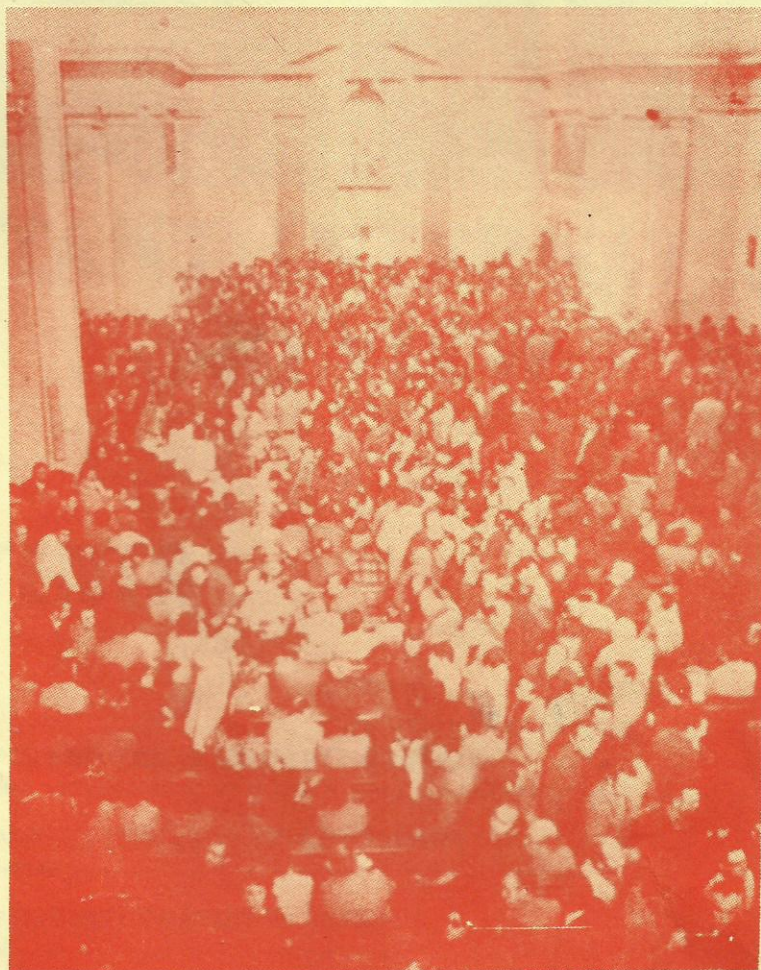


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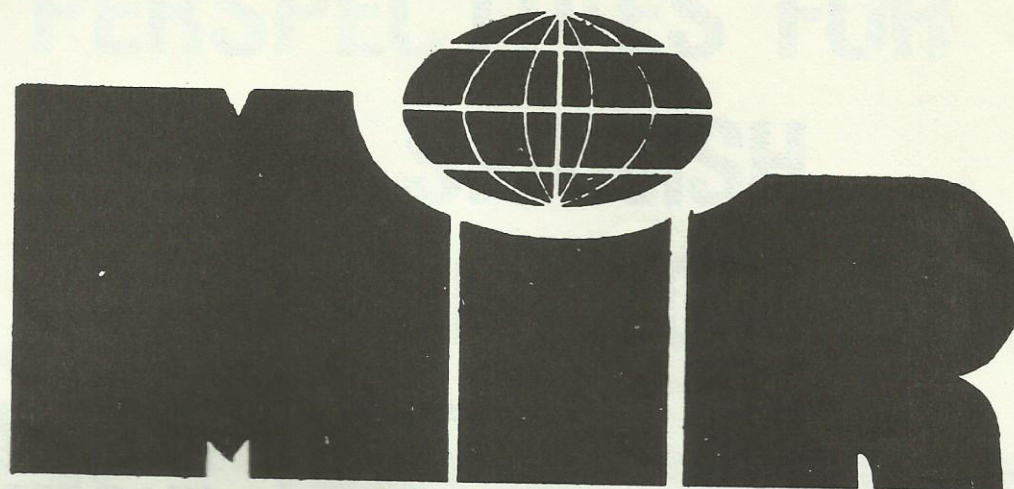
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REVIEW

Kenneth Smith



MILITANT INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

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PERSPECTIVES FOR THE SPANISH REVOLUTION

By David Hughes

The death of Franco and the crisis of the ruling circle opened up a new epoch of revolutionary struggle in Spain. After almost four decades of the most barbarous repression, the dictatorship had exhausted its potential, eroded by the ceaseless movements of the working class, which, in more than a decade of intense industrialisation, had transformed itself into a decisive majority of the population. The giant armies of the industrial proletariat, concentrated strategically in the nerve centres of the country—Barcelona, Madrid, Bilbao—held in check the top-heavy apparatus of repression painstakingly erected by Franco at the close of the civil war.

With each mighty wave of strikes and demonstrations, the ability of the ruling class to contain the revolutionary movement with the methods of the bullet and the bludgeon were called more openly into question. Every new martyr in this bloody war of attrition served only to arouse an undying spirit of hatred in the breast of the Spanish people, and isolate the regime still further.

The unbearable accumulated tensions of four decades of dictatorship gave rise to the heat-lightening of individual terror. Hated officials, torturers, policemen and civil guard fell victims to the bullets of the Basque ETA and the Maoist FRAP. The Franco regime, in its death-agonies, seized the advantage which these acts of individual violence offered, to arrest, punish and execute. But to no avail. No amount of executions could stave off the collapse of the worm-eaten dictator-



Mass meeting in Church during Metro strike Jan 1976

ship, the social base of which had been completely undermined for more than a decade.

The movement of the working class communicated itself rapidly to the myriad intermediate layers of society, now completely disaffected from the regime: students, actors, lawyers, professors, small farmers, junior army officers, doctors, priests, small shopkeepers—demonstrated in large numbers their growing opposition to the dictatorship and solidarity with the democratic demands of the workers.

In the outlying lands of the Basques and Catalans, the national consciousness of the peoples deprived of their rights and denied a

national identity for more than a generation of fascist slavery began to stir powerfully. The widespread sympathy or at least tolerance enjoyed by the ETA can be understood only in terms of the decades of brutal police oppression, the total destruction of Basque and Catalan autonomy and the national-cultural discrimination practiced against the minority nationalities of Spain by the centralist 'Castillian' ruling class in Madrid. Basque and Catalan children were denied the right to education in their own languages. The Basque or Catalan who lapsed into their native language was told to "speak Christian" (ie Spanish).

Worse still, the armed police and Civil Guard drawn from other provinces and quartered on the Basques and Catalans behaved, and still behave, like an army of occupation in a conquered country. Under such conditions, the disintegration of the dictatorship was bound to lead, and did lead, to the re-emergence of powerful centrifugal tendencies, with the upsurge of strong nationalist and autonomist movements, not only in the Basque country and Catalonia, but also in Galicia, Valencia, Andalucia, and the Canary Islands. In a country where the historical task of national unification was never properly carried out, and with a long history of nationalist and regionalist uprisings, the national question emerges as one of the most burning problems facing the working class and one of the key weaknesses of the bourgeois state in Spain at the present time.

In particular, as the recent events in Pamplona and Renteria clearly show, the Basque problem is like a time-bomb which threatens at any moment to explode and engulf the whole Peninsular in the flames of nationalist and terrorist strife. Along with the catastrophic economic situation, the national question, particularly in the Basque country, constitutes the most dangerous threat to the stability of Spanish capitalism.

Economic Catastrophe

Faced with the rising tide of working class unrest, strikes and demonstrations, ferment and opposition among the middle classes, the festering national problem in Catalonia and the Basque country and the upsurge of terrorist violence, the Spanish bourgeoisie was rent with internal dissent. Important sections of the capitalist class, feeling the ground tremble beneath their feet, were cautiously advocating reforms to prevent a revolutionary explosion.

But decades of corrupt dictatorship had spawned a fat layer of venal officials and fascist bureaucrats with

comfortable positions in the apparatus of the state, police, army and vertical sindicato "trade union." The opposition of these creatures, linked to the most reactionary and obtuse sections of finance capital, stubbornly blocked the path of would-be "reformers" such as Areilza, foreign minister of the first government of the Juan Carlos monarchy, under the aegis of arch-reactionary Arias Navaro after the death of Franco.

Hardly had the ministers had time to install themselves in their new offices when the country was gripped by a wave of industrial struggles the like of which had not been seen since the 1930s. The storm-centre was Madrid itself where, as a consequence of industrial development over the past decade, the working class has accumulated a strength almost on a par with the traditional centre of the Spanish workers' movement, Barcelona. Wave after wave of strikes engulfed the entire province.

Mass revolt

The strike fever swiftly communicated itself to the rest of the country, and for a period of months, the Arias government found itself caught up in a maelstrom of social unrest in which the workers' economic demands became the focal point for a whole series of political demands: amnesty, the re-admission of all sacked workers, the disbanding of the repressive organs set up by the dictatorship and punishment for those responsible for atrocities and crimes against the people, legalisation of all trade unions and political parties, free elections, autonomy and the right of self-determination for the oppressed nationalities.

The Arias government, vacillating and divided against itself, floundered impotently in this sea of popular discontent. Whatever line of action it took was doomed in advance. Its concessions and reforms satisfied no-one, while its repressive acts irritated and repelled everyone. The long list of unfulfilled hopes and broken promises, the intolerable delays and prevarications merely stoked the fires of impatience and discontent which erupted with

particular violence in the Vitoria general strike in March 1976. This elemental explosion of the working people of Alava served notice on the ruling class of what might happen if the course of reform was not speeded up.

The events of Alava showed the enormous revolutionary potential in the Spanish working class, unbroken after decades of repression and totalitarian rule. With no lead from any of the political parties and underground trade unions, the workers carried out an impressive general strike, organised by means of workers' councils at all levels and generalised to include the representatives of the housewives', tenants' associations, small shopkeepers and students. On the 3rd of March, the streets of Vitoria were turned into a battle-ground between the armed riot police and the striking workers who erected barricades and met the police with showers of stones and bricks.

For practically the whole day the city was in the hands of the workers with the police battling to re-gain control which they finally did after the cold-blooded massacre of unarmed workers at the Church of St. Francis. Undoubtedly, had the magnificent movement of the Vitoria workers been seconded by a general strike throughout Spain, the government would have been unable to concentrate its forces in Vitoria and events would have taken a very different course.

But the leaders of the still illegal workers' parties in Spain made no attempt to generalise this, or any of the numerous strikes that swept over Spain for months on end. One of the principal spokesmen of the CP dominated trade union, the Workers' Commissions, Nicholas Sartorius publicly characterised the Vitoria movement as "an immature form of struggle." We might add that the CP's "mature" tactics at this time consisted, among other things, of advising striking workers to applaud the police when they turned up—which certainly did not lead to a reduction of police violence against strikers!

The leaders of the main workers' organisations, and in particular the "Communist" party which, at that

particular moment in time, had under its control decisive sections of the organised working class, appeared to be almost as frightened by the movement of the masses as the ruling class. Throughout this stormy period they bent with might and main to exercise a "moderating" influence on the struggle, calling out different sections at different times, refusing to generalise the strike movement, limiting its duration and extent as far as possible.

The reason for this behaviour is not far to seek. The whole strategy of the CP leaders for some time was based on the ideas of an alliance with the so called "progressive" wing of the capitalists for the "restoration of democracy". As a first step, the CP leaders had formed the "democratic Junta" with the representatives of obscure bourgeois grouplets composed of ex-fascists turned "liberals". For their part, the leaders of the Socialist Party (PSOE) first refused to participate in the Junta, then formed a parallel organisation of a similar type, the "Democratic Platform", then finally agreed to merge both organisations in the so-called "Democratic Convergence".

C.P. leaders

Nobody could have had the slightest doubt that the only part of this organisation which had any real power were the workers' parties. The fictitious character of the bourgeois "allies" of the CP and PSOE clearly exposed in the subsequent elections, was evident from the very beginning. Among other unsavoury characters involved was Gil-Robles, the founder of Spanish clerical-fascism in the 1930s and Trevijano, an individual representing no-one but himself who was later publicly exposed for his part in a financial and political scandal in former Spanish Guinea.

Yet the leaders of the workers' parties, especially the CP, were adamant on the need for such elements to be present in the "broad alliance" and even agreed to give them what amounted to the right to veto within the unified body.

By means of such policies, the leaders of the Spanish working class gave the ruling class a breathing-



Santiago Carillo

space and an opportunity beyond their wildest imaginings. From a situation which had appeared almost hopeless only a few months before the bankers, industrialists and capitalist politicians gradually understood, that the regime still remained, albeit tenuously, in their hands.

The situation had been saved by the "responsible", "moderate", and "statesmanlike", conduct of the workers leaders, whose primary aim throughout this entire period consisted in attempting to prove to the ruling class that they and their parties constituted no threat to the established order of society.

The strategists of capital could scarcely believe their good fortune. Was it not all too good to be true? Could they trust the word of Felipe Gonzalez and, above all, of Santiago Carillo, the leader of the "Communist" party? For his part Carillo leaned over backwards to prove his "his good faith".

The behaviour of the leadership of the PCE and the lengths to which they carried their policy of open class collaboration has no parallel in the whole history of the international labour movement. For many years the cornerstone of the party's policy had been that of "national reconciliation". The CP's main demand was now a government of "national concentration" — including all the political parties, even those of the fascist right wing with, of course, the participation of the CP leaders.

Throughout the colossal wave of strikes which shook the fabric of

Spanish bourgeois society in the months following Franco's death, the CP leadership used its considerable industrial weight to brake and fragment the movement, avoiding at all costs the generalisation of the strike wave. Shortly after Carillo's return to Spain, the Party moved still further to the right with the open acceptance of the Monarchy and the Suarez government, which had meantime replaced the ill-starred Arias Navarro ministry. In a move which caused a shock-wave throughout the grass roots of the Party, Carillo announced, that henceforth, the gold and red flag of the Spanish Monarchy would be flown at all Party meetings and public demonstrations.

The Republic was dropped unceremoniously from the Party's agitation and youngsters carrying the Republican tricolour forcibly ejected from Party meetings and beaten up by CP stewards. Forgetting his earlier criticism of Juan Carlos as a stooge of Franco, Carillo has made repeated reference to the King as the "main motor force of the democratising process in Spain". He has gone out of his way to praise the ex-general secretary of the Fascist Movimiento, Prime Minister Adolfo Suarez. In one newspaper interview, Carillo stated that his only criticism of Suarez was that he was not a member of the Communist Party!

Reaction weak

In all this we see the fundamental difference between the revolutionary process in Spain and the Russian revolution in Spain, the revolutionary preparation of the working class, and especially of the most active and conscious layer, the vanguard, had taken place in the enormous wave of strikes and class battles for more than ten years before the death of Franco. In their scope and intensity the class struggles in Spain were even greater than the revolutionary movement in Russia in the period 1910-14.

The strike wave which burst out in the first months after the death of the dictator, which aroused the active support and sympathy of the whole of Spanish society, completely isolating the forces of reaction and

throwing the ruling class into a state of panic and hysteria, had every possibility of extending into a strike with the formation of soviets, or workers' councils as the experience of Vitoria clearly demonstrated.

