

CONFERENCE ON THE WORLD PROCESS OF THE DEEPENING CRISIS OF CAPITALISM

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To the Reader:

This text was elaborated by J Posadas, General Secretary of the Trotskyist-Posadist IV International (1912-1981). It is part of a Conference of the Posadist IV International on the British section held in 1979. We reproduce it this April-May 2017, because the text has become ready for publication, and its conclusions on ***The tasks for the left in the Labour Party*** are still valid.

In December 1979, *Conservative* Margaret Thatcher had recently won the elections in Britain (3 May 1979). In the United States, *Democratic Party* Jimmy Carter (who had become President in 1976) was now running for re-election. The US 'electoral campaign' mentioned in the text is that of the *Democratic Party primaries* where Jimmy Carter and Ted Kennedy were rivals. Carter eventually won, but by a very thin margin, the smallest ever in such primaries. In the Presidential elections of November 1980, Carter was beaten by *Republican* Ronald Reagan.

The period analysed in this text by J Posadas is still dominated by Jimmy Carter. US-led world imperialism was still reeling from its political-military defeat in Vietnam. The United States was entering a new period of recessions. Unemployment, monstrous wars and war failures, price rises and economic stagnation were feeding a very high level of popular discontent in the United States.

In the world, this period was a time of major revolutionary advance. Three days after this text was written, the Soviet Union entered Afghanistan in support of the Agrarian Reform of the pro-Marxist government there. The Iranian Revolution had started (Jan 1979). The Shah had fled Iran and taken refuge in the United States. One month before this text, in Nov 1979, a group of Iranian revolutionaries had stormed and occupied the US embassy in Teheran, paralysing key US counter-revolutionaries there, and keeping them hostages until Jan 1981.

In this text, J Posadas aims his analyses - particularly those about Iran - at the conclusion that the conditions are ripe for social transformation. He shows that they were ripe in Britain too, and this is even more so today (2017).

The rise of the Corbyn leadership in Britain reflects the fact that an anti-war, anti-imperialist and socialist perspective is being keenly looked for in the British working class, in the Labour Party and Trade Union bases, and in the British masses.

The Brexit propaganda and vote express the fear and panic of a British imperialism not only hated and repudiated in the world, but faced with expenses of empire superior to its gains, and imperialist world war failure looming at the end of it all.

The author shows how the Labour Party is forced leftwards by the growing debacle of world capitalism. He shows how the debacle of the capitalist system is also a debacle for the bourgeois structures and leaderships in the Labour Party. This process being irreversible, the author shows that the consistent organisation of the Labour left is an inevitability, and that it must be served consciously therefore, organisationally and politically with the use of Marxism, by all those who wish to see socialist advance in Britain.

The author shows the need to overcome the traditional modes of thinking limited to the practicalism of empire, of expedient and of careerism. He shows to those who seek the socialist transformation of Labour that they need to adopt the scientific and dialectical method of discussing and analysing.

The socialist transformation of Labour requires the revision of the bourgeois 'values' in the Labour Party like 'freedom' and 'democracy' which only amount to the right of the capitalists to sack workers and make wars.

In sum, this document shows the need for the consistent organisation of the Labour left.

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The crisis in Workers States and Communist Parties differs antagonistically from that in the capitalist countries. In the capitalist system, the crisis is one of disintegration. In the Workers States and Communist Parties, the crisis demands reorganisation, rectification, the return to measures of social progress. We are not supposing this. It is happening now.

In capitalism, two fundamental factors drive its rampant crisis: No historic perspective on a one hand, and no concrete social authority on the other. These are the two factors. Capitalism cannot resolve any of its basic problems. Its system is universally reviled, and it stands no chance to continue in history.

The masses of the world side with the Workers States:

Whilst the imperialists are increasingly hated in the world, the anti-imperialist masses welcome Soviet support. The Soviet leaders still conciliate with capitalism, but they cannot do it like before, and neither do they wish to. If only to survive, the USSR needs allies. This organic necessity causes the USSR to look for support in the world, and to value that support. The result in the world is a stronger USSR and more actions of social transformation better able to weigh against the military might of imperialism. Although capitalism reacts to this by increasing its war preparations, this situation transforms the context of those preparations.

Imperialism can no longer intervene in other countries as brazenly as it used to. It sees the need to be more covert and secretive. It feels impeded, and who impedes it? The Soviet Union. In the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, ordinary workers, petit bourgeois and impoverished bourgeois masses view the Soviet Union as an ally. The violent arrogance of capitalism-imperialism drives people towards the Soviet Union; so much so that imperialism feels quite surrounded.

A North American man was arrested in Iran, but no movement started in the US for his 'democratic rights' and 'liberty'. The Yankee imperialists have enough money to buy 10,000 or 15,000 people to start an anti-Iran protest in Washington. They do not do it for fear of more debates, seeing that they are already strongly criticised for having protected the Shah. There are

already enough angry Americans protesting the lack of jobs, the lack of freedoms, the low wages and the repressions. The Carter government does not organise polls to measure Iran's support in the United States. It fears doing this because public sympathy for Iran is very great.

