To recognise the importance of recruiting women into all branches of the active struggle of the proletariat (including military service for the defence of the proletariat) and into the construction of new forms of society and the organisation of industry and life on a Communist basis.

3. To recognise the functions of motherhood as a social function, promoting and supporting appropriate measures to aid and protect women as the bearer of the human race.

Being earnestly opposed to the separate organisation of women into all sorts of parties, unions, or any other special women's organisations, the Third Congress nevertheless, believes that in view of (a) the present conditions of subjection prevailing not only in the bourgeois capitalist countries, but also in countries under the Soviet system, undergoing transition from capitalism to Communism; (b) the great inertness and political ignorance of the masses of women, due to the fact that they have been for centuries barred from social life and to age-long slavery in the family; and (c) the special functions imposed upon women by nature- childbirth, and the peculiarities attached to this, calling for the protection of her strength and health in the interests of the entire community, the Third Congress therefore considers it necessary to find special methods of work among the women of the Communist Parties and establishes a standard of special apparatus within the Communist Parties for the realisation of this work. The apparatus for this work among the women in the Party should be the sections or committees for work among women, organised by all party committees commencing with the Executive Committee and ending with the city districts or village party committees. This decision is obligatory for all parties attached to the Comintern.

The Third Congress points out that, amongst the tasks set before the Communist Parties carried out through the sections are (1) To educate the wide masses of women in the spirit of Communism, drawing them into the ranks of the Party; (2) to fight against the prejudices of male proletarians towards the women, strengthening in the working men and women the consciousness of mutual interests of the proletarians of both sexes; (3) to increase the will power of the women by drawing them into all kinds and forms of political struggle, to awaken their activity and participation in the struggle against capitalist exploitation in the bourgeois countries by mass demonstrations against the high cost of living, against the housing conditions, unemployment, and in other revolutionary forms of the class war; the participation of the women workers in the construction of the Communist State and in the Soviet Republics; (4) to put on the order of business among the tasks of the parties and to pass rules tending to the direct enfranchisement of the woman, recognising her equality and the protection of her interests as the perpetuator of the race (5) to wage a well planned fight against traditions, bourgeois customs and religion, clearing the way for better and more harmonious relations between the sexes, protecting the physical and moral strength of labouring humanity.

The entire work of the sections or committees should be carried on under the direct control and responsibility of the Party Committees. A member of the local party committee should be at the head of such section or committee. Communists should be members of these committees or collegiums wherever it is possible.

All measures and problems of the committees or sections of work amongst women must not be handled by them independently, but in the Soviet Republics, through the respective economic and political organs (branches of the Soviets,

Commissariats, Trade Unions, etc) and, in the capitalist countries, with the support of the respective organs of the proletarian parties, unions, factory committees etc.

In all places where the Communist Parties exist illegally or semi-legally, the Party should organise an illegal apparatus for work amongst women. In all illegal bodies there must be at least one party member to organise the women for illegal work.

The present period requires that Trade and Industrial Unions should form the principal basis for work amongst women, both in countries which still carry on the struggle for the overthrow of the capitalist yoke, as well as in the Soviet Labour Republics.

The spirit with which the work amongst women should be imbued is that of the unity of the Party movement, of an intact organisation, of independent initiative and independent of Commissions and sections aiming at a speedy and complete emancipation of women, to be brought about by the Party. What should be striven after is not parallelism in activity, but assistance in the activity of the Party by means of self-development and initiative of the working women.

#### WORK OF THE PARTY AMONGST WOMEN IN SOVIET COUNTRIES

It is the task of the Sections of the Soviet Labour Republics to educate the masses of the working women in a spirit of Communism, by attracting to them to the Communist Party, to inspire and develop activity and self-reliance by drawing them into the work of constructive Communism and bringing them up as staunch defenders of the Communist International.

It is the task of the Sections to attract the women to every form of Soviet construction, including questions of defence, as well as all the economic plans of the Republic.

In the Soviet Republic the Sections should see that all the regulations of the Eight Congress of Soviets regarding the attraction of working and peasant women to the work of building up and organising public production, as well as their participation in the work of all those organs which direct, manage, control and organise production should be carried out. The Sections should participate through their representatives and through the Party organs in the elaboration of new laws and exercise an influence on the alteration of such as require much alteration in the interest of the enfranchisement of women. The Sections should take the greatest interest and show most initiative in the development of those laws which deal with the protection of the labour of women and children.

It is the duty of the Sections to attract the greatest possible number of working and peasant women to all election campaigns of Soviets, as also to see to it that working and peasant women are elected as members of Soviets and of Executive Committees.

The Sections should make it their business to assist in every way possible in making a success of political and economic campaigns carried on by the Party.

It is the task of the Sections to assist the growth of skilled women labour by means of professional education, as well as to facilitate the admission of the working and peasant women to the corresponding educational establishments.

The Sections should facilitate the entrance of working women into the Commission for the Protection of Labour in various enterprises, and should also accelerate the activity of the auxiliary Committees for the Protection of Mother and Child.

The Sections should make it their business to assist the development of all social institutions such as communal kitchens, laundries, repairing shops, institutions of social education, communal houses, etc., which, basing as they do the conditions of life upon a new Communist principle, ameliorate the difficulties which women experience during the transition period; assist their rapid enfranchisement and transform the slave of the family and the home into a free co-worker in the great social renaissance, a fellow creator of new forms of life.

Through organisers working amongst women elected by the Communist fraction of Trade Unions, the Sections should assist in the education of the Womenworkers, members of the Trade Unions, in the spirit of Communism.

The Sections should look after the due attendance of the working women at all general factory delegates' conferences.

The Sections should carry out a systematic distribution of auxiliary workers, for all Soviet, economic and Trade Union work.

The Sections must first of all take deep and firm root amongst the proletarian women, wage-earners, and organise propaganda amongst employees, housewives and peasant women.

To build up a firm connection between the Party and the mass of the people, and to spread its influence over the non-party members of society, and also to develop the method of education of the women folks in the spirit of Communism, by teaching self-activity and participation in practical work, the Women's Sections are to organise delegate meetings of women workers.

The delegate meetings are the best means to educate the women workers, and peasants, and to spread the Party influence amongst the backward masses of women workers and peasants.

These delegate meetings are formed from factory and shop representatives of a certain region, city or volost. In Soviet Russia, the women delegates are drawn into all kinds of political and economic campaigns. They are sent into different committees in industry, are invited to control Soviet institutions, and used for regular work in the Soviet Departments, in the capacity of clerks, for two months (Law of 1921).

The women delegates should be elected at general meetings of the Shop workers, of the housewives and employees, according to a certain rate of representation fixed by the Party. The Women's Sections are obliged to carry on propaganda and agitation among the delegates, for which purpose special meetings of women delegates are to be arranged not less than twice a month. The delegates are requested to make reports of their activities either in the shops where they work, or at meetings arranged in the city districts. The delegates should be elected for a period of three months.

Another form of agitation among the women is the organisation of large non-party conferences of women workers and peasants. Representatives to conferences are to be elected at meetings held for women workers - at their place of work, and for peasant women - in the villages.

The Section for work amongst women is charged to call the conferences, as well as to supervise their work.

In order to make the best use of the experience that the women workers have secured by participating in the work and activities of the Party, the Branches, and Committees carry on an elaborate campaign of propaganda by word of mouth and press. The Sections arrange meetings and discussion for the women workers at the shops and for the housewives at the city clubs. They exercise control over the delegate meetings and carry on house to house agitation.

To train active workers among the women and to widen their understanding of communism, the party must organise with the help of the Sections, special courses for work among the women, at each Party school or school for Soviet work.

## IN CAPITALIST COUNTRIES

The current tasks of the Committees or Sections for work among women are initiated by the circumstances of the period. On the one hand, the ruin of world economy, the rampant growth of unemployment, especially affecting the women workers and tending to increase prostitution, the high cost of living, the acute housing question, and the threats of new imperialistic wars; on the other hand, the unceasing strikes in all countries, repeated outbursts of armed uprisings of the proletariat, and the ever more violent civil war throughout the world, are the prologue to the inevitable world social revolution.

