

It is clear that capitalism cannot provide for the peoples of this planet nor repair the planet itself. Momentous events are upon us. There is a growing realisation amongst countless millions of workers that change is necessary. If workers are reaching for mischievous solutions, this results from the weakness of our socialist movement internationally. Whether or not this state of affairs is temporary or more permanent depends on our ability to provide an alternative, which reduces as it always has done, to the provision of a programme that is both historically adequate and which expresses the needs of the international working class.

LEARNING FROM THE MISTAKES OF THE USSR. A BRIEF 21st CENTURY COMMUNIST MANIFESTO.

A developed programme of action and of goal emerges from a process of intense and vigorous debate by thousands of activists. It represents the confluence of many strands of independent thought together with reflection on and experiences of struggle. This contribution is one of those strands, one which stands in the Marxist tradition by recognising that the interest of the working class is objective, that it arises from concrete class relations and their interactions which together shape our daily lives.

Capitalism is the first but not the last industrial society in history. This remarkable society has its feet in the horse drawn carriage era and its head in satellites orbiting planets and even exiting our solar system. What took months now takes hours, what took the efforts of thousands is now accomplished by a handful and what took days to communicate now takes microseconds. In every way capitalism, this inescapable, inevitable and necessary step in our economic emergence, has laid the foundation for a future and more highly organised mode of production.

However, no economic mode of production gives way to a higher mode until it has exhausted its economic potential, or what is the same thing, “when its relations of production have come into irreversible conflict with the forces of production”. Without a doubt, the body of capitalism is currently exhausted. It is a body that has been made obese by the absence of the investment needed to exercise it resulting in flabby rolls of fictitious capital infiltrating its vital organs, an obese body precariously supported by an osteoporotic skeleton (infrastructure) that is itself crumbling, at the same time its extremities lie ulcerated as economic blight sets in covering not only industrial towns but whole regions, and finally it is beset by an escalating auto-immune disease diagnosed as the war on terror, a self-inflicted condition inflaming prejudice and delayering the democratic nervous system. This then is the diseased body of capitalism lying in intensive care on a drip of low interest rates, fed a diet of quantitative easing and nursed by an increasingly restless working class.

That capitalism has been allowed to deteriorate to such a degree and in such a manner is due to the triumph of bourgeois ideology and the resulting passivity of the working class. The international working class may be 3 billion strong, but it is held in thrall by a capitalist class that numbers only 1.3 million. Never before has the modern working class been as disorganised, as vulnerable and as politically unprepared as it is now. The historical tasks facing workers towers above it appearing to soar to unscalable heights.

Set against this is the deterioration in workers' standards of living over a generation. In all major economies, with the exception of China, workers are paid less and work harder than their parents. Working to live has been replaced with living to work. No longer do the apologists for the capitalist class criticise Marx's prediction that capitalism ultimately immiserates the working class. It is this corrosive effect on workers' lives, this tormenting attack without an end, which is forcing workers to consider how much longer they can go on living under these conditions, that is behind their growing restlessness and their demands for change even if the first spontaneous demands are self-defeating because they divide the international working class.

The banner of socialism is yet to be unfurled, let alone hoisted proudly high as once it was before the fall of the USSR. The USSR is used to smear socialism, used to proclaim the supremacy of capitalism, used to warn workers not to seek any alternative to capitalism. Within the left, political cowards like the SWP, characterise the Soviet Union as capitalist while the fools on the other extreme like the old Communist Party of Great Britain actually saw it as a form of socialism.

It was neither. It was not capitalist, because in the absence of markets the labour of the individual worker now became part of the labour of society directly. And it was not socialist because that labour was expropriated by a parasitical bureaucracy using the levers of an oppressive state. It was in reality a socialised economy negated by exploitation therefore doomed to fail. It was further away from socialism than it was from capitalism which is why it decayed back into capitalism in the late 1980s.

It is probable that as the ideological struggle matures and advances, the history of the USSR will be resurrected once again by the ideologues of the capitalist class and used to intimidate workers. But even if they do not, then we must, for unless we learn from the USSR, this first example of a post-capitalist economy, from its mistakes and crimes we will be less prepared for the future. We owe it to the workers and all those who suffered at the hands of Stalin and Mao never to repeat these mistakes. This short programme embodies the history of the USSR and applies it to the tradition borne out of the struggles against capitalism. It is limited to the eight core principles on which socialism is based, all of which have to be present and in place if socialism is to succeed. Without a successful and dynamic socialist economy, humanity cannot escape the economic gravity of the private property which has borne down on and disfigured society for ten thousand bloody years.