Wounded by the world revolutionary tide, the capitalist system has no economic, social or political remedies. The only thing at its disposal is force, repression, the military and war. Absolutely nothing else! For many years, it dealt with revolutions by means of violence and 'coups'. Now it uses the same violence and 'coups' against its most ordinary opponents. But what lasting protection does it expect to secure in that way? All it does is turn everyone in the world into its enemy!

The decomposition of the capitalist system causes the decomposition of the capitalist apparatus of the workers' parties:

Let's consider Portugal: The revolutionary process there started in the colonies, and beyond. Now this world revolutionary process weighs in Portugal itself, and its recent elections; it guides the best revolutionaries in matters of policy, programme and objectives. The Portuguese Communist Party is more to the left than many other Communist Parties. In just two years, its vote passed from 8% to 20%. This shows what happens in Portugal of course, but fundamentally, it shows what impact the world process is having on Portugal.

Now with other countries: Behind the events in Italy, it is the world that influences there. They influence the Italian Communist Party particularly. The same goes for Britain and Germany. The world process is at the root of whatever you observe in the British Labour Party too, or the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). The same goes for the French Socialists. In each of those mass workers' parties, you see internal upheavals, progressive initiatives, clashes, crises and instabilities. In each of them, the situation is specific of course. There is no uniformity in the political crisis of capitalism, but the crisis of capitalism itself demands change in all of them. This is what they have in common.

The decomposition of the capitalist system provoke aspects of internal decomposition in the capitalist apparatuses of the workers parties. Those parties differ from country to country, but this process across them presents similarities. The impotence of capitalism demands from them new political and social ideas, provoking internal crises and differences. Those parties no longer enjoy the old authority of the past; they find it harder to garner votes. The crisis of capitalism and their need to come up with new ideas have the effect of pushing them leftwards. This fundamentally

characterises what is happening in France, Britain, Germany, Portugal, Italy (and others) – and in North America too.

Class issues grow behind the electoral concerns:

In the North American electoral campaign, Kennedy accused Carter of being 'the protector of an assassin'. This refers to the protection that Carter gave to the Shah of Iran. This accusation was used to win electoral points, but what an accusation! It shows the putrefaction of the regime. Such an indictment can only be used because, beyond the electoral contest, much deeper and wider issues are at stake. Issues to do with the relations of the capitalists with the Workers States for instance, particularly the Soviet Union.

The crisis of capitalism takes two forms. The first is the 'normal' crisis due to the irrepressible struggle of the Trade Unions and workers' parties for jobs, social rights and the life improvements that capitalism will not grant. The second has to do with capitalism having to deal with the Workers States and the struggle of the world masses. There is a necessary progress in the world, of a kind that capitalism cannot stop. It is expressed in all sorts of political, social and revolutionary struggles. There are important political struggles in Italy for instance. There is endless social and revolutionary struggle in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

It is not just for electoral advantage that Kennedy accuses Carter of protecting 'assassins like the Shah'. Kennedy says this to win popular support as well. Amongst the huge demonstrations in the United States lately, not one was against Iran. Indeed, the one in New York was led by Iranians and North Americans. Its central slogans ran along lines like 'expel the Shah' and 'no US intervention against the revolution in Iran'. It was on that occasion that Carter was denounced by Kennedy 'for protecting assassins'. In the United States and the world, the masses support the Iranian Revolution. And they condemn the actions of US imperialism in Iran.

The American masses reject the policies of Carter:

This process shows the debility of Yankee imperialism. Observe how many weapons it has, atomic included! Half of its budget is for war, and not its declared 10%. It has an immense military and economic power, but it has not the social strength to impose itself. Even in El Salvador and Nicaragua, the masses defy US imperialism, and throw it out. There are similar examples everywhere. These are the true indicators of the world relations of forces.

The world relation of forces takes an anti-imperialist direction in a regular, constant and dynamic form. It does not spread circumstantially or just in isolated areas. It is a tissue where every social, economic, political and military strand influences the other, on a world scale. Every event you observe in Africa, Asia and Latin America, results from an interaction of local circumstances and world relations of forces.

It is important to use this conclusion when considering Latin America for instance, and its proximity to the United States. The countries of Latin America used to be a centre of unquestioned Yankee domination and never-ending poverty. The populations did not accept this however. With repeated insurrections, they fought imperialism back, and still do. With no material means at all, Nicaragua and El Salvador are repelling Yankee imperialism. But where do they find the force to do this? They find it in the world relations of forces. What do we mean by 'world relation of forces'? We mean two things: The Soviet Union intervenes in the world nowadays; and the masses of all continents are fighting against imperialism – and with the support of the masses of the United States!

In the 'mighty' United States, the ordinary people have no means to be heard. It is through their votes, their mobilisations and their meetings that we learn how opposed they are to their governments. Carter went as far as to call for demonstrations in support of the Shah of Iran, now a refugee in the United States. He soon dropped the idea when he saw that the most likely demonstration was going to be against him. The US governments have no social authority.