The women's committees must put forward the most important tasks of the proletariat, fight for the unabridged slogans of the Communist Party, of the Communists against the bourgeoisie and social-compromisers. The committees must see to it that the women are not only registered as equal members of the Party, Trade Unions and other militant workers' organisations, which are waging the fight against all injustice or inequality of the women workers, but also that the women should be allowed to occupy responsible positions in the Party, Union or Cooperative on an equal basis with the men.

The Committees or Sections must facilitate the work of the wide masses of the women proletarians and peasant women in utilising their franchise in the interests of the Communist Parties during election to the parliament and to all the public institutions, explaining at the same time the limitations of those rights, in the sense of weakening the capitalist exploitation, promoting enfranchisement of women, and replacing parliamentarism by the Soviet system.

The Committees must also aid the women workers, employees and peasant women to take a most active part in the elections of revolutionary, economic and political soviets of workers' deputies, obtaining representation in them, awakening the political activity of the housewives, and carrying on a propaganda of the Soviet idea among the peasant women. The special concern of the Committees must

be the realisation of the principle of equal pay for equal work. It is the task of the Committee to start a campaign, drawing men and women workers into it, for free, universal, education, aiding the women to become highly qualified in their work.

The Committees should see to it that women Communists take part in the legislative municipal and other legislative organisations, in fact, wherever women have the right to vote.

While participating in the legislative, municipal and other organisations of bourgeois States, Communist women should strictly adhere to the tactics of the party, not concerning themselves too much with the realisation of reforms within the limits of the bourgeois world order, as taking advantage of every live question and demand of the working women, as watchwords by which to lead the women into the active mass struggle for these demands, through the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The Committees or Sections must explain the disadvantages and waste of the system of individual housekeeping, the bad bringing up and education of the children by the bourgeoisie, rallying the women workers to the struggle for practical improvement of the conditions of the working class, waged or supported by the Party.

The Committees must aid in recruiting the women to the Communist Party from the Trade Unions, for which purpose the Communist fraction of the Trade Unions appoints an organiser for work among the women, under the direction of the Party and the local branch. The entire work of the Committee must be carried on with one purpose in view: the development of the revolutionary activity of the masses and the hastening of the social revolution.

#### IN ECONOMICALLY-BACKWARD COUNTRIES ( THE EAST )

**NOTICE!** The work among the Eastern women being of great importance, and at the same time representing a new problem for the Communist Parties, the Conference deems it necessary to add to this thesis special instruction on the methods of communist propaganda among the women of the Eastern countries, appropriate to their local habits and conditions.

In conjunction with the Communist Party and Women's Section should do everything possible to achieve in industrially weak countries, the recognition of the legal equality, the equality both of rights and obligations, of women in the Parties, Unions and other organisations of the working class.

The Sections or Committees should carry on, in conjunction with the Party, a struggle against prejudice, religious customs and habits which maintain an oppressive hold upon the women; to achieve this, it is also necessary to carry on propaganda amongst the men.

The Communist Party, together with the Sections or Commissions, should carry out the principle of the equality of women in matters of education of children, family relations and general social life.

The Sections should look for support in their work, first of all, amongst the large classes of women who are exploited by capitalism in the capacity of workers in home industries, as labourers on rice, cotton and other plantations, and assist in the general establishment of communal workshops and home cooperatives; this applies especially to all Eastern peoples living within the borders of Soviet Russia; the Sections should also assist in the general organisation of all women engaged in plantation work with the working men united in Trade Unions.

The raising of the general educational level of the population is one of the best means of fighting the general stagnation of the country as well as religious prejudice. The Committees or Sections should, therefore, assist in the opening of schools for grown-ups and children, such schools also to be accessible to the women. In bourgeois countries, the Committees should carry on a direct agitation to counteract the influence of the bourgeois schools.

Wherever possible, the Sections or Committees should carry the agitation into the homes of the women and utilise the field work of the women for purposes of agitation. They should also organise clubs for working women, doing everything to attract to these clubs the most backward section of the women. These Clubs should represent cultural and educational centres and model institutions, illustrating what can be achieved by women for their emancipation through such means of self-activity as the organisation of creches, kindergartens, schools for adults and so forth.

Special clubs should be organised for nomadic peoples.

In Soviet lands the Sections, together with the Party should assist in the transformation of the existing pre-capitalist forms of production and economics into a communal form of production. They should be practically propagated, in a manner to

convince the working women, that the former home-life and home-production oppressed and exploited them, whilst communal labour will emancipate them.

With regard to the peoples of the East who live within the borders of Soviet Russia, the Sections should take care that Soviet legislation should equalise men and women, and that the interests of the women should be properly protected. For this purpose the Sections should assist in appointing women to the position of judges, and as members of juries in national Courts of Law.

The Sections should also get the women to participate in Soviets, taking care that working and peasant women should be elected into the Soviets and Executive Committees. All work amongst the women proletariat of the East should be done on a class basis. It should be the task of the Sections to expose the powerlessness of the Moslem feminists in the solution of the question of the enfranchisement of women. For enlightening purposes in all the Soviet countries of the East, the intelligent feminine forces should be utilised, as, for instance, women teachers and sympathisers, avoiding all tactics and vulgar treatment of religious faiths and national traditions. The Sections or Committees working amongst the women of the East should definitely fight against nationalism and the hold of religion on the women's minds.

All the organisations of the workers should, in the East as well as in the West, be built not upon the basis of defending national interest, but upon the unity of the International proletariat of both sexes striving for the same class aims.

#### PROPAGANDA AND AGITATION

In order to fulfil the principal task of the Sections, dealing with the Communist education of the large masses of the proletariat, and in order to reinforce this body of fighters, it is necessary that all Communist Parties of the West and of the East should realise that the principle of work among women is: 'agitation and propaganda by deed'.

Agitation by deed first of all signifies an ability to arouse a sense of independence in the working women, to eradicate the distrust in themselves and, by attracting them to the practical work of construction, to teach them by practical experience that every conquest of the Communist Party, that every action which is directed against capitalist exploitation, is one more step toward the improvement of the position of women. The method which the Communist Party and its Sections for work amongst women should use, can be expressed in the following words: 'From experience and action, to a knowledge of the ideas of Communism and of its theoretical principles.'

In order that the Section should represent organs not of verbal propaganda alone, but also of activity, it is necessary that they should work in contact with the Communist Fractions of the various enterprises and workshops, for which purpose the latter should supply an organiser for the work amongst the women of the respective enterprise or workshop.

The Sections should come into contact with the Trade Unions through their representatives or organisers, who are appointed for that purpose by the Trade Union fraction, and who should carry on work under the direction of Sections. Propaganda, by deed, of Communist ideas in Soviet Russia, signifies that all the women workers, peasant women, housewives and employees in all spheres of Soviet Life, from the army and militia down to every enfranchised Oblast (district) should be drawn into the work of the organisation of Communal Housekeeping of establishing the necessary number of institutions for Public Education, institutions for the Protection of Motherhood, and so forth. A special task is to draw the labour women into the bodies that control, etc., the production.

Active propaganda, by deeds, in the capitalist countries, means first of all the enlistment of the women workers to take part in strikes, demonstrations and other forms of the class struggle, fortifying and enlightening the revolutionary will and consciousness; the recruiting of women workers to all sorts of Party activity their utilisation for purposes of illegal work, particularly in despatch service, the organisation of party 'Saturdays' or 'Sundays' at which all women sympathisers of communism, the wives of labouring and professional men, in this way learn to be useful to the Party. The principle of propaganda by acts and deeds is also aided by drawing the women into all political, economic or educational campaigns, from time to time carried on by the Communist Parties.

While organising the feminine forces for the Party the Sections must, first of all, leave deep and firm roots amongst the women workers, developing propaganda activity also among the housewives, employees and peasant women.

In order to carry out the work of propaganda by word of mouth, according to a plan, the Sections must arrange meetings in the factories and workshops, also open meetings for women workers and employees according to profession or location,

as well as general public meetings of housewives. They must see to it that canvassers and organisers are elected by the Communist groups of the Trade Unions, cooperative and industrial councils in capitalist states, and that women members are elected in all the organising controlling and administrative bodies of the Soviet institutions. In a word, the labour women must be elected to all organisations, which in capitalist countries must be used to revolutionise the exploited and oppressed masses, and assist them in their struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat; and in Soviet countries to such organisations as serve to defend and realise Communism.