PRINCIPLE 1. The abolition of the ownership of the means of production, distribution, information and the land.

Ownership of the means of life - the means of production and the land - is the essential condition for disempowering workers making possible their exploitation. It represents the fault line in society, the class divide forcing workers to work for the owners of these means. Nothing can be achieved until workers are re-united with their means of production bringing classes to an end. It is the essence of true democracy and its realisation. In a society divided

between those who own and do not work and those who work but do not own, democracy will always be partial, superficial and precarious.

A common misconception is that private property is replaced with public property. Public property or state ownership is but a mere legal and transitory stage to non-ownership. It is the gathering in and collectivisation of all the individual strands of private property by the state. In turn the state as the temporary custodian of the means of production and the land is not allowed to offer title to it, to cede it, to extract a rent for it or to redistribute it in any form. In the hands of the state, property becomes fossilised.

State ownership thus puts an end to property. When it is commonly recognised and accepted that we all own the factories, the shops, the ships, the land and so on, then it has to be recognised that no one owns it. It ceases to be property, it becomes unowned and with it the purpose for the state ends - the protection of property. In the future we will see the means of production for what they are - proud objects of our combined labour. The only “no entry signs” will be those found mounted in museums. Hence in proportion to the successful development of the socialist economy and its distancing from the remnants of capitalism, together with the ending of property in production, so withers the state whose purpose has been spent.

A strict distinction is drawn between the means of production and the articles of consumption. Articles of consumption are and will remain personal property. This includes homes. Homes are not means of production; they are the personal property of those who live in them. The fact that they are the most durable and costly of the articles of consumption and that they form the social landscape is irrelevant. The right to one’s own personal home is a socialist right. Socialism makes no distinction between homes that were previously rented or previously owned. All properties lived in become the property of their occupiers with the exception of the mansions of the rich and second homes which will be confiscated and redistributed. However, because homes vary in size, quality and location, a “home’s tax” (the only tax found in a socialist society), will be levied for the purposes of upgrading homes, building new ones, replacing dilapidated properties and transforming the locality with the participation of its inhabitants. This will be a differential tax with larger and better properties paying a higher rate than smaller and lower quality properties. It is thus an equalising tax borne out of the uneven housing stock inherited from capitalism.

PRINCIPLE 2. Subtractions from the social product not the addition of margins.

In his Critique of the Gotha Programme (the programme adopted by the newly emerged German trade union movement), Marx criticised the Lasallian concept of “workers being entitled to the fruits of their labour”. In all surplus producing societies not everyone works to produce things. There are the young, the elderly, the sick and infirm, and those who look after them, educate them, heal them, together with those involved in administration and planning without which society cannot function. If the producers consumed what they produced, there would be nothing left to support all those sections of workers standing outside production itself. Nor would there be the funds needed for new and additional investment to expand production and thereby elevate and transform society.

Accordingly, Marx demonstrated that a part of the social product (the aggregated fruits of our labour) would have to be deducted or set aside to support these necessary and humanising functions. At the time he wrote these words, Marx could have no inkling of the importance this criticism would have when applied to the Soviet Union and China half a century later. Here instead of a portion of society's product being democratically deducted by the producers themselves, the Stalinist bureaucracy claimed this product by the coercive additions of tax and profit margins.

At first glance the subtracting of a portion of society's product instead of the arbitrary adding of margins may appear to be semantic. It is not. It expresses different relations of production, it speaks about who owns and controls the social product, and it expresses the presence or the absence of working class democracy. All exploitative societies are marked by the presence of margins, which always and everywhere are the means of exploitation. Margins are possible only when workers are under-paid for their labour creating the opportunity for margins. Within capitalism this takes the form of cost price plus the profit margin. In the USSR it took the form of the wage fund plus the tax margin and later profit margin. In this way workers were and are left with only a residue of what they have produced allowing the capitalists or the Stalinist bureaucrats to live off the rest.

In a genuine socialist society, it is producers who own the social product. It is the workers who then decide how it will be consumed. It is the workers who decide how much has to be set aside for social needs and new investment. Only the workers who produced this surplus either directly or indirectly have the right to decide on its disposition. Therefore, this setting aside can only take the form of a deduction because the producers are in effect voluntarily giving up part of their product for social need and for the expansion of the economy.

