

# Britain's Road to Socialism

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## Introduction

The peoples of the world are confronted today with problems of enormous magnitude. These include the ever-growing poverty and widespread malnutrition and disease which afflict billions of the world's six billion population; war and the threat of nuclear catastrophe; and the environmental and ecological time-bomb which adds a new threat to human survival.

This need not be so. Never before in history have the rapid advances in science and technology provided such opportunities for the all-round development of every human being. But in Britain, as in other capitalist countries, a deep-seated crisis of the whole economic, social and political system adversely affects every aspect of life.

The wealth, effort and ingenuity which could be used to improve the living conditions of working people are, instead, wasted in war preparations or otherwise used to expand the profits of the giant corporations and banks that dominate the economy and society. The Communist Party aims to replace the crisis, insecurity, profiteering, inequality and social conflict of capitalist society with socialism. A socialist Britain would be run by and for the people, not for private capitalist profit.

The commanding heights of the economy would be publicly owned. Production would be socially controlled and planned to guarantee everyone the right to a job and a home, to free education and health care, to comfort and dignity in retirement, and to other social services and benefits. Freedom would be rightly understood not as the right of individuals to exploit and oppress others, but as the power of human beings - through the collective control of their society and environment - to develop their interests, abilities and talents to the full.

For over a century, communists and socialists in Britain have had this aspiration to create a fundamentally humane, democratic and just society.

The Communist Party of Britain, in this programme, shows how this can be done.

Britain's Road to Socialism is not a detailed catalogue of policies covering all issues, nor is it a fine blueprint for the future. Rather, it sets out the basic principles governing a strategy for socialist revolution in Britain. It outlines the general lines of action and struggle which can bring about the unity of the working class and its allies for the winning of political power and the building of socialism.

Britain's Road to Socialism is a living, developing programme to be constantly tested in practice and reassessed in the light of experience. In it, we make clear our view that:

- the major social and economic problems we face today can only be resolved by putting an end to capitalism and establishing socialism;
- to achieve socialism, the working class and its allies must take political, economic and state power out of the hands of the capitalist class;
- decisive advances towards socialism can only be achieved by mobilising the mass of the people in support of an intermediate alternative economic and political strategy which aims at securing full employment, a general improvement in living standards, a wide expansion of democracy and a genuine policy for peace;
- the socialist revolution can be carried through in Britain by organised mass struggle outside parliament, creating and combining with a socialist parliamentary majority - producing a government and mass movement determined and able to implement a socialist programme;
- the contradictions within imperialism and the historical growth of the world's other progressive forces place considerable obstacles in the way of any attempts at

outside intervention in support of the British ruling class - although the possibility of such attempts cannot be precluded;

- the forces exist which can put Britain on the road to socialism, and the need is to unite them in a democratic anti-monopoly alliance led by the organised working class;
- essential to the creation of such an alliance and the advance to socialism is the building of a Communist Party which exercises mass influence.

This programme is imbued with our confidence in the ability of the peoples of Britain, led by the organised labour movement, to overcome all opposition and to transform our society as part of the struggle to change the world.

## Chapter 1: Capitalism and crisis.

We live in a world of enormous economic and social contrasts. The combined wealth of the top 300 people now exceeds the total annual income of the world's one billion poorest. The richest one-fifth own 85% of the world's wealth, while the poorest one-fifth control less than 2%.

The scale and nature of economic activities at the dawn of the 21st century create wealth unimagined by previous generations. Developments in telecommunications and digital technology mean that information and money can cross the globe with ease. However, half the world's population have never used a telephone, and 840 million are illiterate - two thirds of them women.

Although the potential exists to create riches and distribute them around the world, chronic mass unemployment affects more than 820 million workers. Production and trade is dominated by giant transnational corporations like Exxon, Unilever, Shell and Microsoft. Assisted by their 'home' governments and states, and by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, they strive to impose their monopoly across the world in the name of 'free trade' and globalisation. Billions of

dollars are spent on armaments each year, but resources cannot be found to eradicate poverty and diseases such as malaria. Throughout the developing countries one and a half billion people have no safe water supply, two and a half billion lack sanitation and hundreds of millions suffer from chronic malnutrition, while their governments are up to their necks in debt to Western banks.

In the United States, resources can be found to explore space and even to militarise it. Yet at the same time, the stability of the life support system of our planet is under threat due to ozone depletion, the greenhouse effect, acid rain, deforestation, toxic wastes and the extinction of species.

After a century of unprecedented social, national and international conflict, war still blights one part of the world after another. Aided by Britain and other NATO powers, the United States acts as policeman, judge, jury and executioner on behalf of the 'international community'. Countries that depart from the American line like Yugoslavia, Libya, Iraq and Sudan are invaded or bombed with no regard for human rights or international law. The division of the world by the major imperialist trading blocs of North America, the European Union and Japan is increasing the danger of military conflict. The Cold War may be over, but the risk of nuclear annihilation still exists.

This crisis which grips the world is endemic to capitalism in its highest and most moribund stage, imperialism. Britain however, as a wealthy imperialist state, is not immune. Here too, the richest tenth of the population own half of Britain's wealth, while the poorest 50% own just 6% of it. Governments come and go, but the major economic decisions continue to be made in the boardrooms of the big financial institutions and monopoly corporations. At the stroke of a computer key, huge sums of money are moved out of Britain and around the world. Factories are shut down while investment is directed overseas, where wages are often lower and conditions worse. The Welfare State is put in jeopardy and hard-won gains are sacrificed, so that companies can remain profitable' in the global market place'.

Does the world - or indeed Britain - have to be like this? For much of the 20th century, Communists could answer with a categorical 'No' as the world appeared to be undergoing an irreversible transition to the higher system of socialism. Such arguments became much more difficult after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the East European socialist states. Various 'Third Way', 'New Age' and anarchistic ideas have stepped into the ideological vacuum.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialism was a severe setback from which Communists have had to draw many lessons. Those societies certainly had many faults - not least their restriction of democracy - which contributed to their downfall. Nevertheless, developments since then confirm our basic analysis. Socialism, as it existed there, may have been overthrown, but capitalism fails billions of people the world over every day.

Capitalism is unable to tackle the problems of Britain and the world because it is a system based on private ownership and individual greed. Socialism, reborn and reinvigorated by mass participation, remains the only alternative. This conclusion is not a case of wishful thinking. It arises from our scientific, Marxist analysis of society and the class struggle within it.

### ***Workers and capitalists.***

In Britain, as in all capitalist societies, a continual struggle takes place between workers trying to preserve or advance their pay and conditions, and capitalists attempting to cut costs and boost profits.

The capitalist class is dominated by big shareholders who own most of industry, land, commerce, the banks and the mass media. The overwhelming majority of people can live only by selling their labour power to a capitalist employer, or to the state sector which maintains capitalist society. Most retired and unemployed workers are receiving a portion of the wealth produced by their past or future labour power. Parents receiving child-related benefits and allowances are rearing future providers of labour power for capitalism. That makes most of the population of Britain objectively working class, whatever their own individual perspective.

Under capitalism, the price of commodities that workers produce reflects the average labour time taken to produce them, including their inputs (raw materials, power, wear and tear of machinery etc.) But the revenue that capitalists receive from the sale of those commodities is more than enough to pay the wages bill, other production costs, taxes and renewed investment. The balance - capitalist profit - goes mostly in dividends to shareholder capitalists, in rent to landowning capitalists and in interest payments to money-lending capitalists.

Where does this capitalist profit come from? It is the value created by the company workforce, over and above the value of their wages. Workers in Britain's manufacturing industry, for example, create almost twice the value of their wages. The portion they do not receive back in wages or social benefits is the 'surplus value' kept by their employers. Here is the source of capitalist profit, and in this way workers are exploited under capitalism.

As employers seek to minimise costs and to squeeze more surplus value out of their workforce, they will try to hold down wages while also investing in machinery and equipment that saves labour costs and enables them to produce commodities more cheaply than their competitors. As the price of a commodity is determined largely by the average labour time taken to produce it, companies producing it at below average cost and value will make extra profits at the expense of the high-cost ones.

In the state sector, workers in local government and the civil and public services are also engaged in a struggle with employers. Lower costs and higher productivity of labour will keep public expenditure down - which means lower taxes, less pressure to increase wages and therefore bigger net profits in the private sector.

Whether in the private or public sector, it is in the interests of the capitalist class to reduce labour costs by employing workers who can be discriminated against on the basis of their race, gender, or age. Divisions within the working class on these and other grounds assist the capitalists to force down the general level of wages and other labour-related costs.

That is why it is in the interests of all workers to unite against discrimination and inequality.

Across the economy as a whole, the drive of capitalists to maximise productivity and profit has a contradictory effect. As the work process is increasingly mechanised in the drive for higher productivity, for lower labour costs and greater market share, so the proportion of the economy's capital invested in the workforce which creates new value - and therefore surplus value - diminishes. Employers are compelled to combat this tendency of the overall rate of profit to fall by reducing the real value of wages, intensifying the work rate, reorganising the work process, introducing continuous working, etc.

Thus the capitalists are impelled to increase production while at the same time restricting the purchasing power of the vast majority of consumers, namely the working class.

As a consequence, the point is reached periodically when not all the commodities produced can be sold at a profit. Orders for new machinery to increase output are cut back; workers in those sectors are laid off and their spending power diminishes; more commodities are unsold and, in turn, the workers who produce them are sacked. Soon the whole economy goes into a downward spiral of wage cuts, redundancy, closure and mass unemployment. As workers resist, the capitalist class exploits all the divisions that exist within the working class, deploying the forces of the capitalist state against the labour movement and any scapegoats' who can also be blamed for the crisis.

In these crises of 'over-production' which are increasingly frequent and widespread, smaller and weaker companies go the wall as plant and machinery is scrapped. Bigger capitalist firms weather the storm until it becomes profitable to produce once more, utilising cheap labour provided by mass unemployment, cheap credit and cheap means of production.

Thus the relations of production under capitalism - based on private ownership and profit - increasingly squander and periodically destroy society's productive forces. Yet these productive forces, if

planned and owned and nurtured by society as a whole, could already more than satisfy the material needs of all the world's people.

### ***Monopoly capitalism and imperialism.***

During the 19th century, periodic crises speeded up the process - through bankruptcy and merger - of reducing a large number of small firms to a small number of large ones. In each sector of industry and commerce in the main imperialist countries, no more than ten or 12 large companies came to monopolise the market, often forming cartels to restrict competition. Where they could, these capitalist monopolies restricted output relative to capacity in order to obtain monopoly prices and profits.

This compelled them to find greater investment outlets abroad for their growing capital, aiming to repeat on a world scale the monopoly control they had established at home. In particular, they sought to monopolise sources of raw materials and cheap labour, thereby pre-empting imperialist rivals. More and more of these companies thereby established themselves as transnational corporations (TNCs or 'multinationals'), locating at least some of their production operations abroad.

The monopolies also sought to protect their foreign investments through political and often military control of the countries in which they operated, using this to maintain privileged markets for their own manufactures. Hundreds of millions of people - the majority of the world's population - were drawn as workers and through trade, usury and taxation into the sphere of imperialist exploitation, and into the political and cultural oppression that sustained it.