The Sections must delegate experienced women Communists as workers or employees to enterprises where great numbers of women are employed. These comrades must settle down in large Proletarian districts and centres, as practiced with success in Soviet Russia. In the same way as the working women's organisations of the Communist Party in Soviet Russia organise meetings and conferences of delegates not belonging to any party, the Communist women's committees in the capitalist countries must convene public meetings of women workers, female employees of every kind, peasant women and housewives, to discuss various questions and needs of the day, and elect committees to serve as connecting links between their respective constituencies and the Communist women's organisations, and to attend to the questions raised. They should also send speakers representing their views to gatherings of opposing organisations. Public propaganda by means of meetings, etc., must be supplemented by constant and regular home propaganda.

Each Communist woman engaged in this work should have not more than ten women to visit at their homes, on whom she ought to call regularly at least once a week, and also on every occasion of importance to the Communist Party, or the Proletarian masses.

In order to promote agitation, organisation and education among the masses by written word, the women's Section of the Communist Parties are charged to work for the establishment:

- (1) of a central women's Communist journal in every country;
- (2) to secure the appearance of a woman's department in the Communist press, as also the printing of articles in the political and industrial papers. They must provide editors for such publications, and find adequate assistance for them in the ranks of professional and militant women. The Sections must publish and distribute simple, stimulating and adequate literature in pamphlets and leaflets. They must strive to make the best possible use of their members.

Women Communists should be sent to attend courses in Party schools in order to intensify their class consciousness and to prepare them for work among the masses of women. Special courses, lectures and discussions for women can be organised only in case of special conditions and urgent necessity.

In order to enhance the spirit of comradeship among male and female workers it is desirable not to organise separate course of schools, but to establish, in the general Party schools, sections for courses for work among women. The sections exercise a right to elect a certain number of their women members for attendance at the general Party courses.

Construction of the Sections or Committees of work Sections amongst the women must be organised by each Party Local Executive, District Executive and the Central Executive Committee of the Party.

Each country decides for itself the numbers of members in these Sections or Committees. The number of members of the Sections, who are paid by the Party, is also fixed by each party according to the possibilities.

The director or Chairman of the local Committees or Sections must be a member of the local Party Committee. Where this is not the case, the Director of the Section is present at all meetings of the Party Committee, with the right of decisive vote on all questions of the women's committees, and with a consultative vote on all other questions.

Besides the duties of the district Section or Committee above mentioned, the following tasks are also part of their work; to maintain connections between the Sections of one district with the Central Sections; to collect facts on the activity of the district Sections or Committees; to facilitate the exchange of material between the local branches; to supply the district with literature; distribute agitators among the districts; to mobilise the efficient party workers for work among women; to call district conferences of the women Communists, representatives of branches, with a representation of one or two from each Branch, at least twice a year; to call non-party conferences of women-workers, peasant women and housewives of a particular district. The members of the Section or the Committee are approved by the provincial Committee or the county Committee on recommendation by the Director of the Section. The director, as well as the other members of the county Committees and province Committees, are elected at the conferences of the county.

Members of the district or local Sections or Committees are elected at a general city, county or district conference or are appointed by the respective Sections in agreement with the Party Committee. If the director of the Section is not a member of the district Party Committee, he has the right to be present at all meetings of the party Committee with a decisive vote on all questions of the Branch, and with a consultative vote on all other questions.

Besides all the functions above mentioned, which are the duties of the district Sections, the Central Section must fulfil the following additional functions: instruct the Sections and their workers; investigate the work of the Section; take charge in connection with the respective organs of the party, of the transfer of workers from one Section to another; observe the conditions and development of work, consider the changes in the legal or economic situation of the women, through its representatives or appointees; participate in Special Committees, solving the questions of bettering the conditions of existence of working class, protection of labour, protection of childhood, etc., publish a central 'page' and edit periodical journals for women; call conferences of the representatives of all the district Sections not less than once a year; organisational excursions of instructors on work among the women of the country; take charge of the recruiting of women and of the participation of all Sections in all sorts of political and economic campaigns and demonstrations of the Party; send delegates to the International Secretariat of Women Communists; take charge of the annual International Women's day.

If the Director of the Women's Section of the Executive Committee of the Party is not a member of the Executive Committee, he has the right to be present at all the meetings of the Executive Committee, with a decisive vote on all questions concerning the Sections, and with a consultative vote on all others. The director of the Section or the chairman of the Committee is appointed by the Central Executive Committee, or is elected at the general Party Congress. The decisions and resolutions of all Sections or Committees are subject to the final sanction of the respective Party Committee.

#### WORK ON AN INTERNATIONAL BASIS

The direction of the work of the Communist Parties of all countries, uniting the women workers for the tasks set by the Comintern, and drawing the women of all countries and nations into the revolutionary struggle for the Soviet system and the dictatorship for the working class, on a world basis, is the task of the Women's Secretariat of the Comintern.

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# Communism and Women

## For a Mass Working Women's Movement

by Stuart King

The Comintern Theses on women adopted at the 3rd Congress of the Communist International in 1921 both codified the marxist position on the women question and summarised the experience of over 25 years of marxist agitation amongst working women. The Communist Manifesto declared it the intention of communists to 'emancipate women from their position as mere instruments of production'. Bebel, Engels and Clara Zetkin developed a communist analysis of the woman question showing the road to this emancipation to be inextricably bound to the proletarian revolution. Engels demonstrated that the material basis for the oppression of women lay with the development of private property - the domestication of animals and pastoralism and the development of slavery increased the wealth, the form of which belonged to the male line. With their greatly increased status the tribal chiefs were able to overthrow the existing system of 'mother right' that recognised descent solely through the female line, thus precluding the passing on of such wealth to the male's children. Thus the social driving force of developing private property led to a new form of patriarchal family - where descent was determined exclusively through the male line, the woman was degraded and regarded as the exclusive property of the man, a mere instrument for breeding children. Thus women's oppression existed in all class societies - antiquity, feudalism, capitalism - and only the ending of class society would provide the pre-conditions for the full emancipation of women. The pre-conditions because the dictatorship of the proletariat (which places political and economic power in the hands of the working class, which has no material interest in the oppression of women) will immediately begin to cut the roots of women's oppression.

The exploitation of both women and men will end with the suppression of capitalist property relations and their replacement by socialist planned production. Women will be drawn into all spheres of social production on an equal basis with men. The transformation of privatised domestic labour by the socialisation of childcare and housework will supercede the family as a unit for the reproduction of labour power. These socio-economic roots of women's oppression must be cut if women's liberation is not to remain a utopia. This task necessitates the united efforts of the vanguard of the proletariat (its party) and an organised mass movement of working class women. Like the class struggle itself it necessitates, before and after the proletarian revolution, a relentless campaign against both the class enemy and its agents and also every element of backwardness in the working class itself. Moreover, Marxists recognise that the oppression of women will not end on the morrow of the revolution. Aspects of sexual inequality and oppression will continue for a period, as will other aspects of social oppression because of the cultural level inherited from bourgeois society. The population cannot be totally re-educated, nor can a psychological pattern instilled in men and women from infancy be fully eliminated and reversed at a stroke. The Dictatorship of the Proletariat

is a necessary transition to socialism involving a ruthless drive against all the ideological and social remnants of capitalism. The fundamental difference between this struggle before and after the seizure of power is that in the latter case communists will be cutting with the grain of social development, will have in their hands the means of administration, public education and coercion. Thus the Comintern Theses set down a series of tasks for the communists in countries where soviet power was already achieved, aiming to 'transform the slave of the family and home into a free co-worker in the great social renaissance - a fellow creator of new forms of life'.

