

THE PROCESS OF THE FORMATION  
OF BRITISH IMPERIALISM,  
AND THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIALISM

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Science advances enormously, particularly in times when new Workers States are made. For science to be fully used, and then developed, private property needs to be eliminated. The development of science is held back by the continuation of private property. The essential requirement of science is the unity of the world.

New scientific discoveries are constantly being made. Instruments to measure time and distance are constantly being perfected, and this never stops. Because of this, our understanding of nature keeps improving. Humankind becomes steadily more aware of the relations between society and nature. All this is true, but only generally, because all the while this goes on, capitalist society keeps going backwards. Here you see how the continued existence of private property imposes limits not just on science, but on human culture too.

Capitalist war is the most appalling backwardness imaginable. In preparation for it, and in the hope that this helps it survive, capitalism drags the whole of society down towards utter mayhem. Aware that objective science does not respect capitalist interests, capitalism cares little for it. It only ever wanted from science what its commerce, its production and its wars required. Things have reached the point where it uses science for hardly any other purpose than more destructive powers, more destructive weapons and more devastating wars.

Of course, this does not diminish the objectivity of science itself. Its objectivity is always completely ahead and beyond the use that capitalism makes of it. Time, temperatures and distances are no longer measured from ships and aeroplanes. Sophisticated instruments do this now, based on observations and computations. Human intelligence operates on entirely new levels. Its main focus has moved from Earth towards

everything that links the Earth to the other planets. Intelligence is in the grip of unprecedented curiosity. It knows not only that it is urgent to resolve the problems that we face here on Earth, but that there are wider solutions that are going to help us resolve the problems on Earth. Marxism has come on the scene of history. With Marxism, human confidence has not only risen, it has solidified. There is now a sense that the problems that we face on Earth form part of the need to communicate with the cosmos.

On the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the creation of the Soviet Union, a Soviet astronaut was interviewed in an amphitheatre in Greece. When a journalist asked the astronaut: "Do you think there is life on some other planets?" he answered: "No doubt about it. I believe there is life on many planets, and that on some, it is superior to us. We have still not been able to communicate with it." He spoke firmly and confidently, and when he had finished, a chant welled up from the 40,000 in the stalls: "Soviet Union! Soviet Union!"

### **The Workers State is the decisive path to social progress:**

The Workers State concentrates all the human knowledge of the past - from Gutenberg to Marx for instance. The bureaucracy cuts the development of the Workers State down to the minimum, but the Workers State remains the summary of all past achievements. The Workers State is the actual form that determines social progress and its development. When we speak of the enormous progress that the Soviet Union embodies, we refer to its regime of production, its regime of property and its property structures. In the Soviet Union, there is a great deficit in the social organisation of these structures, certainly; but this does not cancel the fact that the highest levels of human intelligence and knowledge are still contained in its regime of production and its property structures.

The contradiction between socialised production and private distribution can only be overcome by human intelligence taking charge of the economy and society. A social regime that manages this feat is a superior social regime. This is what the Soviet Union has done.

No serious historic analysis can avoid comparing the miserly ability of capitalism with the immense potential of the Workers State. No historic balance can avoid comparing the repugnant stinginess of capitalism with the infinite capacity of the Workers State to integrate human progress.

Wherever the capitalist system presided over a degree of human progress - economic, scientific or military - its concern did not go beyond the private interest. It allowed advances to be made in relation to the Feudal regime, but serving only its class meant that it could go no further. This placed an irrevocable cap on the conditions, the possibilities and the need to amplify knowledge, economic, scientific, military, and above all cultural.

History shows how, along with the development of the economy, capitalist expansion has meant a constant process of wars. Capitalism expanded because its production regime represented a superior form of social organisation compared with Feudalism. This superiority allowed it to accumulate capital, but accumulation in one place meant competition and war elsewhere. War in capitalism became part of capital accumulation. Per force this made capitalism imperialist! For capitalism, war was always as important as the development of the economy, of technology and of science.

### **Compare capitalism with the Workers State!**

The capitalist system passed from free trade and free competition to the concentration of property and the production of goods for capital accumulation. With the growing needs of expanding populations, it responded by combining private enterprises. This eventually led to the monopolies, trusts and multinationals that we know today.

The more advanced use of the 'socially necessary labour time' came with immense steps backwards in the human relations. This was made worse by the constant reliance of capitalism on the military, the latter being its essential tool of competition. The result was an even greater retreat in the human relations.

Just compare this with the Workers State!

The Workers State of the Soviet Union, even at its worst under Stalin, developed audaciously in spite of almost no economic, military and material means. In the conditions that saw the birth of the Soviet Union, the material and economic resources had been destroyed. If the little that was left turned out to be enough, it is because it was made of human will, human grasp and the brilliant consciousness of the Bolshevik Party.

Upon this will, this grasp and this consciousness, the Soviet Workers State was made. It unified a great number of territories, and it did this without war. It settled the nomads scattered all over Northern Russia and Mongolia. It made one single country from areas where there had been countless dialects and ethnic groups. Note that this is typical of all the Workers States. Ethiopia and Korea did this in their times, rapidly and without war, from multitudes of tribes, often nomadic, that had been divided by immense racial and historic antagonisms.