In the early 20th century, once the world was completely divided up into colonies and other spheres of influence, the expansion of any one imperialism could only be achieved at the expense of another. No stable redivision or carve-up was possible, because capitalist countries develop unevenly. The faster-growing industrial power of Germany came to challenge the status quo dominated by the older, less dynamic power of Britain.

A struggle between imperialisms became inevitable. To prepare their economies for war, and to condition or bludgeon their peoples into accepting it, the monopolists began to fuse their economic and political power into a unity: state monopoly capitalism. This is characterised by the closest collaboration and joint involvement of the capitalist monopolies and the state apparatus in economic, political and military affairs.

The conflict between imperialisms culminated in the bloodbath of the 1914-18 First World War. But as they saw through the nationalistic and bellicose slogans of their own ruling class, working people everywhere began to struggle against war and the system which had caused it.

In the Russian empire - itself a target for imperialist investment - the corruption and military incompetence of a landlord police-state helped forge an alliance between the peasants' struggle against landlordism and the workers' struggle against capitalism. Out of this came the October Revolution of 1917, when Lenin, the Bolsheviks and their allies seized political power.

From then on, imperialism was faced for the first time in its history with a system which was ending exploitation. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) became a new and special focus for capitalist hatred.

Within the imperialist system all the old contradictions continued to develop. The First World War had stimulated important shifts in the productive forces and production relations. Methods of mass production raised the productivity of labour very sharply, while the war economy had accelerated the growth of monopoly. As capitalism was re-stabilised in the mid-1920s, partly by the increased intervention of the monopoly capitalist state to defeat trade union militancy and attempts at revolution, workers' consuming power grew more slowly than productive capacity. This contradiction laid the basis for capitalism's most profound periodic economic crisis, the Great Depression of the 1930s.

This crisis was uneven between imperialist countries, being deepest where the cushion of super-exploited

colonies did not exist on a significant scale, but where the productive forces had grown most rapidly. In Germany, such deep crisis coincided with an organisationally strong but politically divided working class. The German ruling class turned to fascism to destroy the Communist and working class movement, in part as preparation for a new imperialist war to redivide the world in its favour.

Initially, Nazi Germany was able to use the anti-Sovietism of powerful sections of the ruling classes of other imperialist countries to strengthen its own economic and military position. The working class, on the other hand, led the struggle to build a popular front against fascism, the principal force for war. In the struggle against fascist aggression, the Soviet state and the international Communist and working class movement were able to use the divisions within imperialism - between bourgeois democracy and fascism - to prevent a united front of imperialism against the USSR. Thus the basis was created for the defeat of fascism in the Second World War. That war also marked the emergence of the United States as the world's leading imperialist power, having already established its own colonies and semi-colonies in Central and South America.

Since then, capitalism's productive forces have grown at an unprecedented rate, largely due to the scientific and technological revolution. Widely based, this has been epitomised by the computer and micro-electronics revolution, through which complex mental processes could for the first time be carried out by machines.

But for the fruits of scientific advance to be realised, an ever more complex division and unity of labour was required, with huge resources devoted to research and development. In some sectors (eg. aircraft, informatics, chemicals and robotics), giant enterprises constituted the minimum scale of operation required to achieve this, but even they needed to collaborate with other giants. The research and education needed to underpin the scientific and technological revolution could only be organised and financed through massive state involvement, and in spheres such as nuclear fusion only through collaboration between states. Few countries were large enough to sustain the scientific and

technological revolution in every sector. A new division of labour between countries - with a new geographical distribution of productive forces - was necessary.

This process has been led by the transnational corporations. Their policies are tempered only by state pressure and popular struggle. The transnationals are now the decisive monopolies of imperialism, exporting capital from the home country where their headquarters and most of their biggest shareholders are based. They organise their activities between different countries in order to maximise their global profits. Their decisions - which sectors to expand, which to contract, which type of productive forces to develop, which to make redundant - determine the fate of whole regions, nations and groups of workers. Today, transnational corporations based in the USA, Japan, Britain and the other leading imperialist states account for one-third of the world's production, two-thirds of world trade and three-quarters of international investment.

### ***The challenge of socialism.***

For the working class and oppressed peoples of every nation, the Russian revolution was proof of the practicality of their hopes and beliefs. Working people could achieve political power and use it to build a social system free from exploitation, unemployment and war. Workers and oppressed peoples everywhere gained enormously in confidence. In particular, they saw how in the Soviet Union a communist party based on the theory of scientific socialism had been the vehicle for this breakthrough.

The achievements of the Soviet state and people were enormous. All remnants of feudalism were abolished. Large-scale industry was developed. The achievements of Soviet science in so many spheres were outstanding. In health, housing and social services big steps forward were recorded. There were massive advances in education, and a cultural revolution which changed the face of what had been a very backward society. Women threw off many of the shackles forged by feudal and religious customs and beliefs, achieving equality in law if not always in practice. Whole peoples acquired a written culture

and a measure of national self-government as the Tsarist 'prison house of nations' was demolished.

The Soviet Union also made a tremendous impact on the struggle for freedom against imperialism across the world, rendering invaluable aid to the national liberation and anti-apartheid movements. Nor should it be forgotten that Soviet industrialisation, on the basis of state ownership and planning, made possible the defeat of fascism in the Second World War - thereby saving the whole of humanity from unprecedented tyranny.

The Soviet Union struggled to build its socialist system in a backward country, surrounded by hostile imperialist forces. The Soviet people were plunged into two devastating wars - the war of intervention immediately following the revolution, and the Second World War which was followed by the defence burden of the Cold War.

The effects of encirclement and invasion by hostile imperialist forces should not be underestimated. Immense problems were caused for the Soviet Union politically, culturally and economically. The 'siege mentality' provoked by imperialist aggression was a powerful factor giving rise to wrong policies. From the late 1920s onwards, decisions were made which led to serious violations of socialist and democratic principles. More specifically, there developed an excessive centralisation of political power. State repression was used against people who failed to conform. Bureaucratic commands replaced economic levers as an instrument of planning. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the trades unions became integrated into the apparatus of the state, eroding working class and popular democracy. Marxism-Leninism was used dogmatically to justify the status quo.

Theoretically, the working people of the Soviet Union owned everything. But in fact they were masters of very little. Society was actually run by the party leadership, issuing orders from the top down.

After 1945, the centralised planning of nationalised economies had enabled the Soviet Union and its socialist allies to rebuild their war-torn countries and, for 20 years, to outstrip the capitalist world in

economic and social development. The Soviet Union developed its own nuclear capability and assisted by the world peace movement - secured a policy of peaceful co-existence, competition and co-operation between the two systems as a particular form of the international class struggle. But from the mid-1970s, the USSR and Eastern Europe began to fall behind capitalism - especially in Japan and Germany - in the quality and rate of growth of its productive forces. The bureaucratic command system of 'actually existing socialism' proved unable to utilise the post-war scientific and technological revolution and develop society's forces of production more effectively than capitalism. The contradiction in Soviet society between its authoritarian form and its socialist content - which could only be resolved by the widest expansion of democracy into all spheres of life - became intractable. Failure to reap the full benefits of the scientific and technological revolution, in conditions of competition with imperialism, laid the basis for the collapse of the socialist system in the USSR, and in those countries modelled upon it in central and eastern Europe.

In particular, the arms race led by the United States had compelled the Soviet Union to channel massive resources into military production, diverting them from civilian needs including consumer goods. The unfavourable comparisons with the West which this created - and which took no account of the way imperialism exploited the Third World - contributed to undermining confidence in socialism among sections of the population in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The scale of the Soviet military programme also created a powerful network of bureaucratic interest groups within the command system, straddling industry, the scientific community and the military establishment.

Attempts to renovate socialist production relations and bring democratic control into political and social life, attempted in the 1960s but stifled, were renewed in the mid-1980s. But perestroika ( 'reconstruction') in the economic sphere failed to win the fullest co-operation of bureaucratic cadres in the Party, economy and state. Established links were disrupted but not replaced by new ones based on a more flexible planning system and the use of market mechanisms.

The policy of glasnost ( 'openness') exposed long-standing distortions of socialism, thereby weakening the confidence of many who had from ignorance or loyalty denied their existence. The old Party-state structures were broken down - but there were no properly functioning political organisations, including the Party itself, to replace them. And because the dogmatisation of Marxism-Leninism had stunted political understanding and creative socialist thought at all levels, the door was opened to illusions about private ownership and the so-called 'free' market.

In these conditions, the capitalist option came to be embraced by key elements of the bureaucratic establishment who saw it as protecting their privileged position. Without a mass political movement based on the working people and led by a Communist Party armed with a clear perspective for socialist reform, the pressure for capitalist development - notably privatisation - became irresistible. The descent into chaos was accelerated by the failure to work out a new Soviet state structure acceptable to the republics and capable of defusing the ethnic conflicts which had begun to break out as a result of economic disruption and bureaucratic sabotage.

The collapse of socialism and the restoration of capitalism has since been a disaster for masses of people in the former Soviet Union and central and eastern Europe. Economic output, wages, social benefits and life expectancy fell dramatically in Russia as speculators, asset-strippers and gangster capitalists siphoned huge amounts of wealth out of the country. The new capitalist class in these countries is often weak and unstable. Economic relations with capitalist countries - formerly confined to trade - are deepening through transnational involvement and financial links with the International Monetary Fund and the European Union. Imperialism's main economic interest is to exploit the huge natural resources of the former Soviet Union not to encourage the development of a modern, rival capitalist Russia.

As a result of the regression to capitalism, civil war and ethnic conflicts have erupted in the Balkans, the Caucasus and in Central Asia. These have in many

cases been encouraged by outside imperialist interference. The major imperialist powers are pushing eastwards towards Russia, economically and militarily. The continuing expansion of the European Union and NATO into eastern Europe threatens peace in a way that the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact never did.

### ***Imperialism versus working people.***

Since the 1990s, the collapse of the socialist system has objectively strengthened the hand of capital while weakening that of the working class. The glue of anti-Communism and anti-Sovietism which held competing imperialist interests together has melted away, freeing imperialism to intensify its rivalries and its domination of the Third World. Far from creating a single economic 'global village' in the wake of the collapse, competing transnational corporations have intensified their struggle for new markets and larger shares of existing markets, so intensifying the exploitation of the working people of all countries.

So long as the capitalist world economy was expanding rapidly, rival transnational corporations could share in swallowing up their smaller competitors. But when the rate of world expansion slowed down from the early 1970s, German and Japanese companies -built up with substantial state aid and protection - mounted a challenge to their mainly US and British competitors. The economic and political outcome has been the polarisation of the world's monopolists into three groups. The capitalist monopolies have pressed their own national governments to construct rival trading blocs based on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), where the USA is dominant; the European Union, where Germany, France and Britain are dominant; and the countries of the Pacific Rim, where Japan is dominant.

It should not be imagined that TNCs 'have no country'. They constantly exert pressure to ensure that national state power is deployed to create a favourable class and financial climate at home, and to support their struggle against rival monopolies and troublesome governments abroad.

In western Europe, though, the use of national state power to help establish monopolies which dominate in a single country or even on an all-European scale is no longer enough. Because the struggle for domination takes place today in a global arena, transnationals in Europe are disadvantaged without an all-European state apparatus. The most powerful monopoly capitalism, Germany, organises others under its own hegemony in accordance with an absolute law of monopoly capitalism: the domination of the stronger over the weaker. Hence it strives for European economic unity backed by a European state apparatus, one which is capable of taking on the USA and Japan in a global struggle.