Observe how the huge demonstrations in the United States are never in support of US imperialism, but always against it. If Carter starts a demonstration in support of the Shah, the progressive sectors of the petty bourgeoisie, many academics, government employees and State officials will go down in the streets too. It will not be long before the affair takes an anti-capitalist turn. The revolution in Iran has stimulated all this. The political education which the North American masses are denied internally, they receive from the revolutionary masses of the world. It is not true that the North American masses are passive and indifferent. This is a lie! If this were so, the US imperialists would have set up pro-Shah phoney demonstrations by now. Seeing how much money they have to kill the peoples of the world, they have enough money to pay demonstrators. If they do not do this, it for fear of the adverse political and social reaction of the masses of the United States.

The governments of the United States refrain from asking the US masses to

demonstrate in their support. They fear opening the gates that shut out political life. People would start having opinions and ideas. Then they would want the political means through which to intervene. Whatever next? This is why the capitalists do not call for demonstrations in support of their policies.

If the capitalists could be sure of loyal masses coming down in the streets, and then going home, they would call on the people to rally behind them. They have the money, plenty of it, to pay enough people to initiate such things. They fear the organisational and political consequences of this kind of thing. Once the US masses start speaking, they will not return to inaction. They will have ideas and will want to speak on. They will insist on being treated better than they are now. They will protest against the brutality of the police; they will condemn the assassin behaviour of the capitalists and bosses; they will denounce the policies of the US governments in the world and they will defend the peoples of the world.

Jane Fonda led a demonstration of 200,000 in Washington to demand 'no intervention against the Iranian Revolution'. In New York, there was a demonstration of Iranians in which North Americans took part – they were the majority in the ranks – demanding that the Shah be thrown out of the US. Both in Washington and New York, the demonstrators were denouncing the Carter's government for being 'the protector of assassins'.

Not long before that, Carter's mother had said that that she would have the Ayatollah Khomeini killed, if only she could. The mother of the president of the United States plotting murder and boasting about it! In an electoral speech, Kennedy attacked the Carter's government "that protects assassins". He knew that saying this would win votes. This is how you measure what is being discussed in the working class and the petit bourgeoisie of the United States. The masses of the world see this. In the United States, an accusation of this sort against a president is not a small matter, particularly in the middle of large popular mobilisations.

Capitalism fears the sentiment of solidarity that the North American people keep displaying towards the masses of the world. The employers' class supports Carter. If it could, it would mobilise supporters to get Carter re-elected. It does not do that though. It knows that its interests are better served by keeping 'the protector of assassins' at some distance.

Capitalism cannot form new bourgeoisies:

Most [economically] backward countries like Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, Cuba or Nicaragua, have overthrown capitalism and created the start of

new Workers States. They declare for Socialism. They choose Socialism and not capitalism because capitalism smashes them. Why don't they start on a capitalist road in order to turn socialist afterwards? They do not because it cannot be done. The only way they can develop is out of capitalism, on the socialist road. There is no place in history for capitalism.

This reality is decisive. It forms part of today's relations of forces. The Workers States hamper capitalism, and capitalism can no longer invade, smash, murder, plunder and impose a dictatorship as freely as in the past. The Workers States are led to intervene, if only to find allies and fight more efficiently themselves. They are driven to lend support – direct support – for that reason. Imperialist predation continues, certainly, but the political understanding of people reaches new levels, both in the subjugated countries *and* in the imperialist countries. This is new. This is what you see in the United States. This is what has changed in 'the world relation of forces'.

The predation of imperialism keeps countries in backwardness by paralysing their political and social life. This happened to Iran where imperialism imposed the dictatorship of the Shah. Like many other countries, Iran eventually transformed itself. The Shah is still around, but its people are unanimous and concentrated in their resolve to overthrow his power. It is the Yankee imperialists who stand behind the Shah – not the Soviet Union for instance. Iran has not chosen to attack anyone. It attacks the Yankee imperialists because they stand behind the Shah against the progress of Iran. Iran does not attack the Soviet Union because the latter is rather positive about Iran's revolution. The masses of the world measure these things. They see the appalling conditions of life, and of social life, in the oppressed countries. They see how imperialism chokes their economic, industrial and social development. The masses of the world observe how these oppressed countries have supported, are supporting, and will continue to support, the measures and the policies that free them from imperialist and capitalist bondage.

Religious faith and social transformation can 'walk together':

The capitalist class is weak in Iran. Naturally it wants to develop and needs to do so. With the Shah at its head, and him allied with imperialism, the Iranian bourgeoisie is hardly allowed to exist. The Shah substitutes for the bourgeoisie which has very little social force. To give himself the social force that he cannot have, the Shah falls back on the army. On the army and on imperialism! Any attempt at throwing out imperialism leaves the Iranian bourgeoisie with no strength at all.

The bourgeoisie of Iran can only develop by sprouting a capitalist regime of its own; but this is a country emerging from 40 years of dictatorship. One fine morning, it woke up and said: "We have decided on a policy of expropriations". The masses of Iran said that this was good, because the wealth of the country should go to the people, instead of to a few. The way the Iranian masses became conscious of this did not conflict with their religious faith. They found no contradiction between the social transformation of their country and the strength of their religious feelings.

Life for the Iranian people could only improve by the US imperialists and their Iranian capitalist supporters being expropriated. Concrete reality had demonstrated that, as long as this was left undone, progress for the whole population was not possible. For the country to experience development, social transformation had to happen.