We give importance to this history because it shows how humanity manages to progress. It shows how to make historic comparisons between the social regimes; between the Feudal regime and the capitalist for instance, and between the capitalist regime and the Workers state. With these analyses, we wish to demonstrate how human progress is made.

In capitalism – and in Feudal society before it – there were geniuses like Copernicus, Galileo, Giordano Bruno, Newton and others around and before them<sup>1</sup>. They developed science. They investigated astronomy. They studied the movements of Earth and Moon, and the relation between these and the Sun. Their

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<sup>1</sup> Nicolaus Copernicus, 1473-1543, Period of the Renaissance. Born in Western Russia/Poland, scientist, scholar, mathematician, astronomer. Placed the Sun and not the Earth at the centre of our ‘universe’. His name was banned by the Catholic Church after his death. Galileo Galilei, 1564-1642, Period of Renaissance. Born in Italy. Astronomer, scientist, physicist, engineer, philosopher, mathematician. Tried by the inquisition. Found “vehemently suspect of heresy”. Confirmed the centrality of the Sun. Forced to recant in 1615. Giordano Bruno, 1548-1600. Born in Italy. Period of the Renaissance. Philosopher, friar, mathematician, poet, cosmological theorist, famous for his logical thought. Confirmed the centrality of the Sun. Refused to recant. Burnt at the stake by the Catholic Church, with his tongue tied to stop him having a last word. Isaac Newton, 1642-1726. Born in England. Mathematician, astronomer, physician. Key figure in the scientific revolution of the epoch. Formulated the Laws of Motion and of Universal Gravitation.

findings contributed absolutely to the confidence of society. They brought knowledge and reassurance.

In what we do ourselves, in politics, we try to do the same! We want to know where society is at, and what we are at ourselves. We want to make a conscious use of the means surrounding us to contribute to social change.

**The Workers State has no need to kill,  
the reverse is the case:**

Capitalism used the contributions of Copernicus, G. Bruno and Newton, but it killed half the populations in the places where it imposed its regime. Such is the abhorrent contradiction of capitalism and imperialism. No Workers State has ever done this. No Workers State needs to do this. Compared with the constant process of capitalist and imperialist slaughter, the Workers State kills no-one. The killings that took place under Stalin are nothing in comparison.

To set itself up and evolve, the Workers State has no need to kill. Just the reverse! The capitalists kill their socialist, communist and working class opponents. To the reverse of this, the bureaucracy of any Workers State needs some anchorage in the working class. In any Workers State that continues to exist, the bureaucracy has no choice but to keep the working class around. Then, that particular Workers State cannot make any progress without allowing a certain weight and development for its working class.

This was so even under Stalin! Throughout Stalin's period of leadership, the Soviet working class continued to weigh in the USSR and indeed throughout the world. It was the Soviet proletariat that defeated the Nazis in the Second World War. It was the world influence of the Soviet proletariat that sustained the continuation of Communist parties. This is the kind of thing that capitalism cannot do. Here you have the difference between capitalism and Workers State: Two different regimes of production; two different societies; killing on the one side and human relations on the other.

## **Scientific capacity vs intelligence.**

Through the British navy, the capitalist system organised the greatest fleet in history. The world domination of that navy continued more or less until the first Workers State, the Soviet Union, in 1917. Superlative British imperialism never wished to coalesce with any other imperialism. But to the pole opposite of this, the Workers State develops human fraternity and intelligence. This is what it develops most.

In the Soviet Union, the ordinary workers made much progress in spite of the bureaucracy that stopped them making more. In the Soviet Union, the average level of human intelligence grew enormously. This cannot happen in capitalism. Capitalism can generate knowledge, but it does not generate intelligence. Capitalism generates capacity, but not intelligence. It cannot generate intelligence because its function in history is not necessary.

In relation to the progress of history, 'intelligent' is what 'intelligence' does. Intelligence necessarily contributes to the human relations, to the human sentiments, to the relations of human love. It denounces war, exploitation and every sort of imposition. It looks up to sharing and to collective usefulness. The most complete, logical and natural form of intelligence is Socialism. Anything short of Socialism remains in the orbit of human co-existence, where private property still governs the social relation.

We do not ignore the scientific capacity that British imperialism served up to a point. And not just in terms of military science. When British imperialism built its naval power – because on land the French were stronger – it displayed undeniable intelligence and scientific prowess. Many British scientists developed within that process. They contributed to outstanding inventions, from the steam engine to electricity, and then the use of electricity. This goes immensely beyond the capacity to make ships.

The scientific mastery that grew in Britain branched off into major fields like physics and chemistry, although less in

philosophy. Britain had Shakespeare, himself the result and propagator of industrial and social change. It was not by chance that Britain found people capable of making a great navy. To make that great navy, important historical relations and social capabilities had had to come about. In other words, Britain did not become the first great industrial power because it had a navy. Other achievements played their role too, for which the navy became a point of support.

### **Capitalist progress vs. the necessity of history:**

The determination and resolve that animated the leaders of the 1642 Revolution, like Cromwell, was already indicative of a mighty process approaching. The Revolution impelled the creation of the social leadership which was going to be needed. Well before 1642, the country had already the conditions for an important scientific and social development. The latter came to pass, and with it, a great leap was made in social leadership.