The European Union (EU) was established as the European 'Common Market' (later the EEC) in 1957 precisely in order to increase the power and the profits of the capitalist monopolies through greater exploitation of the working peoples of Europe and the Third World. Its bureaucratic, anti-democratic structures reflect this purpose. The political representatives of monopoly capital use the EU to co-ordinate their attacks in each member state on social and welfare programmes, nationalised industries, job security, migrant workers and refugees. The single European currency (the 'euro') is a central element in the strategy to impose pro-monopoly and anti-working class monetarist policies in every member state of the European Union.

At the same time, the transnational corporations see in the EU the opportunity to weaken the power of individual member states to regulate the economic activities of monopoly capital. So big business and finance work to undermine national economic sovereignty and so remove themselves from any possibility of democratic control by - and accountability to - national governments. Thus in the EU, economic and financial powers are transferred from democratically elected national governments to the European Commission, the European Central Bank and other supra-national agencies that are beyond direct democratic control and accountability.

Lenin warned in the midst of the First World War that the formation of a capitalist 'United States of Europe' would either be impossible or reactionary: impossible, because the monopoly capitalists of



different European imperialist powers were fundamentally the deadliest of rivals; or - to the extent that they could bury their differences temporarily - reactionary because their unity could only be 'for the purpose of jointly suppressing socialism in Europe, of jointly protecting colonial booty against Japan and America'.

Capitalism portrays deregulation, privatisation, cuts in the welfare state and mass long-term unemployment as necessary medicine to be swallowed by workers in the 'era of globalisation'. A handful of imperialist powers are the main driving force within the IMF, World Bank and World Trade Organisation in efforts to create a 'globalised' market, one in which their transnationals can operate without restrictions. This is reflected in the formulation of one-sided definitions of 'free trade' and 'fair competition', whereby power blocs such as NAFTA and the European Union are exempt from many of the measures imposed on other states. IMF and World Bank programmes are designed to create the most favourable conditions for the penetration of Third World and former socialist economies by Western monopoly capital, usually involving privatisation and cuts in social spending.

Changes stemming from the scientific and technological revolution and operating mainly through the transnational corporations have had a devastating impact upon the poorest and least developed countries.

Firstly, imports of the most industrialised countries are increasingly of sophisticated manufactured goods, whose raw material content is decreasing or is composed of artificial substitutes. By the late 1990s, the developed capitalist countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) drew less than 20% of their imports of food, beverages, tobacco and raw materials (other than petroleum) from former colonies, compared with two-thirds from each other. Lower tax rates on company profits in the imperialist centres have made it more attractive for transnationals to impose artificially low prices on imports from their subsidiaries in the Third World. In this and other ways, the underdeveloped countries are robbed of much of the value that their working people produce,

and which could otherwise be used to develop their economies and societies. But this trade is also of less significance to the imperialist countries than it was in the 1950s and 1960s.

Secondly, the relative reduction in demand for raw materials from underdeveloped countries has shifted foreign investment away from them and towards the developed countries and their sophisticated industrial products. By the late 1990s, the six leading imperialist economies (the USA, Japan, Britain, Germany, France and Italy) received less than one-fifth of their foreign investment income from the developing countries. Four-fifths of their assets abroad are now located within north America, western Europe and Australasia. The flow of rent, interest and profit from foreign investments is predominantly between the developed industrial countries themselves.

Operations in the Third World currently provide less than 3% of the total profits of the home-based capitalist class in most imperialist countries, although this figure takes no account of the cheap prices imposed on imports from the Third World by monopoly pressure. Significantly, the chief exception is Britain, whose capitalists draw nearly one-tenth of their total investment income from the developing countries. These global interests impel sections of the British ruling class towards a close alliance with US imperialism.

The export of profits and interest payments from the Third World to the West makes a significant contribution to the balance of payments of a number of imperialist countries, especially Britain, while plunging Third World countries themselves into utter destitution. Their balance of payments is kept permanently in deficit, forcing many of them to subordinate their economies to cash-crop production for export. Deeply in debt and short of foreign currency, they turn to the IMF and the World Bank for assistance that comes with strings attached - they must slash social and welfare spending, and sell off state industries to Western transnationals.

This analysis of world economic relations and the latest developments in the productive forces shows that, for imperialism as a whole since the 1980s, the

most important source of profit is the working class of the highly developed capitalist countries. So long as that situation holds, it follows that the sharpening struggle will be primarily within the 'First World' itself, between the three main imperialist blocs for a redivision of markets and spheres of investment and influence. Control over oil resources, supply lines and key minerals, many of which are located in the Third World and the former socialist countries, will remain a vital strategic objective of the imperialist powers - one for which they will threaten and use force. In a world dominated by imperialism, without the Soviet Union as a powerful force for peace, there is greater scope for a reversion to the open military methods of colonialism and the final arbiter of inter-imperialist conflict has always been war.

How can the world's left, democratic and progressive forces find a way forward from this dangerous juncture in world development?

Intensified competition between rival transnationals and their states invariably means a deepening trend towards reaction in every sphere of society. Economically, this coincides with severe cyclical crises, exerting greater pressure on wages and the social wage, reinforced by political and ideological offensives. The response to this must be practical struggles for the first stages of alternative economic and democratic strategies - consistent with the historical position and traditions of each country - that would shift the balance of wealth and power towards working people. Such strategies would prioritise the need to defend jobs, trade union rights and the welfare state, and to build solidarity against the transnational corporations.

Politically and ideologically, pressure for reactionary unity within Europe will coincide with pressure for growing hostility towards the USA and Japan. All moves towards the creation of a European capitalist super-state must be resolutely opposed on democratic and anti-monopoly grounds. The militarisation of the EU, with its common foreign and security policy, military-industrial complex and European Army (or 'rapid reaction force'), threatens not only the neutral status of some member states, but also the national self-determination of peoples beyond western Europe. Communists see national and multinational

states with their popularly-based democratic institutions - the only democracy we have - as essential vehicles for the establishment of socialism.

The EU's 'Fortress Europe' policy is imposing further racist legislation in the field of immigration and asylum rights. The resurgence of neo-fascist parties and movements within the European Union and in non-EU states in Europe is of enormous concern. Whether arising from counter-revolution in eastern Europe after 1989, or from xenophobic and racist policies pursued by the EU under the Schengen Agreement, neo-fascism needs to be confronted and isolated. The ruling class everywhere will seek to make scapegoats of national and ethnic minorities. All manifestations of racism have to be actively countered by the Communist and working class movement.

In the former socialist states, the best condition for slowing down and even reversing the restoration of capitalism is that the people's democratic and socialist organisations have the greatest freedom to operate. Their battle to keep their countries' development free from external capitalist intervention is a vital part of the working class struggle for national self-determination everywhere.

The collapse of socialism in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union has led to increasing external pressure on the remaining socialist countries. Thus there is need for growing solidarity with, for instance, Cuba against US imperialism. The campaign to impose capitalism upon China and People's Korea has begun, with Tibet and Taiwan providing pretexts for imperialist interference. To safeguard and develop the socialist countries and those of a socialist orientation, their right to self-determination must be defended by the world's working class movements.

The oppression and indebtedness of much of the Third World will continue to give rise to revolutionary struggles and attempts to break from the yoke of imperialism. Control of strategic oil supplies and other key natural resources will continue to be a source of conflict in the Third World and in parts of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Growing divisions within imperialism preclude a US monopoly, and provide openings for smaller and

Third World states where popular struggle can reinforce a neutral or anti-imperialist stance. This underlines the importance of a reinvigorated Non-Aligned Movement. All of these possibilities will demand greater solidarity from the labour and progressive movements in the imperialist countries, in defence of national self-determination and against imperialist interference including military intervention dressed up as 'humanitarianism'.

The future role of the United Nations depends upon the balance of forces and interests between member states, and between peoples and governments. The collapse of the USSR removed a powerful progressive force from the UN Security Council and agencies such as the International Labour Organisation, UNESCO and the World Health Organisation. The changed international balance of forces has allowed the imperialist countries to sideline the UN when necessary, as in the war against Yugoslavia and the prolonged bombing of Iraq.

The United Nations is in urgent need of democratic reform, but this will not be easy. Many smaller states are subject to the economic power of the imperialist countries. For the present, therefore, the Security Council veto exercised by China and Russia alongside the imperialist powers remains an important check. Democratisation will depend on the strengthening of anti-imperialist and working class forces at national level. Immediately, it is necessary to put forward initiatives on basic economic and social issues which can expose and isolate imperialist programmes at world level, to demand the scrapping of debt repayment and begin developing the UN as a forum for promoting a democratic New International Economic Order.

Faced with imperialism's renewed and militarised drive for new markets and for the redivision of old ones, the campaigning for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation needs to be stepped up. The peace movement nationally and internationally has to be strengthened in the struggle against great power interference in countries' internal affairs, for the right of nations to self-determination, for the peaceful resolution of international disputes and against the political and economic doctrines of imperialism. In this context, the role of China as a socialist power

committed to peaceful relations between states becomes increasingly important.

Success in the campaign for peace and disarmament would release enormous resources for the conquest of poverty, hunger and disease, and for protecting the world's ecological balance. By opening up a new system of international relations, it would make possible co-operation between all states irrespective of their social system - to deal with the problems of global environmental protection.

### *The struggle for environmental and ecological security.*

In its world-wide rush for profit and power, imperialism has ravaged the resources and environment of the earth for more than a century. Widespread pollution of the air, soil, rivers, lakes and seas is but one of the consequences. Global warming and its 'greenhouse effect' threaten a greater incidence of climatic instability, crop failure and flooding. Destruction of the rainforests is driving plant and animal species to extinction. Ozone depletion, acid rain, deforestation and desertification present the world's peoples with new and additional dangers.

The transnationals, aided by imperialist governments and some international agencies, have exported ecologically dangerous processes to the developing countries where safety laws and their enforcement are inadequate. This adds to the total pollution of the environment and must be stopped. Pressure on the environment is exacerbated by the continued growth in world population. World resources are finite and the planet clearly cannot sustain an infinite number of people. While moves to contain population growth must be welcomed, it is essential that population policies are seen as just one element in a programme of sustainable development. Family planning policies should be combined with far-reaching programmes of education and - above all - poverty alleviation. In poor countries, poverty leads to a desire for large families both as a form of insurance in old age and as a source of labour for subsistence agriculture. This desire persists even in the early stages of development and, combined with improvements in medical services, leads for a period to accelerated

population growth. But experience also shows that once development has become established and poverty decreases, family size tends to diminish.

Population growth is not sufficient to explain the degradation of the environment. A major factor is capitalism's drive for profits, its unplanned exploitation of the earth's resources and the consumerist psychology which it engenders. The average inhabitant in Britain or the USA consumes 25 times the resources of someone in India or China. New bio-technologies which use as their raw material species of plants and animals found in the Third World - particularly the rainforests - should not be in the hands of the TNCs, which have a record of ruthless exploitation and destruction of other natural resources.