The Iranian masses realised this. They found no contradiction between their strong faith and their need to answer the call of ideas and social organisation. And there is no such contradiction, really, although it is true that the force that galvanises social behaviour comes from beyond religion. To resolve this, the Iranian masses brought Mahomet to the socialist road, and with him by their side, they started walking together.

Iran shows that the world is ready for social transformation:

The Iranian Revolution is an immense historic transformation. It brings suddenly forward the cultural and social development that used to need centuries at the old speed of the past. The Iranian masses are moved by strong feelings of social determination and of religious fervour. In practice, they place their religious fervour at the service of social development. This shakes the Islamic world to its base. In reality, the same happens in the Catholic world. The Catholics look on and say: "We can do the same!"

The revolution in Iran shows how much the world is ready for social transformation. Between the religious behaviour of today's humanity, and its social behaviour, it is its social behaviour that wins. Social conduct orientates the religious one. To develop their country, the Iranian masses make social transformations. Religion no longer stands in their way to paralyse their social will or blind them to the material world. Age-long traditions, customs and modes of education continue to perpetuate the religious sentiment, but social comprehension develops faster than these. A guiding social hand has emerged. From a past where the 'social' and the 'spiritual' kept in very close proximity, the guiding social hand is no longer Mahomet's, but Marx'. Without abandoning their faith, the Muslim masses accept social transformation. They incorporate their faith into their social

needs, and not the other way.

Iran is a country where imperialism never allowed a political leadership to develop. The Communists remained weak. The overbearing power of imperialism arranged to have them massacred, along with many intellectuals and progressive bourgeois layers. Iran was robbed of a huge part of its cultural, scientific, social and political heritage. The result is this strongly religious country bursting on the social stage of the world with a burning passion to transform. Like the masses of the world, the masses of Iran want progress and no limits placed on it by religious institutions. Progress cannot be limited anyway, because its remits are boundless. The masses of the world see this. They follow it and they learn from it. They watch the Muslim masses of Iran going to prayer, then getting hold of the gun to impose State control. When the Iranian masses took Western hostages, they defended their actions by indicting Yankee imperialism. Such things happen because the world relations of forces permit them. Iran today is a documentary on the world relations of forces. Part of this is the fact that Iran is the direct neighbour of the Soviet Union – one more reason why the Yankees do not have free entry into Iran.

Revolution adapts faith to social necessity:

Although the masses of Iran are comforted by the military presence of the Soviet Union, their confidence does not depend on it. What gives them strength is the social existence of the Soviet Union. It is the social existence of the Soviet Union that shows to humanity what to do. This explains why the fifty million Muslims in the Soviet Union consider themselves Soviet citizens who happen to be Muslim, and not the reverse. They defend the Soviet Union and the social structures of the Soviet Union. The masses of the world see this too, because they make similar experiences: They inherit their religious beliefs, but they adapt their gods to the social necessities.

There is a great progress in the masses of countries like Iran, where world imperialism imposed economic backwardness by banning the political, as well as the social organisation of life. See how quickly these shackles were broken in Iran, in less than one year during which people adapted their religious beliefs to social necessity. This is an enormous human and social leap. Imperialism sees this and foments war.

Imperialism prepares the war because the masses of the world – particularly those it views as most backward – take the road of the Soviet Union. Iran is only starting on that road, but how much more could have been done with a prepared political leadership! The present struggle in Iran is precisely about the construction of that political leadership.

Imperialism cannot turn the clock back:

The Iranian masses want social transformation, and their present leaders have to respond. The craving for progress in Iran is not guided by feelings of revenge against imperialism. It is guided by the example of the Soviet Union. The masses of Iran have seen how the Soviet Union – a backward country like their own – eliminated capitalism through state-ownership, planned production and Trade Union power. Even if they cannot do it all, they see this! They learn, and quickly. Imperialism sees this too. It realises that Iran is trying to create a social, communist or soviet leadership.

The leaders in formation in Iran have no reason to imitate the Soviet Union either, or reproduce bureaucracy. They simply proceed on the road which they have opened for themselves, and this influences back in the Soviet Union. Imperialism watches this too, but what can it do about it? It has no solution. Only war.

The masses of Iran and their Muslim leaders are ready for whatever Yankee imperialism has in store for them. Observe how they do not fear. There was a time when the Yankees could send in gunboats and bombers to keep Iran cowered. The US had the political force. Iranian resistance had to submit or be wiped out. This is no longer the case now. The Yanks are still moving their warships and aeroplanes, but the Iranian masses no longer fear. The knowledge that the Soviet Union hampers imperialism gives them confidence, but they find an even greater source of strength in the exercise of what they now experience as their own capability and freedom to organise.

If the Iranian masses were just counting on the Soviet Union, they would not be half as assured as they are. Why don't they fear that the Soviets may suddenly decide to conciliate with the Yankees, and divide up Iran? Why don't they fear this, which is what the capitalist system wants them to fear? The answer is: The broad masses of Iran, even those in remote areas, recognise that the Soviet Union has to intervene in the world; that it does not do it for its own interests, and that its system has no need to conquer and dominate. The ordinary masses see the Soviet Union as a new system whose continuation depends on its extension in the world. The peoples of the world actually believe that the Soviet Union must go to other countries, support human progress there, and build the strength to eliminate the capitalist system. The masses of Iran, Nicaragua, Angola and El Salvador understand this. Although imperialism does too! It realises that the world masses, having learnt this, will never un-learn it.