Faced with the implacable movement of the people, the apparatus of repression would have broken in the hands of those who attempted to use it. The thinking representatives of big business had no illusions on this score. Yet the situation in Spain, in those months of turmoil, did not lead to a new edition of the February Revolution in Russia, or even to a revolutionary overturn such as took place in Portugal after the 25th April. What is the explanation of this?

The difference does not lie in the objective situation. In every respect, the situation in Spain was far more mature for revolution than, say Portugal at the time of the Armed Forces' coup d'état. And it is here we see the decisive role of the subjective factor in the revolution. Many times in the history of the last seventy years we have witnessed similar revolutionary situations where power was within reach of the working class and yet the revolutionary movement was aborted for the lack of a real Marxist party and leadership. Spain was no exception to this rule. And the difference with Russia consisted precisely in this.

In Russia, for a period of decades prior to 1917, a whole generation of workers had had the experience, not only of great class battles, but also of the Marxist leadership of the Bolshevik party of Lenin. For many years the active layer of the class, those tens of thousands of conscious proletarians, the best class fighters in every workshop, mine and mill, the people we may call the natural leaders of the working class had been imbued by the the Bolshevik policy, its press and agitators, with one single, overriding and imperative idea: **do not place your trust in the Liberal capitalist politicians, do not compromise your class independence in blocs and alliances with the so-called "progressive" bourgeoisie: trust only in yourselves and fight only under your own banner in defence of your own programme and policy.**

Although the so-called "Communist" leaders of today have forgotten it, to their eternal shame, this Marxist idea was what fundamentally separated Bolshevism from Menshevism; in other words, revolutionary socialism from reformist class collaborationism.

But not even the Russian mensheviks, with their policy of collaboration with the liberal bourgeoisie, ever went so far as Carillo and the other leaders of the Spanish CP in their abject policy of capitulation to the Suarez government and the Juan Carlist Monarchy.

The CP leaders blindly placed their trust in the "reformist" wing of the Spanish capitalist class. As if the "reforms" and concessions had been graciously conceded by Suarez out of the goodness of his heart, or as a result of the "skilful" wheeling and dealing of the Carillo, and not out of abject fear of the movement of the working class! The CP leaders, in their reformist blindness, could not understand that the tactical retreat of the Spanish ruling class had been forced upon them by the **changed balance of forces.**

Pre-Marxist

In place of the Marxist class analysis of society, the lamentable "theoreticians" of the PCE have erected an amazingly elaborate metaphysical construction whereby the whims and caprices of the individual bourgeois politicians and, of course, the "cleverness" of Carillo determine the fate of society. A wrong word here, "undiplomatic" gesture there, immediately cause the tanks to roll into the streets of Madrid, according to the "wise men" of the PCE Central Committee. Instead of understanding the class dynamics which open up the rifts in the ranks of the bourgeoisie, causing one sector to advocate reform and another repression, Carillo and Co. retreat into the Alice in Wonderland world of "good" capitalists and "bad" capitalists. Clutching the "good" capitalist Suarez by the sleeve, Carillo fondly imagines that he is helping "progress" against "reaction".

Thus the leaders of the "Communist" party of Spain have abandoned

the Marxist class view of society in favour of the pre-Marxist liberal democratic idea of "progress" versus "reaction". The forces of the proletariat become hopelessly entangled and merged with the general morass of "democratic and progressive forces", which in the case of Spain includes a veritable rogues' gallery of "converted" fascists and yesterday's hangmen of the working class up to and including His Majesty Juan Carlos de Borbon y Borbon and the ex-general secretary of Franco's Movimiento whose main fault is that he is (for inexplicable reasons) "not a member of the PCE"! And this is the travesty of Marxism which, day in and day out, has been fed to the rank and file CP workers by their leaders, through the Party press, in meetings, cells and study circles. A whole generation of the most advanced layers of the Spanish proletariat have been educated by the "theoreticians" of the CP, not in the Leninist spirit of implacable hostility towards the bourgeoisie, but in that of collaboration with, and subordination to, the so-called "progressive" wing of the ruling class.

This behaviour of the CP leaders came as a complete surprise to the bourgeoisie who, after 40 years of the most brutal repression directed primarily against the Communist workers, expected the worst from that quarter. Now, very rapidly the more intelligent wing of the ruling class, represented by the arch-opportunist Suarez, came to understand the real significance of the policy of Carillo and its importance for the successful execution of the enormously dangerous and difficult transition from the methods of open dictatorship to a more subtle form of class rule.

Contrary to the myth of the "good" capitalists and the "bad" capitalists assiduously disseminated by the CP leaders, the fact remains that the bourgeoisie does not rule on the basis of ideas and principles. The capitalist class is always very flexible as regards the methods which it uses to dominate society. **Its preference for dictatorship or democracy is not determined by the subjective wishes of this or that bourgeois politician, and certainly not by the mincing and**

The Spanish Revolution

[1931-39]

by Leon Trotsky

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London E8 3PN

fawning of the moderate "statesmen" of the CP, but purely and simply by the prevailing class balance of forces.

For some time before the death of the Caudillo, the more thinking representatives of capital had understood that, with the changed relationship of class forces in Spanish society, the continuation of the old methods of repression was increasingly counter-productive and actually constituted a threat to the survival of the rule of their class. The intolerable pressures and contradictions that were accumulating within society, lacking the safety valve provided by the legal outlets of "normal" bourgeois parliamentary democracy, could at any time erupt and bring down the entire edifice of capitalism in Spain.

Only a profound and craven fear of the movement of the masses was capable of producing the "miraculous" transformation of Suarez, Areilza and Juan Carlos from life-long fascists and supporters of Franco into latter-day democrats and "friends of the people". Only the heroic movement of the working class, stiffening the opposition of the intellectuals, clergy and middle layers of society, deprived the regime of its mass base, suspended the dictatorship in mid-air, and reduced the mighty repressive apparatus to a state of impotence.

Yet for Carillo and the other CP leaders the whole secret of the "transition to democracy" lay, and still lies, in their ability to ingratiate

themselves with the bourgeoisie and demonstrate in deeds as well as in words that the threat of a revolutionary overturn is a mere figment of the imagination and that the working class, under their responsible guidance and leadership, will never transgress the boundaries of bourgeois legality, or to use one of Carillo's favourite expressions, will never break "the rules of the game".

Suarez referendum

If Cevantes, the greatest of Spanish humanists, were living today he would have no problem in composing a parody still more hilarious than Don Quixote, describing the farcical activities of the Spanish labour leaders, tilting at the windmills of the ever-present "forces of reaction" and falling over themselves in their efforts to win the favours of Suarez and the King who privately reward their labours with the same rude guffaws bestowed on the mad knight by the ugly peasant girls he mistook for beautiful maidens in distress. And just like Don Quixote, the leaders of the Spanish working class always end up with the soundest of buffetings as a reward for their efforts.

As always happens, the "parochial", "realistic" politicians of labour always turn out to be the most hopeless of utopians when it comes to the test. The results of their actions turn out to be diametrically opposed to their intentions. So it was with the ingnomorious "Democratic

Co-ordination", which first tried to negotiate with Suarez the contents of his promised reforms, then couldn't make up its mind whether to say "yes" or "no" to the Referendum, and by the time it decided to abstain, Suarez had already succeeded in convincing the country that his package deal had indeed been freely negotiated with the (still illegal) opposition and (in the lack of any alternative whatsoever on the part of the Democratic Co-ordination) got an overwhelming "Yes" vote in the Referendum.

Only in the Basque provinces was there a sizeable abstention. In the rest of the country, the workers, peasants and small shopkeepers took one look at the sorry disarray of the "democratic" opposition, which for months on end had been telling them what good and sincere democrats Suarez and Juan Carlos were, and decided to vote "yes"—and see what happened.

The pathetic campaign organised at the very last moment in favour of abstention, in complete contradiction with all that the opposition leaders had been saying for months before, and with no clear alternative being posed, met with no response, other than among the minority of more advanced workers who abstained more out of loyalty to the leaders of their organisations than from conviction. **The only criticism offered by the workers' leaders of the Suarez Referendum was that they had not been invited to participate in its elaboration**—which was perfectly true. But in view of the fact that their exemplary good behaviour in the previous period had convinced Suarez that he had nothing to fear, why should he have treated them with anything else than contempt?

Here again, the "diplomacy" of the workers' leaders, to their utter dismay and incomprehension, led to the opposite results to what they had intended. It is a situation that has been repeated many times since and still they do not learn.

The Suarez government emerged from the Referendum campaign greatly strengthened. With the help of the leaders of the opposition, principally of the workers' parties, the new regime had acquired respectability in the eyes of the



Mass Rally of workers during the 1977 election

masses, particularly of the middle class and the more politically inert layers of the working class. One of the most celebrated political cartoonists in Spain, "Paredis" of the influential *El Pais* hit on the idea of portraying Suarez in an imperial pose on the top of a Roman style column, where he has remained ever since, with the opposition leaders standing on each others' shoulders in a vain attempt to conduct negotiations with him "on equal terms".

With a big majority of votes in favour of the government's reform, which undoubtedly reflected the general vague, but deep-rooted desire for change, Suarez was now in a strong position to call a general election, and win a majority. Had elections been held in the first few months after Franco's death, there is no doubt that, in the charged and radicalised atmosphere, the Socialist and Communist parties would have swept to power and the bourgeois parties, not only the fascist but also the "reformist" ones, would have been practically wiped out.

A cursory glance at the editorials of the serious bourgeois press, not only in Spain but also internationally would reveal the complete collapse of confidence of the capitalist commentators at that time. But the confidence of the ruling class is also a variable factor. The strategists of capital internationally had not taken sufficiently into consideration the absolute bankruptcy of the leaders of the Spanish workers' organisations which unexpectedly gave them the

opportunity to regain the initiative, at least in the short run. On the eve of the general election of June 1977, the ruling class had recovered its nerve and the press was now talking in glowing terms of the "Superman Suarez" who had, in their view, saved the day. They now confidently looked forward to an electoral victory which would give Suarez the same overwhelming victory he had gained in the Referendum.

A Bonapartist regime

The strategy of the majority tendency of the ruling class in Spain was to proceed cautiously with the dismantling of the old dictatorship with the intention of installing a monarchist "strong state" along the lines of the Gaullist regime in France. The constitutional illusions of the bourgeoisie were expressed in the words of the President of the influential "21st Century Club" where he talked of "a Crown which, by virtue of its mission of conciliation and arbitration, will give peace, order and understanding to Spain."

The Spanish ruling class has learned something from the British bourgeoisie which for centuries has maintained the Monarchy, at enormous cost, not out of caprice or sentimentality, but as a **reserve weapon of reaction**, a force which apparently stands above politics and "party interests", but which, in the

event of a direct confrontation between the classes, could serve as a rallying point for all the forces of reaction within society and could challenge the legality of a democratically-elected parliament which attempted to carry through socialist measures.

The new-found monarchic enthusiasm of the hard-headed Spanish bankers and industrialists has no other explanation than this. Unfortunately for them, the Spanish Monarchy has neither the same history or roots as its British equivalent, but is seen by the great majority of Spaniards as an artificial graft which is, moreover, tainted by its past connection with the Franco dictatorship. No amount of public relations campaigns can erase that stain, not even with the energetic assistance of the general secretary of the Spanish "Communist Party". At the first attempt to use the Monarchy against the Spanish people, that instrument will break in pieces.

Nevertheless, it is a measure of the stupidity and short-sightedness of the Spanish workers' leaders that in the recent discussions on the new Constitution, the MPs of the "Communist" Party voted unanimously in favour of the Monarchy, while those of the Socialist Party only put up a token show of opposition. Even the meek display of resistance by the Socialists provoked the ire of Santiago Carillo who publicly accused the Socialists of irresponsibility in breaking the "consensus" over the question of the Monarchy!

What the leaders of the Spanish workers' organisations cannot or will not understand is the real nature of the plans of the Spanish ruling class, whose main intention, behind all the facade of parliamentarism and "democracy", is to construct a **Bonapartist state**, with the Monarchy as the focal point of reaction in the future, a second chamber with considerable powers, elected on the kind of franchise which would give more weight to the less populated, more conservative provinces and act as a counter-weight to the lower house (in a similar way to the British House of Lords in the past), and above all, **maintaining virtually intact all the old apparatus of repression inherited from the Franco**

period.

The bourgeoisie hoped that the general elections would result in a **strong government**, capable of consolidating this type of semi-parliamentarian **Bonapartist** regime, and on the other hand, confronting the working class with an **austerity plan**, based on wage restraint and an attack on living standards as a way out of the increasingly severe economic crisis. The new-found confidence of the Spanish capitalists was expressed in the rise in share prices on the Stock Exchange on the eve of the elections. Suarez, the "superman", was riding high on the success of the Referendum campaign. The political parties of the opposition were only just emerging from the twilight world of semi-illegality in which they had found themselves in the previous months. Their apparatus was extremely defective, and they lacked funds and cadres.

Election result

The new "party" hastily knocked together by Suarez on the eve of the elections, consisting of an ill-assorted rag-bag of "liberals", Social Democrats" and the opportunist ex-fascists of Suarez's camarilla, known disparagingly in the press as "all the President's men", after Nixon's Watergate mafia, enjoyed all the resources of the state machine, unlimited access to television and limitless funds from the banks and monopolies. Just to make sure there would be no slip-ups, the voting system was rigged to deprive the youth and the worker emigrants of votes and give the advantage to the backward rural areas over the industrial centres even in the elections to the Lower House.

On top of that, no fewer than 41 members of the Upper Chamber were directly nominated by the King. To further undermine the workers' parties, the official election period was limited to three weeks, whereas the government party had in effect been conducting its campaign for months.

Yet in spite of these measures, the first relatively "free" elections after 40 years of fascism resulted in an amazing triumph for the workers'

parties, and above all for the socialist party, the PSOE. This was no thanks to the vision and foresight of the party leaders who had completely underestimated the potential strength of the socialist vote.

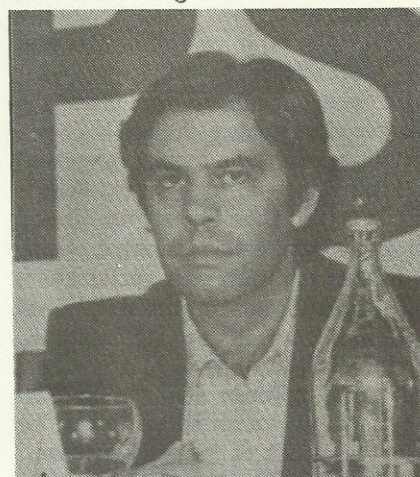
The Marxist tendency in the PSOE had already anticipated a big vote of maybe 30%, whereas in January, Felipe Gonzalez, the general secretary went on record as saying that 15% would be an "acceptable result" for his party. In the event, the PSOE won 33% of the votes, scoring spectacular successes in all the main working class centres of the country. In Madrid, Barcelona, the Basque country and Andalucia, the Socialist Party, after decades of being reduced to a tiny handful struggling for existence, emerged as the main force in the working class.

PSOE amounted to more than 50% of the electorate. In Barcelona the PSOE and PSUC (as the CP is known in Catalonia) completely wiped out the government party, the UCD. In the Basque provinces, the Centre Party was annihilated by the combined forces of the Socialists and Basque nationalists. Only in the most backward regions of Galicia and Old Castille did the UCD get a decent result. And in these areas, the old system of the "caciques" or local political bosses still prevails which means that large numbers of peasants were certainly compelled to vote as directed by the local landlords and fascist bureaucrats under pain of losing their jobs or homes.