An environmentally safe system of energy production does not yet exist. Greater emphasis will have to be placed on energy conservation and on the development of renewable sources, with less reliance on fossil fuels. Cheap public transport would cut down the use of cars and the production of carbon dioxide from petrol combustion. The burning of coal will remain a major source of energy for the foreseeable future - but in Britain this should be British rather than imported coal. Fluidised-bed combustion and adequate scrubbing of waste gases must be introduced to cut down the emissions which produce acid rain. Because of the environmental hazards from nuclear power based on fission, particularly from the disposal of nuclear waste and the problems of decommissioning, existing nuclear power plants should be phased out.

We must move towards an overall system of production in which waste products are either eliminated or reduced to an absolute minimum. The atmosphere, the oceans and the land can no longer be treated as a dustbin. Waste must either be recycled or used as a starting point for other processes. Where this is not possible in a particular process of production, that process may have to be abandoned or replaced by an alternative one. At all times, the effects of human activity on the environment will have to be carefully monitored, and research carried out to deal with problems as they arise. This applies to agriculture as much as to industry.

The change to a closed system of waste-free production is incompatible with the existence of an unplanned capitalist economy dominated by the monopolies. Their drive for maximum and short-term profit takes precedence over the long-term consequences for the environment.

The drive for private capitalist profit is an in-built obstacle to greater environmental protection. It regards 'green' policies as a drain on potential profits and dividends. It leads to the wasteful levels of consumption of raw materials seen today in the highly industrialised world. It follows that measures to protect the environment must feature prominently in any programme for advance to socialism. But even under socialism, as experience in the former socialist countries indicates, environmental protection will require constant vigilance, public awareness, democratic involvement, openness and accountability.

### ***Imperialism or socialism.***

Not only is capitalism a system built on exploitation and oppression in its imperialist stage, it is becoming increasingly parasitic and obsolete. Its intrinsic profit motive produces militarism and war. Compared with what is possible, capitalist production relations are today a barrier to the development of society's productive forces and their use by human beings for the full, free and beneficial development of all.

Replacing private ownership of the means of production (land, workplaces, power, machinery, raw materials, et.c) with common ownership will not only put an end to exploitation. It will also ensure that production takes place in order to meet society's needs, not in order to maximise private profit. The democratic planning of production would enable the full use of scientific and technological advances to eradicate poverty, raise living standards and put an end to the massive inequalities of wealth and power. The guiding principle of socialism would be: 'from each according to their ability to each according to their work'.

Socialism would make possible the creation of genuine democracy and participation in all areas of society, allowing people to fulfil their potential free

not only from economic and social pressures, but from all forms of prejudice and discrimination. It also provides the only hope of saving our planet's ecological balance from irreparable damage.

How can socialism be achieved? Communists strive to formulate the road to socialism in the concrete conditions of each country, taking as their starting point the real-life developments and forces in society.

## Chapter 2: The Crisis in Britain.

Britain's problems today reflect the general problems of world imperialism, and at the same time exhibit specific features arising from Britain's parasitic colonial past.

As the first industrial capitalist power, Britain was once the “workshop of the world.” It dominated world trade and commerce, controlling the largest colonial empire in history. Up to the First World War, London was the financial capital of the world and the pound was monarch of the international monetary system.

All that has changed. By the beginning of the 20th century, new capitalist nations including France and Germany - but especially the USA - were challenging Britain for supremacy. Since 1945, the peoples of the colonies have fought for, and mostly achieved, political independence leading to the collapse of the British Empire.

The need for a complete break with past imperialist policies had become urgent but, instead, successive Tory and Labour governments continued with them.

Central to this was the effort to maintain the international role of the pound and of Britain as a major financial centre. British monopolies carried on investing huge resources abroad at the expense of investment at home.

Colonial wars and repression continued after the Second World War, while neo-colonial policies undermined the efforts of former colonies to achieve real independence. Racist and oppressive regimes

were backed in South Africa and in other parts of the world.

Britain played the role of junior partner in the USA's efforts to hold back national liberation movements and to direct the Cold War against socialism. This meant a gigantic waste of resources on bases abroad and armaments.

Nevertheless, advances in living standards could still be won. The immediate post-war situation favoured a sustained expansion in the world economy, enabling Britain to enjoy a period of growth.

Although Britain's economy compared unfavourably with others in terms of investment, productivity and trading performance, significant concessions were yielded to working people in terms of jobs, wages and other material and social benefits.

The creation and expansion of the Welfare State from the mid-1940s epitomise the gains that could be made.

The situation altered towards the end of the 1960s, when the post-war expansion began to end. The chronic weaknesses of the British economy were sharply exposed as the world capitalist economy went into crisis.

For the British ruling class, it became a particularly urgent task to place the burden of the crisis upon the shoulders of working people, even to the extent of clawing back previous concessions.

The Heath Tory government was the first to attempt a complete break with the Keynesian-style class-collaboration policies pursued by post-war Labour and Tory administrations.

From the moment of its election in June 1970, it opted for open confrontation with the trades unions. But the Heath government suffered defeat after defeat at the hands of the working class, which was too united, too strong and too confident to be beaten in direct confrontation.

When the Labour Party was returned to office in February 1974, many thought that the magnificent struggles of the miners, the dockers, the power

workers and the whole working class might be rewarded.

Labour's election manifesto had promised to bring about "a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power and wealth in favour of working people and their families." But instead, there was a further shift in the balance of power and wealth in favour of the capitalist class.

The class objectives of Labour's right-wing leadership were the same as those of Heath and the Tories. The difference was that where Heath had failed to achieve these objectives through open confrontation with the labour movement, the Wilson and Callaghan Labour governments succeeded by enlisting the collaboration of most trade union leaders.

In September 1974, the TUC endorsed the Social Contract, which supposedly offered the unions a partnership with government in formulating economic and social policy. But its real purpose was to get the TUC itself to police a policy of wage restraint.

The results of the Social Contract were catastrophic for the working class. The Labour government - operating behind the facade of an IMF diktat - slashed state spending on industry, infrastructure, public sector wages and social services. As the position of working people steadily worsened, and their initial confidence and expectations turned into disillusionment and disgust, the ground was inexorably prepared for the election of the Thatcher Tory government in 1979.

### ***Tory strategy in the 1980s and 1990s.***

The strategic objectives of the Tories under Thatcher and Major were two-fold: to reduce the incomes and living standards of the working class in order to restore and consolidate the profit base of the capitalist monopolies and, at the same time, to suppress democratic rights in order to break any working class resistance.

Towards these objectives, Tory legislation facilitated the deep and direct penetration of monopoly capital

into many areas of social life and activity, including education, housing, culture, sport and leisure.

These Tory governments sought to hide their real class aims behind an elaborate propaganda campaign extolling the virtues of private enterprise and the market economy, and the individual choices and freedoms that supposedly go with them. But harsh realities in Britain soon exposed the hollowness of these claims.

The Tories cut public spending and investment, sold off vital public assets and nationalised industries at knock-down prices to private monopolies, encouraged the exodus of capital and provoked interest- and exchange-rate instability.

These policies accelerated the decline of Britain's economy and led to massive redundancies, inflation and balance of payments crises.

British-based monopolies and financial institutions made enormous profits, but many smaller firms collapsed and whole communities were devastated by factory and pit closures. Such new developments that did occur in those areas were carried out in the interests of the big property, leisure and retailing companies.

Tory governments created and used mass unemployment as a weapon to debilitate the organised trade union movement and to undermine its confidence and morale.

Threatened loss of benefits forced many "job seekers" into working long hours for low pay, while increased job insecurity enabled employers to drive down wages and intensify the work process.

Weakened through years of underfunding, the Welfare State faced the prospect of outright abolition. The fall in the real value of pensions and benefits, together with increased indirect taxation and cuts in the "social wage" - the National Health Service, state education, council housing and public transport - contributed to a significant reduction in living standards for the majority of the population.

The worst affected were women, young people, pensioners, ethnic minorities, the unemployed and

single parent families - those sectors of the working class who are least well-organised and therefore least able to defend their interests.

Indeed, the discrimination experienced by women and black people means that they are not only exploited as workers, but also oppressed because of their gender or race.

Women's employment increased throughout the period of Tory rule but predominantly into part-time, low-skilled and low-paid jobs, and the second-class status of both women and black people made them particularly vulnerable to cuts in benefits and social services.

The savagery of the Tories' attack demonstrated their intention to secure an irreversible redistribution of wealth and power towards the capitalist class. Central to achieving this were the drastic constraints imposed on the trades unions.

Long standing common law immunities were removed, solidarity strikes and secondary picketing were outlawed, ballots were imposed on every conceivable occasion and - even where ballots were conducted - employers were given powers to sack strikers with impunity. Crucially, the TUC and the unions failed to maintain a united, militant front in the face of this onslaught.

A parallel assault took place on representative local democracy, where the labour movement had secured significant representation. Measures such as rate-capping, "local management" of schools, council house sales, privatisation of municipal transport, abolition of the Greater London Council and the metropolitan authorities, and the introduction of the Poll Tax and then the Council Tax, stripped local authorities of significant powers.

The centralisation of power in London denied the peoples of Scotland and Wales any real means to influence or determine policies affecting their national interests. At the same time, the sovereign rights of all the British peoples were curtailed by the transfer of more of the legislative powers of the Westminster parliament to the unelected European Commission in Brussels.

This assault by itself represented a serious threat to democracy.

But the attack took place on every front, using every instrument of state power including the police, the judiciary, the secret services, the civil service and the mass media.

The Criminal Justice Act gave the police and the courts a wider range of powers to harass, intimidate and convict people. An ideological offensive was launched to create a climate of fear, insecurity, intolerance and personal greed.

Sexist and other divisive attitudes were encouraged, aimed at women, lesbians and gay men. Racist immigration and nationality laws not only denied rights to black people, but also led to escalating levels of racist violence and other oppressive behaviour.

Of all those who suffered as a result of the Tories' suppression of democratic rights and civil liberties, none did so more than the people of Northern Ireland.

Colonised by England over 800 years ago, Ireland had been partitioned in 1922 after fighting a people's war for national independence. A puppet state was set up in the north to perpetuate British imperialist domination.

But the continuing struggle for national unification, and the growth of the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland, led eventually to the collapse of the Stormont regime in 1972 and its replacement by direct British rule.

In 1969, British troops had been sent into Northern Ireland ostensibly to keep the peace. Instead, the army was consistently used to intimidate the nationalist community and to suppress the republican forces seeking a united independent Ireland.

It has been responsible for mass arrests, torture, killings and the military occupation of working class nationalist areas. No-jury Diplock courts, assassinations and other forms of state violence became the norm.

Northern Ireland also played the role of “guinea pig” for British state repression, as methods first applied and tested there were subsequently transferred to Britain. Successive Labour leaders colluded with the Tories to ensure continued imperialist intervention in Ireland.

The Tories’ approach towards Ireland symbolised the continuity between their reactionary domestic policies and their reactionary foreign policy. Together with the US government, the British state stood - as it does today - at the forefront of the struggle against world progress and to maintain the grip of imperialism.

The Tory governments of Thatcher and Major provided every form of assistance to reactionary regimes around the world, most notoriously to apartheid South Africa and the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile.