Of course all this progress was made in Britain through the actions of British capitalism and imperialism. With this text which we are writing, we are now considering the reach of this progress against the necessity of history. British capitalism developed the economy and production through the invention of productivity, but this invention curtailed human development vastly throughout the world - in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and in other European countries.

Comrades need to develop the dialectical preoccupation to understand all the facets of this process. In this matter, factual knowledge is not enough to gauge correctly the objective and unconscious contribution that capitalism made in its early development. Many factors came together to force capitalism on a road of progress. If capitalism stimulated progress however, it was to exploit; and this, mostly through war. War being the instrument of the capitalist system.

What British capitalism achieved in its early stages can only be called 'progress' in comparison with the immense retreat of its imperialist stage, the one we live in now. The study we are making here is not entirely comprehensive, but it brings to light

the essential limitations of the private property regime. This essential limitation carries over into the bureaucracy of the Workers States, the bureaucracy of the Soviet Union, every bureaucratic apparatus<sup>2</sup> - the bureaucracy of the Labour Party included.

Any historic regime has to respond to the needs of the economy. There is a degree of justification for a regime that manages to succeed in this matter, but a regime that no longer develops the economy becomes sheer oppression. Such a regime no longer answers the necessity of history, and because of this, it cannot last long. British imperialism has reached that point.

### **China triumphed with no navy, but with ideas:**

As we have just seen, British imperialism was the world's first great industrial producer. This allowed it to develop not only a naval capacity, but internal production too, and at a high level. Within that process, the naval development of Britain was fundamental to the development of British imperialism. The navy was the military instrument through which the British Empire expanded, and this expansion was achieved less through the economy than through military force.

The relevance of all this has declined, but not the conclusions. It is important to appreciate the huge creative ability that went into making the superior ships and the cutting-edge inventions to build the mighty British navy. It is also important to look at this creative ability in the context of the very narrow capitalist interests it was destined to serve. The creativity engaged here was very great. It was decisive for capitalism, but not for the progress of history. Although this creativity expanded in the world, its contribution did not expand much beyond the capitalist interests. Time passing, it became less transcendent, and now it has lost all transcendence.

British imperialism at its height presided over the great development of its navy, of its trade and of its industry. This

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<sup>2</sup> Read Trotsky's "The Revolution Betrayed". Editorial.



was awesome at the time. Today, it is a small feat compared with the tremendous blows struck for human progress by the masses of the world, in countries like North Korea and China for instance, amongst others.

North Korea is a country that was never allowed to exist. China was a country where the world's capitalist powers felt they could use, invade and ransack at will. See how China threw them out, and then defeated poverty, unemployment, hunger, floods and droughts. Without a great navy. China won its battle for life without a great navy, but with a great army of ideas! It developed ideas along lines not so very different from Lenin's. These ideas were retaken later by others, like the Vietnamese and the Cuban Revolutions.

Through this study, we have sought to give a measure of the power of ideas. The only ideas that work today are those based on Marx and Lenin. The Marxist ideas. Because these ideas necessary to the creation of Workers States, they amount to a material force. They are the most important material force in the whole of history because they build on the material strength created by all earlier social regimes. These earlier social regimes include the Greeks and all other regimes up to now, capitalism included.

### **The British proletariat does not support imperialism:**

Marxism demonstrates that knowledge and discovery have always been appropriated by the ruling social layers. The latter always got hold of knowledge to make it serve their narrow interests. Things have changed now that we have Marxism. With Marxism, human intelligence wills that all accumulated knowledge returns to the economy and society. With the handle of Marxism, intelligence wants all accumulated knowledge at the complete service of human need.

When the first Workers State of the Soviet Union was created, humanity entered a new era. A superior way had been found to develop the economy, science and technology. It all amounted to placing intelligence, culture and objective thinking at the service of human need. The way had been found to have the

whole of human capacity serving everyone, and no longer just one class, one country, one nation or one language.

The Soviet Union could never have happened without the conditions put in place long before, like the world development of the economy and production. This said, nothing short of Revolution could have turned those conditions to advantage. Had the Russian Revolution not happened as it did, and when it did, those previous historic conditions would have fallen by the wayside. Attainments would have withered away, and there would have been an enormous retreat in history.

The Russian Revolution got hold of the capacity and intelligence thrown up by others, in previous times and in other parts of the world. It is a fact that the various empires (British, French, Italian and others) had managed some intelligent development. They had applied it mostly to the economy, science and production - mostly for limited goals - but they had reached important levels of cultural development. Only, the capitalist system has had no further use for these. As British imperialism was thrown out of the colonies, it was a matter of time before it would fail. The British proletariat watches this process closely.

The Soviet Union suffered hugely under the oppression of Stalin. He assassinated the whole leadership of the Revolution; he harried and disorganised the Soviet Communist Party. He intimidated the proletariat. In the end, however, it is him who disappeared, and not the Soviet Union. He disappeared, and the world revolution continued! None of this could be possible if Socialism was not a necessity of human history. When the true representatives of the need of history are late in turning up, history 'invents' them. It creates substitutes, so to say, until the genuine ones arrive. So it was with Stalin.

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Do not underestimate the fundamental part that the British proletariat played in the destruction of the British Empire.