But the real significance of these results lay in the **total defeat of reaction**. The main right wing party, the "Popular Alliance" of Manuel Fraga, which did not dare to openly advocate fascist policies, got less than 10% of the votes, about the same number as the CP. The openly fascist "New Force" (Fuerza Nueva) got only 63,000 votes (0.35%) of the total. This may be compared to the 5 million votes of the PSOE and the 1½ million votes of the PCE.

What these elections demonstrated clearly was precisely the fundamental change in the correlation of class forces in Spanish society. Contrary to all the pathetic bleatings

of Carillo and the Spanish reformists there is no mass social base for reaction in Spain at the present time and the objective situation is enormously favourable to the working class which, with a correct leadership, programme and policy would be entirely capable of effecting the transformation of society without bloodshed and without civil war.



Felipe Gonzalez

Electoral statistics are, in themselves an important indicator of the class balance of forces and of the changing moods of the classes within society. But they do not by any means exhaust the question of the relative strength of the classes. The vote for the Centre Party (UCD) for instance, could not by any stretch of the imagination, be seen as a vote for reaction. What that vote represented was the first stirrings of political consciousness among the millions of inert and more politically unaware sections of society—the small shopkeepers, peasants, artisans, housewives.

These sections, in voting for the Centre, were first and foremost expressing their decisive rejection of 40 years of fascist dictatorship. In a confused way they were voting for change for a better life and a better future. The electoral propaganda of the Centre played up to these aspirations of the "small man". Not accidentally, Suarez the ex-fascist chose to fight the elections under the banner of the "Centre", and even described himself as a Social Democrat! Undoubtedly these petty bourgeois masses, in voting UCD, were voting against dictatorship and for democracy. But in the minds of

these farmers, small shopkeepers and housewives the idea of democracy was inextricably bound up with the more the idea of a better, "more European" living standard. Inevitably, it has been precisely these sections in the months following the elections which have moved most swiftly and decisively against the Centre and against the Suarez government.

Both the opinion polls and the bye-elections in Asturias and Alicante prove conclusively that the middle classes have decisively deserted Suarez and are seeking a radical alternative to a government which has betrayed their hopes and offered them nothing but economic ruin, political instability and social anarchy. Of the leaders of the PSOE and

If the leaders of the PSOE and PCE had the slightest idea of socialism, the great majority of these disillusioned middle-class voters could be won to the side of the working class. Unfortunately, the conduct of the leaders of both parties has proven to be no better after the elections than it was before them.

Economy

The misfortune of the Spanish bourgeoisie was that in its attempt to effect the difficult and perilous transition to a Bonapartist semi-parliamentarian regime coincided with the onset of the first major world-wide recession since the Second World War. The increased competition for world markets between the different capitalist countries rapidly exposed the hopelessly uncompetitive character of Spanish industry. In 1976, the deficit of trade was \$7,330 million. Even after the devaluation of the peseta carried out by the Suarez government in a desperate attempt to regain a competitive edge for Spanish exports, the deficit of trade stood at \$6,363 millions at the end of 1977. At the same time, this devaluation represented an indirect attack on living standards, provoking an increase in inflation as a result of the rising cost of imports. Since 60% of all imports consist of

raw materials and semi-manufactured products vital to Spanish industry, any depreciation in the value of the currency vis-a-vis other currencies necessarily has the effect of causing big price rises at all levels in a short space of time.

The devaluation therefore had to be accompanied by a package of measures designed to hold down wages and make the workers pay the price of the inefficiency and bankruptcy of Spanish industry, which had been kept in a privileged position for years under Franco, pampered by enormous subsidies and sheltered behind high tariff walls.

The rate of inflation, which in real terms was approaching the horrendous level of 40% in 1977 had been enormously increased by the increase in the money supply which reached the incredible figure of 23% at its peak last summer. The Suarez government, fearing an early confrontation with Spanish labour, deliberately chose to increase the amount of money in circulation, continue to give cheap credits to industry to keep down unemployment, and allow prices and wages to rise at the very time when all other capitalist countries were carrying out policies of austerity and wage freeze, such as the "social contract" in Britain. This policy, from a capitalist point of view, was suicidal in view of the already uncompetitive nature of Spanish industry and the yawning balance of trade deficit. The capitalist press let out a hue and cry against the government for allowing the economy to drift, inexorably towards catastrophe.

But on the other hand, Suarez now found himself in an impossible position. Instead of the strong government anticipated by the bourgeoisie prior to the elections, they found themselves with a weak government, which had behind it neither a majority of the votes nor with an absolute majority in parliament. Within a few months after the elections all the opinion polls reflected an absolute collapse of support for the government.

The rapid rise of inflation provoked a wave of anger and resentment among the middle class as well as the backward sections of

the workers and housewives who had voted for Suarez. The scandal of the beating up of the Socialist MP Jaime Blanco by armed police revealed to everyone that precious little had changed since the "good old days" of Franco and Arias Navarro. The simmering discontent of the nationalities again erupted in disorder in the Basque country, massive demonstrations in favour of autonomy in Catalonia, Valencia and Andalucia, which resulted in a fatal shooting in Malaga. A determined offensive on the part of the Socialist and Communist MPs inside and outside Parliament could undoubtedly have brought down the government and forced the convening of new elections in which the workers' parties would have been assured a landslide victory. But this did not occur. Once again the leaders of the PCE and PSOE strove with might and main to arrive at a deal or "consensus" with Suarez and prevent mobilisations of the workers.

In the Autumn of 1977, Suarez convened a series of conversations with the leaders of the opposition parties. By this very fact he indicated that the government could not last a matter of days without the support of the PSOE and PCE leaders. The result was the signing of the notorious Pact of Moncloa, the Spanish equivalent of the British Social Contract. This Pact established a ceiling of 20% for wage increases at a time when even the rigged official index estimated a rise of 30% in the cost of living (the real rate was much higher, as we have stated). On the other hand, the government ordered the Bank of Spain to reduce the increase in the money supply from an annual rate of 23% to 17%. This latter measure had the immediate effect of cutting off funds to industry and causing a massive wave of factory closures, and an enormous increase in unemployment.

For its part, both the government and the big capitalists initially looked with indifference at the devastating social and economic effects of their policies. The Basque industrialist and "royal" senator Louis Olarra commented cynically: "To insist upon maintaining the work force of our factories intact at this moment in time is suicide...If

there is a big factory which has to suspend payments, it is better that it should do so as soon as possible in order later to attempt to recover it... What we cannot do today is to keep a lot of dead ducks."

These words adequately express the point of view of the Spanish monopolists who were quite prepared to shut their factories like so many matchboxes, throwing hundreds of thousands out of work as a means of teaching the workers a lesson, holding down wages and boosting profit margins. The most prominent spokesman of this suicidal policy was Fuentes Quintana, the "strong man" of the Economic Ministry, very highly thought of by the leaders of the PCE and PSOE, who, in all fairness, have never shone in matters of economic theory, or any other theory, if it comes to that. At the time of the signing of the Moncloa Pact, Carillo boasted that these economic measures would solve the economic crisis "within 18 months".

But it did not take eighteen days before the catastrophic effects of this policy became felt. The monetary cut-back, as predicted by the Marxist wing of the PSOE in the pages of their journal *Nuevo Claridad*, immediately threw the entire economy into a state of turmoil. In the first few months of 1978 there was an average of two factory closures a day in the heavily industrialised Basque province of Vizcaya. In the Basque country as a whole there were 127,000 men out of work out of a population of 972,700 (13.16% of the total).

Bourgeoisie pessimistic

In the Basque provinces of Guipuzcoa, where most Basque is spoken and where practically every family in many villages had one or more member arrested or beaten by the police in connection with the activities of ETA, there are no fewer than 24.54% out of work, mainly youth. Not without reason, the Socialist leader Enrique Mugica recently related the resurgence of terrorism in the Basque country to the problem of mass youth unemployment. And this situation is not peculiar to the Basque country. In Catalonia, the textile industry is in a state of absolute ruin. In Andalucia, the levels of misery, unemployment and actual hunger have alarmed even the bourgeois press which daily publishes reports of the desperate

condition of the unemployed in that unhappy region. The generally accepted figure for unemployment is around 1,300,000. But not long ago, an MP of the right wing Popular Alliance Party in a parliamentary debate actually put the figure at two millions, and that estimate may not be far from the truth. In addition, only a small minority of the unemployed in Spain receive any kind of unemployment benefit.

The present economic situation is desperate. The government's measures have partially ameliorated the balance of payments deficit, which, as we have seen, remains high nevertheless. But only at the cost of completely undermining the home market, which remains in a very depressed state. At the close of the first quarter of 1978 the general situation was one of total stagnation of industry, empty order books and plant operating at only 80% of capacity. In some sectors the situation is worse still. Shipbuilding is working at only 60% of capacity and steelmaking at 74%, and still falling. Stocks are rising and, despite all the government's measures, private investment is falling.

The worry of the situation is that the very capitalists, who were screaming about a reduction in state expenditure only a few months ago, are now complaining bitterly about the shortage of state aid and credit. The truth of the matter is that the Spanish capitalists, after years of leaning like cripples on the crutches of state aid, now find it completely impossible to get along without it. They do not invest in industry and are completely pessimistic about the future.

The depths of this pessimism are fully revealed in an article written for the Italian newspaper *La Stampa* (14.4.78) by Antonio Garrigues, President of the Association for the Progress of Management. Significantly, the title of the article is "State Socialism in Spain?" It is worth while quoting a few lines from this article which shows how the thinking representatives of Spanish capitalism view the future: "At this moment the capitalist is not investing, which is the key to the whole system of the liberal market system (he means the capitalist system, DH). On the other hand, the

state is obliged to invest, reducing the space for private initiative (?). As a consequence we see, little by little, the socialisation or statization of the economy."

Again: "The possibilities for a really liberal policy to save the market economy are minimal. The Left will control—jointly—the economic activity (of the country) at any moment."

In these lines you can clearly see the nervousness, almost the hysteria of the bourgeoisie who fear the consequences of the economic collapse yet are impotent to do anything about it. Garrigues goes on to draw an irresistible conclusion: "**The Left control 50% of political power, they have the trade union and cultural power. We have to set out from this situation. There is no other alternative except to arrive at consensus solutions.**" (my emphasis DH)

Government unstable

The trembling voice of this spokesman of capital reveals the real situation in Spain far more than all the speeches of Felipe Gonzalez and Santiago Carillo. The intelligent bourgeois understand the enormous power represented by the millions of workers organised in the PCE and PSOE and their respective trade union, the Workers Commissions and the UGT. The recent trade union elections resulted in an enormous strengthening of Spanish trade unionism, with the election of factory committees in the great majority of workplaces throughout the country. At present, something like four million workers are organised in the trade unions, mainly the UGT and Workers' Commissions, and these organisations are still growing, despite the economic crisis and mass unemployment, as the Spanish workers instinctively realise the need to defend themselves against the bosses. No wonder Garrigues paints such a gloomy picture of the "Left" controlling the political, trade union and economic power!

The only way out for Spanish capitalism would be an all-out attack on workers' living standards to restore the profit-margins and business "confidence" of the bour-

geoisie. But after four decades of fascist slavery, the Spanish workers are in no mood to tolerate attacks on their hard-won living standards. A move towards reaction and a new dictatorship under these circumstances would be out of the question. While there are undoubtedly a number of lunatics in the general staff of the army and civil guard who fondly dream of a return to July 1936, the overwhelming majority of the bourgeoisie regard such a prospect with undisguised horror. Not for sentimental reasons of course.

These hard-hearted, cynical gangsters would have no compunction in wading knee-deep in the blood of the workers and their families as they did before, if they thought they had a reasonable prospect of success. **But the decisive section of the ruling class clearly understand that the class balance of forces has changed decisively since 1936.** Today the working class is a million times stronger, its position in production and in society more decisive. On the other hand, the social reserves of reaction have shrunk practically to nothing in the intervening period. Where today is the backward mass of illiterate, conservative peasants? Where are the Hitlers and Mussolinis? Where are the Moorish mercenaries? The ruling class of Spain have never forgotten that in 1936-37, despite the much more favourable circumstances, the working class gave them a good lesson in the first few months and almost succeeded in taking power.

Had it not been for the paralysing influence exercised then, as now, by conservative and cowardly leaderships, the Spanish workers undoubtedly would have taken power. The bourgeoisie in 1936 came close to losing everything. And today the chances of such a disaster befalling them are greater still, despite the welcome assistance provided by the present day Prietos and Ibarruris. For that reason, the Spanish bourgeoisie keeps its military adventurers on a tight rein. In the words of Garrigues, it is not the moment for confrontation but "consensus solutions".

The trouble is that the present government has proved woefully

inadequate to deliver the goods, as far as the bourgeoisie is concerned. The bourgeois press is ever more critical of Suarez and his government. But what alternative is there?

For some months now the idea has been canvassed of the entry of the Socialist leaders into a government of coalition. Not long ago, one of the PSOE leaders, Alfonso Guerra stated that the Socialists could bring down the Suarez government in 48 hours. The reason why they chose not to do so was that they were not sure what the reaction to a Socialist government would be on the part of the bankers, capitalists, Church and army generals! For some time, the right wing of the PSOE leadership, headed by Enrique Mugica and Luis Solana have been engaged in semi-secret discussion with the leaders of the so-called "social democratic" wing of the UCD led by Fernandez Ordonez. The idea was apparently to form a coalition with this wing of the UCD after a split in Suarez's increasingly divided party.

Bye-elections

The prospect for holding the Suarez government together looks more remote every day. On every major issue, splits and dissensions break out within the government party which has never satisfactorily been unified. The economic catastrophe of Fuentes Quintana's deflationary package led to the summary dismissal of the unfortunate professor and his replacement by the more pliant Alvil Martorell. Undoubtedly, this reflects a change in the government's economic policy, and not accidentally.

The collapse of factory after factory brought the social tensions to a head in a series of sensitive regions of the country. Already last autumn, the threat to close the shipyards in Cadiz brought practically the whole working population into the streets in a violent demonstration in which the police found themselves bombarded from the rooftops of the workers' flats with "heavy objects" including a sewing machine and a fridge! At the other end of Spain in the troubled Basque provinces, the threatened closure of the big steel factory, Babcock and

Wilcox which put 30,000 jobs in jeopardy in the Bilbao area brought about a one-day general stoppage and the threat of a factory occupation which, if it should materialise, would threaten to spark off a wave of sit-ins throughout Spain.

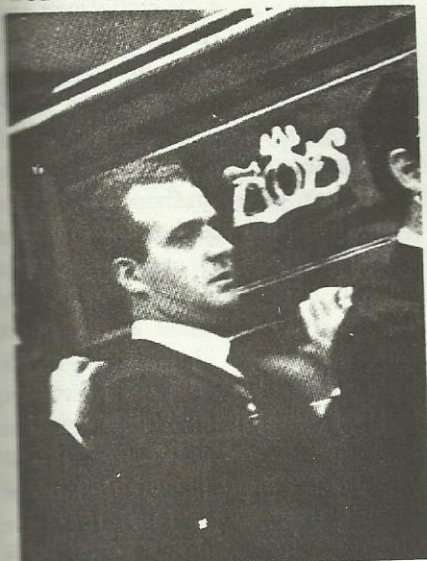
Frightened by the consequences of their own policies, the Suarez government has once again retreated in panic, allowing the money supply to rise again, and offering new credits to industry to prevent more factory closures. But such a policy can only result in a new twist in the inflationary spiral. At the close of 1977, the budget deficit stood at 80,000 million pesetas (£1 : 145 ps). A further increase in subsidies can only result in an increased budget deficit, rising inflation and the undermining of the advantages of the devaluation of the peseta, which will cause a new balance of payments crisis, leading to a new devaluation and so on.