Throughout the 1890s up to 1914 Clara Zetkin led and developed German Social Democracy's work amongst proletarian women in the spheres of education and agitation, at the same time clarifying and extending theoretically a marxist analysis of women's oppression under capitalism. Capitalism destroyed the old household economy where social production and household work took place. But at the same time as separating off privatised domestic toil from the sphere of social production it forced women into production to earn a livelihood: creating the modern woman question. Here their inferior social position, stemming from their position in the family, seriously handicapped them in their fight against exploitation as members of the working class and provided the capitalists with a super-exploited additional workforce. Within the family women perform the essential economic role of maintenance and replenishment of the commodity of labour power - this takes place outside the sphere of public production; in the privatised tasks of child-rearing, cooking, cleaning etc. Women, isolated in the sphere of petty production and dependent for economic support on their working husbands are easy prey to the ideology which glorifies the women's position in the home as rearer of the family, and which condemns all those movements which threaten the stability of the society and the family. The family is both a prison and a haven for the working class woman. In order to defend themselves in the sphere of production women not only had to overcome these ideas, the result of centuries of social isolation and enslavement within the family, but had to fight against the same ideology and prejudices in male workers. All this and at the same time carry the double burden of having two jobs - one at the factory and one in the home. The capitalist has every interest in maintaining this inferior status for women. It renders unionisation and collective struggle by both men and women workers difficult. The woman's domestic responsibilities mean she is able to take full time work only when capital provides the necessary child care facilities - providing the ideal reserve army of labour to be driven back to the home in periods of recession.

It was the recognition of these special problems facing women which made it necessary to find special methods of work amongst women and develop women's sections or committees to carry out such work primarily amongst working women i.e. those already involved in collective activity and struggle but also amongst housewives and home workers. To reject such work was to abandon large sections of the working class to the influence of the bourgeoisie and open to reaction in times of social crisis.

While capitalism produces the modern women's question, marxists recognise that it takes different forms within different classes. The Comintern Theses in declaring as a 'basic proposition of revolutionary marxism' that there is no specific women's question' and no 'specific women's movement', summarises the position adopted by the marxist women's movement towards the bourgeois women's movement - their enemy sisters'.

For middle class women - the petit and middle bourgeois women and those of the bourgeois intelligentsia also drawn into social production with the expansion of capitalism, the women's question manifested itself firstly in their position of economic inequality as regards the men of their class in the employment field. The demand for the suffrage - for equal political rights with men - was seen as the battering ram for the other demands of the movement, for equality

in occupational education, for sex equality in carrying on an occupation. The 'Women's rightsters' were fighting in the economic sphere for free trade and free competition with the men of the liberal professions already threatened by the overproduction of 'proletarian brain workers'. For proletarian women capitalism's increasing search for the cheapest labour power broke down any such barriers erected to limit free competition - machine production meant she became completely equal to the man as labour power, and for the capitalist her advantages - stemming from her social position as an undercutting competitor, encouraged them to extend the use of women labour to the highest degree. Unlike her bourgeois counterpart she did not have to fight against barriers erected to prevent her competition - against the men of her own class - such opposition and barriers had been torn down for her by capitalists need for exploitation. She was faced with a common struggle of both working women and men to overthrow the system of exploitation which enslaved them both. Marxist women recognised the justice of the demands of the bourgeois women's movement - they fought alongside them in their fight for political equality - but at the same time recognised that were all the demands of the women's rightsters conceded it would leave them as exploited as ever and that those who saw only a 'women question', who recognised no class struggle only a struggle of the sexes - the bourgeois feminists - would go into the camp of the bourgeoisie, would demand their rights alongside the males in their class to exploit their proletarian 'sisters'. Thus even while fighting for the rights of women the bourgeois feminists were bitterly hostile to the demand for special protection for women workers. A demand growing out of the fact that working women did not see the end goal as free competition with men, the freedom to be exploited to an equal amount and more as the men of her class, but as the ending of their joint exploitation. Rather it was a question of erecting new barriers to the exploitation of women - and men - a demand which drew a class line in the 'women's movement'. Thus the socialist women's movement argued clearly that communism and the complete emancipation of women would not be achieved by united efforts of all women of different classes but by 'the united struggle of all the exploited'.

## THE MODERN WOMENS MOVEMENT

The triumph of Fascism and Stalinism and the long recession of the Thirties, was a period of dark reaction for women. After World War Two, however, the unprecedented expansion of capitalism led to the drawing into the workforce of large numbers of women. These conditions, amounting to an emergence of women into the sphere of public life hitherto not witnessed under capitalism, gave women of both the intelligentsia and the working class a potentiality for struggle which encouraged the rebirth of a large, if amorphous, women's movement in the late Sixties and early Seventies.

This movement emerged into a situation very different from the last great period of women's organisation and struggle, the period lasting from the 1880's to the 1930's. Stalinism had obliterated the communist position on the family (in order to cover its retention, indeed glorification, in the Soviet Union). It had espoused a ferocious bourgeois puritan ethic utterly repugnant to Marxism - persecuting homosexuality as an 'unnatural vice', driving from the ranks of its parties not only 'sexual radicals' like Wilhelm Reich, but even anathematising orthodox psycho-analysis in favour of a crude and reactionary behaviouralism. This sexual counter-revolution and the renunciation by the world's C.P.'s of the building of mass communist working women's movements had almost wiped out the memory of the movements of Zetkin and Kollontai.

Although modern feminists have rediscovered the profoundly revolutionary analysis of the family to be found

in the works of Engels, they have all too often recoiled in horror from Marxism, identifying it with Stalinism - or with the indifference or hostility to women's liberation which the 'Trotskyists' have too often demonstrated. They have identified these groups as hostile to women's liberation. Thus, despite recognising working class women as 'the most oppressed', socialism as the necessary 'material basis' for the full liberation of women, feminists remain anchored to the notion of a 'women's movement', refusing to specify its class allegiance. (And, thereby giving it not, as they imagine a non-class character, but a petit-bourgeois character.) This refusal to draw the necessary conclusions from the above 'recognitions' leads to a refusal to orient towards working class women in general, and to organised working class women in particular. It leads, above all, to an opposition to the Marxist strategy of building a working class women's movement under communist leadership. Such a movement should not be seen as a component of a broad 'women's movement' independent or autonomous from the vanguard of the working class (its revolutionary communist party) but as a component of the class forces of the proletariat specifically organising women and independent of all bourgeois or petit-bourgeois forces.

To the Economists and sectarians within the working-class movement, such as the SWP (IS) who see no need for a working women's movement, who would limit it to Trade Union demands, or who insist that it can be no more than a department of the party, we point to the specific nature, the dual nature, of working class women's oppression and exploitation, rooted in the domestic slavery of the family, and from there extending to all spheres of social life including the work place. To rouse women from the passive acceptance of this, a particular programme and a specific form of organisation is needed. A programme which addresses itself to the question of working women's slavery in the home and the family. Which, therefore, takes up the right of women to control their own fertility, the demands which make concrete the struggle for the socialisation of child rearing and housework. One which takes up all the questions of women's rights to equal treatment as independent human beings in terms of jobs, housing, social and welfare benefits etc. A fighting strategy which takes up not only equal pay and conditions, vital as these are, but includes certain forms of positive discrimination (in areas like admission to apprenticeships, training programmes and to skilled jobs.) providing this is under the control of organised working women. It must also, necessarily, include special provisions: rights to caucus separately, meetings in working hours, creche provisions etc, which enable women to play a full and equal role in the struggle of their class for its emancipation and that of women.

A communist current, rallied around such a programme, will undoubtedly find mortal foes in the bureaucracies of the Labour Movement (T.U. and political) not primarily because these are male preserves, though they are of course largely so, but because these bureaucracies are inextricably bound up with the existence and preservation of capitalism - and all this entails for women. Such a communist current, will, therefore, have to strive to organise women independently of these bureaucrats. This does not mean standing in sectarian isolation aside from the mass organisations of the class. It necessitates, centrally, work in the unions to build a mass movement by winning individuals to the communist programme, it allows for the placing of demands on the bureaucrats, including the demand for the formation of a 'mass working women's movement' autonomous from any bureaucratic veto, i.e. with its own, democratically-elected, leadership at all levels, and the freedom of political tendency within it. In such a movement communists would fight openly for the leadership and the adoption of their programme.

Thus, two interlinked tasks face us in the coming period. The rallying of a communist women's tendency around the type of programme outlined above, and prop-

aganda for a mass working women's movement. The former must aim, via polemic and debate, to rally the best elements of the present women's movement to its ranks. The latter task means close involvement in the day to day struggles of working women, focussing centrally in the Trade Unions.