The British proletariat kept sapping at the base of the British Empire with ceaseless demands and many victories. Had British imperialism enjoyed the support of the British proletariat, it would have felt the strength to stay in the colonies much longer than it did. The ordinary workers have no reason to defend imperialism. The British proletariat did not defend British imperialism. This is one of the British proletariat's major contributions to the progress of history. Let us never forget it! In the coming stages, the importance of this fact will become clearer, particularly in the Labour Party.

### **The Labour masses will want to be heard:**

In the past few decades, two factors confirmed the Labour leaders in their sense of power and entitlement. The first factor – now weakening – was the strong feeling of economic security that Britain could derive from its world's position. The second factor was the mistakes of the Communist parties, and essentially those of the Workers States. The Workers States failed to present themselves to the workers of the world as the undeniable protagonists of human progress. The British and North American workers and masses saw that there was not enough of this.

The masses of the capitalist countries realised that a very great economic and social progress was being made in the Workers States. They saw the standard of living rising rapidly in the Soviet Union. What they did not see was the participation of the Soviet masses in the leadership of the Soviet Union. They did not see enough of this in China and in Cuba either. They did not see the masses of the Workers States intervening directly in the leadership of society.

The British masses needed to see Soviet<sup>3</sup> functioning in action in the Soviet Union. In Britain and in all the capitalist countries, this dimmed the influence of the Workers state. The masses of the capitalist countries observed and admired the achievements, but they did not see the masses of the Workers States organising and learning how to lead their societies.

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<sup>3</sup> Read by J Posadas: *What is a Soviet*. Can be read on: [quatrieme-internationale-posadiste.org](http://quatrieme-internationale-posadiste.org)

As the Workers States presented to the world only a face of general superiority, the masses of the capitalist countries felt no intimation of immediate social transformation. This was a mistake on the part of the Workers States, a mistake rooted in Stalin's epoch.

All this said, one thing is beyond doubt today: There is no tranquillity in capitalism. The North American masses have mobilised continuously in support of Vietnam. They did not manage to stop Vietnam being bombed, but in the end, their resistance and struggle against that war played a very large part in the eventual defeat of Yankee imperialism in Vietnam.

There is no tranquillity in Britain either. There is no tranquillity in the Labour Party, because the Labour masses want their voice to be heard. The British proletariat has not yet managed to topple capitalism or the Labour bureaucracy, but the struggle of the British masses gnaws at British imperialism and capitalism. It accelerates their decomposition. When Britain faces again its new 1945-moment, in not very many years' time, the conditions will have grown to bring down the whole bureaucratic structure of the Labour Party.

Why does British imperialism try so desperately to stay top-dog in world competition? Because it has lost the colonies! If Yankee imperialism keeps sending presidents on trips to Europe, it is because it is no longer the great hub that receives visitors. Yankee and British imperialism have weakened. The masses of the capitalist world - in Britain and the United States particularly - do not support their imperialist rulers. This has an effect; from Vietnam to Latin America, British and US imperialism must be more covert.

### **Imperialism can only end up in failure:**

We discussed the above conclusions on the occasion of our visit to the Greenwich *National Maritime Museum* in London. We believe that these conclusions need to be discussed in the Labour Party. The artefacts that we saw gave us a good account of the 1509-1660 naval period in British history. In

shipbuilding for instance, we saw the great scientific knowledge and technical skills that already existed in 1420 in Britain, and even before.

The majesty and the beauty of the ships of the British navy are on a par with the great audacity of their construction. Yet, what was the purpose of it all? To destroy the progress of other countries! Historically speaking, this was not just destroying the progress of others: it was destroying the progress of Britain too. How so? Because you cannot secure your own progress without securing that of the others. The British imperialists will never understand this. This thought cannot enter their mind, and this is the reason why they are inherently incapable of overcoming the contradictions of competition and exploitation. This is also why US and British imperialism can only end up in broken development and failure. Which is already happening.

### **The proletariat stimulates new levels of debate:**

Compared with five years ago, there are more political discussions taking place in Britain. People want to know "where is Britain going?", as Trotsky put it. Now this question is less the title of a book<sup>4</sup> than an urgent concern. Since Trotsky's epoch, tendencies kept appearing on the Labour left, and the British masses never stopped fighting for the progress of life.

To improve economic planning, some Labour leaders pose the need to nationalise certain industries, enterprises, ports, car-plants and the like. Other Labour leaders grant subsidies to ailing companies to stop them closing; but the bosses take the money and still close down. The idea of State-subsidies is supported by the present Labour government<sup>5</sup> and the bureaucracy of the Trade Unions; but it is not the idea of the masses.

The masses have not specifically objected to the Labour subsidies, but this is not because they want the bosses saved. They hope that Labour will start looking into the bosses' affairs. Now the Dockers demand the nationalisation of some ports,

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<sup>4</sup> Title of a book by Trotsky. It is generally in 3 volumes.

<sup>5</sup> In March 1978, the Labour government was headed by Harold Wilson.

and other sectors of the working class mobilise in their support. The political debate remains limited, but it is improving. Labour and Trade Union tendencies are constantly discussing these matters. When they go along with the idea State subsidies, it is not just a manoeuvre. It is an expression, although a limited one, of the possibilities that exist.

