

# **THE WORLD CRISIS OF CAPITALISM AND THE BRITISH LABOUR LEFT**

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British capitalism is desperate to have the class struggle immobilised. It wants the workers subdued. It does not concede any improvement to them above what the Labour and Trade Union bureaucracy should be needing to keep them down.

This is how capitalism thinks. It has no other way to think. This is how capitalism works and it has no other way to work. Opposed as it is to the dialectical understanding of social evolution, it cannot make any scientific assessment of the social processes. It cannot even see correctly its own role in history. And if it could, it would want to curl up and die.

When capitalism concedes a little material improvement to the struggling masses, it pares it down to what it calculates the 'leaders' can get away with, without people rising<sup>1</sup>. Such is the class role of capitalism. Beyond this class role, it has no other.

## **The working class' bureaucracy must move left - or be replaced :**

The big capitalist countries are still sacking the world, but they can no longer do it without incurring losses in social, cultural, Trade Union and political terms. Mindful of this, Giscard d'Estaing went on official visit to the USSR and laid a wreath on Lenin's tomb. He meant to tell the working class that the French bourgeoisie deserves appreciation. He wants to impress the working class, gain credit inside it. It is not the workers' bureaucracy that bothers him; he knows the latter for the old and stagnant apparatus which it is. His concern is with the new and militant workers emerging in France. If d'Estaing were on

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<sup>1</sup> In industrial relations, this is what all the consultations, negotiations and arbitrations are normally about. Edit.

top of the class struggle, he would not bother with doing this, least of all with flowers for Lenin! Do not take this event for a passing one, because it isn't. This is a situation of capitalist crisis, and a crisis that can only worsen. The working class' bureaucrats keep moving leftwards to keep abreast of the worker base. They must do this or be replaced.

This can only continue, and it applies to what happens in Britain too. From a historical point of view, the day cannot be very far when the workers, the intellectuals and the artists, the professionals and their allies are going to stand up and demand Communism. With his flowers to Lenin, d'Estaing is already competing with this future. The new workers' leaders in France want the satisfaction of immediate needs, but in what they do, they show proletarian consciousness and cultural understanding.

### **Britain is part of the world :**

Jim Callaghan is still finding ways to hold back the class struggle, but this cannot last long. Capitalism cannot keep people down for long. West Germany (FDR) is a good example. The SPD (Social Democratic Party) closed down the Jusos (Young Socialists) three times – for being 'too much to the left'. Now the Left in the Jusos regrows, for the fourth time. The SDP sacked two left-wing Ministers, and then it brought them back<sup>2</sup>. These upheavals reflect the rising internal contradictions of capitalism.

Capitalism has much more than its internal contradictions to cope with. It must deal with world competition, plus the existence the Workers States, plus the struggle of Revolutionary States like Algeria, Angola, Mozambique and others<sup>3</sup>. The crisis in the bureaucracy of the Workers States is not good news for it either. For example, China broke relations with the world

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<sup>2</sup> This was under Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, SPD, still in government in Germany when this was written (until 10.12.1979).

<sup>3</sup> Read J Posadas: *Revolutionary State and Transition to Socialism*.

Communist movement, but it just sent a Trade Union delegation to Vietnam. First it sent its army to attack Vietnam, then it was defeated by Vietnam, and now it sends Trade Union delegates to Vietnam! These events are consistent with a world generally favourable to Revolution and Socialism. The process in Britain follows this general trend. The advances made by the world masses encourage the masses in Britain. Britain is part of the world. A world that favours the rise of militant workers and militant Trade Unionists. With their struggles, these gnaw at the power of the Labour and Trade Union bureaucratic structures.

**The Labour apparatus  
can no longer shut Britain entirely off from the world :**

Capitalism is deeply conscious of its loss of social support. No doubt d'Estaing went to the USSR to sign deals favourable to French capitalism. With his homage to Lenin however, he sought to glean an authority for capitalism in the masses. An anti-communist attempt, of course. The situation in Britain is very different, but the Labour government of Callaghan displays similarities in this matter, as when he says: 'Don't vote for the Conservatives. They promise to raise the wages, but they will raise the prices as well!'. Callaghan wants to be seen as not completely supporting the capitalists.

Within the working class of Britain, the Labour Party has developed an apparatus dedicated to fight workers' power. To remain in existence however, the Labour Party cannot break from the working class entirely. The working class for its part, is a class keenly interested in what happens in the world, and clear about it. It follows particularly what the workers of other countries achieve. It applauds with great joy when other workers win their rights. This influences the Labour Party because it cannot entirely break away from it. From its refuge in British concerns, Labour cannot stay permanently in ignorance of the world. When '*The Times*' workers were on strike, management

tried to print in Germany, but the German workers refused. The same happened when Holland was tried. Such things belong to class relations that the Labour Party cannot ignore. The same happens to the SDP in Germany where more than a million Turkish workers learn about the class struggle there.

**For a national, permanent and consistent Left  
in the Labour Party :**

Capitalism cannot bring to society any further economic, scientific or cultural progress. In the working class and in growing layers of the petit bourgeoisie, the standard of life declines, and will continue to decline. Capitalist competition between the US, Britain, France, Japan, Germany and Italy is very sharp, but the sharpest competition facing them all is that of the Workers States (Socialist countries). For the competition of the Workers States against capitalism is not just economic: it is antagonistic.

The Soviet Union and the other 'Socialist countries' are the social competitors of capitalism. They compete economically as well, but their competition is *social* above all. The people of the world are not blind. They see no unemployment in the Soviet Union. They see that life has remarkably improved there, particularly on the level of the quality of life. For example, the USSR sent a French astronaut in a Soviet spaceship. Quite a blow for capitalism! It is a conciliatory move on the part of Brezhnev, but it also aims at winning a sector of the French military. A part of the French military is open to it.

Life in capitalism can only get worse. Count on this in Britain, and everywhere. Change is coming because things cannot stay as they are. Pressure is going to grow on all the delegates, the representatives and the leaders of the British working class. The workers and the masses are not about to give up the struggle for their living standards. Today, there is only one way to defend

the living standards: by opposing capitalism.

The left as it exists today in the Labour Party and the Trade Unions believes that it can continue advancing from struggle to struggle without much of a plan. This is helped by the official Labour Party for whom this is enough to keep 'Labourism' going. In reality, the need for a national, united and organised Labour Left has never been greater.

As the British masses continue to struggle, and to make gains against capitalism, the latter will have to concede more, and stay on the back-foot. This process favours the formation of a national, permanent and consistent Left in the Labour Party.

The immediate task therefore is to organise the Labour left with an anti-capitalist programme and policy. A left conscious of itself. A left determined to gather the means required by its construction.

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