The position of Spanish capitalism is desperate. And the fundamental reason for the crisis is the inability to stage a head-on collision with the working class because of the enormous accumulated strength of Spanish labour.

The hopeless floundering of the Suarez government, the desperate economic situation, the festering sore of the national question, continual terrorist outbreaks and brutal police repression, all add up to an extremely explosive combination.

The extremely weak position of the Suarez government was clearly indicated in the recent bye-elections in Asturias and Alicante. In Alicante, the Centre's vote was reduced from 35.4% to 31.15%. In Asturias (Oviedo) it collapsed from 31% to 23.4%. In the latter province the difference between the government party and the PCE was only 800 votes! The process of polarisation was clear in both constituencies, but especially in Asturias, where a series of very radical strikes and occupations in the

mining industry formed the background to the election campaign. In Asturias, where a series of very radical PSOE and PCE were more than 55%, and in Alicante, more than 51%. All this indicates that if general elections were held at the present time, the workers' parties would walk home.



Juan Carlos

Nevertheless, the recent elections also revealed a high percentage of abstentions, in contrast to the massive turn-out at the general elections last year. Also the vote of the PSOE registered a slight decline, whereas the vote of the PCE increased, in the case of Asturias, to a significant degree. This fact demonstrates that the middle class and the more backward sections of the working class is thoroughly disenchanted with the results of 12 months of "democratic" bourgeois government and registered its protest by abstaining in a bye-election which could not determine the future government of the country.

No doubt in a general election this pattern would not be repeated, and the main beneficiary would be the PSOE. But the fact cannot be denied that the incredibly short-sighted and foolish policy of Felipe Gonzalez in the recent months materially contributed to the loss of votes by the Socialist party. Under the pressure of Willy Brandt and the leaders of the Second International, the leaders

of the PSOE have moved steadily to the right in the recent period, abandoning all of the radical phraseology which characterised their position in the underground period. In a vain attempt to "win the middle ground", Gonzalez, following in the footsteps of Carillo, attempted to give the party a "moderate" and "respectable" image which he foolishly imagined would appeal to the middle class voters.

After the PCE had formally abandoned Leninism at the recent Congress, Gonzalez decided, apparently without consulting the Executive of the PSOE, that the time had come for the Socialist Party to "go one better" and formally abandon Marxism! This "respectable" posturing, which threw the Socialist Party into turmoil and caused the leaders to beat a hasty retreat under the pressure of the angry rank-and-file, conspicuously failed to win the votes of the middle class but certainly lost the party thousands of working class votes which ironically passed to the PCE, notably in Asturias.

The real reason for the mass abstention and the slight drop in the Socialist vote is that these sections have radically turned against the Centre but, as the result of a total lack of serious opposition from the workers' leaders, can see no fundamental difference between the parties and register this protest against "all politicians" by not voting. A serious campaign of opposition, mobilising the workers in meetings and demonstrations in every factory, workers' district, village and university would galvanise support for the PSOE. But the "practical" policies of parliamentary posturings and wheeling and dealing with the Centre only serve to repel and demoralise the middle classes who draw the conclusion that "they're all the same". Nevertheless, in spite of themselves, the PSOE and PCE leaders will gain enormously in a general election where the issue is posed point blank of "who shall govern Spain for the next period."

At times, when considering the behaviour of the workers' leaders in Spain, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that they do not really want to win power. The impression is irresistible that the Socialists, in particular, are torn between the desire to hold ministerial portfolios and fear of the consequences of being in the government at a time of rising class struggles and desperate economic crisis. The revolt of the rank-and-file against Gonzalez's attempt to drop the word "Marxism" from the party programme was an indication of what could be expected if the Spanish Socialist leaders were to attempt to repeat the experiences of the present Labour government in Britain in the Spanish context.

Degenerate

The leaders of the PSOE understand that, once in power, it not be easy to abandon their programme without provoking enormous opposition in the ranks of the party. Yet, on the other side, they know that against the background of world capitalist crisis, any attempt to carry through their programme of reforms will meet with the implacable resistance of the capitalist class. The Socialist leaders will find themselves between the hammer and the anvil, with the workers and the rank-and-file pressing them to carry out their programme and the bankers and industrialists pressing them to reduce living standards to "save the country". All this is quite sufficient to explain the reluctance of Felipe Gonzalez to bring about the fall of Suarez "at this moment in time".

For their part, the leaders of the "Communist" Party, utterly degenerate from a Marxist point of view, shown no such restraint. Carillo and the rest are positively eager to "assume the responsibilities of office" and enter the government on practically any terms. With the break from Moscow, the leadership of the PCE no longer acts, as it did in the 1930s as the conscious agents of the Russian bureaucracy and increa-

singly acts instead as the ally of "its" bourgeoisie. The "nationalism" of the Spanish C.P. leaders vis à vis the Kremlin finds its counterpart in its desire to acquire the image of a "national" "patriotic" "Spanish" party whose first concern is the "national" interest, which, as it happens, is the same "national" interest defended by the right wing Social Democrats, Suarez, the King, or, for that matter Fraga.

It is a supreme irony of history, that precisely at the moment when capitalism is foundering in the worst crisis of recent times, and when the whole system of so-called "private enterprise" is falling apart at the seams, the leaders of the so-called "Communist" Party express their confidence in the future health and well-being of the "mixed economy", loudly denying their intention to nationalise the banks or anything else for that matter. Carillo is fêted for his "statesmanlike wisdom" in the pages of the bourgeois press. But his policy of breaking away from Moscow has opened up a Pandora's box of criticism and internal dissent within the ranks of the party. At the recent congress of the PCE which formally renounced Leninism, a whole series of cracks and dissensions were already visible. The Catalan CP (PSUC) refused to accept the decision. Not accidentally the mass opposition to the change came from the worker elements in the Workers' Commissions.

On the First of May Demonstration in Madrid many CP members were to be seen sporting a badge with the inscription: "I am faithful to Lenin". It is clear from all this that the PCE leaders can no longer count upon the same blind obedience to their policies which they enjoyed in the past. The old monolith has finally been broken. Carillo will soon discover that it is not possible to maintain a Stalinist discipline in the absence of a Stalinist policy. The entry of the PCE into the government would inevitably spell big movements of opposition along the same lines as in the PSOE.

However, Carillo's anxiety to get hold of a ministerial portfolio will be delayed for a while yet. The Communist party is too small to be a decisive force in the game of parliamentary manoeuvring. The leaders of the PSOE are in no hurry to enter the government. And the bourgeoisie, in spite of the difficulties it faces, is not very keen on the idea either.



Adolfo Suarez

At the present moment in time, the Spanish ruling class cannot do anything right. On the economic plane, neither a policy of deflation nor of inflation will solve its problems, and either course will inevitably lead, sooner or later to a head-on conflict with the working class. This autumn, Spanish industry faces yet another round of collective bargaining for the new wage contracts. The nightmare of a new wave of strikes haunts the capitalist and bourgeois ministers who fear, with every reason, that any one of these strikes could spark off violent conflict with the intervention of the armed police or so-called "uncontrolled" fascist hooligans. And the recent events in Pamplona and Renteria showed with what speed such conflicts can become generalised. The government was fortunate that these events took place at the start of the Summer holidays when a large part of the

workers were already away on holiday. Had this outbreak occurred in October, things could have taken a very different turn, and the bourgeoisie is well aware of this.

On the political plane, the ruling class now has precious little faith left in Suarez and his rag tag and bobtail government. But what alternative is there? Despite all the assurances and the "moderate" stance of the leaders of the PSOE and the PCE the strategists of capital look with dread at the possible entry of the workers' leaders into the government. They do not fear the individual labour leaders. But unlike these leaders, the representatives of capital make a careful distinction between what is said by the Communist and Socialist leaders **and the class forces which stand behind them.** They fear that, by allowing the workers' leaders into the government, they will open the floodgates and cause a wave of radicalisation which will place the labour leaders under enormous pressure to grant concessions which Spanish capitalism is not prepared to give. Under the irresistible pressure of the masses, the workers' representatives in the government might be forced to go far further than they themselves had intended or foreseen. Therefore, the bourgeoisie, lacking all confidence in the Suarez government, has no alternative but to back it and strive to maintain it in power for as long as possible.

In this, as always, they have received every assistance from the leaders of the PCE and PSOE who missed yet another opportunity to unleash a mass campaign against the government on the issue of the new Constitution, which one Socialist deputy correctly described as "the most reactionary in Europe". This constitution which enshrines the Monarchy, the Upper Chamber, the capitalist system, the special position of the Catholic Church and the employers' right to lock-out, has been approved by both the PCE and PSOE, although the Socialists at least made a token resistance to a series of the most reactionary points,

much to the chagrin of Carillo. By so doing, the leaders of the two main workers' parties yet again played into the hands of Suarez whose intention is clearly to repeat his earlier trick of convening a Referendum (this time on the Constitution) and then, on the basis of an overwhelming "yes" vote, move rapidly to new general elections (possibly with the long-delayed local government elections in between). Given the support of the PSOE and PCE a big "yes" vote is inevitable, with the important exception of the Basque country, where it is not ruled out that the Constitution, which explicitly rejects the right of self-determination, may actually have a majority against.

Marxist leadership

The refusal to concede the right of self-determination to the Basques, Catalans, and other minority nationalities will lay the seeds of further violence, bloodshed and deaths in the coming period. For this reason alone, it was the duty of the PCE and PSOE MPs to oppose the Constitution. The Spanish bourgeoisie hoped that the measures of autonomy granted to the Basques and Catalans which permit them a certain limited control over their affairs would satisfy the nationalists, and undoubtedly the Catalan and Basque capitalists would be prepared to come to an agreement which would protect their power and privilege within the Spanish state without leading to actual independence.

But with the deepening of the social crisis, the worsening of unemployment and the spread of terrorism and right-wing violence, there is a real danger that the demand for separation would begin to gain a mass hearing, particularly in the troubled Basque provinces. The present campaign of ETA is a warning that the national question in the Basque country is far from being resolved and will, in fact, become exacerbated by the general crisis of Spanish capitalism.

The talk about the "Ulsterisation"

of the Basque country can take on a terrible reality in the coming months and years unless the forces of Spanish Marxism can succeed in winning the majority of the Spanish labour movement for the kind of policies and programme which alone are capable of winning the entire proletariat of the Spanish state: Andalucians, Basques, Catalans, Galicians, Castilians, on a common programme of struggle, beginning with the democratic demands which, in spite of what the reformist labour leaders say, still remains to be won: full trade union freedom, amnesty for all political prisoners and re-admission of all sacked workers, democratic and trade union rights for civil servants and members of the armed forces, abolition of the Monarchy and the Upper Chamber, dissolution of all repressive bodies and popular trial for those responsible for fascist crimes against the people, the right of self-determination, a revolutionary Constituent

Assembly—democratically elected by all citizens from 18 years of age. But such a programme of sweeping democratic demands would not stop there. A genuinely representative Constituent Assembly composed of the representatives of the workers, peasants, small shopkeepers and housewives would go on to eliminate the social basis of reaction by expropriating the banks and the monopolies of the 100 families which retain their stranglehold over Spanish society today, just as they did under Franco.

Only the working class, organised under the leadership of a mass party with a Marxist leadership and a Marxist programme will be capable of ending the nightmare of class and national oppression, establish the Iberian Federation of Socialist Republics and set about the socialist transformation of society.

(Sept 4th 1978)

SRI LANKA MOVES TOWARDS DICTATORSHIP

By Roger Silverman

The eclipse of parliamentary democracy in Sri Lanka and the proclamation of a bonapartist constitution herald a period of sharp class conflict within an island in the Indian Ocean which at one time seemed an idyllic shelter from the ravages affecting the rest of the colonial world. But the long-prized democratic rights of the Sri Lanka people were eroded and chipped away during the previous regime, in which two workers' parties, "Communist" and "Trotskyist" respectively, participated! These paradoxical events must be seen in the context of the stagnation of the world economy, and particularly the terrible convulsions that have racked the Indian sub-continent over the last decade: the revolutionary upsurge in West Bengal in 1967-71 and the overthrow of Ayub Khan in Pakistan, in a vast Northern belt of strikes, demonstrations and gheraos (workers' sieges); the genocide and bloody war leading to the liberation of Bangladesh, and the downfall of Yahya Khan; tightening repression in India, the massacre in West Bengal and the Indian railway strike culminating in the imposition of emergency rule by Congress; the collapse of Congress and the advent of tremendous class struggles in an India gripped in a pre-revolutionary situation; four coups, a revolutionary mutiny, and a counter-revolution within a few months in Bangladesh, followed by new mutinies and mass executions; the collapse of Bhutto and the return of a barbarous dictatorship to Pakistan. In the background were the defeats of US Imperialism in Vietnam, Cambodia

and Laos, a new and bloody dictatorship in Thailand, the end of the Japanese 'miracle'...The capitalist class has proved incapable of fulfilling its own mission. At a time of recurrent slumps, it has had to have recourse to massive state intervention. Despite important differences within each of the countries of the Indian sub-continent, a similar cycle of flamboyant windbags with a flair for 'socialist' rhetoric, and openly reactionary regimes has continued to unwind.

Decay of LSSP

Events in Sri Lanka have followed the same general pattern, but the Labour Movement is so highly developed that a socialistic tinge to all the parties' demagogy is all the more obligatory in deference to its traditions. The lessons of current events in Sri Lanka are important in understanding the impotence of the capitalist class to carry through its historic tasks, the key role of the working class in drawing the struggles of the oppressed masses to a successful conclusion, and the instability of every capitalist government, no matter how repressive, in Southern Asia. But that is not all. They illuminate the contradictory effects of a Popular Front regime on the different layers of society and outline the chain of events likely to be set in motion by the coming to power of similar governments in France, Italy, Spain, Greece and other European countries.