But the fact that Britain was no longer a leading world military power, with bases across the globe, meant that the ruling class had to rely increasingly on US military strength to protect the parasitical, neo-colonial interests of British TNCs overseas.

This factor, more than any other, accounted for slavish Tory support for US imperialist aggression in Central and Latin America, for US policy in the Middle East, and for US arms expansion since the early 1980s including the infamous “Star Wars” project.

This is also the reason why British governments helped to reinforce US domination of the NATO military alliance, while also playing host to 130 US military installations.

These made - and still make - Britain the main centre for 'forward-based' US strategic nuclear weapons and, therefore, a main target for retaliation in the event of nuclear conflict.

But Britain's relationship with the USA remains a complex one. Although one side of British imperialist interests dictates the necessity for an alliance with US imperialism, another side of those interests dictates the need for closer unity with the West European

imperialist powers grouped inside the European Union.

British monopoly capital was originally opposed to the formation of the European Economic Community in the 1950s because, at that time, it ran counter to Britain's global interests. However, British imperialism has since come to play a key role in the EU, seeing it as a necessary framework for protecting its interests, in common with those of other Western European imperialist interests, against the intensifying competitive threat posed by US and Japanese TNCs.

The British ruling class also sees the European Union as a powerful mechanism to undermine organised working class struggle - while facilitating the collective neo-colonialist exploitation of former European colonies, particularly in Africa.

The Thatcher and Major governments attempted to block certain aspects of Western European centralisation, although they supported the drive to create a Single European Market by 1992.

Their opposition to complete centralisation did not, however, spring from any desire to protect national sovereignty and democracy on behalf of the peoples of Britain; rather, it reflected Tory efforts to balance and reconcile British state-monopoly capitalism's EU involvement with its so-called 'special relationship' with US imperialism.

At the same time, of course, British imperialism has its own interests to pursue as a major economic and military power on its own account. Despite Thatcher's populist assertions about defending British sovereignty, her governments signed up to numerous measures which eroded that sovereignty, including the sweeping 1987 Single European Act.

The general crisis of the world system of imperialism dictates the fundamental tasks facing the dominant section of the capitalist class in Britain as elsewhere. These tasks were common to the Heath, Wilson, Callaghan, Thatcher and Major governments alike in their role as the executive arm of Britain's capitalist monopolies.



What distinguished the Thatcher Tory government was the consistency and uncompromising ruthlessness with which it pursued ruling class objectives, and the extent to which it fought the battle of ideas against socialism and the very concept of 'society' itself.

### ***State monopoly capitalism today.***

The election of a Labour government in 1997 opened up new opportunities for working class advance. It was a defeat of historic proportions for the Tories.

The experience of mass unemployment and popular resistance to the Poll Tax helped to galvanise public opinion in favour of Labour as the only realistic alternative.

In preparation for this outcome, Britain's monopoly capitalists had turned to a policy of class collaboration in place of open and uncompromising confrontation with the working class.

Business leaders, media barons and top personnel in the state apparatus had been reassured by the "New" Labour leadership under Tony Blair, its support for pro-big business policies and its abolition of the socialist Clause Four in the Labour Party's constitution. Business tycoons were promptly appointed to numerous posts in the new government.

Once in office, the Blair government made some concessions to its working class supporters. It reduced VAT on domestic fuel, restored some trades union rights and introduced a statutory national minimum wage.

But in a whole number of areas notably the economy, taxation, benefits, pensions and privatisation it essentially continued Tory pro-big business policies. In some cases, such as student tuition fees, it went much further.

Commitments to an "ethical foreign policy" were quickly abandoned. 'New' Labour continued Britain's role as a junior partner to US imperialism, championed NATO aggression against Yugoslavia, enthusiastically endorsed moves towards a European military capitalist super-state, and joined the gutter

press in a vicious campaign against refugees and asylum-seekers.

In preparation for European monetary union, it surrendered control over interest rates to the Bank of England.

For the peoples of Scotland and Wales and for the citizens of London, the establishment of new representative bodies by the Blair government was nonetheless a step forward.

The Communist Party had campaigned for many years for Scottish and Welsh parliaments, and for the restoration of local democracy including the Greater London Council.

The limited powers of the Welsh Assembly, Scottish Parliament and Greater London Authority, together with electoral systems which concentrated powers in the hands of party leaderships, have significantly restricted the ability of working people to use these bodies to control big business and the state bureaucracy.

Rather than widening popular democratic participation and granting genuine national rights, the Blair government's general thrust in these areas has been to maintain the unity of the British imperialist state and to "modernise" its apparatus to make it more efficient for monopoly capitalism.

Its promotion of English Regional Assemblies, 'reform' of the House of Lords and the introduction of a cabinet system and directly-elected mayors in local government needs to be judged in the same light.

Significantly, all these changes are taking place at the same time as genuine democratic powers have been ceded to the European Union through the Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties.

There is a danger that the EU's 'Europe of the Regions' agenda will be used to undermine further the unity and democracy of member states, and to set working people against each other with regions' offering lower labour costs and a 'flexible' workforce in order to attract inward investment from big business.

Despite the loss of democratic powers to the European Union, it remains the case that state power is exercised at British level by British finance capital, by the capitalist class and its top bureaucratic, political and military representatives. Both Tory and 'New' Labour governments have acted to strengthen executive power and the links with big business at every level. In this way, British state monopoly capitalism has been consolidated.

For British-based monopolies, the British state remains indispensable. It manages almost every aspect of capitalist society in Britain. It fights - often literally - to secure their access to markets and raw materials across the world. It provides these companies with the research, contracts and trained labour without which they could not survive. It bargains on their behalf within the institutions of the EU, NATO, the World Trade Organisation, etc.

The only reduction in British state power favoured by monopoly capitalism is in its democratic potential to challenge, control and roll back the prerogatives of capital.

The question of which political party forms the government within the state apparatus is an important one for the capitalist monopolies. The ruling class cannot afford to allow the demise of the Tory Party which has, hitherto, most fully and directly represented the interests of British imperialism at home and abroad.

At the same time, it is clearly in the interests of capital to make the Labour Party a totally safe and obedient servant of British state monopoly capitalism. It is not only the left which is struggling for the heart of the Labour Party, but also those sections of capital which have rejected direct class confrontation in favour of 'social partnership' or - to give it its proper name - class collaboration.

However, it will not be possible to make Labour wholly safe for capital in the long term unless its character as a party rooted in the organised working class is qualitatively altered. Weakening the links with the trades unions, excluding unions from the selection of Labour Party election candidates, ditching Clause Four and moving towards greater

state funding of political parties are all part of this process.

But this process has not yet run its full course. The working class has made it clear that it still recognises Labour as its mass party. It will remain the mass party of the working class as long as it is based upon trade union affiliation. The implications of this reality for any strategy for socialist revolution will be considered in the following chapters.

The crisis in British society grips every sphere of life, most severely affecting the working class and oppressed sections of the people. This is in essence a crisis of state monopoly capitalism in Britain, which is in turn part of the general crisis of imperialism. That the contradictions of capitalism prevent the full and all-round development of the people, individually and collectively, is evident to all whose horizons have not been closed down by their experience of life in capitalist society.

In Britain as elsewhere, the crisis is increasingly taking the form of a crisis of democracy. Not only are civil liberties being curtailed through further security and surveillance measures, changes in the civil and criminal law, new public order and "anti-terrorism" legislation, etc.

State monopoly capitalism has also been compelled to limit and even remove the potential of elected institutions to effect economic and social change in the interests of the working class.

As this generates feelings of powerlessness and alienation, so it deepens the crisis of those parties that have long claimed to represent working class interests within capitalism, winning reforms and improvements without challenging the existence of that system itself.

### ***The role of reformism.***

Across the whole range of domestic and international issues, the right-wing leadership of the labour movement supports policies which - although offering some minor concessions to sections of the working class - in general protect the economic and political power of the capitalist class. The leaders of

the Labour Party, the TUC and most trades unions collaborate with the rule of capital instead of challenging it.

They hold out the prospect of reforms and improvements to the system of state monopoly capitalism, but would never undertake the revolutionary task of abolishing it altogether.

The predominance of class collaboration and reformism in the British labour movement has its roots in empire. The propaganda and some of the super-profits of British imperialism have been used to make some layers of the labour movement and many leaders identify their own interests with those of the capitalist class and its system.

The diversionary role of reformism explains why the ruling class and its mass media have always supported the right wing inside the labour movement, and why they have tolerated the election of reformist Labour governments despite that party's trade union affiliations and socialist left wing.

The nature and techniques of reformism change in different phases of capitalist development, mirroring changes in ruling class strategy. Thus, for example, the benign post-war reformism of the Labour Party offered the prospect of jobs for life and ever-increasing standards of living within the context of a "managed" capitalism (or even "post-capitalism").

Reformism today is much more restrictive, seeking to condition workers to accept the 'reality' of the 'flexible labour market' which means more intensive exploitation, greater insecurity and a declining quality of life. Class collaboration and reformism are dressed up as 'new realism' and 'social partnership'.

In this new period of intensified competition on a world scale - and of the protracted structural crisis of British state-monopoly capitalism - the Blair leadership represented a new right-wing trend in the Labour Party.

Openly pro-big business and anti-labour movement, it did not even seek to represent working class interests through collaboration with capital; rather it openly and consciously represented the interests of

British state monopoly capitalism inside the labour movement.

But a pro-big business Labour government could never meet the main aspirations, expectations and demands of the working class. The policies of state monopoly capitalism continually threaten people's living standards, job security, public services, the environment and peace.

This contradiction between Labour voters and such a Labour government (and Labour-run councils) will sharpen during economic recession, aggravated by the structural weaknesses of British monopoly capitalism.

In any major clash of interests, a Labour government will tend to side with the ruling class - unless massive pressure can be brought to bear by the labour movement and the mass of people, forcing a change of course at the earliest opportunity.

The experience of Britain's post-war history is that right-wing policies eventually disillusion and alienate important sections of Labour's natural electoral base - the working class. They fall prey to Tory populism, turn to other parties or fail to vote at all. Labour then loses office and is followed by a Tory government which is even further to the right.

The lesson should be clear. Just as the ruling class supports a strategy which protects its position, so must the working class and its allies be mobilised in support of an alternative intermediate strategy which promotes their own position.

### Chapter 3: The Alternative Economic and Political Strategy.

The problems facing the majority of people in Britain will never be solved within the confines of the capitalist system. Crises are intrinsic to capitalism and the ruling class will always seek to place the burden of them on the shoulders of the working class.

The only solution is a fundamental change in the very structure and organisation of society.

But the transition to socialism will not come about automatically. It will only come about through revolutionary struggle, in the course of which the working class and its allies - by uniting and concentrating their forces - take state power out of the hands of the capitalist class.

Under capitalism, the state is not something neutral. It is an instrument used by the capitalist class both to maintain exploitation and to prevent any effective opposition to it. Therefore the working class and its allies must take state power, if they are to change the economic basis of society in order to transform society itself.

But the conditions for socialist revolution in Britain do not yet exist. The major problem is that the persistence of working class consciousness is not matched by a growth in socialist consciousness. The reasons for this are complex.

To maintain divisions, the ruling class is still prepared to provide privileges and benefits to some sections of the working class. It continues to use every possible avenue to promote capitalist concepts and ideals in order to prevent dissatisfaction from being turned against capitalism itself.