Deciding on the scale of this deduction is complex. It will be a decision which is compounded on the one side by what is possible and on the other by differing demands. Some groups may propose that repairing the planet as quickly as possible is needed, others may argue that reducing the inequality between nations as quickly as possible is needed, yet others may argue that raising all to the skill level of the highest as quickly as possible should be the priority. There is no right or wrong answer to these competing needs. There is only the democratic resolution of these competing needs. The right of all to put their case, the absolute freedom to communicate the merits of all positions without prejudice and more importantly the freedom to criticise the position of other groups will precipitate a hive of debate resulting in the adoption of broadly correct positions. Television which was used to dupe and dope the masses is now used to debate, to inform and to broadcast diverse views. Instead of being the opiate of the masses it is turned into its opposite, the tool for knowledge and empowerment.

This vibrant collective decision and agreement on the scale and direction of the deductions from the social product is the epitome of working class democracy. It is its defining moment. Removing this control from the working class means removing the right of the producers to decide what is to be done with the product of their labour. It presupposes the reintroduction of oppression. It would gut socialism and lead to its failure. To assume that there are privileged or more educated members of society, inside or outside parties, better able to decide above the heads of workers, will disempower workers and destroy their attachment

to production. That is the lesson of the USSR. We are against any elitism just as we are against those “Marxists” who believe, that simply because they have raised themselves above the sectional interests of the working class, they are ideally placed to decide what is best for our class.

To ensure that the deductions are not misused or used for personal gain, those employed in its administration may not receive more than the “average” wage. They may not work permanently in this sphere. Finally, there must be complete transparency. Workers’ law will be strictly applied in this sphere and vigorously policed.

PRINCIPLE 3. Workers control and management of production.

In a society divided between those who own but do not work and those who work but do not own, the producers have to be managed and led. Despite this general rule, companies like Toyota, discovered productivity shot up when they delegated control of production to the shop floor through work groups. Workers involved in the work process are best placed to understand its strengths and weaknesses, thus best placed to manage it. Distant managers in their comfortable offices are not.

In the 21st century most workers are literate and numerate, unlike their counter-parts over a century ago in Russia. In addition, the larger companies have comprehensively computerised their methodologies and data to allow senior management to centralise the firms’ intellectual knowledge. This makes the transfer of this knowledge into the hands of the workforce that much more efficient. Indeed, preventing the erasure, corruption or encryption of this data is one of the central goals of the fight for control of production. It will be a tenet of working class law to exact severe punishment for those who effect the destruction of this data or the computer code needed to run modern industry.

Workers’ management stands and falls on one tenet alone – the setting of the intensity of work. Without the right to set the intensity of work, workers’ management is reduced to mere phraseology. Under capitalism intensity is set by the competition and mediated by the level of class forces. One of the central goals of the trade union movement has thus been the struggle over the tempo of work. In the USSR the intensity of labour was enforced by state terror.

In a socialist society, intensity is not set by an external coercive force like competition or the state but by voluntary agreement that becomes collective and accepted across the industry. Such a collective decision will require debate within each production unit and discussion between units and countries. Its resolution is a democratic one and once it is agreed it is binding on every worker. Such a discussion is revisited time and again in the light of technical developments.

However, workers’ management on its own will not prevent exploitation re-emerging. That requires working class control of the commanding heights of the economy or as it has been put in Principle 2, control over the deductions from the social product. Only such controls can prevent these deductions being converted into a surplus, and those who administer it into a new bureaucracy.

PRINCIPLE 4. What workers contribute to production or society they receive back after deductions.

Under capitalism what workers produce is owned by the capitalist class who reimburse workers only partially for their production. The balance, their unpaid labour, forms the rent, interest, profits and tax of the capitalist class. Socialism replaces working for the capitalists by working for one-self. What each worker contributes, they receive back after the collectively agreed deductions for social need, administration and additional investment.

This equal right is necessary to unite a working class divided by unequal skills. More skilled workers who contribute more to production will receive back more than less skilled workers who contribute less. If all workers were to receive an average return this would require an unequal right, as the more skilled workers would receive less than they contribute and the less skilled workers would receive more. This unequal right would be divisive and require the continued presence of a state to enforce it, replacing the voluntary and collaborative association of workers by enforcement.

This programme is a programme of principle not of detail. However, it is recognised that as the capitalists and their retinue consume over half of the current output of society, their expropriation creates the conditions for the immediate upliftment in the standard of living of all workers. Further it is recognised that wage differentials under capitalism are widened by the demand and supply of labour with different skills. This ends under socialism ensuring the hierarchy of pay is diminished.