Between 1970 and 1977 a Popular Front government was in power, dominated by the 'peasant party' the

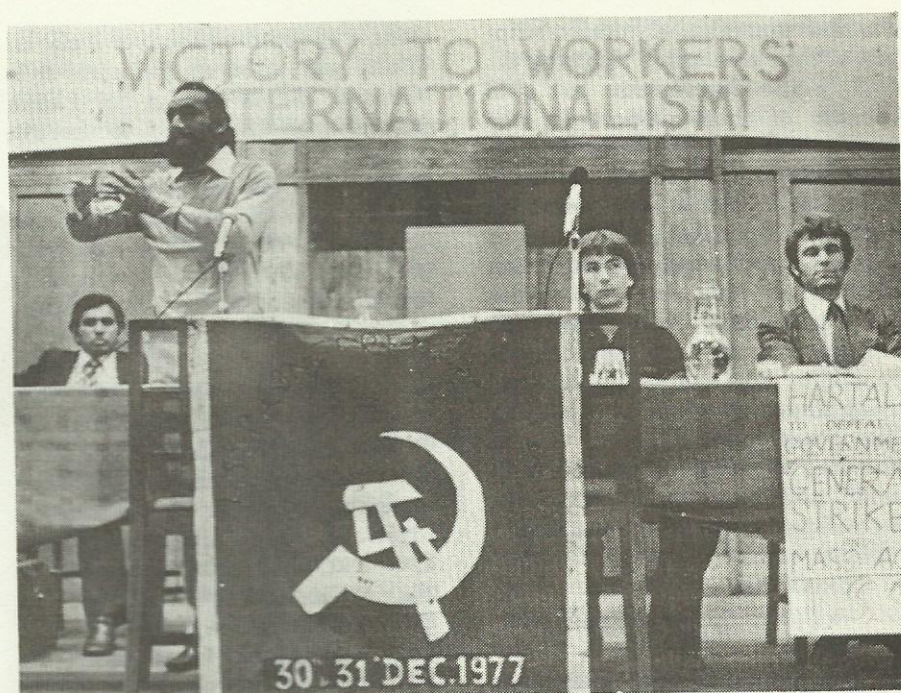
Sri Lanka Freedom Party (a breakaway from the bourgeois United National Party), in harness with the Communist Party and (up to late 1975) the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, the main traditional workers' party formed in the 1930s as a Trotskyist party.

The degeneration of the leadership of this party was partially the result of decay over a period of relative social peace while Sri Lanka remained in a fairly sheltered position, through their parliamentary positions, social contacts, trade union posts, a formidable party apparatus, etc., which allowed a bureaucracy to crystallise—the same process that corrupted, for example, the German Social-Democracy before 1914. But it was reinforced and accelerated by the abandonment of Marxism by the leaders of what was left of Trotsky's Fourth International. It was not the fault of those who diluted and distorted Trotsky's ideas that the only mass Trotskyist party was by a historical accident the LSSP. But their opportunism and adventurism discredited their authority and reduced Trotskyism outside Sri Lanka to scattered and squabbling petty bourgeois cliques. Given the quiescence of the working class in the metropolitan countries and the isolation and irrelevance of the International even among the vanguard of the working class, the leaders of the mass party of Sri Lanka workers grew increasingly sceptical of the ideas of internationalism and the Permanent Revolution. Giving perfunctory lip-service to these ideas on May Days, they lost all faith in the capacity of the world

working class to change society. Naturally they turned to seek allies elsewhere, and became classic reformists, eventually reaching a point of no-return in 1964 by signing an agreement with the bourgeois populist SLFP. In arguing the merits of the Popular Front they vied with the CP and drew very close to it. The 'Financial Times' in its recent Supplement on Sri Lanka (31.5.78) commented that the two workers' parties "are far less radical than their names imply...Mr Colvin R de Silva the LSSP spokesman has a love of parliamentary rhetoric reminiscent of Burke and was the author of the last constitution."

However, this degenerated leadership has lost its base in the rank and file and a new leadership is restoring the traditions of the LSSP, as will be shown later in this article. Nevertheless, LSSP leaders like N.M. Perera, Colvin R De Silva and Leslie Gunawardene in 1970 enjoyed enormous prestige as founders of the mass workers' party, brave fighters against British imperialism who were imprisoned during the war, leaders of the great strike movement of 1947 which opened the way to independence, and of the revolutionary hartal (general strike and mass mobilisation of the workers, peasants and urban middle class) of 1953. In the peculiar conditions of Sri Lanka they wrested spectacular concessions and enabled the people to enjoy welfare unparalleled in Asia with the exception of Japan.

Adult suffrage was granted in 1931, around the same time as in the 'Mother Country'! It was the pressure of the working class, transmitted above all through the LSSP, which won a free universal rice ration, generous subsidies to transport, subsidised wheat prices, children's sugar and infant's milk, free medical and dental treatment, artificially low petrol and kerosene prices, easy loan facilities to rice farmers, fertilisers at 25% of cost, and free education right up to university level. The SLFP, presiding over the Popular Front, also enjoyed popularity in undertaking major reforms including nationalisation of the tea and rubber estates, both locally and foreign-owned, a land reform, and big concessions to



London LSSP Meeting 1978

workers including guarantees against dismissal, etc. The process went so far as the nationalisation of up to 80% of the economy, without however qualitatively changing the social basis of the state, which remained at the service of the *mudalalhi* (racketeers), the landlords and capitalists, and especially the multinational tea companies which despite nationalisation of the plantations continued their ruthless exploitation of Sri Lanka labour through their domination of the profitable tea marketing business. In fact many of the reforms were merely cosmetic, like the Constitution which grandiosely proclaimed "the elimination of the exploitation of man by man", the "ceiling" on house ownership which "limited" it to one house per member of the family, plus one extra (opening up legal arguments as to the entitlements of pregnant mothers!) It is true that a land reform was introduced but the minimum amount of land retained by each family was sufficiently large to allow a layer of rich landlords to retain their wealth and power.

The overall effect of the Popular Front was to disorientate and ultimately demoralise wide strata of the workers and particularly the peasants, enabling the previously discredited UNP which had only 19

seats in 1970 to sweep to victory with 140 out of 168 seats in last year's elections. The SLFP which had previously held 90 seats, was reduced to 9, and the workers' parties between them gained not a single seat in Parliament! This was the terrible price they paid for their leaders' short-sighted policy of class collaborationism. They were tarnished with the crimes of the SLFP, including the massacre of some 10,000 youth during and after the doomed and adventurist JVP uprising in 1971 expressing the frustrations of the unemployed educated Sinhala peasant youth whose expectations in the SLFP were dashed. They had squandered the trust among the Tamil minority, who were harshly penalised by the SLFP's chauvinistic Sinhala-only language policy. The Tamils became ensnared in the bourgeois nationalist Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), which captured 18 seats in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. Above all, the so-called "Indian Tamils", shipped over 150 years ago as cheap indentured labour on the tea plantations who with their sweat paid dearly for the welfare concessions to the rest of the population, had been shamefully betrayed by the workers' parties and even by the TULF which regards them as outside the "indigenous"

Tamil community. Cynically stripped of their citizenship rights by the first UNP Government in 1948 because of their support for the LSSP, they were forsaken by all, as victims of the infamous Sirima-Shastri pact of 1965 which provided for their "repatriation" to India—a measure approvingly quoted on British television by NF leader Martin Webster! N.M. Perera as Finance Minister bore special responsibility for the savage cuts in living standards which amounted to 50% over a period of 7 years, for the breaking of the 1972 bank workers' strike, and the general strike-breaking policy summed up in the slogan "Work, Sacrifice, Struggle Not!"

UNP hypocrisy

When the LSSP had outlived its usefulness to the Bandaranaike Government, it was dismissed in late 1975. The rightward shift of the SLFP (supported right up to the bitter end by its sole ally the CP Cabinet Minister Keunemann) led to a student upsurge and a police shooting on the Peradeniya campus which provoked a General Strike, and some weeks later a month-long railway strike which culminated once again in a General Strike. These upheavals stirred up a ferment within the workers' organisations, with far-reaching repercussions which will be discussed below.

The balance-sheet of the Sri Lanka Popular Front is analysed in detail in MIR No. 9 and in several subsequent articles in MILITANT.)

The UNP swept to power with the objective of creating a bonapartist regime, "stabilising" Sri Lanka, dismantling the welfare state and the powerful trade union movement, and turning the country into a haven for profiteers. Sirima Bandaranaike was thus condemned to join Indira Gandhi, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Sheik Mujib in the dustbin of tarnished demagogues. However, the degree of cant accompanying the counter-revolutionary policies was correspondingly greater in proportion to the strength and democratic traditions of the working class. Ziaur Rahman of Bangladesh took power by tricking the revolutionary soldiers of the great 1975 mutiny, the Indian

Janata by prattling about civil rights. There was to be no Pakistani-style General Zia ul-Haq in Sri Lanka either, with his waxed toothbrush moustache and riding-crop, his floggings, amputations and codes of Islamic law. J.R. Jayawardene (UNP leader) was obliged on the contrary to make oily promises of ending unemployment, bringing down inflation, restoring democracy, upholding the socialist tenets of the welfare state, etc. Once having won the election on a programme of "socialism and democracy", he set to work skilfully operating his packed Assembly to change the Constitution arbitrarily and proclaim himself President, thus relieving himself of the time-consuming chore of accounting to Parliament. A sycophantic Press acclaimed him amid the festivities of February 4th as "a modern Julius Caesar". A latter-day Tartuffe would be a more appropriate description: posing as a devout Sinhala Buddhist, his picture flaunted everywhere piously kneeling in monastic garb before a shrine, every pore reeking and oozing with hypocrisy. So too in his politics, he asserts that the UNP "goes beyond Marxism". He apologetically shrugs off his pet project of a Free Trade Zone as a "capitalist robber barons area" encircled by Socialism, earnestly discouraging companies "out for a quick buck and then run away".

Thuggery

The ugly reality of the UNP victory was revealed within days. The SLFP politicians were beaten up by UNP goondas (thugs). 140 people were killed in the August communal riots, and hundreds were the victims of ambushes, rape, looting, horrible mutilation, etc., in a pogrom worse than any in Sri Lanka's history and affecting assimilated Southern Tamils and "Indian Tamil" plantation serfs as well as the Northern and Eastern population. These riots were deliberately stirred up by the police—one of the instigators was promoted to Inspector-General of Police—and provocatively inflamed by Jayawardena and his Ministers in a calculated and successful decision to frighten the TULF leaders into submission.

In the workplaces, up to 10,000 workers were dismissed to make room for UNP mercenaries, and families were split up and uprooted by the "punitive transfer" of 17,000 teachers. J.R.'s canting humbug was exposed. Even the 'Financial Times' expressed alarm that the UNP had "let loose its youth movement to beat up Marxist opponents in the universities and to disrupt trade union agitation". An unofficial semi-Fascist thug organisation is organised around the "low-caste" right-wing Prime Minister Premadasa, while the President perches and balances in true bonapartist fashion between the right-wing rabble and a system of appointed Commissions in which he hopes to embroil figures like N.M. Perera and Mrs. Bandaranaike. It was not mere gentlemanly courtesy which lay behind J.R.'s expression of "regret" at the loss of N.M.'s and Colvin's contribution to Parliamentary life. It is possible that individual renegades can be induced to defect. It has happened in the past with Philip Gunawardena and other LSSP leaders, and it was significant that the old LSSP leaders have agreed to "advise" the President on how to mitigate the effects of the eviction of thousands of peasants to make way for the Mahaweli irrigation project. But the harsh programme which the UNP has to impose means certain and imminent confrontation with the working class.

The UNP, representing the ruling class of Sri Lanka and world imperialism, wants to turn Sri Lanka into a profiteers' paradise like Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, Malaysia or the Phillipines. A vain hope! Those countries could offer a docile and cheap labour force to foreign investors, but it needed also a growing world market to justify the capital investment. Jayawardene is too late. Nevertheless, he is determined to lift all restrictions on capitalism and take on the working class in the interests of profit and the world's moneylenders. The legacy of the Popular Front is a system which enrages the capitalists while still grinding down the workers and peasants. The total value of the welfare programme is about Rs 7

billion (£250 million). Industry is heavily protected and an elaborate system of import controls and foreign exchange regulations led to black marketeering and starved it of spare parts and raw materials. Plant is operating at 40–50% of capacity. During the period of 1970–76, industry grew at a rate of less than 2% a year. Manufacturing industry has not grown for 20 years—it accounts for 12.6% of output and employs only 115,000 workers. The economy as a whole slowed down from 4.6% p.a. growth in the 1960s to 3% p.a. in the 1970s. Investment is deterred by such measures as the Business Acquisitions Act (which is a nationalisation Enabling Act) and legislation making it illegal to sack a worker without his consent and permission from the Labour Department. These are excellent measures, but they demonstrate that it is suicidal to carry through half a revolution. It led to an “investment strike”, particularly as the high interest rates of 15–18% attracted money elsewhere. Without state ownership of industry and finance, the nationalisation or collectivisation of land, a state monopoly of foreign trade, capitalism can recover and take back these reforms.

IMF blackmail

The result is that 1,200,000 of the labour force of 4½ million are unemployed, especially young people. Already once their intolerable position has led to the gesture of despair of 1971. 27,000 qualified candidates are scrambling for 4,800 university places. Those who gain entry may not find work after graduation. 2,000 arts graduates are unable to find suitable work. Meanwhile, despite the educational facilities, there is actually a shortage of skilled and semi-skilled labour, owing to low wages. Thousands every month are flocking to jobs in Africa and the Middle East.

The UNP Government plunged inflation up sharply to a current rate of 30%, by cutting subsidies and devaluing the rupee by 50%. Taking advantage of the high tea and rubber prices, the prospects aroused by the Free Trade Zone, and the level of remittances from workers abroad,

they relaxed import controls, thus opening up markets to foreign companies and leading to the possibility of thousands more workers being thrown out of work.

But the main targets of the new Government are a massive diversion of resources from welfare schemes to capital projects, at the expense of the masses, and together with this the crushing of the workers' organisations. UNP demagoguery is woven around the theme of shifting funds out of uneconomic and “extravagant” welfare and turning them into investment which would create jobs and wealth. However, the grandiose schemes announced will have very little effect in boosting the economy. Their main purpose is apparently to divert attention from the real “shift of resources”—away from the poor to the rich.

Amid a fanfare of publicity, Jayawardene announced four major projects: the Greater Colombo Development Plan, a new housing programme, above all the Mahaweli irrigation scheme and the Free Trade Zone.



Bandaranaike

The Mahaweli scheme has been speeded up, to achieve completion (on a reduced scale) within six instead of thirty years, to irrigate 900,000 acres and produce over 2,000 megawatts of energy. At its peak of construction it is said that it will create 400,000 new jobs. On the other hand it will destroy many villages, it will be crippled by the shortage of skilled labour, and can only be financed if half the capital is provided by the consortium of foreign creditors with their hooks on Sri Lanka.

The Free Trade Zone is also being built in headlong haste. Already by the New Year, the infrastructure of the first 600-acre site for the Investment Promotion Zone outside Colombo (ultimately encompassing an area of 200 square miles) will be ready, with electricity, water, drainage and telecommunications links, and later on an air cargo terminal and container marshalling yard. Investors are to be offered a five-year tax holiday then a limit of 2% on turnover on foreign sales and 5% on home sales. But the most mouth-watering attraction Sri Lanka is offering, according to the ‘Financial Times’, is “its low wage rates. At US\$1.25 a day for skilled workers, \$1 for semi-skilled, and 80 cents for unskilled, they are amongst the lowest in the world.” But even this will not turn Sri Lanka into a second Singapore. Even if trade union resistance is smashed, even if a stable, tame and also suitably skilled workforce can be guaranteed, even if world markets again expand to justify the capital investment...even then, no more than 10–12,000 workers will be employed there within the first five years.

The ‘Financial Times’, looking at the real prospects with the cold eye of the City banker, commented sceptically on both of these schemes. On the Mahaweli project, it said “there are probably other cheaper methods of raising agricultural output and employment, but the Mahaweli has the advantage of being an eye-catching venture out of which the Government can gain much-needed political mileage to offset the unpopularity of cutting subsidies”. And on the Free Trade Zone, it estimated that “foreign exchange earnings are unlikely to be large—perhaps less than could be earned by sending workers to the Middle East.”