The Labour Party puts up with the tendency of Ted Grant<sup>6</sup> and others in the Labour Youth, because it cannot do anything else just now. It is the same in Germany where the Social Democratic Party (SDP)<sup>7</sup> has sprouted a Youth wing. The apparatus of Social Democracy is stronger in Germany than in Britain. German capitalism fares better economically; and with four million foreign workers - who have no political rights and only limited Trade Union rights - the German capitalists can get away with more ruthlessness towards the workers.

The ruthlessness of German capitalism has not covered the working class of Germany, however. The victory of the recent printers' strike<sup>8</sup> has a social significance well beyond that of the wage rise which they won. The printers fought to keep their jobs and human dignity. They spoke in the press to comment on the following lines: 'technological progress is ok, but it is no progress if we have to pay for it with our lives. If a technological improvement makes printing unnecessary, we must be given equivalent work with equivalent pay'. This is a new level of debate, even in comparison with Italy where the workers won important battles for similar demands. The workers in Germany have forced open a debate on the relation between technology, science, and the needs of society. The pity is that the German Communist Party has so little to say. On one public occasion, our Posadist comrades were the only ones with a researched contribution to make on this question.

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<sup>6</sup> Ted Grant, 1913-2006, a South African Trotskyist who lived in the UK. He was already helping to form a Trotskyist tendency in the Labour Party as early as 1952-53, where he produced the publication: *International Socialist*. In 1964, he founded the newspaper *Militant*, and in the 1970's, the Militant tendency had substantial strength and influence in the Labour Party.

<sup>7</sup> SDP, Social Democratic Party of Germany. Headed by Willy Brandt from 1969 to 1987. Helmut H Schmidt was Chancellor in Germany from 1974 to 1982.

<sup>8</sup> In 1976, 16,000 printers called for a strike in Germany. The bosses locked-out 90,000 of them; eventually, the Courts deemed that lock-out unlawful. This was a great blow for capitalism. In 1978, when this text was elaborated, 120,000 metal workers going on strike had just led to the lock-out of 80,000 of them.

## **Capitalism is incompatible with the continuation of life:**

Technology is positive, but not if it takes away from the workers the right to live. The Italian and French Communists say this correctly, but they do not expand. When the Lip<sup>9</sup> workers in France took over their factory, they declared: "We insist on this very successful watch company staying open, and we need the work". In Italy, a string of factories on the verge of closing were taken over by their women-workforce who are still running them successfully. When the workers oppose closures because they need the job, they demonstrate to all the world that the continuation of capitalism is incompatible with the continuation of human life.

The struggle of the German printers and their victory triggered a public debate on science, technology and the right to life. As a result, the question asked itself: 'What is more important: the workers, technology or capitalism?' For our part, we do not object to technology; technology will continue to advance, of course, but the workers must continue to live as well! The capitalists cannot reconcile those things, but they are a small group in the world.

We dwell on this matter to show that it is the working class that brings up for debate the fundamental aspects in the class struggle. It is not surprising that much of this comes from the workers of Germany, where the SDP's Youth insists on the Party having anti-capitalist points in its programme. Not once but twice, Brandt and Schmidt arranged for the SDP's Youth to be expelled from the Party. They wanted the Youth expelled from the Trade Unions too, but this failed. The SDP's Youth and left would not last long in the Party if they were not defended by the working class, the Trade Unions and progressive layers in the petit bourgeoisie. The German workers do not decide at political level in the SDP: the SDP's leaders take care of that. But the German working class supports the Youth and the left. There isn't much that the SDP leaders can do about it.

## **Labour must be transformed for the task**

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<sup>9</sup> Strikers occupied the Lip Watch Company in 1973 and continued for a long time to run it under workers control.

### **of social transformations:**

Our Posadist comrades in Britain, along with all those on the left who wish to make a difference, must persist with every type of activity that stimulates the Labour Party. They must write, publish, intervene, give ideas, win positions and increase their scientific ability to explain. This is going to attract the most advanced sectors in the Labour Party, like its Youth. It is going to help the British Trade Unions. Our role is to explain the need for social transformations – which amounts to proposing the Workers State in Britain. This is why we need to explain the role and nature of the Workers State. Our comrades need to publish everything our Posadist International has written on the subject. In all our texts, we have demonstrated how to evaluate the Workers State as distinct from its leadership. The Workers State must be seen for the social conquest which it represents, and not through one leadership or other. The Workers States' leaderships have all been transitory, but not the Workers State as a form, or its function. Stalin was thrown out of history, but the Soviet Workers State continued and kept shaking the world.

### **In Britain, the life conditions are under constant threat:**

The debate in the Labour Party must focus on how to defend the life of the population. Britain is not making progress. Those who say the opposite are lying. Some bourgeois layers become more affluent, but they grow less in number. It is in the general population that the standard of living keeps deteriorating. The wage rises hardly keep up with prices, whilst the conditions of life are under constant attack. The environment, the air, the seas, the waters are all polluted. The food is adulterated. The basic materials used in industry are replaced by toxic substances which find their way in the food chain. The attack on the standard of living of the masses is systematic, and getting worse.