Alongside the right to receive in proportion to contribution arises the end to the artificial and ideological separation of production and education. It represents financial independence for the young on the one side and “free” life time learning on the other. Shorter working days will no longer be based on the barring of workers from education nor on the barring of the young from safe rewardable work. This together with the redesign of the work process to progressively eliminate the division between physical and mental labour will have as its purpose, the elevation of all workers to the level of the highest.

If we were to define the higher and later stage of socialism - communism - it would have the following twin features; firstly, the elimination of the vertical division of labour and secondly sufficient abundance so as to bring to an end the miserable calculation of one’s own personal contribution to production. At that point society will no longer be divided by production but united by it, allowing for the emergence of purely personal relationships no longer contaminated by economic considerations.

PRINCIPLE 5. All necessary labour is rendered social.

Under capitalism four forms of labour are thrown up. Productive labour, functionally unproductive labour, personal labour and domestic labour. The first produces commodities and therefore the wealth of capitalist society, the second is employed in the buying, selling, accounting and administering of these commodities not forgetting the labour wasted by arguing over who owns them (legal). The third provides supervisory roles policing the

production and circulation process or providing services directly to the capitalist class such as servants, chauffeurs, advisors and so on. All these forms of labour are partially paid. The fourth form of labour, domestic labour, is the exception for it is never paid.

Socialism renders these different forms of labour redundant. Firstly, it abolishes most functionally unproductive labour such as legal, advertising, marketing, personnel departments, etc., which are no longer needed and reassigns these workers. Secondly it abolishes all personal services again reassigning workers. Fourthly it transforms private domestic labour into social labour. Alongside labour in production which provides the means for life and its upliftment stands the labour that reproduces life, that educates, heals and maintains the quality and dignity of life. Capitalism separates these forms of labour because the former produces profits while the latter costs profits or subsidises profits (domestic labour). Socialism no longer requires these different forms; it treats all necessary labour as work of equal worth.

Socialism thus ends the slavery of women at home and with it the sexual division of labour. It also introduces the regular rotation of workers between production and the sphere of social needs (funded by deductions) so that no sectional interest may arise between those who produce the social product and who may wish to limit deductions for personal gains and those who live off these deductions.

PRINCIPLE 6. Falling prices replaces the profit motive.

Under capitalism the law of value prevails. It represents the elastic relation between market prices and actual costs of production allowing prices to reward capitalists with a profit in proportion to the sum of capital they have previously invested. The purpose of prices under capitalism is to redistribute profits. With the abolition of private ownership of the means of production, distribution and information ends the law of value. It is replaced by prices being directly connected to actual costs of production. Prices now reflect weighted average labour times.

Higher productivity and efficiency leading to reductions in labour time is now rewarded by lower prices. The capitalists have always hated and lied about deflation saying that it delays consumption. The opposite is the case. Every mass market, from the motor car, to flying, to electronics has been preceded by the cheapening of the commodities so described. Instead of delaying consumption, falling prices has allowed the market to grow leading to further economies of scale. The real reason the capitalists fear deflation is that they know it is more difficult to cheat workers of their productivity because deflation requires cutting wages.

Under socialism, the reward for higher productivity and efficiency will not be higher wages so to speak. The term “wage” is used here in short hand but with a different content to that of capitalism. Higher wages tied to higher output can only give rise to sectional interests. This is the lesson of the USSR. In the USSR, the use of higher wages tied to an increase in piece rate production led to the cutting of corners, the misuse of materials and the unnecessary wearing out of machinery due to lack of maintenance. This resulted from workers trying to increase their individual output to boost their wages without regard to the consequences for the

economy as a whole. What one group of workers saved penalised workers further down the production line who had to waste their labour correcting or compensating for these inferior and defective goods. What was gained on the one side was more than lost on the other. In the end higher wages led to a rise in labour times and not its fall within the USSR.

In a democratic socialist society, effort is instead rewarded through falling prices. A reduction in labour time through higher productivity and better organised work reduces the labour time embodied in goods and this is reflected in a lower price benefiting all. The workers who design the new and more advanced machinery, the workers who produce it and the workers who use it to produce cheaper products are all rewarded equally by the resulting fall in prices. The pricing system is therefore a collective reward for the collective labours of the working class thereby maintaining their unity of effort. Rising profits under capitalism, the motive of capitalist production is replaced by falling prices, the motive of socialist production.