The emergency November budget did not in any case make any real provision for financing these schemes. Jayawardene is relying on the IMF standby credit of \$112 million, the first drawing on a three-year extended fund facility programme. Donor nations have also rallied round, promising \$370 million, a rise of 42% on last year. But even after his first tentative attacks on subsid-

ies, they still amount to 34% of Government revenue, or 8.4% of gross domestic product compared to 9% last year. The IMF is gnashing its teeth and howling for real cuts. A new mission arrived in July to press home its ultimatum that subsidies must be slashed by two thirds by 1982.

On his recent visit to his apprentice in Sri Lanka, Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore stressed that all the facilities offered by the FTZ will mean nothing unless real permanence and stability can be assured and "business confidence" built. In other words, all opposition must be ruthlessly crushed. Neither the cuts in welfare expenditure nor the attraction of foreign capital are possible without the smashing of the trade unions and the imposition of a bonapartist dictatorship.

Jayawardene has therefore wasted no time in rushing through a new Constitution before the full impact of his programme dawns on the masses, thus preparing the battleground for a confrontation. The IMF is not prepared to tolerate any further delay. Jayawardene has furtively armed himself with a Constitution that gives him personal absolutist powers, and provides for proportional representation in elections for the assembly (thus effectively making it impossible for any party in future to gain the two-thirds majority required to amend the Constitution), and plebiscites (J.R. has already made the ominous suggestion of a possible future referendum to postpone future elections). Most significant of all is the almost unprecedented incorporation into the Constitution itself of recent legislation allowing the proscription of any organisation without right of appeal, the abolition of bail and imposition of mandatory minimum sentences for specified political offences and other arbitrary police powers. The suggestion has even been made that commercial agreements relating to the Free Trade Zone should be embodied in the Constitution!

The most remarkable feature of the situation is the resilience of the workers' organisations and the Government's extreme hesitation and caution even after a year in dragging itself towards the inevitable

showdown. On every front, it has tested the water and then partially recoiled after seeing the furious reaction.

Thus, having announced its plan to abolish the rice ration completely, it then conceded that people earning less than Rs 300 a month (a large proportion) would continue to receive it. Its heralded draft law on industrial relations, abolishing "political" unions and replacing them with a single state-controlled company union, was hastily withdrawn in the face of threats of a General Strike. The Government has lamely explained that it will "only" apply to the public sector now—and that the new bodies would function side by side with the old trade unions! The law protecting workers from dismissal has been repealed, but employers still have to pay substantial and sometimes deterrent compensation to them. The promise to investors to make existing labour laws inapplicable to the Free Trade Zone has not yet been implemented. As for the sacking of redundant workers, the Government has made a test case in the Thulhiriya textile mill, where a lockout has been in force for several months. But it has tried to appease the workers by appealing to all employers to expand their workforce by 10%, to soak up some of the unemployed, and has created a sordid "job bank" scheme relying on MP's corruption and patronage. It has even introduced a dole of Rs 50 a month, although this has been rightly regarded with suspicion and boycotted. Even the sharp rise in the price of rice, wheat and bread, and the cuts in welfare, have been partially disguised with a general wage rise of 25%. And since the workers would never accept the denationalisation of the estates or the repeal of the Business Acquisitions Act, the Government has so far only dared to turn certain nationalised concerns (such as the textile corporation) to private management.

The Government is thus stealthily creeping up on the working class like a man approaching a tiger. While trying to conciliate the masses, it is engaged in a war of attrition to pick out and harass the best front-line fighters in the workers' parties

without provoking the rank and file. First it tried to neutralise the students before taking on the working class. UNP students were encouraged to "hit back at left-wing domination and bullying", and gangs of armed goondas stormed the campuses terrorising students. Several times the universities have been closed, and on one occasion the schools too, because of the fighting. Then came the turn of workers' activists. Pickets were visited at night in their homes and beaten up. In particular, the UNP has concentrated its fire on the new Marxist leadership of the LSSP, interdicting (suspending) its General Secretary from his job, framing one of its student leaders on a murder charge, viciously beating up its trade-union leaders on the day of the bank strike, and on several occasions jailing its fulltimers on remand for several weeks, for hoisting black flags on February 4th, the day of Jayawardene's accession as President, and for its poster campaigns calling for a token general strike leading to a full-scale hartal and the overthrow of the Government, etc.

New Marxist leadership

The election of a new leadership for the LSSP—of Vickremabahu Karunaratne, Vasudeva Nanayakkara and other real class fighters who had all been unconstitutionally expelled from the party by the old leadership—and its decisive rejection of class collaborationism and adoption of a revolutionary socialist perspective—was a landmark in the history of Sri Lanka, and potentially of the world Labour Movement.

When the fateful decision was taken in 1964 to join the Popular Front, a crisis was provoked within the ranks of the LSSP and in the initial flush of rage at this betrayal there was a substantial walkout. That was a monumental blunder, which left the leadership a clear field, an outrageous example of emotional impressionism and subjectivism, befogging their perspective and judgement with vague "moral scruples". The leadership at that time enjoyed massive support among the workers, who had their eyes pinned on the horizon of their



LSSP Conference 1978—returns back to Marxism

leaders with their courageous records actually coming into office and gaining ministerial portfolios. The winning of 80—90% of the Party rank and file today to Marxism despite the vicious resistance put up by the bureaucracy, are testimony to the lunacy of these sectarian "irreconcilables" in 1964 and the patience and endurance of the leaders of the "Vama", the left opposition tendency which has now taken over the leadership.

Faced with spurious expulsions, and eventually the disaffiliations of whole branches and regions, the left tendency kept its nerve. When it finally became clear that the bureaucracy would prefer to wreck the entire Party rather than submit to a democratic discussion, when it procrastinated through five years of shocks, defeats and betrayals, refusing to hold a Party Congress despite the fact that the rank and file were demanding one, when the working class was faced with the most dangerous threat in its history, the left tendency had no alternative but to convene a Congress itself, ignoring the illegal mass purge that had led to the expulsion of hundreds of members including some of the Party's most respected veterans, and inviting the leadership to come along and defend its position before the rank and file. Since that historic conference in December 1977, the Party has won the support of about a

quarter of the organised working class, a proportion that is growing daily among all strata of the working class from the clerical to the plantation workers, as well as among the students, peasants, intellectuals, Tamils and Muslims, and even Buddhist monks.

Token General Strike

It is winning sympathisers and recruits from other left parties including the CP, the People's Democratic Party (a split-off from the SLFP), the Maoists, the JVP, the TULF, etc. However, the old leadership still retains an apparatus, money, fulltimers, a daily paper, a large headquarters, some trade unions, and above all a famous name among the politically inert masses. As against that, the new leadership has the enthusiasm of the active ranks of the Party and several key trade unions, joined together in the United Federation of Labour. Its campaigns for a Trade Union Action Committee, to fight the threatened industrial relations laws, are finding an echo within all the workers organisations, along with their demands for a minimum wage of Rs 300 a month and a Rs 4 rise for every point in the cost of living index, restoration of all cuts, reinstatement of sacked workers, etc., along with the setting up of People's Councils to fight communalism and subsidy

cuts, etc., the formation of United Left Front, the call for a token general strike to prepare the way for a revolutionary hartal, etc.

The old leaders, on the other hand, their base among the workers crumbling daily, are responding sluggishly and it is significant that there is turmoil today also within the CP, so much that Keunemann, for seven years the sole CP Minister in the Popular Front, has belatedly condemned the "right-wing opportunist tactics" of the past and warned that attacks on democracy "could drive the left underground towards civil war".

The coming clash

Neither by trickery nor by repression can the class struggle be abolished. The new regime will find it easier to win an election than to wipe out half a century of working class struggle. Huge battles impend. Even if Jayawardene does succeed in temporarily defeating the trade unions and the danger of Tamil separation, then the underlying instability of the situation will still remain to haunt his uneasy and short dictatorship. The Government has determined an improbable target of annual growth in the gross domestic product of 5½%—but simply to absorb new entrants into the labour force and keep unemployment steady at more than 25%, will require an annual growth rate of 7%!

The nightmare of a new explosion among the unemployed youth looms ahead. Jayawardene cleverly released the remaining JVP prisoners on assuming office, thus at a single stroke reinforcing his democratic pretensions, introducing a new element of confusion into the left, and having a handy pretext for intensified repression later. Up to now, the JVP is concentrating more fire on the other left parties than on the UNP. Jayawardene has therefore seized hold of another alibi for repression—the "Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam". Having successfully bribed and blackmailed the TULF MPs, offering them (instead of a separate state) houses, cars, money and police protection from their constituents, this small guerrilla force has sprung up, already

claiming the lives of 11 police officers.

The spectre of a separatist civil war is another disturbing prospect for Jayawardene, despite the fact that India would be very reluctant to encourage its own Tamil separatists (the DMK and AIADMK) by intervening in support of a Tamil Elam. But if there was a danger of such a liberation struggle taking a revolutionary political course, then like with Bangladesh it might have no option but to take it over in order

to neutralise its social effect. In reality, either a futile uprising by the JVP or some similar movement, would have catastrophic consequences for the workers' struggle for Socialism, putting victory back for years ahead.

The key is held by the new Marxist leadership of the LSSP. In the titanic last-ditch battles that are impending, before the nightfall of reaction, they have the chance to earn their authority as worthy fighters, to win the confidence of the entire working

class, but also of the unemployed youth, the Tamils, the peasants, the plantation workers and all the other oppressed strata of society. The revolutionary leadership of the LSSP in raising an unsullied red banner today will be well poised to stand at the head of the masses once they reawaken to a new upsurge of struggle, when dawn breaks. In doing so, they could change the face of Asia and the world.

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BRITISH COMMUNIST PARTY IN CRISIS

By Peter Taaffe

In the past year the British Communist Party has received unprecedented attention from the mass media. The polemics with the dissident Stalinist wing and its eventual splitting away to form the "New Communist Party" was extensively reported. This has been followed by the recent three separate one-hour TV programmes on the CP's National Congress.

The CP leadership hopes that this publicity together with its refurbished image of a "democratic and open party" and the issuing of a new version of its programme "The British Road to Socialism" will arrest its decline and put it on the road to recovery and to become a mass party.

This decline is well documented in the publications of the CP itself. Thus in COMMENT (its fortnightly review) the National Executive Committee reported: "Between the 34th and 35th Congresses our membership fell from 28,519 to 25,293. We have to date issued only 21,145 members with their 1978 cards and the position of the YCL is even more serious with only 1,042 cards issued" (27/5/78). In other words the membership of the party has dropped by 25%! Yet this is only half the picture. At the CP Congress it was admitted by the leadership that only 56% of the members paid dues. The "New CP" has further claimed that at least 10,000 of the claimed membership exist only on paper. The alarm of the rank and file is evident in the letters column of COMMENT: "The harsh reality is that we are suffering from a loss of 7,000 members in 4 years, almost the



Will the Morning Star survive?

same as at the time of the Hungarian events" (24/6/78).

The same collapse is shown also by the drop in sales of their daily the MORNING STAR (with a claimed daily home readership of 21,000) and the dismal showing of the Party in local and parliamentary elections. In some local government elections the vote for its candidates ranged from 10% to a derisory 0.5% of the poll. More ignominious was the fact that

some candidates were beaten by the tiny sect of the International Marxist Group: "Socialist Unity got more votes than the party in five out of the seven known contests, and the ecology movement got more votes in three out of the five contests" COMMENT (8/7/78). Added to this is the recent defection of leading lights like Jimmy Reid together with a whole number of key industrial figures.

And yet this decline has taken place at a time when a genuine revolutionary party or tendency should be growing by leaps and bounds. The crisis of British and world capitalism has in turn resulted in a crisis of reformism within the mass organisations of the working class. The Labour right wing has presided over massive cuts in the living standards of the working class. The Tribune Left has not counterposed to them a clear alternative. Like the King in Hans Christian Anderson's story, they have lost their clothes—they are reformists without reforms. It is only necessary to compare the Labour Government of 1945, which was enabled to carry through extensive reforms (due to the world economic upswing), with the present right wing Labour Government with its counter reforms to see how naked and vulnerable before the advanced workers is the present right wing Labour leadership. Under the hammer blows of the last 4 years hundreds of thousands of workers have looked for an alternative to the ideas and programme of the right wing. Many of these are groping for a Marxist programme which accounts for the growth in the support and the influence of the MILITANT.

Why have these workers not found in the Communist Party the alternative for which they are seeking? The leadership have attempted to explain this in terms of the present mood of the working class, bad organisation, hostile mass media etc. In reality the CP is still enmeshed in its Stalinist past, from which it has not completely broken or drawn a balance sheet of. At the same time it does not offer a clear alternative revolutionary perspective and programme to other political trends with in the labour movement.

Fifty years ago Leon Trotsky brilliantly predicted that the adoption of the Stalinist theory of "Socialism in One Country" would lead to the patriotic and reformist degeneration of the Communist parties which made up the "Com-



Enrico Berlinguer, Santiago Carillo, George Marchais

munist International". He forecast that they would go from agencies and "border guards" of the Russian bureaucracy into partial reformist agencies of their own ruling class. In the event of a war between Russia and the capitalist West he expected that the Communist parties would be found on the side of their own ruling class and against the Russian deformed workers' state. Yet events seemed to confound Trotsky's prediction. In the Second World War the leadership of the CPs remained as pliable tools of Moscow obediently responding to every change in "line".

Stalinist past

But the break-up of the Stalinist monolith, the convulsions within the CPs caused by the Hungarian revolution and the Czechoslovak intervention, together with reformist decay of the leadership, has resulted in the complete working out and confirmation of Trotsky's prognosis.

The French CP proudly paint themselves in the "colours of France". The Italian Communist Party now loyally subscribes to NATO while the French CP have become noisy champions of the French "independent nuclear deterrent". In the event of a war between

Russia and the capitalist West—which is completely ruled out in the foreseeable future—the CPs would undoubtedly be found on the side of their own ruling class like the Social Democratic leaders in the First World War.

The nationalist degeneration of both the "Communist" parties in power and those seeking power is reflected in the MORNING STAR itself. It has, for instance, recently reported on the armed conflict between "Socialist" Vietnam and "socialist" Cambodia and the virtual rupture of the former with "Socialist China" which has brought in its train the exodus of 160,000 Chinese from Vietnam. The Chinese Stalinists have in turn reacted in the same hooligan fashion towards the Vietnamese as their Russian counterparts behaved towards them earlier by cutting off aid and withdrawing technicians etc from Vietnam.

The CP leadership has reacted by wringing its hands in anguish, has declaimed against "differences" manifesting themselves in this fashion but is incapable of giving a Marxist explanation of these developments.

Something more than a mere difference of opinion must exist for armed clashes to break out between alleged "socialist" regimes. In reality

these clashes reflect the national antagonisms of the bureaucratic elites which dominate the states in each country. The unification of the productive resources of Indo-China and China in a Socialist Federation would enormously benefit the workers and peasants of the area. But it is not capitalism which now stands in the way of achieving this—these regimes have eliminated landlordism and capitalism and have established planned economies. It is the vested national interests of the privileged stratum of officials who control the state machine, the army and police etc which is the main barrier to achieving this.