Even where the wages keep up with prices, the overall standard of living declines because the environment, the food and the goods are all being polluted and degraded. All the science that capitalism introduces in production – the only



aspect where capitalism makes advances – ends up attacking the workers and masses. Everything is at the service of the concentration of capital. Because the number of capitalists decreases, those who do very well out of this are constantly fewer. The comrades of the Labour left must not just reiterate political positions; they must dwell on the conditions of life in Britain.

### **Human confidence is getting ready for a leap:**

There is a breath-taking increase in the scientific capability of the world. The Soviet spacecraft which was sent to the Soviet Space Station<sup>10</sup> has just docked with it. Then crew members left the capsule, and went back in again: one of the greatest achievements in history! Such capacity shows that the conditions exist to end misery and poverty. Who does not see this? The British masses see it, like everyone else. When this kind of thing can be done in Space, it cannot be long before we sort ourselves out on this Earth.

It is not just that the Soviet Union is doing this. Through its activity in Space, the Soviet Union is addressing the intelligence of the world. And it is not only from Space that the Soviet Union addresses the world, but from the Earth as well, where it supports Ethiopia, Mozambique, Angola and others. The Soviets are educating the world proletarian and intellectual vanguard. Utterly alarmed and jealous, the capitalists speak in one voice to trash the whole experience. They have no choice however but to look on and admire the full display of Soviet superiority.

Through Soviet superiority – both in Space and in Africa – the power of most advanced science extends a hand of solidarity towards the most exploited peoples on Earth. See how *Space* and *Earth* draw closer together, and how this is being done through science and Socialism. The Gods take a peek and say: “They<sup>11</sup> are throwing us out of history.”

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<sup>10</sup> Launched on 2.3.1978 with an American, a Soviet and a Czech citizen on board, Soyuz 28 docked successfully (it was the 4<sup>th</sup> time) with the Soviet Space Station Salyut 6.

<sup>11</sup> Science and Socialism. Editorial

### **In the Workers State, science serves the general good:**

The bureaucracy and the bourgeois leadership of the Labour Party are not stronger today than Stalin ever was. Stalin was the strongest of them all, and even he disappeared. If an entrenched Labour structure managed to persist in Britain, it is only because of the original strength of British imperialism and the erroneous policies of the Communist parties afterwards.

We do not despise the improvements brought to human life through capitalism and capitalist science – i.e. the science of the capitalists for the capitalists. We do not! We recognise the contributions and the advances made in the fields of knowledge and certain forms of social relations. Our concern is with the limits of those advances.

Just as the British capitalists built warships for capital accumulation, they killed the sheep in the fields to force the peasants into factories. And in the factories, they killed the children. Such things were already announcing the growing contradiction between capitalism and human life. More precisely, they were already announcing the historic antagonism between the continuation of capitalism and the progress of humanity. We have considered it our duty to understand this - why it happened and what it means for today.

Things have changed of course. There are Workers States now. The Workers State lays the foundations to make science serve the universal good. A Workers State that retreats from this stops being a Workers State. A Workers State exists when it makes science serve human dignity and the human relations. It has no choice in the matter.

There is no great tradition of Marxist life in Britain, and there is very little knowledge about Marxism. Insularity has been one of the most profound cultural sequels of British imperialism. It tended to stop ideas entering the country, and it effectively stopped the penetration of Marxism in the Labour Party.

Economic power is not everything. Germany was comparatively

more powerful than Britain in the 1930's. As related to this, it had a strong working class and the Communists and Socialists were half of the electorate. Hitler did not win through his own cunning. He won through the bestiality of Stalinism.<sup>12</sup> The limitations of the communist movement allowed Hitler to win, not any superiority on the part of Hitler!

### **The bourgeois Labour apparatus has no future:**

As British imperialism goes on declining, the living conditions for the peoples of Britain can only get worse. It is true that Britain produces a lot of good scientists and receptive intellectuals who seek to understand. This creates conditions that will eventually favour the spread of Marxist analyses, activities and publications.

The pragmatism of British imperialism was originally comforted by the wealth which imperialism brought back from the world. This predation lasted overlong, due to the errors of Stalinism and its 'capitulationist' policies<sup>13</sup>. The policy of 'peaceful coexistence' amounted to a permanent alliance between the Stalin's leadership and world capitalism. And this lasted until relatively recently, until the end of the 1950's.

However much he tried, however, Stalin failed to stop the overthrow of capitalism in 10 Eastern European countries during and after WW2. This overthrow took place in spite of him<sup>14</sup>. How did he continue in power after that? By masterminding frightful bureaucracies in those new Workers States! In alliance with centrists, he helped the creation of downright bourgeois leaderships in Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary. These were the leaderships of Stalin. They did not last long however because the masses of these new Workers States brought down these bourgeois leaders. In so doing, they showed two things: That they were *not agreed* with Stalin's policy of alliance with capitalism; and that they *only* got rid of these bourgeois types when it no longer endangered their

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<sup>12</sup> Read Trotsky on Germany.

<sup>13</sup> World conciliation with capitalism, opposition to revolutions, the elimination of the left Communists. Editorial.

<sup>14</sup> It was the Red Army and the absolute determination of the Soviet masses that defeated Nazism and rolled back capitalism. Editorial.

Workers States. Later, the Rumanian masses did the same.