In this ideological battle, therefore, the capitalist class exploits - for instance - the growth of home ownership and of limited share ownership among the working class.

Racism and national chauvinism are two particularly damaging legacies of Britain's imperialist past and present. Overcoming these divisive reactionary ideas, as well as sexism and homophobia, is a crucial part of winning the battle of ideas in favour of socialism.

Reformism in the leadership of the labour movement - including in the Labour Party - also plays an important role in impeding the development of socialist consciousness.

Nor should we overlook the part that anti-Communist and anti-Soviet propaganda has long played in the battle of ideas. Far from it disappearing in the period since the collapse of the Soviet Union and socialism in eastern Europe, there has been a sustained

campaign to reduce the experience of these societies to their negative factors alone.

Their many achievements are ignored or belittled. This new wave of anti-Communism, which is aimed at all socialist ideas and ideals, even seeks to paint the "crimes of Communism" as comparable with those of the Nazis.

Such arguments rely upon a one-sided and false portrayal of 20th century history. Moreover, they are frequently combined with ideological attacks on the remaining socialist countries, usually on the pretext of defending human rights.

How can these and other factors preventing the growth of socialist consciousness be overcome? How can the gap be closed between the objective necessity for the working class and its allies to take state power and establish socialism, and the need for greater awareness of these tasks?

A significant part of the answer to this question depends upon the extent to which the main organisations of the left - and in particular the Communist Party - can project socialist concepts and ideas within the ranks of the organised working class and other sections of the population.

But the wider answer must lie in the experience gained by working people themselves in the course of the class struggle.

In Britain over recent years, this struggle has widened in scope as different sections of workers and other people have taken action to defend wages or job conditions, benefits and public services, peace, the environment, democratic rights and social justice.

Where successful, these campaigns help to boost the morale and confidence of the people involved, encouraging them to expand their demands.

Another equally positive aspect is that these struggles help to make people aware that behind the power of the capitalist monopolies stands the power of the state.

The major lesson from all this is that, as a starting point, we need to develop the different struggles on

all those immediate issues which face the working class.

More than that, these battles need to be brought into a common stream so that people's experiences can be pooled, their efforts concentrated and directed so as to make inroads into the wealth and power of the capitalist class.

To this end, there has to be a strategy which - by linking together separate policy demands on a range of issues - can promote a united, co-ordinated and therefore more effective struggle to further working class interests.

The alternative economic and political strategy (AEPS), developed in the labour movement and by the Communist Party in particular, is just such a strategy.

The alternative strategy is not a recipe for instant socialism, but is a programme of action directed against state-monopoly capitalism.

It takes as its point of departure the balance of forces within the existing framework of capitalism. In fact, it is a bridging strategy linking the defensive battles of working people to protect their immediate interests, with an array of campaigns to put people on the offensive against the fundamental power base of monopoly capitalism.

Its achievement will require the building of a democratic anti-monopoly alliance, leading through a process of mass struggle to the election of a left government based on a Labour, socialist and communist majority.

In the course of striving to implement the AEPS, people's understanding of the necessity for - and viability of - the struggle for state power and socialism would develop.

### ***Economic and social policies.***

The immediate aim of the alternative strategy's economic proposals is to boost the economy.

Value added tax (VAT) should be cut and direct taxes on working people's incomes reduced. The

burden of taxation should be shifted onto the rich, for example through higher top rates of income tax, a wealth tax and stricter measures against tax evasion.

Council tax should be replaced by a local income tax based on ability to pay. The national minimum wage should be raised to half median male earnings immediately, rising to two-thirds over time, with no discrimination against young workers.

At the same time, there should be a renewed drive to achieve equal wages for work of equal value for women, ethnic minorities and other sections of the workforce that face discrimination.

In addition, there needs to be a massive and sustained increase in public spending in several priority areas. Particularly necessary is a big investment drive in the traditional heavy and manufacturing industries, and in the newer industries based on modern advanced technology.

Such a drive would have to be accompanied by measures to ensure an all-round increase in employment and equal opportunities for access to these jobs for all sections of the working population.

Alongside that, a regional economic development strategy will have to be rebuilt to stimulate industry and employment in Scotland, Wales and the English regions suffering economic depression and severe social inequalities.

Within the framework of planning at an all-Britain level, the peoples of each region and nation must have the powers to ensure that industrial development is made accountable to them, and that curbs are placed on the freedom of big business and property speculators to wreck and distort local economies.

Implementing a shorter working week would help to ensure that investment in new technology does not lead to an overall loss of jobs. Funds should be made available to provide high-quality education and training for all young people, particularly for working class youth.

It is also important to provide a programme for training and retraining adults, especially women and

ethnic minorities, to allow them entry into the more skilled, secure and better-paid jobs in the manufacturing sector.

The education system should be of the highest quality and free to all sections of society. Nursery and childcare provisions need to be improved and made available to all, thereby ensuring that women with children can escape casualised work on the margins and obtain better jobs in the mainstream of the economy.

Primary and secondary education should be adequately staffed to enable all children to receive a full and comprehensive education. Further and higher education, including the universities, must be accessible to every section of society, with grants generous enough to support students without recourse to loans or family contributions.

Student grants should be a right for all adults engaged in full-time study, with no place for tuition fees.

Another priority is social and welfare provision. There must be a substantial increase in public sector spending on housing, hospitals and other health services, and on leisure, cultural and recreational facilities.

The involvement of private capital in the public sector and services will have to be stopped and reversed, thereby securing local and democratic control.

The basic state pension needs to be immediately upgraded, and the link with earnings restored. It should be equally available to men and women at the age of 60. The state earnings-related pension scheme must also be reinstated, and social services expanded to enable the elderly to live in dignity and comfort.

The job seekers' allowance, incapacity benefit and single parent benefit should be replaced by mandatory benefits at least equal to the upgraded national minimum wage. Child benefit and maternity grants should be increased, and the Child Support Agency abolished.

The arts are not something apart from life. But the potential flowering of community arts has been hamstrung by lack of money.

The labour movement must take funding of the arts seriously, and help to mobilise people involved in cultural production in order to widen the appeal of progressive advance and socialism.

How are these alternative policies to be financed and what types of controls are required? Firstly, the British government will have to take back control of interest rates from the Bank of England, to end the domination of the City of London over financial and economic decision-making.

There would also need to be capital and currency exchange controls to ensure that the huge sums of capital being channelled abroad are repatriated and invested in domestic industry and jobs.

In addition, selective import controls would be necessary to protect and redevelop key areas of British industry such as vehicles, electronics, textiles, steel and coal.

The protection of these industries would be crucial to the restoration of Britain's manufacturing base, and would allow for balanced development of other interlinked or dependent sectors of the economy.

Secondly, we should make clear our unequivocal opposition to wage restraint or controls of any form as a means of forcing one section of the working class to finance improvements for other sections.

On the contrary, the Alternative Economic Strategy seeks the collective improvement of the living standards of all working people, forcing the capitalist class - and its monopoly sector in particular to foot the bill out of their profits.

This could involve higher rates of tax on company profits, a levy on dividends, and "windfall" taxes where super-profits arise in specific sectors such as oil or banking.

There also needs to be a system of price controls. A prices' commission must be set up to ensure that wage increases are not passed on to consumers

through price increases, but are absorbed where necessary by a reduction in monopoly profits.

At a more fundamental level, there should be a system of investment controls which must, as a priority, include the policy of democratic nationalisation.

The major areas of industry and the utilities that have been privatised should be re-nationalised; not on the old lines, but on a new basis which ensures worker and consumer representation in management, to guarantee that they are run according to social criteria and not the criterion of private profit.

There also has to be democratic nationalisation of strategic sectors of the economy, including the banks and financial institutions to ensure that the vast funds at their disposal are directed towards investment in British industry.

Nationalising North Sea oil would be the only way to ensure that revenues here are used to help restore Britain's manufacturing base.

There also needs to be a comprehensive system of planning agreements whereby government, with the fullest participation of the trades unions and workforces concerned, can, if necessary, impose guidelines for investment and growth on major private companies.

In the struggle to control those transnational corporations still in private ownership, the potential of the public sector as a powerful economic lever will need to be exploited to the full.

The role of the Co-operative movement should also be strengthened and expanded through the promotion of workers' and consumers' co-operatives.

To enable industrial and social development to take place in a planned and balanced way, the big landed estates in town and countryside will have to be taken into public ownership.

The free market in land will have to be brought under local and democratic control, within an overall national plan. Monopoly domination of both agricultural supplies and food distribution will have

to be broken, with a state support programme to guarantee decent incomes to working farmers and agricultural workers and safe, affordable, high-quality food to the consumer.

Strict measures are necessary to protect the environment. The atmosphere, the oceans and the land can no longer be treated as dustbins. Manufacturers must be required to minimise their energy consumption, and waste - both domestic and industrial - must either be recycled or used as the starting point for another process.

Reliance on fossil fuels for energy production must be reduced by conservation measures, the expansion of cheap integrated public transport, the shift of freight from road to rail and the development of renewable resources. Existing nuclear power and reprocessing plants are unlikely ever to be safe and should be phased out.

Finally, arms control is necessary. Britain continues to devote a higher proportion of its economic output (GDP) to military use than any other capitalist power except the USA. The end of the Cold War removes the last false argument against a massive reduction in Britain's military spending and the conversion of industrial production, research and development to socially-useful projects.

### ***The democratic policies of the AEPS.***

The struggle to promote the economic and social interests of working people is directly linked with the battle to expand democracy.

Policies which aim at increasing jobs, social provision and living standards also require a comprehensive set of policies that can guarantee political and human rights, not least so that the people and their organisations can take action more freely and effectively.

This means, in the first place, repealing all Tory and Labour laws that have suppressed civil liberties and democratic rights. The trades unions must be fully independent and free from government and state interference or control.

In particular, this would require the repeal of all anti-union laws and the restoration of immunities from repressive common law. There should be no time limit on the right to take industrial action without dismissal.

Greater democracy inside the trades unions themselves, strengthening accountability and the links between the leadership and the membership, should be a matter for the members to decide - not the subject of state imposition. All workers should have full and equal rights at work from the first day of a job.

A crucial aspect of the battle for democracy is the fight against all forms of oppression and discrimination. Vigorous measures are needed to combat racism in all walks of life. Racist organisations and the dissemination of anti-Semitic and other racist ideology through the mass media - including the internet - should be banned.

Immigration, asylum and nationality laws which institutionalise racism must be abolished, to be replaced by legislation that outlaws all forms of discrimination and guarantees equal opportunities to black people and other ethnic minorities.

This same principle must underpin measures to ensure genuine equality for women. While this can be fully achieved only under socialism, it has to be fought for here and now.

Policies for economic expansion and wider social access will lay the material basis for women's liberation, but at the same time there would have to be legislation and other measures to end discrimination at every age and in every area of life.

The democratic character of this struggle must also embrace support for campaigns to end all discrimination against lesbians, gays, transsexuals and the disabled, or on grounds of age.

To strengthen freedom of the press, there should be a legal right to distribution and sale for all newspapers, with public funds being made available to minority publications.

All broadcasting organisations should be required to reflect the diversity of our society and its social, cultural and political life.