At the same time in the capitalist world the CP leadership in their polemics with one another reflect the arguments and interests of their own ruling class. Thus the French CP has come out against the early entry of Spain into the Common Market on the grounds that it would threaten French agricultural interests. Notwithstanding their common "Euro-communist" pedigree with the Spanish party, this has earned them a stinging rebuke from Azarcata, spokesman for the Spanish CP. All of this was reported in the *MORNING STAR* without comment! This is not accidental. The British Communist Party has shown the same nationalist, not to say jingoist, tendency in its approach towards the Common Market. Its championing of "British interests" has led it in the past into an alliance with the chauvinist wing of the Tory Party.

Yet the very existence of the Common Market reflects the impasse of capitalism. From its first days the Communist International, under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, stressed that the productive forces, ie. science, technique and the organisation of labour, needed to be liberated not only from the strait-jacket of private ownership but from the national state also. The Common Market is itself an attempt to overcome the contradiction between the colossal growth of the productive

forces on the one side and the narrow limits of the nation state on the other. Because of the national interests and insoluble antagonisms between the capitalists they are incapable of unifying Europe.

At best they were able to come together in a limited customs union but with the onset of the world economic crisis it has been increasingly each man for himself. The limited goal of common "monetary union" recently re-affirmed by Schmidt and Giscard D'Estaing is a chimera which will be dissipated by the first serious monetary crisis. Only the working class is capable of unifying the productive forces and the peoples of Europe. This was the theme underlying the Russian Revolution which was saturated with the perspective of the international revolution. Lenin, Trotsky and the Bolsheviks saw the Russian Revolution as the prologue of the European and World Revolution.

Import controls

This approach is a million light years away from the outlook and programme of the British CP leaders. Thus the Parliamentary correspondent of the *MORNING STAR*, Martin Gostwick, during the discussion in *COMMENT* before the last Congress wrote: "We must also realise that a full hearted commitment to national advance entails our envisaging ultimately diverse roads to socialism in England, Scotland and Wales according to the different national needs and aspirations of each country". This earned Gostwick no rebuke or answer from the leadership which therefore presumably agreed with his arguments. Chasing after every "national" issue the common class and internationalist interests are lost by the CP leadership. Lenin's attitude that the Russian Revolution would perish unless it developed on the international plane is utterly foreign to them. "British Socialism" is conceived as a virtual self-contained entity.

Take the CP's position on import

controls for instance. While some of the Tribune Left have questioned or even dropped the demand for import controls, as a result of the criticisms of the Marxists, the CP embellish their support for import controls with the most hair-raising reformist and chauvinist arguments. In outlining the CP's case for import controls Bob Rowthorne recently wrote in *COMMENT*: "In the present day world there are objective conflicts of interests which cannot just be conjured away by an appeal to abstract internationalism. Under any kind of government, left or right, Britain must pay her way and is on occasion bound to do things against the short run interest of workers in other lands. Short of world socialism there is no way of escaping this dilemma" (13/5/78).

The derisory reference to "world socialism" shows that the author sees it only as a remote possibility. We must live in this sinful world where unfortunately dog eats dog and therefore "we" will have to join in even if this means hurting workers in other countries. To do him justice he excludes import controls against the third world. It is "strategic controls" of key industries which would give a breathing space to put them back on their feet which he argues for. The threat of retaliation from Britain's capitalist rivals is discounted: "Provided these controls are applied intelligently and care is taken they do not fall too heavily on any individual country, they would be unlikely to cause large scale retaliation". And this "practical" programme is contrasted to the "utopian" schemes of the "ultra-left".

The author is precisely incapable of understanding the real world in which we live. For action of this character to have any benefit on the British economy it would need to deal with the massive imports of manufactured and semi-manufactured goods, which now account for 59% of total imports. Yet any attempt to seriously cut these imports would be bound to provoke retaliation. Already a disguised trade war is taking place between the capitalist powers with governments

using subsidies of their industries to bolster them against foreign competition. The major capitalist powers are afraid that this could spiral into an all-out trade war which could have calamitous effects. They are therefore calling for these subsidies to be abolished or scaled down. Any attempt to introduce import controls would provoke retaliation.

Moreover, the capitalists in each country would use the same arguments to their own working class to justify retaliation—the need to protect jobs. The net result would be a contraction of world trade, the cancelling out of any initial advantage gained through imposing import controls with the capitalist back to square one and the working class in a worse situation. But even if in the improbable event, limited “selected” controls were accepted by British capitalism’s rivals, this would not result in a revival of threatened industries. The greedy British bourgeoisie would in all probability use the absence of foreign competition to increase the prices of their goods which would result in inflation and consequently a cut in purchasing power which in turn would lead to redundancies in other industries.

The CP’s “practical programme” is in fact the opposite. There is not an atom of a class or socialist approach in this demand and it is, as Bob Rowthorne tacitly admits, an attempt to pander to nationalism: “To conclude on a less nationalistic note...” The attempt to equate import controls with “planning” is bogus. It is impossible to plan the resources of society on the basis of

capitalism.

The approach of the CP to this issue is just one aspect of its programme “THE BRITISH ROAD TO SOCIALISM”. This document is permeated with the ideas and approach of Fabian reformism, perhaps of the “left” variety. Moreover it is shot through with contradictions. Thus in the first part of the document on page 22 we read the following criticism of reformism: “The ending of capitalism was either seen as unnecessary, or as a remote aim to be achieved by transforming it through piecemeal reforms”. Yet later on the document, in its approach towards of a series of “Left Governments” precisely outlines a programme of “piecemeal reform”. This is what it says about the character of this government: “It would not be a socialist government carrying out a socialist revolution, but one which, in close relationship with the mass struggle outside parliament, would begin to carry out a major democratic transformation of British society”. (Pages 44 & 45).

Peaceful change?

Thus the CP have re-vamped the menshevik theory of “stages” for Britain. First would come the kind of government described above but then later: “Subsequent Left Governments would almost certainly be of a different composition—with the Labour Party shifting further to the left, the Communist Party being increasingly represented in government, other progressive forces perhaps being added, and new forms of

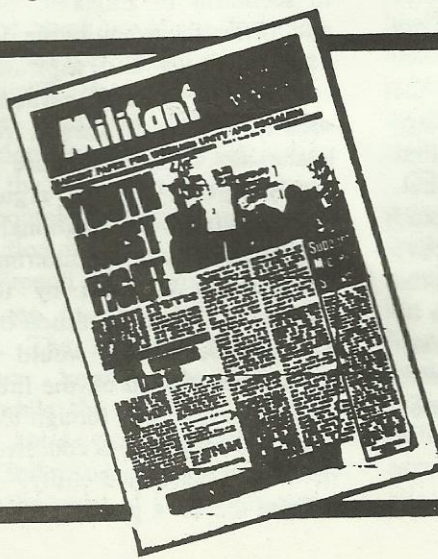
Labour-Communist unity being formed”(ibid). The programme of these governments is clearly circumscribed by the CP.

Thus on the one side it clearly shows the grip exercised over the economy by the monopolies—the top 100 firms control 50% of manufacturing industry and it is predicted that in the next few years they will account for 75% or more. It might be assumed then that the programme would suggest the nationalisation of these monopolies.

Yet the document says: “the key firms amongst the top firms which dominate the economy must be nationalised, while at the same time drastic controls must be instituted over the investment, production, and employment policies of those remaining in private hands (which at this stage would still be in the great majority)” (Page 38). Why not propose the nationalisation of all the monopolies? The document answers: “Concentrating the measures on the main monopoly groups would create possibilities for dividing the capitalist class and preventing united capitalist counter-action”. (Page 40).

This is put forward as a strategy for a peaceful socialist transformation and the avoidance of Civil War. Against the ultra-lefts on the outskirts of the labour movement MILITANT has also argued that armed with a clear Marxist programme, such is the balance of class forces in British society, that the socialist revolution can be carried through peacefully in Britain. Yet it has to be said from the outset that

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the programme of the CP makes the organised resistance of the capitalists not only possible but inevitable! This programme is a guarantee of bloodshed and Civil War!

Both the experiences of the Portuguese Revolution and Chile demonstrate this. Allende and the Chilean CP attempted to apply something approximating to this "strategy". Under the pressure of the masses Allende nationalised about 30% of the economy and the working class and the government intervened against private firms. Yet the main levers of economic power remained in the hands of the capitalists. They were able to use them to frustrate the government's plans, to sabotage the economy, fuel the fires of inflation and whip up the resistance of the middle class.

The half-way house represented by the Popular Unity Government neither satisfied the working class or peasants completely but at the same time irritated the capitalists. **Moreover it gave the ruling class time to mobilise the forces of reaction and prepare the coup.** Many opportunities existed in the three years of the Allende regime for the working class to have taken power peacefully, or relatively peacefully. The last occasion was in June 1973 after the defeat of a right wing coup, with the masses occupying the factories and the land. If the masses had been armed and the soldiers invited to arrest the reactionary officer caste the capitalists would have been powerless to prevent the socialist revolution. Allende temporised while the workers and peasants demanded action and arms to defend themselves against the counter-revolution. The inevitable bloody coup in September 1973 found the working class completely unprepared and disarmed in the face of the counter revolution.

The same attitude as in pre-September Chile now exists in Portugal. The Revolution has gone much further than in Chile with upwards of 75% of the economy nationalised. Yet because of the policies of the Portuguese CP and Socialist Party leaders reaction was able to make a come-back. This has laid the basis for the recovery of the capitalist state machine and set the scene for a



POEU members on one day stoppage

mighty collision between the Portuguese working class and the reaction which is aiming to stamp out the land reforms and the nationalisation of the factories. The lack of a clear Marxist programme by the leaderships of both the main workers' parties has already resulted in agonies for the Portuguese working class. Reaction is preparing a "Chilean" solution in Portugal.

Portugal

But it is not certain if it can achieve this, given the fact that the Revolution has gone much further with a section of the masses armed. Yet the prospect of Civil War could have been completely avoided if the Portuguese working class had possessed a leadership worthy of them. The CP originally had the same programme of a gradual shift towards the Left as outlined in the "British Road". They dragged at the rear of the masses and were completely unprepared for the sharp turns of the Revolution, particularly in March 1975. Only after the masses had forced the government to nationalise the banks, insurance companies and most of industry did they opt for the "socialist revolution". A completely peaceful socialist transformation was possible in Portugal on the basis of workers' and

small farmers' democracy.

But the CP attempted to grab a monopoly of power for itself and its military supporters with the aim of establishing a regime like Cuba or Eastern Europe. This provided the reaction with the pretext to cloak itself as the guardians of "democracy" and hiding behind the Soares leadership it has managed to re-assemble its forces for another trial of strength with the working class.

Rather than dividing the ruling class the strategy mapped out in the "British Road" is a guarantee of a united resistance of capital to the measure of a "Left Government". The capitalists are prepared to see the State bled out, through nationalisation, unprofitable and ruined industries. But it is an entirely different matter where profitable industries are concerned. Leon Trotsky pointed out that in 1926 the demands of the labour movement for the already ruined coal industry to be taken over by the State was itself sufficient for the ruling class to prepare for civil war and the general strike. "The appetite increases with eating" was the watchword of the ruling class. The nationalisation of coal could have become the springboard for the nationalisation of other, profitable, industries. In 1945 the changed relationship of forces meant that the bourgeoisie

had no other choice but to accept the nationalisation of the industry—indeed they welcomed this measure, given the utter bankruptcy of the industry and allied to the lavish over-compensation that they received.

The nationalisation of one or more profitable industries by a Left Government would be the signal for all-out war by the capitalists against the Government which would eventually involve civil war and an attempt to crush the labour movement. Where the relationship of forces is unfavourable to them, gnashing their teeth they may be compelled to accept the takeover of industries and even some important reforms like the 35 hour week. But this would only be in order to buy the necessary time to overthrow the government and take back whatever concessions have been given.

"Not so" answer the sages of the CP leadership. The concept of a "broad democratic alliance" is a guarantee that the handful of monopolists can be isolated; "the broad democratic alliance needs to be not only an expression of class forces, but of other important forces in society". To the question what "other forces" will form the basis of the "broad democratic alliance" the document answers:

"There is therefore an objective basis for an alliance between the working class and many in these sections of the capitalist class, against the common enemy—the big British and international capitalists. There will be big problems in building such an alliance, since the smaller employees are in a contradictory position in relation to the monopolists and the working class. They face the prospect of being squeezed out by the big firms, but are often also linked to them as suppliers, or as distributors of their products. They usually see it as in their interests to keep wages down for the sake of their profits, and the working conditions are often worse in small workplaces. On the other hand, small employers generally face problems when the living conditions of the working class fall and unemployment rises.

The labour movement needs to show them that there is no solution

to their problems in lining up with big business against the workers. It must seek to win them to the side of the working class, and prevent them becoming a prey to right-wing and fascist propaganda. This means campaigning for specific measures to assist them, such as cheap credits, restrictions on monopoly price manipulation, control of rents, relief from high rates, the abolition of VAT, etc., as well as winning them for the wider democratic demands of the labour movement." (Pages 20-21).

Thus the correct idea of the working class drawing behind their banner sections of the petit-bourgeoisie is mixed up here with the completely ruinous and anti-Marxist concept of an alliance of the working class with "many in these sections of the capitalist class". This is not an accidental slip by the CP leadership. The need to win the intermediate layers in society has been advanced as a justification for alliances on occasions with those parties claiming to represent these sections. This Popular Front concept has led the CP in the past to propose a bloc with some in the Tory Party and Liberal Party. This was the case in the Common Market campaign and it has been taken a step further in their campaigns on racialism, including the Anti-Nazi League. An all-class movement for "fun" and against the "nasty Nazis" will not eradicate racialism and fascism. Only the labour movement mobilised on a socialist programme is capable of eliminating those conditions which breed racialism and fascism and can combat this poison. The labour movement does not debar anyone from participating in the struggle against fascism and racialism. All who support such a programme for replacing the society which breeds this evil are welcome to join in, including Tories and Liberals. A programme like this, linked to action, is the way Tory workers and the middle class can be won away from Thatcher and Co.

But so miseducated are CP members on this issue that the rank and file can suggest in the readers column of *Comment* an alliance with alleged "liberal" Tories such as James Prior! Is this not the



Gordon McLellan

conclusion which must be drawn from the above explanation of the "broad democratic alliance"? Yet if a rank and file Labour Party member were to put forward such ideas he would be howled down in most Labour Parties. On this and many other issues the CP is to the right of the average Labour Party member.

In an echo of the demands which *MILITANT* has suggested for small businessmen the document puts forward the following demand for this section: "There would be practical measures to help small businesses, shopkeepers and farmers, in the form for example, of cheap credits, the abolition of VAT and rent controls." Such a programme would indeed help to win these layers over to the labour movement. Yet a Left Labour Government would be utterly incapable of implementing such a programme unless it had control of the main levers of power. This would in turn mean the nationalisation of the 200 monopolies, the banks and insurance companies and a state monopoly of foreign trade. In not linking the demands for small businessmen with the programme for taking over the commanding heights of the economy this document is utterly utopian and will be seen as such by those at whom it is aimed.

Higher wages for workers in small enterprises would be possible on the

basis of a planned economy. But where economic power still remains in the hands of a few monopolies, when wage increases are granted the capitalists will attempt to cancel them out through inflation. In so doing they hope to kill two birds with one stone. They can blame the inflation on the "greedy workers" and thus win sections of the middle class to their banner and prepare the way for the overthrow of the Government. Is this not the way that reaction was able to find a basis for itself in Chile and presently in Portugal? The real lessons of these events is a book sealed with seven seals so far as the CP leadership is concerned.