These are feats of the proletariat! How believe that it won't eventually get rid of the social-democratic and bourgeois leaderships in Germany and Britain? This will happen, never fear! We view our own task, and that of the Labour left, in light of this certainty. One has to learn how to wait, in an active sort of way, whilst helping the development of scientific thought in the Labour Party and the Trade Unions.

British capitalism is trapped within fewer and fewer options. To keep itself afloat, it will try everything to disorient the masses. And it will try to rest, as much as possible, on the bureaucratic apparatuses of the Labour Party and Trade Unions.

Note how a crisis explodes in the Labour Party every time an anti-capitalist tendency starts growing within it. Various left wing tendencies have formed there in the past, often with limitations. Their very appearance in the Labour Party made them anti-capitalist. It is true that none of them adopted a systematic anti-capitalist programme, but this cannot keep going for ever. German and British capitalism have no perspective of development.

### **The Labour left reflects the advance of the world:**

British imperialism carved up a base of support for itself in the Labour-and-Trade Union apparatus. Thanks to this, British imperialism managed to impose its imperialist priorities on British society and in the Labour Party.

The recent history of Britain shows how shaky this arrangement has become. Since 1945, there have been several anti-capitalist tendencies and programmes in the Labour Party. Most of these coincided with the rise of persistent and organised campaigns against British imperialism<sup>15</sup> in the British population. The last decades have seen regular mass mobilisations in Britain against the actions of British imperialism in the world.

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<sup>15</sup> The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, CND for instance, started in 1957.

The constant recurrence and development of left groups in the Labour Party is not fortuitous or circumstantial. It expresses the opinion of the population at any given time. As the British masses reject fairly constantly the role of British imperialism in the world, they stimulate the formation of anti-war and anti-imperialist left wings in the Labour Party. These groups give some measure of the combative disposition of the population towards capitalism.

Not all the groups in the Labour left survive in the end. Some of them only survive by adapting to the Labour apparatus. Others become formed without representing the will of the masses – although this tends to apply more to the left groups outside the Labour Party. In Britain and in the world, the actions of the working class and masses go always much farther than the actions of groups.

What happens in Britain today <sup>(1978)</sup> cannot be separated from the continuing progress of Vietnam and Laos. One leader from Laos recently interviewed recalled that in 1930, Hồ Chi Minh<sup>16</sup> had already raised the idea of the *Federation of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia*. This interviewee explained how Vietnam had welcomed this idea, but not Cambodia. Today <sup>(1978)</sup> Cambodia is led by a reactionary camarilla closely resembling that of Stalin. Mind that we do not say that it is the same as Stalin's. It cannot be the same, but it is as bad as Stalin's - if not worse! What puts it on a par with Stalin, is the way it defends the social interests of a bureaucratic camarilla allied to capitalism. Like Stalin, it will do anything (like invading Vietnam) to stop the wind of revolution blowing towards it the unwanted idea of the *Federation of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia*. Note that we<sup>17</sup> always upheld this idea, even when everyone around us gave it up. We wrote about it these last four years in constant reiteration that the progress of South-East Asia passes through a Federation.

The progress of Vietnam shakes the world's Communist parties,

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<sup>16</sup> Ho Chi Minh, 1890-1969. Communist Revolutionary leader and Prime Minister of the Dem. Rep. of Vietnam.

<sup>17</sup> The Trotskyist-Posadist IV International. See: [posadiststoday.com](http://posadiststoday.com).

the Communist Party<sup>18</sup> of Britain included. The latter does not understand its function in history because it has no notion of history. It behaves with the petulance and the pride of 'being communist' - and 'could everyone please join us'. History marches ahead and past such notions. The Soviet Workers State intervenes in support of revolutions in the world, and with positions that cause the Communists to reflect.<sup>19</sup> We recognise that the Communists have kept links with the working class in many countries, and in Britain itself. For this reason, we have made it our task to try and facilitate their rectification in the world Communist movement, and in Britain.

### **The grip of the Labour apparatus is temporary:**

For a whole historic period, and particularly after the 1926 General Strike, the Labour bureaucratic apparatus was strengthened by Stalin's policy of 'peaceful coexistence' with world capitalism. In many countries, the Communist parties sold out the strikes. In defence of their policies of conciliation with their national bourgeoisies, they launched campaigns to destroy the Trotskyists and the left-wing Communists. Less challenged and feeling vindicated, the apparatus of the Labour Party was reinforced. The perspective of creating Labour anti-capitalist oppositions was put away and almost disappeared.

Following the 1948 Labour's achievements in Britain, the conditions for the systematic organisation of the Labour left were hit again, this time by the corruption and the disintegration of the Trotskyist movement. This took its toll in all the workers' organisations of the world, and not just in Britain. The right-wing workers' and Labour apparatuses found new opportunities to contain the working class and keep going. We are beginning to see the end of this process today, but things have changed since Trotsky. Everything he did and analysed is still valid, but his teachings have become only a part of the new interpretations to be made.

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<sup>18</sup> The author is likely to be referring to the CPGB (1920-1977) because the CPB was formed only a few months before this text was written. Editorial.

<sup>19</sup> "The Soviets do this to gain support in the world masses, [and] to guard themselves against capitalist overthrow", J Posadas, Extract from an unpublished Addendum to this same text. Editorial.