At the centre of this dual perspective today lie the extremely limited forces of the Working Women's Charter Campaign.

## THE WORKING WOMEN'S CHARTER

The strategy of the Labour government to solve British capitalism's crisis at the expense of the working class means a violent attack on all the gains working class women have made since the war. This can be seen dramatically in both the fields of social services and of employment.

Cuts in social expenditure are hitting women hard. Women form the majority of the workforce in the public sector services. Seventy six percent of NHS employees and 67% of education workers are women. Cuts in these sectors will mean high unemployment amongst women and throw the burden for caring for the sick, the elderly and the young squarely on to their shoulders. Family Planning Clinics are being reduced and the new bill to restrict women's right to abortion is being raised in Parliament. In Buckinghamshire the Tory council intends to close all five existing nursery schools. The occupation of the EGA hospital has highlighted the enormous number of hospitals threatened with closure throughout the country. While in Stockport teachers are operating a no-cover policy because their classes are too large, students teachers occupied their colleges last year in protest at the lack of jobs.

During periods of boom the state may increase nursery facilities to enable women to work. This soon changes during a recession. There are less nursery places now than there were in 1900! In times of crisis women can be dropped from the labour force by cutting nursery places.

Unemployment too takes its toll of women. Women find it hard to organise with trade unions because of their family commitments and often through lack of permanent employment. Male trade unionists are often antagonistic to women workers, reluctant to take account of their special needs by providing creche facilities during union meetings or to allocate them places on union committees. Women have remained to a large extent unorganised and exploited by employers.

Women workers are concentrated in unskilled jobs, in schools, hospitals, nurseries or in part-time jobs. Cuts in social expenditure, lack of union organisation, serve to make women particularly vulnerable to redundancy and women are becoming unemployed twice as fast as men.

The government has attempted to defuse the militancy of women against these attacks through myths such as 'a woman's place is in the home', looking after your neighbours, community spirit and the like and also through the introduction of the Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act. The effect of the legislation has been to highlight the inequality of women and to increase their expectancy. The Acts themselves have been shown to be inadequate even in terms of reformist legislation and have in fact heightened the militancy of women. The Trico equal pay strike was undoubtedly the most important struggle last year and proved that the only way to achieve equal pay is through militant action for most working class women. The EPA and SDA were not designed for working class women and this became apparent when most cases taken to tribunals by working class women were lost. There will be moves made to tighten up the more obvious loopholes in the Act and although this should be supported we must also recognise the inability of the Acts to bring equal pay or equality for women.

Women have shown their increasing determination to fight

back against cuts and unemployment and have not been fooled into believing that the EPA or the SDA will bring equality or even equal pay. The victory of the women workers at Trico after 21 weeks of struggle, the victory of the bingo hall workers in Coventry, the occupation of the EGA have shown that during a time when the working class as a whole has shown a reluctance to engage in struggle, women have a heightened expectancy and will to fight.

If the WWCC is to make a serious contribution to the two linked tasks outlined above, and prove itself equal to the period of struggle facing working women, it must overcome a number of serious weaknesses, weaknesses which threaten its very existence. These can be summed up under the headings: Programme; Tactics; and Organisation. In each of these areas we believe the dominant tendency in the Charter — the IMG — has a chronically wrong perspective. We shall, therefore, concentrate, in assessing the Charter's weaknesses on the IMG's wrong solutions and the positions argued for by WORKERS' POWER.

In order to build the foundations of a working women's movement the spontaneous struggles of working class women must be taken up by an action programme of linked demands to address their immediate needs around certain key issues and at the same time show the necessity for uniting the working class in order to overthrow capitalism. The programme we raise for women during the present crisis must contain within it opposition to cuts, unemployment, the cuts in real wages caused by Incomes Policy and inflation, and fight for crucial demands such as A Woman's Right to Work, sliding scale of wages and hours and equal pay.

The WWCC should be able to take up the spontaneous struggles and convince working class women and their organisations of the need to organise around a series of inter-linked demands which will address their immediate needs and, at the same time show that, in order to secure real equality, a united working class struggle for the overthrow of capitalism is essential.

The existing Charter is totally inadequate to these needs. It limits itself almost exclusively to equal rights ( pay, entry to jobs) and to a series of weak demands for reform. Such demands as, 'free abortion to be readily available' rather than, 'free abortion on demand' and for, 'improved provision' of nurseries deliberately hold back to what can be 'reasonably expected' from capitalism. Demands ought to fearlessly express what women need now, expressing as this does the bankruptcy of capitalism, its reformist defenders and the need to overthrow them and it. It should hardly surprise us that the original Charter is a very limited reformist document — coming as it does from the London Trades Council under Communist Party inspiration. But revolutionaries should not simply throw up their hands in sectarian horror and put as much distance between it and themselves as possible. The document, with all its weaknesses, attracted around it certain working class forces. Its adoption by various unions, branches, tradecouncils etc. indicated a definite rousing of activity in the unions following the struggles of the early Seventies. Revolutionaries should relate to this current. This means, however, the attempt to win working women to correct (i.e. successful) tactics in struggle and to a programme for the working class-led struggle for women's liberation. It does not mean adapting or limiting ourselves to the horizons of already existing (reformist or Stalinist) leaders of the working class. This issue lies at the heart of the differences WORKERS POWER has with the IMG's approach to the Charter campaign.

The IMG refer to the existing Charter as, 'the property of the Labour Movement' and have now decided to oppose its amendment. (Actually, if it belongs to anyone it belongs to the bureaucrats!). The IMG have never understood the role of the Trade Union and Labour bureaucracy, either in their ultra-Left or their present 'rightist' periods. Though the bureaucrats have shown scant interest in their property doubtless they could defend it themselves, without the IMG acting as Securitor for them. The IMG know quite well that the Charter is inadequate, they agreed to the am-

amendments at last year's conference, then fought against their adoption until, 'the Labour Movement had been won to them'. Not only that, they also know that by and large only the revolutionaries have fought for its adoption or organised any ongoing campaign around it. Yet they wish to keep it intact, as a sort of talisman, to lure back the CP and the trade union bureaucrats and, through them, the masses.

What is involved here is a mixture of muddle-headedness, realpolitik and cynicism. The IMG know that, initially, it is largely the revolutionary groups and their sympathisers who will organise grass roots campaign work. Therefore, there has to be an 'adequate' policy for them. But the masses can only be reached (so the IMG believe) via the existing official leaders who won't swallow the amended Charter, instead they are offered a 'left' reformist one — to coax them into becoming the Women's Section of the Class Struggle Tendency. This strategy rules out alike the clear, unambiguous presentation of a revolutionary programme and standing foursquare with working women in struggle against these bureaucrats who are their most dangerous 'friends'. In essence the IMG's strategy is like that of the Comintern in 1925-6.

The existing amendments, passed at last year's conference still leave the Charter far from perfect. WORKERS' POWER will propose further amendments. But we believe that to fail to amend the Charter this year will demoralise and disorient the campaign still further — running the risk of destroying it altogether.

## THE FUTURE OF THE CHARTER

The Charter's weaknesses in the field of tactics and organisation flow from its lack of direction in the political field (the absence of programme and perspectives). The IMG are completely incapable of providing these. Their reliance on a 'Broad Labour Movement' / Women's Movement rally — their eagerness to give the Charter Campaign a low profile in this is of a piece with their opposition to definitively amending the Charter itself. Whilst chasing the will o' the wisp of the women's class struggle tendency, they are prepared to see the campaign and the small forces it has rallied frittered away.

What does the Charter Campaign need to become? This question must be asked and squarely faced at the conference on 22nd May if the campaign is to survive, let alone go forward.

Firstly the Charter Campaign needs a set of fighting perspectives and a leadership pledged to carry them out. In outline we believe these should include :- a reorganised and more regular paper which includes, centrally, articles of political analysis as well as reportage — a newspaper that can act as the scaffolding linking local Charter groups and caucuses in the unions together so that they can build according to a common plan. The paper should organise and educate. It does neither effectively at the moment. The paper should explain in depth the key demands of the Charter.