The crude and clumsy use of profits to guide investment decisions under capitalism is replaced by the precise guide of direct prices. Prices reflecting existing and expected costs allows society to efficiently allocate the resources of society to both expand and replace existing production. In this way socialism economises on the expenditure of labour time by ending the wastefulness and duplication of capitalism and it does so in a manner unavailable to capitalism. Planning investment and production now becomes a conscious process.

PRINCIPLE 7. Consumer led planning.

The ending of the separation of production and consumption, and therefore the basis for markets, makes planning necessary. Instead of companies reacting to changes in the markets, planning anticipates these changes because the producer is at the same time the consumer. This planning is called consumer led planning. Workers knowing what their income is and what things actually cost to produce in real time can decide what they will be consuming and how much. This applies not so much to day to day products but to the more expensive and durable products. In addition, they will also be made aware of all the technical possibilities currently available and potential new products. In this way conscious decisions about what should be produced and how much will be made.

Here the legacy of capitalism, in particular the internet, makes consumer led planning eminently possible. If capitalism had not invented the internet a future socialist society would have done so out of necessity. The internet is the essential means for conveying the decisions of consumers to the planning bodies who will aggregate these decisions and organise production to fulfil these orders. Compared to the USSR the roles are now reversed. In the USSR the planners (part of the state) were active while consumers were passive.

The planning agencies will not be state bodies and will survive the state long after it has withered. The function of the workers' state will be limited to a purely political role, the enforcement of workers' rights and workers law. It has no economic role.

In the USSR consumers had to accept what the planners had decided for them. Planning was therefore alienating, paternalistic and generally insulting to consumers and their needs. In a

socialist society the opposite is the case. Planning becomes invigorating, participatory and precise. Workers who expend their labour and are rewarded by their product do not want their labour wasted by inferior or inappropriate products.

It was not the centralisation of the plan in the USSR that made planning impossible. Instead, the problem was that the plan was imposed on society from above and this required its centralisation. Consumer led planning or planning from below is not based on centralising or decentralising the plan. It is based on what is technically and organisationally the most appropriate means for carrying it out. As long as planning is led by consumers it will deliver what is required.

The right to decide what is to be produced is an absolute right. Provided it does no harm to others, there can be no interference with any individual's specific preferences. If workers want cars, that is what they will have and that is what will be produced in the numbers ordered. The only penalty will be that, unlike capitalism where the price is limited to the narrow production costs of the vehicle, it now includes all the additional environmental and impact costs. This applies to every other product as well. In a socialist society there is no longer a distinction between paid costs and actual costs. Actual costs include the overall cost of consuming any product as well as producing it.

In return for this inviolable right to choose what will be produced, comes the duty to work in accordance with the plan. Individual workers cannot decide how and when they will work, for this privilege would disrupt the plan making it unworkable. The working class is a collective class and its freedoms and responsibilities is based on this recognition. The complex products that improve our lives and constitute our standard of living, are not produced by individual craftsmen or women. They are the combined product of thousands of interconnected workers gathered together in workplaces often hundreds of miles apart.

In time, the combination of a shortened working week and artificial intelligence will provide the space and opportunity for everyone to be an artist one day, a pianist the next while all the time learning new skills. In the interim however, we inherit a complex and advanced industry two hundred years in the making and the first order of the day is to ensure we can operate it and build on it.

PRINCIPLE 8. Internationalism.

In 1948, one of history's greatest astronomers, Sir Fred Hoyle formed the opinion that: *"Once a photograph of the earth, taken from the outside is available, a new idea as powerful as any in history will be let loose."* He was right. Within twenty years, astronauts would be looking at the earth from the moon witnessing our small blue planet floating alone in space, appearing as fragile as it was beautiful. *"When you're finally up at the moon looking back on earth, all those differences and nationalistic traits are pretty well going to blend, and you're going to get a concept that maybe this really is one world and why the hell can't we learn to live together like decent people."* (Frank Borman, *Apollo 8*, Newsweek magazine, 23 December 1968). A unified planet is possible when nations are dissolved, but for this to be accomplished the basis of nationhood – private property – must first be abolished by the only class that has no interest in its preservation - the international working class.

It was the steam train, nearly two hundred years ago, that united the nation state during the youth of capitalism. Now space flight unites the entire planet at the demise of capitalism. Nationalism was to capitalism what internationalism is to socialism, a step upward. Capitalism has developed a world economy which now forms our inheritance. Every substantial commodity is the product of many nations and multiple continents. The production chain now spans the planet.