Winning the battle of democracy will require more open and democratic forms of government. Elections should be conducted using the Single Transferable Vote system in multi-seat constituencies, to reflect more accurately the wishes of the electorate.

The minimum voting age should be reduced to 16. Elected representatives should have greater control over the executive, but in turn be subject to recall by the electors.

Democracy must be restored to local councils, with powers to decide levels of tax-raising for local services and to end privatisation in any guise.

The Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly must be transformed into genuine parliaments with wide-ranging legislative and tax-raising powers to tackle economic and social problems, to fund the development of industry, to control the conditions of employment and to defend each nation's distinctive cultural and linguistic identity.

They have the potential not only to bring democratic decision-making closer to the people, but also to strengthen the challenge to monopoly capital in Britain as a whole.

A Cornish Assembly with economic powers could help to secure more balanced development and higher living standards there. Part of Cornwall's rich natural resources should be devoted to the development of Cornish culture in schools and local communities.

Democratically-elected regional councils in England should be established with comparable economic powers, including control over services currently administered by non-elected public bodies ('quangos') in fields such as regional economic development, training, further education and health.

The special status enjoyed by capital in the Isle of Man and Channel Isles, which are run as semi-feudal big business fiefdoms, will have to be ended.



Instead, the peoples of those islands should be democratically represented in the Westminster parliament, with their democratic institutions at Tynwald and in the States strengthened by proportional representation and economic powers like those proposed for Wales and Scotland.

The monarchy and House of Lords should be abolished. A constitutional council, based on representatives of the national parliaments and assemblies, could act as the guardian of the legal framework of the constitution and ensure the transfer of executive power after elections and at other times but should have no other role.

Demands for further changes, including an English national parliament and the establishment of a federal republic, may arise in this process of fundamental change.

There needs to develop a mass understanding that democracy is not itself an institution - it is a process of emancipation. People must be won to involvement in the struggle for all their legitimate needs to be met.

They need to use and improve their own organisations in collective action to win their objectives at each stage - and to gain vital experience for the exercise of state power when the time comes.

### ***An independent foreign policy.***

The progressive and democratic principles that underlie domestic policies for Britain should also extend to its foreign policy.

Britain should pursue an independent foreign policy, based on the principles of peaceful co-existence and co-operation with all states irrespective of their social system. It should withdraw from NATO, unilaterally renounce nuclear weapons, dismantle nuclear war bases in Britain and remove all foreign bases.

It should support a treaty to outlaw the manufacture and possession of nuclear arms by all nations and the similar prohibition of germ and chemical warfare, and should work for general and complete disarmament.

Britain could also contribute significantly to world peace by nationalising the profit-driven armaments industry and the arms trade.

The colonial status of Britain's few remaining overseas territories should end, including the withdrawal of all British troops.

Britain's support for reactionary and repressive regimes in different parts of the world should be terminated, to be replaced with a policy of active support for national liberation and independence.

This would have to include the repudiation of neo-colonialist economic policies, combined with increased assistance to developing nations.

Britain has a special responsibility to ensure a democratic solution in northern Ireland. In particular, all repressive and undemocratic laws and practices in northern Ireland must be ended immediately, and substantial financial and material assistance provided to tackle the problems of poverty and unemployment which have been made more acute by British imperialist exploitation.

The 1998 Good Friday Agreement was accepted by the vast majority of the people in Ireland - north and south - in a referendum, as the basis for the way forward.

For a lasting peace, it will be necessary to remove the gun from northern Irish politics entirely, whether held legally or by the state or by paramilitaries. It is vital that the British labour movement throws its weight behind full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, and behind the demand that the British government becomes an active persuader for unity and ends the long legacy of national oppression in Ireland.

At some point there should be a declaration of intent that British troops will be withdrawn, opening the way for the Irish people to determine their own future in a united, sovereign and independent state.

Every aspect of advance in Britain requires the defence of the democratic sovereign power of the British people. Above all, this means the power to control capital.

But the European Union's fundamental treaties, institutions and charters proclaim the sovereignty of capital. They are fundamentally anti-socialist, favour privatisation and the unfettered movement of capital, cannot be tinkered with - and have therefore to be rejected.

The alternative strategy demands that the Westminster Parliament and other democratically elected bodies in Britain - not the European Commission or the European Central Bank - should control interest rates, currency policy, the movement of capital, taxation and public expenditure, and have the power to nationalise industries and services and ensure that they are run for the public good.

To argue that the EU can be transformed into an instrument to advance socialism ignores the realities of who controls the European Union and how.

The fact is that the European Union intentionally undermines the sovereignty and democracy of all member states - and the weakening of Britain's democracy weakens the fight for socialism.

The minor concessions offered by the EU to employees and consumers could be legislated for - and vastly improved upon - by the parliaments within Britain.

Therefore, in order to exercise the powers and controls required by the alternative economic and political strategy, there must be a clear commitment to Britain's withdrawal from the European Union.

This is not a call for withdrawal from the European economy or from international economic relations in general. On the contrary, it is a call for a different form of participation in these relations.

It should be combined with growing solidarity between the workers of all European countries - particularly those employed by transnational corporations - in defence of workers' rights, living standards, the welfare state and democracy.

By withdrawing from the EU, it would become possible to restructure British industry through a system of balanced and equitable relations with all countries in Europe as well as in the rest of the world.

The struggle of the labour and progressive movements in Britain against monopoly capitalism requires the maximum unity and solidarity with the struggle against the TNCs and imperialism on a world scale.

This means solidarity with the working class throughout Europe, the USA and Japan; and with the people of the developing countries who, under neo-colonialism and debt-bondage, are plundered by imperialism and so remain in abject poverty.

In specific economic terms, this solidarity should mean not only planning for balanced and mutually beneficial trade between Britain and the Third World, but also cancelling debts and providing credits and other forms of direct aid to assist industry and trade in the developing countries.

#### Chapter 4: The Forces for Change.

The forces exist which - if mobilised around the demands of the alternative economic and political strategy can put Britain on a new course, to tackle the crisis in the interests of the people, expand democracy and open the way to socialist revolution.

The urgent need now is to link these forces and their struggles closer together. The policies of the alternative strategy aim to promote the economic, social and political interests of all working people in a combined and mutually reinforcing way.

This process must also involve - at the organisational level and in the course of mobilising for struggle - growing unity between the forces for change, drawing together the widest possible alliance directed against state-monopoly capitalism.

Building and strengthening such a democratic anti-monopoly alliance must be the top priority.

To achieve it, however, requires an understanding of the class forces in capitalist society in Britain today.

## ***The capitalist class.***

The capitalist class comprises the owners and controllers of the means of production, distribution and exchange (the factories, banks, shops, land, etc.) and their agents.

People in higher managerial positions and in the upper echelons of the state apparatus, although they sell their labour power, are part of the ruling class because they act directly or indirectly on behalf of the capitalists, identify with them and often own substantial amounts of capital.

Even as a whole, the capitalist class is only a small fraction of the population. But within it, there is a still smaller minority exercising the dominant power - those who control the very big firms and banks, which not only exploit their own workers but operate at the expense of many smaller businesses, small shopkeepers and farmers.

Small enterprises are among the first victims in periods of acute crisis, many of them going bankrupt, being forced to close down, or being swallowed up by the big firms. When working class living standards are cut, small producers, shopkeepers and traders are also adversely affected.

There is, therefore, an objective basis for an alliance between the working class and many in these sections of the capitalist class. They confront a common enemy - the big British and foreign monopolies, including the banks.

There will be problems building such an alliance, because the smaller employers are in a contradictory position to both the monopolists and the working class.

Small businesses face the prospect of being squeezed out by the big companies, but are also often 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 working conditions are often worse in small workplaces.

However, the organised working class needs to show small firms 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 labour movement, and prevent them becoming prey to right-wing and fascist propaganda.

This means campaigning for specific measures to assist them, such as cheap credit, restrictions on monopoly price manipulation, controls on rent, relief from high rates, the abolition of VAT, etc., as well as winning them for the wider democratic demands of the working class, including the struggle for peace, disarmament and environmental protection.

## ***Intermediate strata.***

While in modern society the great majority of people are members of either the working class or the capitalist class, there are also those whose relation to the means of production places them in an intermediate position.

Middle-grade management and the middle ranks of the state apparatus act to a considerable extent as agents of the capitalist class, but the degree to which they exercise control over the means of production is often limited.

Furthermore, their income is derived mainly from selling their labour power for a salary. They may, therefore, be considered part of the intermediate strata between the capitalist class and the working class.

Members of family businesses, small shopkeepers, working farmers and small firms which employ little or no labour are another such group. So are those among professional sections like architects, lawyers, doctors, writers and artists who are self-employed.

They are all affected by the social and economic crisis of capitalism, and by the ways in which it holds back progress in spheres in which they may be particularly concerned, such as housing, health, interest rates, disarmament, culture and the environment.

Policies need to be advanced by the working class and progressive forces which will win as many as possible among these sections for a broad alliance against the capitalist monopolies.

## *The working class.*

The leading force in the democratic anti-monopoly alliance will be the working class. Its interests are most directly and consistently opposed to those of the capitalist ruling class.

Its strength and capacity for organisation enables it to give leadership to all the forces for advance in society. As a class it can only achieve emancipation through socialism.

But the working class is important not just because of its numbers, but because of the special place it occupies in capitalist society. Although the working class has no need of capitalism, capitalism could not function without the working class.

This is as true of administrative staff in the state sector and ancillary workers in public services as it is of manual workers in manufacturing. Though some workers regard themselves as “middle class”, and may work in institutions which help to perpetuate capitalism and its ideas, they too are objectively part of the working class.

Their real interests broadly coincide with those of workers in manual occupations. All workers provide essential labour power for state-monopoly capitalism, all are constantly under pressure to produce more, and all are subject to the insecurity and crisis generated by that system. They share a united common interest, therefore, to challenge and abolish capitalist exploitation.

At the heart of the working class is its most advanced section - those workers concentrated in large-scale enterprises. The very scale of the means of production used in these enterprises means that their workers can never own and control them except collectively, under socialism.

A large proportion of such workers have traditionally been in the manufacturing, engineering, energy, metalworking, transport and shipbuilding industries, where the anarchy of production and profit-seeking causes the most severe industrial crises.

They have also tended to work where technical innovation raises the rate of exploitation and

economic insecurity the fastest. Of all sections of the working class, these workers can see the already-planned character of the enterprises in which they work.

This improves the prospect of winning them to appreciate the potential of planned socialist production. Today, many such workers work for transnational corporations and have the biggest need for - and impulse towards - building international solidarity.

Because the ruling class knows that defeat in such big enterprises has the most dangerous implications, it has always brought to bear its sharpest coercive and ideological weapons against workers there.

On their part, therefore, these workers have been forced to mobilise the solidarity of the whole working class. Thus they have unparalleled experience in the struggle for unity.

In the past, many non-manual workers held aloof from the industrial working class and from trades union organisation. But the distinction between manual and non-manual work is being more and more eroded as a consequence of technological advance and modern processes of production.

The impact of capitalist crisis has also contributed to a substantial increase in trades unionism among non-manual and service workers, who have shown greater readiness to take action to defend their interests.

Strikes by health workers, bank employees and teachers in the recent period are significant evidence of this. Such action itself contributes to the development of working class consciousness.