The local Charter groups need to be won to a united national perspective, a real will and determination to reach out to working class women in struggle, centrally in the unions and factories but also, importantly, in the nursery campaigns, the general campaigns around the cuts or on specific issues like the closure of the Elizabeth Garret Anderson Hospital. The orientation of the campaign should move away from the emphasis on affiliations and adoptions. These are important in gaining support among the rank and file and must be fought

for, but they should flow from the continual agitation / propaganda work being done at the base. Using key demands in the Charter to campaign around in the workplace it will be possible to build women's caucuses in the unions. The emphasis should shift away from geographically based Charter groups towards caucuses in the unions. The geographically based groups should provide the links between the workplaces, the localities and the national structure of the campaign. The national campaign should raise issues crucial to particular unions and industries. For example, in NUPE and COHSE, heavily affected by the cuts, it will be important to take up and campaign against the cuts. As the demonstration on November 17th. showed, the public sector unions are becoming increasingly militant. NALGO, SCS and CPSA will also be feeling the effects of the cuts and the Campaign can make gains amongst the rank and file of these unions. Positive discrimination on trade union committees, women's special needs in attending meetings etc. should be raised in national unions as well as the localities.

In making this orientation we have to make doubly sure that we do not develop the chronic trade union cretinism of the SWP (IS) in 'Women's Voice'. It is a great mistake to believe that only 'economic' demands, equal pay etc. are relevant to women at work. Indeed unless we take up family-related issues — abortion and contraception, nursery facilities i.e. the oppression of women, then we will not win a working class women militants to the Charter Campaign and will not hold any that are attracted to it. Nor can the Charter ignore the central political issues facing the class as a whole. In most places women feel the effects of ruling class policies more sharply than men whilst being, because of relative isolation in the home and lack of militant trade union organisation, more open to ruling class propaganda.

The years of crisis and stagnation that face British and International capitalism face the working class as a whole with the choice of fighting back or losing piecemeal the gains made over twenty five years of struggle. Likewise it faces women — from the 'middle class' as well as working class — with the loss of the 'social reforms' that they have gained or hoped to gain. Women are a potentially greater organised force today than at any previous time in history. In all previous revolutionary periods women have played a key role. They must do so again.

# reviews

The National Question

Selected writings by Rosa Luxemburg.

Edited by Horace B. Davis

Monthly Review Press

The publication of this book cannot but be welcomed by Marxists. Rosa Luxemburg's views on the National Question have hitherto been known to English readers solely through the pages of those, such as Lenin, who polemicised against her. This was an unenviable fate for a major Marxist theoretician and one which was to nobody's benefit. The three major anthologies of Luxemburg's writings in English contain not a single item devoted to her life-long opposition to the taking up by the proletariat of the struggle for Poland's independence — a struggle which pitted her against the opinions of both Marx and Engels.

The articles in this book start with one written before the fourth congress of the Second International, held in London in July 1896. In it Luxemburg forcefully takes up the cudgels on behalf of the historic tradition of Polish socialism — the outright opposition to the working class espousing the cause of Polish separation from Russia. The Revolutionary Socialist Party Proletariat, formed in 1882, had a short but heroic history of struggle — four of its leaders were hanged by the Tsarist authorities in 1886 and its main theoretician, Ludwik Warynski perished in the notorious Schlüsselburg Fortress whilst serving a sentence of sixteen years hard labour. It had an exemplary record of resistance to Polish chauvinism and formed an alliance with the Russian Narodnaya Volya. Rosa herself joined one of its cells in the last year of its existence.

The reasons for the Proletariat Party's opposition to Polish independence stemmed, however, from the 'pre-scientific' communism of Blanqui — a belief that the coming revolution would be a socialist revolution, in Russia and Poland.

A tendency, which was to become the Polish Socialist Party, arose in opposition to this in the early 1890's. This grouping warmly espoused the cause of Polish independence and argued for the formation of an all-Polish party, that is for the splitting of the Polish sections from the German and Austrian Social Democracies and the creation of a movement which would cover all three segments of partitioned Poland. They covered their overtures to the Polish bourgeoisie and anti-Russian chauvinism with all the quotes from Marx and Engels in support of the Polish national struggle.

Rosa Luxemburg conducted a two-sided struggle. Against the PPS and the Western Marxists who parroted Marx and Engels, but also against the ahistorical position of the old Polish socialists. She pointed out that,

'Marxism lies not in this or that opinion on current questions, but in two basic principles: the dialectical materialist method of historical analysis — with the theory of class-struggle as one of its corollaries — and Marx's basic analysis of the principles of capitalist development.'

(The Polish Question and the Socialist Movement published Cracow, 1905, Davis p. 77)

Carrying out this method in practice Luxemburg analysed the concrete social and political conditions of Marx

and Engels' support for Polish independence (the immobility of Russian society resting on the natural economy, the role of Russia as gendarme against the bourgeois-democratic revolutions in Central Europe, the revolutionary vitality of the Polish gentry up to 1861). All these factors had changed by the 1890's. Capitalism was creating a modern proletariat and bourgeoisie in Russia and Poland. Neither of these two classes had any particular interest in reviving historic Poland. Both had good reason for solidifying their ties with their Russian brothers.

Luxemburg's practical justification came in 1905 when the party she had founded, the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania, led the workers of Warsaw and Lodz in the mass strikes which convulsed all the industrial centres of the Russian Empire.

Lenin never objected to this element of Luxemburg's analysis — the rejection of a separate state for Poland. It may come as a surprise to those 'Trotskyists' who are prepared to sprinkle Marxist 'holy water' over Scottish or Breton nationalism, that Lenin held that,

'The proletariat, however, far from undertaking to uphold the national development of every nation on the contrary warns the masses against such illusions, stands for the fullest freedom of capitalist intercourse and welcomes every kind of assimilation of nations except that which is founded on force or privilege.'

(V.I. Lenin 'Critical Remarks on the National Question')

Therein lies the essence of Lenin's disagreement with Luxemburg. For the latter, in her zeal to avoid the chauvinism of the PPS, argued that the Russian Social Democrats should strike from their programme the demand that Russia's subject nationalities should have the right to 'determine their own future up to and including the right to freely secede'. As Lenin pointed out this would make Russian Social Democrats into chauvinists and annexationists. Luxemburg, further, and in contradiction to her own concrete analysis of Poland, extended her analysis to all nations. Even in 1896 she was including Ireland within the category of 'dead' national struggles. She later extrapolated from her theory of Imperialism and the outbreak of the imperialist war, the position that 'national wars, i.e. struggles for national independence, had no progressive content. Lenin drew the opposite conclusion — that national struggles against Imperialism had to be related to, as the great peasant struggle for land had to be, so that these 'non-socialist' battles might aid the proletarian revolution.

The introduction to the volume, by Horace B. Davis, the author of 'Nationalism and Socialism' is, like the latter work, curiously confused at key points in the attempted analysis. It is a standing indictment of the poverty of work amongst revolutionary Marxists that such a muddlehead should write the first book on the national question since Solomon Bloom's, 'The World of Nations' (1941) a non-Marxist examination of Marx's views on the National Question. May this omission soon be rectified! The translations compiled by Davis help such a project. Will anybody translate Otto Bauer's 'Die Nationaliten Frage'?

Dave Stocking

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The IMG's "The Socialist Challenge to Labour's Cuts"

reviewed by Ron Haycock

The bulk of the IMG's pamphlet "The Socialist Challenge to Labour's Cuts" is taken up with outlining and documenting the extent and meanings of Labour's cuts. In this respect the pamphlet can provide some useful information for socialist militants and trade unionists.

However the alternative to cuts offered by the IMG, and their proposals for the fight against cuts, offer no serious alter

native to the policies and programme of the 'left' reformists – the Communist Party and the Labour 'left'. The IMG offer, in essence, a reformist alternative to the cuts inflicted by the Labour Government.

Hand in hand with wage restraint and a huge "shakeout" of labour, British capitalism is set on a central strategy of diverting public spending away from the welfare and social services to productive manufacturing industry. Alongside wage restraint and unemployment, cuts are part of a concerted strategy to force down workers living standards.