Imperialism knows that it cannot turn the clock back. This leaves it with the feeling of having no role left in the world. And nothing to do with anything – yet another reason why it foments war.

The masses of the United States support Iran:

In North America, there have been no mass meetings against the Iranian Revolution. Not one! US capitalism has enough money to arrange for some individuals to start demonstrations. There are eight million unemployed in the US, out of whom a few thousands could be expected to welcome a phoney job, but capitalism did not even try. It knows from experience that this kind of recruitment fabricates future opponents.

As we mentioned above, Kennedy repeatedly condemned Carter for protecting 'an assassin'. Since Kennedy said this to get votes, there must be a lot of people holding this view. He would not say this if it were not popular. This is the way to measure public opinion! These examples show that the North American masses are on Iran's side.

Observe also that capitalism did not manage to turn this electoral campaign into an 'anti-Russia' one. The Carter's team, or the Kennedy's one, never tried to put Mr Meany¹ on podiums. Meany is the ex-president of the AFL-CIO. He retired recently on a pension of at least 120,000 dollars a year, besides being the owner of various hotels. He likes to denounce the Soviet Union. He just warned against a 'communist dictatorship' in Iran. Why isn't capitalism getting him to speak at rallies? No one supports Meany, that is why. If the US masses hated the Soviet Union and the Iranian Revolution, opinion polls would have appeared in the factories to take a measure of Mr Meany's support among the workers. Such polls were not tried. This is how we know that the masses of the United States are neither against Iran nor against the Soviet Union.

When dealing with North America, one must not interpret the lack of a workers party there, or of Trade Union life, as signs of incapacity in the US proletariat. The working class of the United States has capacity, resolve, keenness and political ideas, but there is no Labour or mass workers' Party in North America. Political and Trade Union life are very limited in that country, but it is no sign of weakness or incapacity in the working class and Trade Unions. The lack of Party life comes from a power structure so monolithic that the mass of the people cannot speak and give opinions. It is therefore with great difficulties that the concerns of the US masses find

¹ George Meany, 1894-1980. US Labour leader. President of the AFL Trade Union 1952-55, and President of the AFL-CIO 1955-1979. Staunch defender of Lyndon B Johnson's Vietnam war.

political expression – although this situation is beginning to change.

You see a sign of change in the mass abstentions that took place in the recent presidential elections. Carter was re-elected by 26% of the vote, and he was the first to say that this was very little. He refrained from saying that this was not good enough and that he was going home; but who are the three quarters who did not vote for him? One thing is sure. They do not back him and his anti-Communist views. This means also that the overwhelming majority of the US people reject Mr Meany and his anti-Communism.

Many historic factors have combined to stop the formation of a mass Communist Party in the United States. Although the North American Communists committed errors, which did not help them, Stalinism has been the main cause for this lack of Communist development. Because Stalin's world policy was essentially one of alliance with capitalism, the effect in the United States was to dissuade and keep back the forces of anti-capitalist and revolutionary transformation. In this matter, Stalinism has been the greatest obstacle.

In front of its war, capitalism divides instead of uniting:

World capitalism² has decided to install US ballistic missiles in Europe. One more step towards imperialism's world war! We are continually being told that this action is defensive, but this is false. Imperialism has been sliding towards all-out world war for decades. We are not saying that it is going to launch such a war straight away, or even that it can launch it whenever it likes. What we say is that there is a limit to how much capitalism can accept the growing ties between the Workers States and the masses of the world.

It is to smash the world revolutionary process that capitalism prepares militarily. When we say that 'capitalism prepares militarily', *we do not say* that it is going to succeed, or even manage to wreak all the havoc it is capable of. What we say is that capitalism-imperialism prepares for war to stop the world extension of the revolutionary process.

The war preparations of the capitalists gnaw at their class unanimity. If any degree of unanimity ever existed between them, it has gone. Of course they need to unite if they want war on the Workers States - but they do not do so! All manner of anti-war tendencies keep appearing within them. Where do we see this? In the Social Democracy! The German SPD has very important currents opposed to war. The same goes for the Socialists of

² US and European capitalism in the main, in this particular case. Editorial note.

France and Italy, and the same goes for the Labour Party in Britain. In these workers' parties, the commanding structures go along with the war of imperialism, but the workers and masses at the base of those parties are opposed! They oppose that war, and all the imperialist wars. Mortally wounded, imperialism turns to Social Democracy for political support. The more it rests on it however, the more it feels to be resting on a void.

In the daily paper of the Italian Communist Party 'UNITA', workers' letters were recently published. Signed by a group of workers, one of those letters said squarely: *'We are against American missiles being installed in Italy. If these were Soviet missiles, we would not oppose them. The Soviet missiles have no reason to attack Italy, but the American missiles do'*. This is the political level of the Italian working class, as expressed by its vanguard in a Communist paper. Be sure that this same maturity exists in the British working class.