And yet many workers continue to cling to their sinking national ship as the globalisation storm rages. This is understandable for many workers feel increasingly left behind if not swept aside by the rise of the multi-nationals. However, if workers are to seize power they can only do so by uniting internationally, otherwise the capitalists will play one national group off against the other. This is the lesson of the USSR.

Stalin's "socialism in one country" was not only a pragmatic response to the defeat of the German revolution in 1923, it was to become a non-aggression pact with imperialism. In exchange for the imperialists (the USA and Britain in particular) respecting the territorial integrity of the USSR, Stalin offered to sabotage or at least disorientate the international workers struggle. This was the only devil's pact the imperialists would respect. Accordingly, Stalin instructed Mao to disarm the workers in China in 1928 enabling Chiang Kai-Shek to massacre them. In the early 1930s, Stalin convinced the German Communist Party (KPD) that their main enemy was not Hitler but the social democrats whom he labelled social fascists. By precipitating a civil war in the ranks of the German working class, the political space opened up for Hitler to march to power. In 1936 at the height of the Spanish Civil War, Stalin's death squads killed many members and leaders of the POUM (anarchists) thereby weakening the Republican side and helping Franco seize power. The rise of Hitler and the defeat of the Republicans in Spain made war in Europe inevitable and with it the invasion of the USSR, the very act Stalin had sought to avoid.

Therefore, at every level internationalism is not an option. No single nation can exist economically outside the world economy ever again, even a country as large as the USA. Secondly, a peace between a socialist island and the capitalist sea in which it finds itself, can only be struck on terms which are fatal to the international working class. Furthermore, nationalism unites workers with their capitalist masters. Support for immigration controls, means support for the capitalist state which alone can implement these controls. The enemy is seen as outsiders, migrants seeking work, and not insiders, their own capitalist class. Instead of calling for the removal of their own capitalist class they seek the removal of the migrants, workers suffering a common oppression and exploitation. Once workers support the state oppressing foreign workers, they are unable to defend themselves when this same state turns around and attacks them.

Finally, the problems facing the working class are global in scale. Reversing global warming requires a concerted, united and international response. This is particularly true for ridding the planet of fossil fuel burning. A globalist recognises that somewhere on our planet there will be found a place where the sun is shining or the wind blowing. Transcontinental power grids, linking up wind turbines and solar panels thousands of miles apart can provide sustained and sufficient power 24 hours a day thus ending the need for fossil fuel base load power stations. Workers can and must think globally in a way that competition prevents the capitalists from doing. Big may not be beautiful, but it is bountiful and liberating.

PART 2. THE PARLIAMENTARY ROAD TO SOCIALISM.

In volume 1 of *Das Kapital*, in the section on Primitive Accumulation, Marx deals with the separation of the labourer from his or her instruments of labour as the essential pre-condition for the formation of the modern proletariat. He analyses the enclosure movement, the vagrancy law and the draconian labour laws of early capitalism. His conclusion: capitalism is born with blood dripping from every pore. The capitalist social relation is therefore latent with violence. Whenever workers have rebelled and stretched the wage relation to breaking point they have been clubbed or starved back to work.

The wage relation is one of oppression and not one of equality. If it appears to be peaceful this coincides with workers accepting and submitting to it. Had workers refused to submit, then the wage relation would not have endured for over three hundred years surviving numerous economic crises and world wars. It is this submission by workers which needs to be explained.

This submission is not purely a question of false consciousness. If “being determines consciousness” as it does, then the material basis for the prevailing consciousness of workers reflects their status as the sellers of the commodity labour power. They act as commodity owners seeking the best terms for the sale of their commodity from the purchaser of this commodity, the capitalist class. It is this necessity that shapes their consciousness. It accounts for the first organisations thrown up by workers, that of associations of sellers of labour power - the trade unions. And it explains why trade unions took specific forms, often divisive forms, tied to industries and to the degree of skill of their members. And it explains the changing form of these unions as industries and occupations have changed.

Thirdly workers are not able to spontaneously connect the profits, rents and interest enjoyed by the capitalist class to their unpaid labour. At the level of appearances, fair wages together with fair profits seems achievable. The wage struggle is thus confined to the struggle over the distribution between wages and profits. Inequality is seen not as the wages system itself but as the level of wages relative to profits.

Fourthly, workers do not see capital as the accumulation of their unpaid labour in the hands of a hostile class. Instead of being elevated by this accumulation they are diminished by it. The now huge means of production rears up above workers dwarfing them by its magnitude and increasing their sense of powerlessness and alienation. The more international capital becomes the further removed it appears to be from workers. The current globalisation of the world economy testifies to this.