Any strategy to fight the cuts must start from this point. There can be no coherent campaign against the cuts, capable of more than protest, that does not link the battle against cuts with the entire battle against the Social Contract. The public sector trade union leaders see 'cuts' as a separate and special issue. Fisher, for example supports wage restraint while opposing cuts.

Now the IMG start and finish their pamphlet with the cuts. Nowhere do they link the struggle with the struggle to break the Social contract.

Any serious strategy against the cuts has to start with an alternative to the politics and methods of the trade union and left leaders. The public sector leaders see their campaign as a special case, as a separate case for protest and lobby. Not only are they not prepared to lead beyond token protests and demonstrations unless pushed they will be prepared to take action to hold back rank and file trade unionists taking on the local Authorities. Already the NUT has actually suspended members for taking action against the cuts. Likewise the "political" alternative of the lefts and trade union leaders offers only diversion and alternatives to direct action.

True the IMG call the left leaders names. They are 'spineless' etc so we are told. But nowhere do the IMG call for independent rank and file organisation against the cuts – nowhere do they argue the need to organise independent of the trade union leaderships in order to take action. "The Labour Movement" is exhorted to take up the struggle, as if it was homogenous and in need of a push in the right direction. The IMG's failure to pose the need for rank and file organisation leaves them incapable of warning militants of the real problems of organising a fight back, and of focusing on those struggles and demands that that can mobilise the real fighting strength of the labour movement.

The IMG's political alternative to the 'lefts' is equally flabby and unprincipled. Import controls are opposed . . . . not because they are reactionary, because they export unemployment to foreign workers but because the IMF "will simply use stronger measures to sabotage the economy than a run on the pound, as they have done in the past in Latin America" and "at the same time other capitalist countries will introduce their own import controls on British goods". With capitalists seeking to invest abroad the IMG suggest "an immediate embargo must be slapped down". The IMG do not say whose state it would be that should place an embargo on foreign investment, and abolish capitalist arms spending! They have no alternative to the identical call being made by the Morning Star. All the IMG come clean on is that such issues "will be decided by a show of strength between the labour movement and the capitalist state."

While revolutionaries have always seen the monopoly of foreign trade and an investment embargo as integral features of a workers state only the IMG and reformists raise them as recommendations to the capitalist state now . . . . with the outcome to be decided by a "show of strength" from the Labour movement.

Failing to break with the politics and leadership of the trade union and Labour 'lefts', the IMG have no fighting alternative to put forward. They call for militant struggle. The example of the Clay Cross Councillors "showed their willingness to fight". But besides building a broad movement against the cuts, with

strikes and demonstrations the IMG offer in essence only an alternative plan of spending and allocation of resources. They pride themselves that the ASTMS in conference has supported the sliding scale of social expenditure, they call for public works, for a cancellation of the debts and for the opening of the accounts and books of the investors and banks. Nowhere do the IMG connect the action of workers, the fight against the cuts with the implementation of these demands. They remain alternative policies for the leaders in the labour movement.

Now against the IMG and the Labour left we say the key to fighting the cuts lies in organising to act independently of the trade union leaders whenever necessary and in the fight for clear alternative politics to those of the reformists and trade union leaders. Unless this is done the Labour Government and the employers will be able to drive a wedge deep into the labour movement, a wedge dividing the bureaucrats of the manufacturing unions and those 'representing' the public sector.

Direct action to stop the implementation of the cuts, to refuse to cover for unfilled vacancies, to refuse to increase the rate of work, to cut the hours not the jobs – with no loss of pay. This means focusing on shop floor direct action, on building shop floor organisation to open the books of the financiers and the bankers to refuse to implement Labour's plans through such action a campaign can be built to oppose the wage restraint policies of the public sector union leaders. From such action we can build a force to demand an end to all cuts, the automatic protection of the social services from inflation, to demand that Labour councillors refuse to implement the cuts, refuse to pay the crippling debts and interest repayments to the banks and finance houses.

Such a programme of struggle – building the organisations that can struggle for control with the Government and the employers – lays the basis for a serious campaign against the Labour Government's attacks. The IMG's pamphlet does not.

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# where we stand

Capitalism condemns the vast majority of mankind to poverty, insecurity and war. Once a progressive system which vastly enlarged the productive forces on a scale hitherto unknown, it always relied upon the concentration of ownership and control in the hands of a few, while the vast majority laboured in conditions of poverty and squalor.

Capitalism, having as its source the exploitation of the working class, is constantly impelled to increase the rate of exploitation in the interests of the competitive survival of each unit against its rivals. Blind production for profit, ever sharper rivalry and competition, result in periodic, more or less sharp, economic crises of over-production. Capitalism is torn with contradictions internal to itself. The most general is the conflict between the tremendous expansive powers of modern large-scale industrial production and the fetters imposed on it by production for profit, national barriers and the pointless rivalry of world markets. The constant revolutionising of science and technology and the potential this holds for improving the lot of mankind is never realised under capitalism. Millions starve in a world of abundance. Indeed, the gap between the wealthy and the poor becomes ever wider. The so-called communist countries are not communist or socialist. The proletariat does not hold state power in these countries. The mode of production is bureaucratic state capitalism and the bureaucracy is the ruling class.

The increasing intensity of competition between multinational cartels and nation states (including the Socialist states) threatens mankind with economic ruin and war. The capitalists and the Stalinist bureaucracies are driven to intensify their exploitation of the working class to escape from the crisis of their own making. From the deepening crisis and stagnation, capitalism can only escape by crushing all the independent organs of resistance of the working class.

2. Imperialism marks the maturing of capitalism into a conflict ridden world-wide system of exploitation. It marks the opening of the epoch of wars and revolutions.

Imperialism condemns two-thirds of humanity to super-exploitation and systematic under-development of their countries, crushing the development of their productive forces and making them sources of super profits and raw materials for the 'advanced countries'.

The exploitation and oppression practised by capitalism and imperialism call forth forces of resistance both from the working class - the proletariat - and the oppressed masses and nationalities.

The working class, itself the product of capitalism, has shown its power to challenge and overthrow this system in a series of struggles unprecedented in the history of all exploited classes.

The exploited nationalities, victims of imperialism, have also shown their ability to challenge and overthrow the forces of the strongest imperialist powers. The successful socialist outcome of such struggles, however, depends on the conscious leadership of the working class in national struggles under the leadership of a revolutionary party, basing its programme on the theory of the permanent revolution, the independent organisation of the working class for power, the leadership by the working class of all anti-imperialist forces, the spreading of the revolution beyond the boundaries of a single state. The working class must take up, as its own, struggles of all oppressed classes and social strata - peasantry, oppressed nationalities, races, women, etc. It must take up in its own every serious democratic demand of the broad masses. It alone can lead these struggles to final victory.

3. The bourgeois state must be smashed by the working class. It must be replaced by the dictatorship of the proletariat over the exploiters. Democratic collective control over the means of production and distribution is possible only by a state of workers' councils. The dictatorship of the proletariat is only a transitional period, ending with the complete withering away of the state and the abolition of classes - Communism.

Though a workers' state can come into existence in a single country, prolonged isolation opens the way to defeat or degeneration. The proletarian revolution must expand internationally or perish. The working class is the only class capable of leading an international onslaught against the bourgeoisie, though all oppressed classes and nationalities have a direct interest in supporting and forwarding its struggles.

4. At the same time, the nature of capitalist production, the development of technology, its increasing concentration makes more and more possible and necessary the replacement of bourgeois relations by true social production - democratically planned production for social need.

Only a social revolution led by the working class can accomplish this transformation. Such a revolution would transfer the means of production into common property and abolish the division of society into classes, liberate all the oppressed and rid society of distinctions of class, race, and sex.

The working class gains the experience to revolutionise society by constant struggle against the ruling class, through mass organisations created in the course of that struggle - trade unions, factory committees, workers' councils, and through the struggle of the oppressed for their own liberation.

However, the more intense and concentrated the class struggle, the deeper the social crisis, the more does the bourgeoisie seek to divide and control the focus of the working class, attempting to through various agencies to sow technical, craft, ethnic, religious, nationalistic, sexual, and the worst poison of all, racism.