The particular debates and concerns in the Labour Party and Trade Unions do not arise for 'British' reasons. The masses and the vanguard workers of Britain live in the world. They observe and listen to it. Practical life shows to them that the problems they face come from world structures. The British masses see beyond electoral defeats³. They look at other countries in search of ideas. When they see revolution winning in Nicaragua and El Salvador, they realise that the world balance of forces is favourable, and that the British working class too can make progress.

This is what we mean by 'world balance of forces'. It is a fact that the influence of the world enters in Britain with more difficulty than elsewhere. The insularity of British imperialism sought to keep Britain aloof⁴, but this has diminished. Now, the separation of Britain from the world continues only to the extent that capitalism preserves some strength. This exists in other imperialist countries. If it applies quite particularly to Britain, it is due to the strong structure of capitalist political apparatus in that country. This places a considerable burden on the revolutionary, scientific, political and social life of the country. It pares down the development of art and culture, and even that of scientific knowledge.

The non-dialectical method of reasoning blocks imagination:

Scientific knowledge is necessary, and innovations in electronics and cybernetics form part of scientific knowledge. This said, the experience that humanity has made with the creation of *the Workers State* is more important than all electronics and cybernetics put together. The masses of

³ This refers to the defeat of Callaghan and the rise of Thatcher. Editorial.

⁴ This is still the case in 2017. The vote for Brexit illustrates the point. Editorial note, May 2017.

the world learn constantly from the experience of the Workers States. The masses of Nicaragua go from forty years of dictatorship to reconstructing their country in only a few months. What gave to the people of Nicaragua the strength not to retreat into individualism and family egoism? The social experience of humanity has done this. Dictator Somoza failed to drown people in permanent anguish. Instead of yielding to fear, the masses of Nicaragua used the long years to prepare. When the time came, they intervened massively and brought the dictatorship down.

The masses of Britain are not experiencing this kind of thing of course. They have better conditions of life. They have better means to develop culture and science. What works against them in Britain, however, is the solid bureaucratic capitalist apparatus of State. It is true also that the strength of this apparatus must be seen in context: The apparatus that used to sustain Somoza in Nicaragua was even more powerful than the British Queen and British capitalism⁵.

We have seen that the influence of the world revolution enters Britain slowly, indirectly, in a limited way. Up to recently, the organised structure of British capitalism had the force to filter out most of that influence. This way, the British masses were kept at a distance from the revolutionary processes happening elsewhere. Although this was quite effective, there was, and still is another factor even more effective and determinant. So determinant that British capitalism rests entirely on it: That factor lies in the non-dialectical method of reasoning and of discussing in Britain.

In the field of thought-method, impressionism is what emerges when a person's reasoning is non-dialectical. Impressionism is what takes the place of dialectics. When faced with what we call 'change', impressionism looks for tools of immediate application, for immediate effects. It does not consider that 'change' [in any situation] is the qualitative leap that takes place past a certain amount of accumulated quantitative pressures. This non-dialectical way of thinking is widespread, and not just in Britain. A lot of it prevails in the world communist movement too.

Stalinism started in Britain, not in the USSR:

In the political and Trade Union structures of Britain, the method of reasoning is dominated by what we shall call 'practicalism'. By this, we mean a combination of pragmatism and expediency which dominates the way of thinking. Due to historical reasons, and well before the rise of any Stalin in the world, the organised working class in Britain became steeped

⁵ Supported as it was by world imperialism, i.e. US and European imperialism, and their allies in the country and in Latin America.
Editorial note.

in practicalism. This was then reinforced by the rise of Stalin, Stalinism therefore, and by the errors of the Communist parties. Practicalism is essentially the Stalinist method of analysing history.

'Practicalism' tends to get hold of structures, particularly where the leaders come from social layers dominated by immediate interests. In the Soviet Workers State after Lenin, such a layer gained the power to speak in the name of the workers' movement and of revolutionary necessity. That was Stalinism. And one of its features was practicalism. Through the policies of Stalin and the Stalinist policies of the Communist parties, this way of thinking was allowed to spread worldwide. In many countries, it reinforced the practicalism already existing there, in the working class movements.

In the USSR under Stalin, the interests of the leading bureaucratic current were pragmatic and practicalist. The absence of great mass movements at the time allowed this current to combine its own interests with those of capitalist layers. Practicalism is characterised by this combination. The workers' movement had to accept this situation. There were no precedents. There were no previous traditions to lean on, or to make comparisons. There were no experienced currents of Marxist application. The Russian Revolution had been betrayed by Stalin. From then on, this never stopped weighing on the Communists and on the workers' parties. It is still weighing on all of them today, Britain included.

Create a dialectical current in the Labour left:

The consequences of Stalinism were made very much worse by the existence of a quasi-Stalinist bureaucracy in the workers' aristocracy of Britain. This was well before any Stalin appeared in the world. What operated in Britain, and still does, was not called 'Stalinism'. It was given other names, but its concepts and practices were, and are those of Stalinism. There is a difference of course. The Stalinism of the USSR worked in defence of a Workers State's bureaucracy, whilst the Stalinism in Britain works as a function of capitalism. This is the only difference. Apart from this, both share in the regular interests of the capitalist system, and both abhor any sign of revolutionary intent.