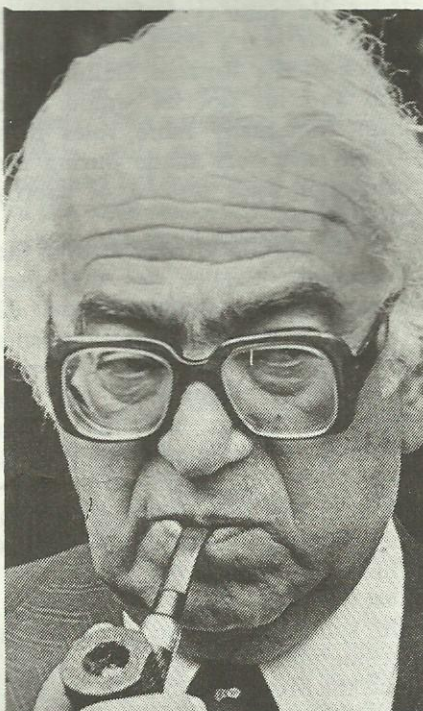
They advance a programme which purports to avoid civil war and yet its "piecemeal" nature is a guarantee of the opposite. This is even tacitly admitted where the programme concedes: "The ruling class will fight against this process by every possible means...there would be the utmost resistance from the ruling class with violent campaigns in the media, hostile demonstrations, economic sabotage by big business...illegal methods, sabotage and an armed coup could also be resorted to" (Page 47).

"Left intellectuals"

Any thinking CP worker will say to himself: Our leaders concede the possibility of civil war on the basis of this minimum and moderate programme of only taking over a few key firms. If this is so, is it not better to propose the complete elimination of the power of the ruling class by taking over all the monopolies and instituting a planned economy under democratic workers management and control? This would put the issues in a completely transparent fashion before the labour movement. If implemented by a Socialist Government this approach would completely cut the ground from under the feet of the bourgeoisie. It would allow the complete satisfaction of the demands of the petit bourgeoisie and cement a real alliance with the working class and against the Tory, Liberal and Nationalist Party leaders. It would ensure the peaceful socialist transfor-

mation by completely undermining the social reserves of capitalism.

The BRITISH ROAD TO SOCIALISM is neither a perspective of the likely course of events in Britain in the next period nor is it a clear revolutionary programme capable of showing a way forward for the working class and the labour movement. Consequently it cannot establish the CP as the major force within the British working class. On the contrary it is a programme which in large measure is indistinguishable from the Tribune tendency within the Labour Party. Indeed Gwilym Roberts, Tribune MP, when invited to comment on the programme in the MORNING STAR pointedly wrote: "Many of the economic policies and those for extending workers' democracy are similar to the policies of the National Executive of the Labour Party. Where is the revolutionary type of Socialism one would expect from the Communist Party? It appears to have been completely lost in a document from which the Communist Party emerges as a minute, impotent version of the Labour Party"! (25/3/77)



C.P. Programme is no different to Tribune

This harsh, but undoubtedly correct, estimation of the CP spells further decline in the future. There would at least be some justification for a separate party if it had a

distinct programme differentiated from all other trends within the labour movement. But the CP is merely a smaller version of the Tribune Left. And the mass of the advanced workers, being practical people, will always prefer the big Left party to a similar but smaller one.

The CP in Britain has never been more than a sizeable propaganda organisation. But in the past, basking in the aura of the October Revolution, it was a pole of attraction for an important layer of industrial militants. While it has not completely lost its industrial base it no longer attracts all the best industrial militants. Instead, its ranks have been filled out with a layer of left wing academics with the same haughty contempt for the working class and the labour movement as the sectarian grouplets on the fringe of the labour movement. These sects see themselves as the bearers of "socialist consciousness" with which they must imbue the working class. They justify this with quotes from Lenin's "What is to be done", which Lenin himself subsequently repudiated. Now the "liberal" wing of the CP emulates the sects. Thus Martin Jacques—editor of the CP theoretical magazine MARXISM TODAY—recently wrote in the MORNING STAR: "Without the left intellectuals, the labour movement cannot emerge as a leading force." (15/7/78)

Of course the working class needs those with specialised knowledge who are prepared to put this at the disposal of the labour movement. But before becoming "teachers" the "left intellectuals", who Jacques speaks of, should first go to school in the Labour Movement and learn from the working class.

Yet those who are now coming to prominence in the leadership of the CP have emerged from the student movement which is perhaps the only field in which the CP managed to retain an important presence.

Like the sects these worthies see the working class and the Labour Movement as putty to be moulded by the "intellectuals" who will instruct the workers in "socialist consciousness". That vital aspect of Marxism—of learning from the working class

and generalising their struggles in the form of a programme and perspective—is entirely foreign to them. This clearly emerges in their muddled criticism of “Economism” which if it means anything is a criticism of the CP which fails to link the struggles on wages, hours, conditions etc., with the idea of the socialist transformation of society.

In reality the criticisms of alleged “Economism” is a disguised attempt to turn away from the organised working class in Britain as the anchor around which all struggles must be organised. The Trade Union and Labour Movement is seen as just one of many areas of struggles to be put on the same plane as the student movement, womens lib, gay lib etc. Along this road the CP can become a half-way house for radical and chic “intellectuals” but will never become a serious mass working class force. On the contrary it could degenerate into an insignificant sect as the Independent Labour Party did in the past.

This process will be given a further push by the developments in the Stalinist world. The British CP has been compelled like its brother parties in the rest of the capitalist world to take up a more critical stand towards the more abhorrent features of the “socialist countries”. It has not gone as far as the Spanish CP leader Carillo who has echoed some of the criticisms made by Trotsky of Stalinism: “The October Revolution has produced a state which is evidently not a bourgeois state, but neither is it as yet the proletariat organised as the ruling class, or a genuine workers’ democracy...the question is whether the State, which is no longer capitalist, is not an intermediate phase between the capitalist and genuine socialist state, in the same way as the absolute monarchies were an intermediate phase between feudalism and modern capitalist parliamentary democracies; a phase which, through an analysis of its characteristics and functions, would enable a more objective and scientific explanation to be given of the Stalin phenomenon and others like it” (EUROCOMMUNISM AND THE STATE pages 164/5)

Stripped of its verbiage, convolu-

ted language and avoidance of calling things by their right name, Carillo has all but admitted the Trotskyist analysis of the regimes of Russia, Eastern Europe etc.,. It was Trotsky who characterised these societies as transitional between capitalism and socialism. He also showed in a whole number of brilliant works that a bureaucratic elite had usurped power from the working class and established a Bonapartist (a military police dictatorship) which rested on a planned economy. Moreover, he showed that a new political revolution of the working class in these countries would be necessary in order to remove the privileged elite and move towards Socialism.

Workers’ democracy

But there is nothing principled or “Marxist” in Carillo’s approach. Like the reformist Left in Britain Carillo can sometimes be very radical towards events abroad but the opposite at home. By criticising the Stalinist regimes he calculates this will redound to his credit in Spain itself. He quite cynically remarked after last year’s elections that the attack of the Russian Stalinists on him and his policies would have given him many more votes if it would have been made during the campaign itself instead of shortly afterwards!

In the past the greatest asset of the Communist Parties was that they were linked to the “land of October”. But these developments show that the identification with the Stalinist regimes is now an enormous minus for them. To maintain any credibility they must criticise the worst abuses of these regimes. But they have not broken the historical and golden threads which bind them to the Russian and East European elites. They are riven with splits and contradictions which become more glaring at each stage. Thus the MORNING STAR, MARXISM TODAY, and Party spokesmen can reverently refer to these regimes as “socialist” while the same journals detail the monstrous measures resorted to in order to silence its opponents. Is it little wonder that one writer to COMMENT can baldly

state: “The British working class do not trust us”. So long as the Party is linked, in the eyes of the advanced workers, never mind the broad mass of the working class, to the Stalinist elite it will never become a mass party or even a big propaganda organisation.

But the British CP is still dependent on Moscow for financial support: something like 12,000 copies of the MORNING STAR are sold in Russia and Eastern Europe. It is therefore easy for the British ruling class to identify the CP as a supporter of totalitarianism, no matter what protestations to the contrary the CP makes. This will have been further underlined by the spectacle on TV of the General Secretary of the CP, Gordon MacLennan, being embraced by the representative of the Russian “polit-bureau” the gangster elite of the elite.

Such a charge, despite the attempts of the media to do so, cannot be made to successfully stick against the Marxist Left of the Labour Party which has defended the planned economy but at the same time called for the replacement of the ruling stratum by workers’ democracy. It is evident from the pages of COMMENT (24/6/78) that the rank and file of the CP are groping in the same direction.

Thus a recent letter put the issue starkly:

“Jim Riordan quotes part of a statement of Lenin’s on the high salaries paid at that time for the services only of top bourgeois specialists. These, he wrote in 1918, were ‘a compromise, a departure from the principles of the Paris Commune and of every proletarian power, which call for the reduction of all salaries to the level of the wages of the average worker’. However, if they worked right, he said, the Soviet would be able ‘in the course of one year’ to ‘rid ourselves of this evil legacy of capitalism’ with its ‘corruptive influence’. (Lenin Collected Works, Vol. 27, pages 249—251)

The Programme of the Russian Communist Party, drawn up under Lenin’s guidance in 1919, presented the matter in the same way, whilst stressing the Party’s ‘striving to secure equal remuneration for all

labour'.

However, Lenin made no compromises on what he called 'perhaps the most important point as far as the problem of the state is concerned', namely 'the reduction of the remuneration of all servants of the state to the level of workmen's wages', as Marx had urged. (Collected Works, vol.25, page 420). And all Party members, in whatever sphere they were working were limited to a similar 'Party maximum' till about 1930.

Whilst claiming to be the most faithful defenders of Lenin's heritage, the Soviet leaders practice a thoroughly revisionist course in this sphere today with the enormous privileges to which Comrade Riordan refers.

A.R. Jones
Bromley"

Lenin laid down four conditions for a healthy workers' state: 1) No standing army, but the armed people. 2) All officials, managers, etc. to be elected with the right of recall. 3) All officials to receive the same wage as a skilled worker (technicians, specialists etc. to be paid no more than a maximum of four to one) 4) Power to be vested in Soviets with the regular rotation of duties ("when everyone is a bureaucrat nobody is a bureaucrat").

As this letter demonstrates not one of these conditions exist in Russia, Eastern Europe or the other deformed workers' states. The glaring inequalities between the bureaucratic elite, epitomised by Brezhnev with his different sports cars and private swimming pool in his basement, and the Russian workers is evident. To characterise these regimes as "socialist" is to trample the very idea of socialism in the mud. To the great Marxist teachers socialism meant a society which from the beginning stood at a higher level than the highest level yet reached by capitalism, i.e. higher than capitalist America today. This would be possible on the basis of a World Socialist Federation. Only with the highest stage of Socialism, i.e. Communism, with a society of super-abundance, would classes and all the last vestiges of capitalist society, the state, money etc.



Lenin and Trotsky

disappear. But at the beginning of socialism it would be possible to begin to dismantle the state machine. Lenin spoke of the "semi-state" in this context.

Instead of this we have seen an unparalleled development of the instruments of repression, the state machine, in Russia, Eastern Europe etc. A monstrous bureaucratic elite bars the road towards a socialist society. Only a political revolution—which will retain the planned economy but replace the domination of this caste with workers' democracy—can take these societies forward.

Leopold Trepper

This process of questioning and criticism of the Stalinist regimes by the CP rank and file will be given a further push by the inevitable upheavals which are coming in Eastern Europe and Russia. New "Hungariies" are being prepared by the complete rotting of the Stalinist regimes in these countries. The isolated criticisms of the privileged elites which dominate these regimes by the CP leaders will not be able to end the festering discontent within the ranks of the CP. On the contrary it will stimulate the questioning mood of those workers who remain in its ranks. They cannot fail to question the appellation of "socialism" which the CP leaders give to

regimes which are monstrous caricature of socialism.

Moreover the question will inevitably be posed: what is the origin of these regimes, how did the Russian Revolution degenerate, and what is the social basis and nature of these regimes? A genuine Marxist analysis and investigation of this question would inevitably lead back to the rich treasure house of Trotsky's writings on Stalinism. Those genuine and sincere Stalinists such as Leopold Trepper, leader of the underground "Red Orchestra" against the Nazis in occupied Europe during the Second World War, have recognised that only Trotsky and the Trotskyists understood the process which led to Stalinism, and fought to replace it with a programme of workers' democracy.

The present CP leadership are incapable of adopting such a position. They are still dependent on Moscow for the necessary wherewithal to maintain their creaking apparatus and only an earthquake could completely rupture this relationship. Moreover even though it has sought to distance itself from the Moscow bureaucracy and Stalinism it has not adopted a genuine Marxist programme and perspective. On the contrary it has gone from Stalinism to a reformist position.

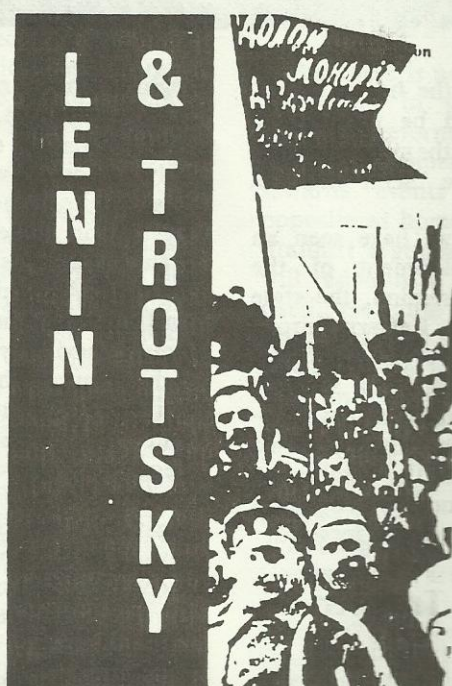
This has in turn encouraged the growth of the "liberal" or right

"wing" of the CP which the leadership was compelled to lean on against the Stalinist wing at the last Congress. Caught in this vise the CP is doomed to sterility and decline. That does not mean that it may not experience a temporary injection of support at a time of upswing in the class struggle. But any gains will be cancelled out by the upheavals in the Stalinist world and the stormy march of events in Britain itself which will be reflected within the CP. This will lead the ranks not just to question the policy but the methods of organisation and the recent much vaunted "democracy" of the CP. Criticisms are now permitted but the right of party members to form

tendencies and adopt alternative platforms—a vital part of Lenin's Bolshevik Party—is carefully circumscribed by the leadership. This was underlined by the TV programme where the selection of resolutions for debate, the speakers etc. was carefully controlled by the leadership. As one commentator put it; "Bert Ramelson (a CP leader) ruthlessly crushed the Stalinists in the best Stalinist manner".

So the "new turn" of the CP will not assure it the growth in numbers and influence which the leadership anticipates. On the contrary, the future holds out only further splits and the undermining of its membership. Yet opportunities for the

growth in the support and influence of Marxism will open up in Britain in the next period. But with its present policies and methods these cannot be seized by the CP. The crisis of reformism within the Labour Party and Trade Unions will result in the further adherence of growing numbers of workers to the Marxist Left within the Labour Party. This in turn will prepare the way for the best elements of the CP to travel in the direction of the Marxist Left of the Labour Party.



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