In the class struggle the working class must develop

clear class strategy for conquering power. It has shown that the indispensable instrument for this is a party basing itself on a Marxist programme and rallying the most class-conscious militants to it.

The party sets as its tasks the overcoming of the uncertainties of working class experience, the fighting of bourgeois ideas and forces in the working class, the presentation of the lessons of past struggles and the binding together and unifying of all fragmented struggles. All this with the aim of developing a conscious and coherent offensive against capitalism.

Such a party must consist of revolutionary working class militants, it must be the vanguard of the class. The creation of such a party is the urgent task of all revolutionaries and working class militants.

The revolutionary party cannot be built on a national basis alone. We fight to build an international democratic centralist party - to combat the bourgeoisie on the basis of an international programme for workers' power. Such an international programme and party must be built on the lessons and experience of the first four Congresses of the Communist International and the re-elaboration of the 1938 programme of the Fourth International.

Workers' Power does not believe such an international party exists. Neither has the necessary programmatic work been completed. The Fourth International needs to be re-created around a re-elaborated transitional programme, on a democratic-centralist basis.

6. In the twentieth century, capitalism's survival has principally been the result of two forces -

i) The reformist and Stalinist leaderships in the international labour movement. After World War I, capitalism, challenged by the first workers' state and a mass revolutionary wave, was saved in its heartlands by the reformist parties of the Second International. The incorporation of the reformist workers' parties and Trade Union leaders has remained a vital component of capitalist stability.

After World War II, capitalism could not have survived and consolidated without the conscious support of the Stalinist parties. Notably in France, Italy and Greece, the Stalinist parties directed the potentially revolutionary forces, giving power back to the bourgeoisie. In East Europe independent working class, peasant and national movements were subordinated to the interests of the Russian bureaucracy (stability and shared spheres of interest) by the creation of client states to the Russian bureaucracy.

Born of the isolation of the Russian Revolution, nurtured on the destruction of the vestiges of workers' power in Russia and the elimination of revolutionary vitality in the Comintern, the Stalinist parties crossed to the camp of the bourgeoisie. In Russia and East Europe they have created states that must be destroyed by workers' revolutions. In the West they offer only collaborationist, national reformist programmes.

Stalinism and Stalinist parties are reactionary, an obstacle on a world scale to the Socialist Revolution.

ii) In addition to the conscious counter-revolutionary role of the Stalinist and reformist workers' parties, capitalism has only survived as a result of the wholesale destruction of capital in two imperialist world wars and the subordination of the world economy to American Imperialism's massive expansion after World War II.

The exceptional stability and expansion of world capitalism after World War II has to be understood primarily as a result of these two factors. However, capitalism in the twentieth century cannot free itself from the pressures of inflation, the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, increasing instability and a sharpening of competition on a world scale except at the expense of the working class.

7. The working class has, over the last 150 years, fought to create organisations capable of leading the struggle for Socialism. The early workers' organisations (e.g. the Chartists in England) the Social Democratic and Labour parties, the Communist parties of the 1920's, all, at their foundations, were looked to by the workers to accomplish their emancipation. Yet the bourgeoisie and its agents in the working class exerted enormous pressure to corrupt and betray them as weapons of class struggle.

This corruption has taken the form of reformism and capitulation to chauvinism. This is, the supposedly gradual transformation of capitalism through parliamentary reform and the identification of the working class with 'its' nation and ruling class against the workers of other nations. The Labour and Communist Parties are thoroughly corrupted in this way - although many of their members and supporters sincerely wish to destroy capitalism.

8. The Labour Party, in its programme and policy, is firmly tied to the bourgeois state, committed to maintaining capitalism. It is a bourgeois party. In periods of boom, under working class pressure, it has enacted limited reforms which, however, leave the fundamental power bases of the ruling class intact. In periods of falling profits like the present, it acts as the focus of most subtle weapons to claw back the concessions made over decades, attacking workers in struggle again and again.

Yet the Labour Party is a party rooted in the working class movement. The Trade Union members support it and provide it with most of its funds. The vast majority of workers vote for it and see it as their party - as the one that should be their friend against the bosses. It is the bourgeois workers' party. In this attraction lies the possibility of overcoming the centrifugal influences of a fractured parliament and the need to build up a party to strengthen society and its political action.

members within the Labour Party, most workers' leaders in the ranks of the class.

The Labour Party claims to be the party of the working class based on the Trade Union. We cannot but agree to 27 sections of Socialist thought towards and against the Labour Party.

9. The revolutionary Left consists of fragmented and disunited groups stemming from the only communist revolutionary tradition to survive from the collapse of the revolutionary communists in the 1920's and 30's, the remnants of L.D. Trotsky and the Fourth International of the Workers' Opposition, sectarian and disorganised but genuine forces within this movement. However, the creation of revolutionary parties and an International on the basis of the Leninist and Trotskyist method applied characteristically to the new period of capitalist crisis require before us.

The Workers' Power group sets out the task of fighting for revolutionary unity, based upon a programmatic programme. The elements of this programme are the basis for our common work and activity. We will cooperate in a common industrial fashion with all who agree with us in whole or in part. We seek fusion with all those with whom we have fundamental programmatic agreement.

## THE PRINCIPLE PLANKS OF OUR PLATFORM

For a workers' revolution leading to the dictatorship of the proletariat. The parliamentary road to Socialism is an illusion demonstrated time and time again, most recently in the Chilean catastrophe.

For a revolutionary party based on a transitional programme and organised according to the principles of democratic-centralism - full freedom of political debate, disciplined unity in action.

For the reconstruction of the Fourth International on the basis of an international transitional programme and a democratic-centralist practice.

For unconditional support to all national liberation struggles against imperialism and practical opposition to 'our own' ruling class' policy of oppression.

No platform for Fascists. Against all forms of racism and immigration control. For the right of immigrants to organise in their own defence. We fight tirelessly against racist ideas and leaders in the Labour Movement and for Labour Movement based united fronts to fight for these policies.

We support the workers of the so-called Communist states against their bureaucratic oppressors. Considering that only a workers' revolution can transform them into true Workers' States. Such a revolution would mean the creation of Soviets, the smashing of the secret police and army and its replacement by a workers' militia, the smashing of the bureaucratic state apparatus and its replacement by soviet democracy and nationalisation of workers controlled planned production. We adopt a definite position in any conflict between the Russian and European bureaucracies, itself imperialist, and US, West European imperialism. We, however, defend Cuba, North Korea, Vietnam, China against imperialism as these countries are non-imperialist powers.

We fight for complete social and political equality for women, supporting their fight against male domination, a feature of capitalism, as of all previous class societies. We fight for all immediate demands promoting this aim, whilst recognising that only the transition to Communism will remove the last vestiges of women's enslavement. In particular we fight for working class women, who suffer both oppression as women and super-exploitation within the workforce at present. We fight against male chauvinism and the unequal treatment of women in society and the Labour Movement, for full and equal rights in the workplace. We fight for a woman's right to control her own fertility, for the socialisation of housework, and for a mass working class women's movement. We support the struggle of gay people against discrimination on the grounds of their sexual orientation.

In the workers' movement and the Trade Unions we fight for the total independence of the Trade Unions from the State and from all legal shackles on the right to organise and to strike.

We fight to democratise the unions, putting them under the control of the rank and file. We fight for industrial class politics, for all immediate and partial demands which increase and strengthen the morale and confidence of the working class. Against all attempts to make this a mere pay the enormous cost, in terms of the lives of the workers, made by generations of workers' struggles, for the British bourgeoisie to rationalise and re-structure industry for their own benefit.

For a workers' class council of power, fighting to move workers' control from participation of production, the only conclusion to this struggle is a planned economy in a workers' state. It is the duty of revolutionary workers to control the masses of workers in struggle and so, by step, to the inevitable, necessary and possible socialist society. Socialism is the only alternative method to mankind's survival.

For practical solidarity with workers in struggle throughout the world. For the international nature of the working class, especially for links between the rank and file of dedicated workers. We commit ourselves to socialist debate and discussion and offer tendencies of the Left to study the problems discussed in the publication of Workers' Power and hereby to help for a possible and revolutionary internationalisation of the working class.