Fifthly, the competition in the labour market divides workers nationally and internationally. This is used by the capitalist class to skilfully play off workers one against the other. In particular the reserve army of labour hangs over those in work. Finally, the educational system via the exam system, is used to atomise students preparing them for their entry into the labour market where they will sell their labour power as an individual. The loneliness and stress of the exam room presages the loneliness and stress of the interview room.

The most important element has been left to last. Until recently capitalist crises were short lived. Marx describes recessions as the explosive resolution of the crisis of profitability based on the overaccumulation of capital and the overextension of production. The capitalists call it their “creative destruction”. The old is destroyed to make way for the new. Recessions tended to be short lived, being one fifth the length of expansions which typically lasted 6 - 8 years.

Recessions strain the wage relation as workers are made to pay for the economic downturn with the loss of jobs, lower pay and fewer services. What restrains the working class is the view that this state of affairs is temporary, requiring only short-term sacrifices. What is beginning to rock capitalism today is the emerging recognition that these sacrifices are no longer short term but unending. For this reason, it is not the moment when cut backs occur that is decisive, it is the follow up period, when the horror slowly dawns that these cut backs are not going to be reversed, but that they will endure and intensify. It is this emerging consciousness which is beginning to agitate workers. With few exceptions (mainly Asian economies) workers’ standards of living have stagnated or fallen in the major economies for a period that exceeds at least one business cycle. This ranges from 1974 in the USA to the 1990s for Japan to the 2000s for Europe.

For the first time since the fall of the Berlin Wall, workers are becoming open to the argument for socialism again. Many realise they cannot continue to live this way and that capitalism is unlikely to provide for their future and their children. This development is a decisive and underestimated political event. If this is occurring now, even before the outbreak of the next and imminent recession, how much more convulsive will be the political reaction when the pain of that recession is added to the accumulated pain which already exists.

At the heart of the wage relation is unpaid labour. Workers are employed only for their capacity to produce unpaid labour which is converted into profit through sale. Workers give more to the capitalists than they receive back through their wages. In other words, the capitalists engage in legalised theft because they underpay their workers. Stealing the labour of the working class is never a peaceful act. Separating workers from the means of life (means of production etc.) is not a peaceful act. A normal working life is at least 45 years. Currently the average rate of exploitation is 60%. This means that over this period of 45 years, 27 years are unpaid and only 18 years are paid. How can the taking of 27 years of one’s life be considered a peaceful act? It cannot.

So what appears to be peaceful, predicated on the behaviour of the worker, is a class relation whose contradictions are irreconcilable. There cannot be endless peace between those who live off the labours of others and those forced to part with their labour. There is no such thing as a fair profit, because profit no matter how small, still represents unpaid labour. Similarly, there can be no such thing as a fair wage, because wages no matter how large still represents only payment for part of the working day. The worker was and remains a wage slave no matter their level of wages.

As long as the class struggle is confined to the wages struggle and does not challenge the wage relation itself, the state is able to conciliate, to help both sides strike a bargain. So soon as it goes beyond this, the state casts aside its veil of neutrality. Now it is revealed that it has

been spying on workers and their organisations all along, providing confidential information to the bosses and targeting the trouble makers. That it has inserted into the ranks of workers' agents whose purpose is to confuse and undermine their struggle. That many of the workers' leaders are in the pocket of or have been blackmailed by the secret police. That the state media is now being used to discredit and misreport what is happening so as to isolate those in struggle. And soon workers in shirts are confronted by police kitted out for war. The closely guarded identity of state is now fully revealed: it is the dictatorship of the capitalist class, the assembled and organised political force tasked with the protection of its property and its economy.

Lenin in his authoritative pamphlet *State and Revolution* summarises the Marxist position on the state. It also includes a critique of the conciliators and reformists that is as pertinent today as it once was a century ago. The lack of class consciousness on the part of workers does not mean the capitalist class lack class consciousness. Looking up to heights can be exhilarating but looking down from heights can be terrifying. And the capitalist class are terrified, terrified of losing their wealth, terrified of losing their power, terrified of losing their luxuriant life style, terrified of having to do real work. They have been a ruling class for centuries and are skilled oppressors. They will fight to the last of their mercenaries, both in and out of uniform, in order to hold on to what is not theirs.

