

INTRODUCTION TO THE 1980 EDITION of the book:

"The tasks for the Left in the Labour Party"

by

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Britain is the closest ally of the Yankees, but it is a lightweight compared with the economic and military power of the United States. Britain's financial base is totally dependent on US imperialism, and the rest of its economy is almost entirely dependent on it. With the competition of France and Germany that Britain must face, everything combines to diminish the social, political and military authority of British imperialism.

It is not by accident therefore that important changes are taking place in the Labour Party. At the most recent Labour Party Conference, delegates voted resolutions demanding the right to 're-select' the Party's MPs and the right to weigh more directly in the leader's elections. Implementation aside, these resolutions mark the start of a very important process. They remind the Party that it will not succeed on the basis of ignoring its members and the Trade Unions. Some Conference speakers intervened in favour of the re-nationalisation of private enterprises, and others proposed the formation of workers' committees to manage the State enterprises. The overall drift of the Party's programme is anti-capitalist.

The steel strike was blocked by the Labour leadership. The latter did this by boycotting the workers' actions and giving them only verbal support. In the present circumstances however, the need of the Labour leadership and Trade Unions to base themselves on strikes is greater than it used to be. Thatcher has only one aim in mind: to make the working class - and the miners in

particular - pay for the crisis of capitalism. The Labour leaders know only too well that if they give Thatcher free rein, people will not want to vote Labour. Electoral concerns will not allow them to miss this point, and besides, they sense that the Party is moving to the left.

Michael Foot is on the left, although relatively. The divergences between him and Tony Benn highlight the weakness and the superficiality that prevail in the Labour left circles. They want to go forward, and they will, but one must remember that they have no theoretical or programmatic formation. You can only tell they are of the left when they defend positions more favourable to the workers, but this is not grounded in principle. The task therefore is to persuade them of the need to discuss.

When contributing to this, one does more by showing the need to discuss than by lecturing about 'dialectical materialism'. Let's show the need to discuss! Any proper debate shows that human progress in Britain wants for economic transformation, that economic transformation needs a Party, and that this Party needs to be alive. What we call here '*political culture*' must be nurtured in the working class and in the Labour Party. As it stands, the Labour Party is not a Party. It is a commercial enterprise where the MPs dictate the terms and conditions of the Party's programme and political views. The MPs dictate to the Party, not the Party to the MPs.

In such conditions therefore, a Labour Party Conference where the delegates demand the right to determine the Party's programme is something coming close to a revolution! Although not quite a revolution yet, because the process of decision-making must go all the way down to the Party's base, the Trade Unions and the working class. For the time being, nothing stops the Labour MPs getting on like before.

What has to be analysed in the Party, is that the Labour base must be involved in mass discussions. The Labour base must be offered the stage. It must be given the full liberty to speak and make analyses. It must be involved in a massive process of internal democratic Party discussions.

For instance, even though it was good, it was not enough that some Labour MPs supported the Soviets in Afghanistan; or that they support the USSR generally, without analyses. There is much to be discussed on the question of Afghanistan: a country evolving from the most primitive conditions to a country going through economic, social and cultural development. The Afghan students have risen against the reactionary sons and daughters of the landowners. There is so much to debate on this question at all levels in the Labour Party.

All this requires a dialectical way of discussing, without trying to impose views on comrades, or trying to impress them with praises for the USSR. The left in the Labour Party - however much it has learnt - has not yet the scientific understanding to arrive at such conclusions. One thing is sure: every passing day, it can see the practical result of the existence and importance of the USSR.

The internal struggle in the Labour Party isn't the same as used to be. For one thing, it is now taking place in the midst of world war preparations - a process where Britain has decided to second the Yankees. The left that you see standing up in the Labour Party is not moved by any fear of the war! It steps forward, on the contrary, with the strong wish to get involved and take actions that tend towards the removal of capitalism.

On the question of world war, the position of Labour is not homogenous. Some sectors are much more against war than others. The Labour masses support the Labour Left because they

want it to oppose the war. They want Labour to get rid of the missiles and free Britain from the domination of the Yankees. In the Party, this higher level of consciousness rises up from the working class. The working class is being kept in the margins of politics, but it knows exactly where it stands on war.

Observe how the Labour leadership did not condemn the intervention of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Individuals in the Labour leadership did, but not the leadership. This is not an interested oversight or a concession to avoid being attacked by the Soviets. It is a level of consciousness that you find much better expressed in France, Germany or Italy. A certain level of consciousness only, but a consciousness all the same.

For years now, Labour has not really attacked the USSR. Callaghan and his followers would have done it, but they had to keep their mouths shut and go along with it.

Callaghan answers to some in British capitalism that would prefer not to depend too much on the United States. That particular capitalist sector has its own leaders. It does not support Callaghan politically, but it goes along with him. It does this because Callaghan happens to be there, and because it agrees with Callaghan in many ways. These capitalists take advantage of Callaghan. They use him.

Those who give a direct support to Callaghan are in a workers' base and a petit bourgeoisie opposed to war. In spite of the capitalist propaganda, these are not opposed to the USSR, and they certainly do not want war.

We make this analysis to give an idea of what happens in Britain. This is where we see the signs of *Where is Britain Going?*¹

¹ Reference to Trotsky's writings on Britain, with a chapter called: *Where is Britain Going?* See: "The progress of Britain is united to the struggle for Socialism". J Posadas, 13.11.1977.

As the Labour left has no tradition in theoretical formation and theoretical experience, this limits immensely its political experience.

The Labour left acquired its political experience through its own struggles, through Trade Union structures and management, through government bodies and the likes. Its political experience has evolved as part of its role in the bourgeois structures of society.

It is our task to help the Labour Left to look towards a higher order beyond those structures, without necessarily dropping everything about bourgeois management.

The higher order is the Socialist one. This is what "*Where is Britain Going?*" means today.

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