About where Trotskyism is at today, here goes an example: Comrades of the group of Ted Grant denounce the Ethiopian army "for having invaded Ogaden". They call "for Ethiopia to be thrown out of Eritrea". But this is incorrect. The Ethiopian army entered Eritrea to liberate it, not to crush. 'Independence' and 'self-determination' cannot resolve the problems of Ogaden and Eritrea. The opposite is the case! Comrades must propose the unity of Ethiopia and Eritrea, so that a solution of self-determination can be found without the need to separate.

Trotsky's programme is not a recipe. Those who handle it need scientific preparation before application. The Ted Grant's comrades say that the Soviet Union is "a degenerated Workers State"; but this begs the question: What is a Workers State? What qualifications must it have? We see Workers States forming today in the most [economically] backward parts of the world<sup>20</sup>. Are they 'degenerated' Workers States, or are they Workers States starting? Comrades say that these States are born 'degenerated', but the old *degenerated Workers State* label does not explain the new processes. The definitions of the Grant's comrades in this matter have become vague and insecure; in this particular instance, they express the pressure they receive from the Labour petit bourgeois left. The comrades combine their positions with those in the Labour left. They still defend 'the 'Workers State' but they reject the nationalist revolutionary soldiers of Ethiopia.

### **Production must be planned and Labour must make a start:**

Capitalism will not concede, and cannot concede the means of life to the masses. Compared with only a few years ago, the standard of living of the masses has declined in Britain. The environment is completely under attack, and not just in Britain, but in Germany, France and North America. In Britain, people of Pakistani and Indian origins live in bad conditions. The same goes for the working class. It is fundamental to demand that production is planned. For production to be planned, a whole

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<sup>20</sup> In the 1970's, there were at least 9 *Revolutionary States* in the world: Bolivia, Libya, South Yemen, Mali, Ghana, Peru, Egypt, Congo, Tanzania. Perhaps Tanzania was a Workers State. In the 1970's also, there were at least 15 *Workers States*: USSR, China, Cuba, East Germany, North Vietnam, North Korea, Mongolia, Yugoslavia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Albania, Algeria.

series of measures must be taken. The task is to propose the programmes and the policies required, for production to be planned.

The present leadership in the Labour Party does not discuss nationalisation, and it does not want to hear of social transformation. To contain the workers and their demands, it makes promises and keeps repeating: 'Later, later!'. It pretends to listen, but it does nothing. This pretending cannot last. It is miles away from what history requires. Such leaders do not defend the interests of the British masses. Just like Stalin, and just like capitalism, they have no future. It is a question of time.

The British masses have the advantage of a hundred and sixty years of Trade Unionism<sup>21</sup> during which they never lost confidence in their determination to fight for human progress. The present anti-working class behaviour of the Labour Party's apparatus is not an expression of strength. World events and relations allowed the Labour leadership to keep the power which it has, but these events have been only transitory.

**For life to continue, private property must disappear:**

The magnificent ships that came out of the British shipyards in the 1770's were technical masterpieces and even works of art, in some way. This kind of thing is not specific to Britain. Compare it with the Duomo<sup>22</sup> for instance, or the structural and architectural feats of the Persians and Turks. The Chinese civilisation too has contributed an enormous lot, although perhaps less than the Arabs who have been masters of construction, of harmony and of form.

As we saw in the *National Maritime Museum* in Greenwich, the way the British ships were constructed was highly accomplished and audacious. Only, what was the aim of that? The aim was to crush human progress somewhere in the world. In the end, this is an impotent aim. It makes imperialism impotent, and

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<sup>21</sup> Skilled workers started Trade Unions in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, preceded by the guilds of Feudal times.

<sup>22</sup> The Duomo, in Florence, was built by Filippo Brunelleschi in 1296. Florence became the cradle of the Renaissance in Italy.



impotent imperialism cannot develop history. It is humanity and not imperialism that has the vision and the strength to keep going in the direction of the Workers State.

The Workers States are imperfect, certainly. They have bureaucracies, but they have created the economic and the social forms required by the advancement of human progress. They do not yet have the necessary functioning, but you will find that any economically backward country in the world wants to make a Workers State. Mind that we say 'economically backward' and not 'socially backward'. Socially, the countries of the ex-colonial world are the most advanced countries. At this particular moment, many African and Asia countries stand up and declare themselves in favour of the Workers State. Even the Papuans<sup>23</sup>, who still use spears, say that they want to nationalise the economy.

Those in the communist leaderships failed and disappeared when they turned against the progress of history. British Labourism and North American Trade Unionism will not fare any better. They will not stop the masses winning the fight for life. All those who tried to do this failed. The intelligence of humanity recognises this fact. It grasps that for life to continue, private property and war must be eliminated. Humanity knows this. The North American masses know it too, and so do the British masses.

Particular conditions handed over to Stalin the most complete form of control in history, the most complete apparatus of State. But he was smashed however. He was smashed by the progress of history<sup>24</sup>. The power of the Labour apparatus in Britain will suffer the same fate.

J. POSADAS

31.03.78

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<sup>23</sup> Papuans: Tribal area in Indonesia.

<sup>24</sup> In other documents, the author shows how the spread of new Workers States after the Second World War, particularly in Europe, 'smashed' Stalin and his deadly world vision. Editorial.