In Britain, a practicalist and pragmatic culture developed over long periods. We refer here to the times when the historic experiences of other countries went generally unreported in Britain. The British workers' movement was in construction, but it was not allowed to learn from working class experience elsewhere. Its own sense of history developed within bureaucratic structures already dominated by practicalist aims and policies. The more practicalist these structures were, the less anti-capitalist they were as well.

This is still the case today. Practicalism responds to events in jerks and manoeuvres; it does not seek the deliberate policies drawn from the long-term project and programme to eliminate the capitalist system.

Practicalism hampers progress in the Labour Party:

As we have seen, the rise of Stalin in the USSR reinforced the practicalist currents already existing in the world. It also encouraged new ones. Time passing, these did not diminish but increased, and grew confident.⁶ In the organisations of the working class in Britain, these currents buried all perspectives connected with doing away with capitalism, defeating its power, making social transformations. In the rest of the world, this abandonment took place in most of the Communist parties. So much so that today (1979), there is a counter-revolutionary leadership in China. When seen in this context, it is no surprise to find in Britain a bureaucracy allied with the queen. This is completely in keeping with the historic process. It is no British particularism or abnormality.

For what concerns our Posadist organisation in Britain, we have given ourselves the task to help create a current that values this history, and uses it to guide its anti-bureaucratic struggle. Our analyses aim at making the anti-bureaucratic currents aware that, although this task requires historic time, it is neither exceptional nor impossible. If the bureaucratic structures in Britain are so firmly entrenched, it is because they were originally built by imperialism, in the times when it was strong.

There is less and less scope for the Labour apparatus:

The Labour Party was not defeated in the elections: The bureaucratic leadership of the Labour Party was. You can see this in the reaction of the masses. Within a short time of the electoral defeat, an important movement of Trade Union and mass struggle welled up against the attacks of the Thatcher leadership.

Had the elections been a political defeat, and not just an electoral one, people would have retreated within themselves. But they did not, and there was no retreat. Labour did well in the local elections. There was no sagging of resolve in the Trade Unions, and the masses continued to mobilise and demonstrate. All this shows that the British people did not feel defeated.

⁶ Let's not forget that capitalism makes things easy for practicalism by rewarding careerism and superficiality. In other documents, J Posadas explains at length how the worst crime of Stalinism was to have broken the continuity of Marxism in the world. Trotsky dedicated all his life and writings to maintain that continuity - i.e. the continuity of the scientific method of analysing society. Editorial note.

Following these elections, it is in the Tory Party⁷ - and not on the losing Labour side - that signs of disintegration appeared! Thatcher won the elections with less than 30% of the vote cast. Even though their Party is now badly divided, some Tory MPs side with Labour against the new anti-immigrant laws. They do not want their Party to lose even more support. These Tory MPs are not decisive politically, but they worry about having so little support. Indeed, those who voted Thatcher are a minority; and this minority – grandees, knights and idiots – has no value. While on the side of the working class, most people play a useful part in the development of the country. They vote with the workers and welcome Trade Union life.

The worldwide war preparations of imperialism pull sharply on the cultural concerns of the Labour vanguard. There always was a Labour vanguard in Britain, but the level of its political, cultural and programmatic preoccupation was never as high as in France, Italy or Germany. Due to traditions and past conditions, the structures of British capitalism acquired the strength to press down on, and against the Labour vanguard, using for this purpose a Labour apparatus particularly accommodated to capitalist power.

Nowadays however, there is less and less scope for this continued accommodation of the Labour apparatus. The pressure of the masses keeps growing. Whilst the Labour Party [leadership] was busy losing the elections, the British workers were defending the Trade Union leader and Convener Derek Robinson. In so doing, the workers were not just defending a Communist; they were defending the right of Trade Union leaders to take part in the leadership of society.

This too is unfavourable to the continued accommodation of Labour. Although the behaviour of the Communists may not be correct - and they do not have the preparation to use this situation - the masses confront the capitalist system and defend the leaders of the Communists. British capitalism can no longer maintain the capitalist structures which it built in the past⁸. This causes a decay within those structures, weakening the social authority of British capitalism and its competitive edge against North America, France, Germany and Japan.

The Thatcher government's laws attacking the immigrants show capitalism retreating into reactionary and protectionist mode. British capitalism erects new barriers around itself, showing how narrow and restricted it has become. This does not restrict the determination of the workers and

⁷ The Tory Party is another name for the Conservative Party. Editorial.

⁸ One of these structures is the unity between England and Scotland for instance. This unity has broken down. The glue of imperialist power that kept them together has melted away. Now it is each region for itself. Editorial note 2017.

masses however. There a continuous elevation in their scientific and political discussions.

Capitalism fears the Labour-Trade Union link:

The sacking of Derek Robinson by his employers at British Leylands has a profound significance. It aims at stopping the formation of a consistent Trade Union and anti-capitalist opposition in the working class. The Communists have a certain weight in the Trade Unions, but it is not the Communist Party that the capitalists fear. They fear the process itself. They know that the masses are going to continue struggling because they, (capitalists) have no solution apart from more sackings and wage cuts.

Because there is no capitalist solution to the crisis of the capitalist system, the process can only evolve in an anti-capitalist direction. Capitalism knows this. To maintain its profits at world-competition level, it must close enterprises and concentrate production. Capitalism is entirely dominated by competition: competition against the other capitalists, and competition against the Workers States.