The first rule of propaganda is to accuse your enemy of your own crimes. The capitalist class and their media always accuse the left of being undemocratic, of wanting to abolish parliament, of being against the popular vote. How disingenuous. Since the second world war the capitalist class, especially the US ruling class has abolished not tens but hundreds of popularly elected parliaments around the world with coup d'états, military interventions and even invasions. From Brazil and Argentina, to Iran and Iraq, to Greece and Portugal, democratically elected governments have been overthrown and their popular leaders assassinated or driven into exile.

The parliamentary road to socialism is impossible because the capitalists will not allow it. Once workers have outgrown parliamentary democracy, once the streets are alive with protest, once the organisations of the working class start asserting themselves, then the capitalists will declare a state of emergency, dismiss parliament and suspend the rule of law. They will seek to discard all the impediments standing in the way of their naked rule, anything that holds them back, that offers any protection to the other side. Now it becomes a pure test of power, dual power, that has to be resolved one way or the other.

If the first rule of propaganda is to accuse your opponents of your own crimes, then the second rule is to rewrite history to bury your past crimes. The capitalist class never tire of portraying the revolutionary crowd as a bloodthirsty mob out of control. And yet in the Russian Revolution itself, less than a thousand people lost their lives on both sides. In the counter-revolution which followed which was financed, led and supported by Britain, France, Japan and the United States, over twenty million died. It is not working class revolutions that kill, it is capitalist counter-revolutions that kill.

If there is one lesson to be learnt from 1917, it is that by organising and uniting the working class, workers can achieve power with the minimum loss of life. This is the purpose of this

programme. It codifies the objective and historical interest of the working class. It demonstrates to at least 80% of capitalist society that they have every interest in the fight for socialism. It is therefore capable of isolating the capitalist class, the pre-condition for its downfall.

Secondly, we recognise that there is no peaceful road to socialism. But our doctrine is one of minimum violence. If the history of capitalism followed the mythology of the capitalist class, namely that once upon a time society split into classes because the capitalists chose to become capitalists by saving their income while the workers recklessly spent theirs, it would mean that capitalism was a voluntary system, an optional system, one based on conscious decisions. But it was not. Capitalism was an inevitable economic step in the industrial development of our species. It could not be by-passed nor substituted. The capitalists are as much a victim of history as we are though they be its beneficiary. It therefore follows that our target is the capitalist system and not individual capitalists, though to be sure some of them will be cruel beyond imagination. That is why our doctrine seeks to disempower the capitalist class and not disembowel them.

This is in accordance with an allied consideration. The power of the weapons ranged against the international working class, from nuclear through to biological are terrifying. The capitalists have the potential to turn the class war from one of liberation into one which annihilates civilisation. We thus approach the question of our liberation with this long term view in mind: it is of paramount importance to preserve the means of production which has been built at such great cost and with so much blood, for unless we preserve humankind has no future. It will be this imperative that stays our hand, that tempers our outrage even in the darkest of times. The emancipation of the working class lies not simply in overthrowing capitalism but ensuring that we are able to build the future, that we have the means to do so and that we have managed to convince those who would destroy it on behalf of the capitalist class, to join us in this noble cause.

Crucially we need to win the argument that capitalism has come to the end of its days and so must give way to a higher mode of production for the sake of humanity. Capitalism is at the historical cross roads. It has increasing difficulty reproducing itself and managing a world economy. It is incapable of repairing our over-heating planet. It dreads the pending introduction of Artificial Intelligence because of the social upheavals this will bring about. And finally US economic hegemony is being challenged for the first time in 70 years by China. All this is happening contemporaneously, the one adding to the other to produce the greatest challenge to capitalism in its history, far exceeding that of the Great Depression and the Second World War.

Only the working class can resolve these contradictions. Only the united and international effort made possible by a socialist society can repair our planet. Only a planned socialist society can reinvigorate production. Only a socialist society can harmonise the forces of production with the relations of production enabling the harmonious introduction of Artificial Intelligence, so that the working week is shortened and 'mind destroying' work is progressively eliminated. Finally, only a socialist revolution can prevent another world war between the US and China. War is the intensification and extension of competition into the military sphere. Competition which is fuelled by capitalist private property can only be

extinguished by the abolition of this private property, an act which simultaneously ends the epoch of wars.

These are the tasks facing the international working class. They are as immense as they are momentous. If workers do not rise to this challenge, then all the hardships from the past will have been in vain and all the possibilities for the future will have been lost. Workers have a world to win or a world to lose.