There is another aspect to Robinson's sacking. The employers' class is determined to stop Trade Union influence - both industrial and political - from reaching vanguard sectors in the Labour Party. The capitalists know that a Labour Party under Trade Union influence will elevate the workers' fight. The capitalists realise that the workers will fight more effectively in the future if the Trade Unions and Labour collaborate more closely.

In light of the general war that British [and world] imperialism prepare⁹, the last thing that British capitalism wants is a greater penetration of the Trade Unions in the left, and in the Labour left. It fears simple Trade Union disputes turning into organised movements of political opposition.

Since imperialism cannot cut off the Trade Unions from the Labour Party, it wants these unable to confront capitalism directly. In an unwitting way, the approach of world war stimulates the Labour Party and the Trade Unions towards closer alliances of political opposition. This stimulation grows every day, even if Labour and the Unions continue to appear unable of confronting capitalism directly.

Capitalist democracy means freedom to attack the workers:

As the closest ally of US imperialism and its war preparations, British imperialism wants the British working class kept in check. It watches

⁹ Read J Posadas 'On War'. Edit.

carefully for fear that a small tendency – like that around Derek Robinson – may lead to a more consistent political organisation in the working class. It fears that tendencies may suddenly appear, able to draw the working class in an anti-capitalist direction.

All these factors lurk behind Robinson's sacking. This action is outrageous. Where are the 'democratic liberties' and the 'democratic rights' that Britain is so proud of? The capitalists who are now sacking Robinson are the same who trumpet their support for the 'dissidents' in the Soviet Union. These same people supported the counter-revolutionary allies of US imperialism in Vietnam.

And let us not forget besides, that key Trade Union and Labour leaders connived with the employers to get Robinson sacked. These are the same Trade Union and Labour leaders who campaigned strenuously in support of the 'dissidents' of the Soviet Union and of the Workers States of Eastern Europe.

Robinson's sacking begs the question: What is the meaning of 'democracy' in capitalism? Whose democracy is upheld in the act of sacking Robinson? The employers' democracy! Democracy for the employer. The democracy that gives to the employer the right to sack workers because these fight for workers' rights, for Trade Union rights, for proper wages and conditions! This attack on the democratic rights of the workers is an enormity – but such is the 'democracy' of capitalism.

Capitalism foments world war in the worst conditions for itself:

The huge bureaucracy of the Trade Unions in Britain is very ineffectual when it comes to working class organisation. Compare this with the great social advances that, with very few means of working class organisation, the workers and masses of El Salvador managed to extract from the capitalist system. This is a mark of great backwardness in Britain. We recognise that the workers and masses of Britain are fighting to remedy this, and we intervene with them in that fight. We make this comparison to show that highly organised Trade Unions are not always a guarantee of revolutionary and cultural class superiority.

The bureaucratic structures and leaderships of the British Trade Unions exist for many reasons. One of these, and by far the most devastating, comes from the policies of the Soviet bureaucracy under Stalin. It is true that matters have moved on since then, but bureaucracy is still a major problem in the Trade Unions. For the capitalists meanwhile, the crisis has worsened to the point that they have no solution. France, Germany and the

United States draw together in support of their class interests, but competition between them has never been so fierce. They unite to bring down the Soviet Union, but they are hampered in doing it by their contradictions. These contradictions put historic delays in their plans, and this gives to the Soviet Union more time to go out, influence the world masses and win their support.

Capitalism prepares the war in conditions of deepening and irreversible unemployment. The standard of living for people goes down, and irreversibly. To this, capitalism has only the remedy of repression; but repression makes only matters worse for capitalism, and it fails to scare people anyway. When you observe the world, you see that repression has no dampening effect on the revolutionary movements. The latter confront the repressions, and they win. Capitalism prepares this war in the worst conditions for itself.

Capitalism advances its war aims with a certain caution. This is because the masses are resolutely opposed. In the other wars, capitalism did not face the opposition of the masses. It attracted them patriotically against the external foe, which was another capitalist. Now the enemies are the Workers States! The masses of the world support the Workers States. They have seen what the Workers States do. The masses of the capitalist countries support Cuba, Vietnam, Ethiopia and all the liberation movements.

World capitalism realises that its economic and political dominion is nearing its end, and irreversibly so. With the loss of its political dominion, it loses social authority too – a social authority that used to hold its power up, like a pillar. All this is being lost irreversibly. This causes capitalism to increase its war preparations of course, but the resistance to war grows as well, even in the capitalist camp! Large sectors of the capitalist class grow supremely concerned. They understand politically, socially and scientifically, the class significance of this coming war. They see and feel that the war is the end of them, as class.

As a system, capitalism sees this too, and Yankee imperialism sees it best of all.

The coming world war is the end of the capitalist system. It is not the end of the world.

This is why the bourgeoisies of the capitalist countries live their lives in a permanent state of anguish.

All the capitalists live anguished lives nowadays, and they express it in a thousand ways.

The stuff of nightmare for them is that they have to initiate the very war that they know is going to be the end of them.

In depth, the capitalists feel that they are wrong. That the masses of their own countries want rid of them. And that there is no prospect of them winning, and no way for the capitalist system to continue.

J POSADAS

23.12.79