Moreover, many service workers - particularly in the public sector - are today among the most unionised contingents of the working class, and are often concentrated in large departments and offices.

Whether in industry or services, in the private or the public sector, large enterprises embrace the greatest diversity of workers. They reflect in miniature the diversity of the whole working class.

To build here a concentration of organised forces, capable of confronting the organised power of their state or monopolist employers, inevitably gives these workers the deepest and longest experience in overcoming sectionalism.

They learn why it is essential to put the long-term interests of the class as a whole before the immediate interests of any one section.

Trades union organisation and ideas of class solidarity have spread among workers in the state apparatus, in the mass media and other key areas of society. Nor should their importance in smaller enterprises, including in the most technologically advanced sectors, be underestimated.

Such developments represent an important extension of the potential power of the working class to engage in mass struggle outside parliament, utilising an ever wider range of tactics and techniques.

Another significant development has been the growing number of women joining the workforce, often in part-time jobs. Increasingly they are joining trades unions and - as the TUC Women's conference shows - they are making a major and progressive contribution to the labour movement.

The scandal of low pay among women must become a central issue for the unions, who have a responsibility to step up the fight for equal pay for work of equal value, for childcare facilities, against sexual harassment and for other measures that can ensure the equality of women.

It is unthinkable that real progress in developing the unity of the working class is possible without a continuous challenge to all discrimination and a commitment to end it.

Campaigning along these lines will help to build the confidence of women so that they participate on a basis of equality with men in the joint struggle to abolish capitalist exploitation.

The labour movement must therefore be won to the fullest understanding that the demands for genuine equality for women, black people and for other oppressed sections are central areas for struggle.

Moreover, the struggle against the subordination of women, against racism and other forms of oppression, while each exhibiting their own distinctive features, nonetheless form essential aspects of the class struggle.

The fight for women's liberation and for black liberation is not a priority only for women and black people - it is a priority for the whole working class.

### ***The labour movement.***

The main influence of the working class on society is expressed through the labour movement, though this does not yet comprise the whole of the working class. It includes the trades unions, pensioners' organisations, the Labour Party, the Co-operative movement and the Communist Party.

The trades unions are the biggest and most powerful organisations of the working class. They play a vital role in enabling workers to combine and exercise their collective strength, in defence of wages and working conditions against the capitalist drive for profit.

As such, they are important training schools for workers involved in class struggle. Trades unions today also take up a wide range of issues which are highly political.

But they cannot be a substitute for political parties of the working class, although many of them are affiliated through its federal structure to the Labour Party. By their very nature, unions tend to concentrate on class struggle in the economic sphere ie. on the direct relation between workers and employers.

But if the working class is to put an end to exploitation and oppression, then this struggle must go beyond this specific economic relation to embrace the political relation between workers and the state.

Therefore, industrial militancy is not enough, and there is a need to combat the economistic outlook which sees the trade union struggle on economic issues as sufficient in itself.

In fact, this struggle needs to be linked with a political perspective if it is to produce lasting gains for the working class.

This point has been consistently stressed by the Communist Party, which urges its members to work to strengthen the trades unions, workplace organisation and the shop stewards movement, the British TUC, trades union councils, the Scottish, Welsh and regional TUCs and the Co-operative movement - for political and social as well as economic struggles.

A vigorous fight for the interests of their members on all fronts could help the trades unions to draw back into their ranks those who have been lost through the decimation of heavy and manufacturing industry.

It could win millions who have never been organised, and breathe new life into branches and workplace organisations. The adoption of the “organising” model of trades unionism in place of the old “servicing” model could greatly assist in such developments.

In particular, unions need to do far more to attract, organise and activate young workers on whom the future of the movement depends.

At the same time, a more conscious and determined effort has to be made not only to attract more women and black workers into the trades unions, but also to ensure that they enjoy equal opportunity of promotion and representation at every level of the trade union movement.

Here the TUC's structures for women, black, lesbian and gay and disabled workers have an important role to play.

The fight against unemployment must unite the employed and the unemployed around the key demands of a shorter working week, reduced retirement age, higher unemployment benefits and pensions, apprenticeship and proper training for workers of all ages at trade union rates.

To this end, the role of TUC unemployed centres as labour movement campaigning organisations must be strengthened, and trades unions must actively seek to

recruit unemployed workers, taking up issues on their behalf.

In recent years, the pensioners movement has taken on a new militancy. But the fight for a 'living pension' is not the responsibility of pensioners alone. The trades unions have to understand that this is a fight for their members' future, as the provision of a decent basic state pension is the only way to guarantee a financially secure retirement.

Every union should have a retired members section. Although the pensioners movement has received increased backing from trades unions and Labour Party organisations in the battle for adequate pensions, and for greater social provision for the retired and disabled, the labour movement needs to help turn this into a truly mass, broad-based and militant campaign.

Local trades union councils can be a major force in generating mass struggle and influencing political ideas within the labour movement. They take up issues of wide concern across the movement, such as unemployment, pensions, racism and defence of local services, and can help develop solidarity with workers in struggle.

A fight needs to be waged to ensure that trades unions affiliate fully to trades union councils and participate in their work.

In addition, a stronger and more united left wing is needed in the trades unions to end the dominant position of the right. This political fight must be conducted at workplace level, among the mass of workers, and not just at the level of union leadership.

To win workers to a socialist - and not only a militant class - outlook, increased political activity in the workplaces by the left and the Communist Party is essential.

Despite people's experiences of the Blair government, the Labour Party is the mass party of the organised working class which continues to enjoy the electoral support of large sections of workers.

But its politics and ideology have been those of social democracy and imperialism, seeking to

manage and reform capitalism in the immediate temporary interests of the labour movement - but not to abolish it in the fundamental interests of the working class and humanity as a whole.

Labour has never fundamentally challenged ruling class ideas. At best, it has only reflected and represented the “trade union consciousness” of the working class in political life.

The reformist outlook which dominates Labour confines the party to an exclusively parliamentary role within the capitalist system. Its campaigning work is seen almost entirely in terms of participation in elections, and it carries out little or no socialist education.

Yet the Labour Party is different from other social democratic parties in one crucial respect. It is a federal party with mass trade union affiliations.

Certainly, the capacity of the unions to influence the Labour Party has been much diminished in recent years by the attacks of the Blair leadership on internal party democracy.

Even so, the organised collective voice of working people can - through their unions - still exercise a major influence within the Labour Party. This is why it is important that workers and their unions continue to pay the political levy and their Labour Party affiliation fees.

The unique structure and composition of the Labour Party has also ensured the existence of a significant socialist trend within it. These socialists have at times won major advances in the battle of ideas inside and beyond the party, producing policies that have challenged big business in the interests of working people.

But without underestimating the importance of the Labour Party left, it is not a cohesive and united force.

While some of its members are influenced by Marxist ideas and hold firm to basic working class principles, others are too ready to abandon the need for mass struggle in workplaces and localities, to embrace a reformist outlook on this and other questions such as

incomes policies, imperialist intervention, and the nature of the state under capitalism and socialism.

Because the Labour left lacks a revolutionary political perspective, is not centrally organised and is not sufficiently related to the many extra-parliamentary struggles, it cannot by itself bring about the necessary transformation in outlook and activity of the labour movement.

Nor is the answer to be found in the various ultra-left groups, which have in common a narrow interpretation of Marxism and a strategy which in practice adopts a dismissive, sectarian attitude towards the labour movement.

The appeal of Trotskyism, anarchism and other forms of ultra-leftism springs primarily from the failure of reformism. Such groups and parties are usually based on anti-Communism and anti-Sovietism, which they call 'anti-Stalinism' and which is reflected in a lack of understanding of the nature of imperialism.

This has led some ultra-left organisations to take an objectively pro-imperialist stance on key international questions, whether by welcoming counter-revolution in the former socialist countries, rejecting solidarity with Cuba or backing the so-called “Kosovan Liberation Army” during the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia.

Such sectarian groups frequently play a disruptive and divisive role in the labour and progressive movements in Britain.

When not conducting “entryist” activities inside the Labour Party, they are proclaiming various alternatives to it regardless of realities in the working class movement. Their tactics and slogans are often unrealistic, irresponsible or premature because they do not flow from a concrete analysis of the concrete situation. Confusion and disillusionment invariably follow.

Similarly, their demagogic attacks on trade union leadership often take little or no account of the real balance of forces. Trade union “bureaucrats” are invariably accused of betraying workers in struggle, regardless of objective difficulties, sowing divisions

instead of seeking to win the labour movement from top to bottom for left policies.

Their dogmatic interpretations of Marxism also generate incessant splits within their own parties and sects.

Nonetheless, many members of these groups are motivated by socialist and communist ideals. Their organisations can sometimes act with boldness and imagination, taking up issues which the right wing has ignored.

Therefore, the negative influence of ultra-leftism and sectarianism is best countered by political debate and discussion, and by co-operation on the left where agreement can be reached on campaigning objectives.

The main task in the current situation is to defeat the pro-big business, anti-labour movement trend in the leadership of the Labour Party and its influence in the trade unions.

The affiliated unions have a central role to play in this effort. But this will require a battle within the unions to reject the ideology of “social partnership”, and a struggle to defend and extend Labour Party democracy - and to preserve the working class character of the party itself.

The trades unions must intervene more actively in candidate selection processes, and campaign at every level to demand that Labour candidates commit themselves to pro-working class policies before and after elections.

Affiliated unions should also ensure that their representatives on leading committees, including the Labour Party NEC, are accountable to - and play an active role in fighting for - the policies and interests of their members.

The union links with the Labour Party will also have a vital role to play in helping to secure a left government based on a Labour, socialist and communist parliamentary majority. The unions can influence the policies, leadership and parliamentary representation of the Labour Party to make such a government possible.

But for Britain to take this road to socialism, the trade union movement has to be won to fight for the policies of the alternative strategy.

To argue that this is not possible is not only defeatist - it is in effect to write off the organised working class as the leading force for socialist revolution.

This is a sectarian position that inevitably results in sectarian politics, isolated from the labour movement.

It reveals itself in the perennial efforts to create a new party to the left of Labour, even though in current conditions no such party would attract the support of significant sections of the trade union movement.

These attempts invariably weaken the Labour left and undermine efforts to unite the left around a common alternative economic and political strategy.

The Communist Party calls and works for the strengthening of the links between the trades unions and the Labour Party and for maintaining Labour as the mass party of the working class and the labour movement.

Communists are not neutral in the left-right struggle within the Labour Party and the labour movement and, as an integral part of that movement, we work to unite and strengthen the left against the right.

We therefore seek the removal of all discriminatory bans and proscriptions directed mainly against Communists - but also affecting others on the left - which only help the right wing by keeping the movement divided.

In particular, trades unions should have the democratic right to nominate and elect, from those who pay the political levy, candidates and delegates of their own choice to the Labour Party, as was once the case.

The necessity of winning the trades unions and the wider labour movement for the policies of the AEPS, and on the basis of mass struggle which makes this possible, underlines the vital need for a distinct and much stronger Communist Party.



As a party guided by the principles of scientific socialism and active among the organised working class and other progressive forces, it is uniquely capable of providing leadership not on the basis of elitism or sectarianism - but on the basis of co-operation with the left in the Labour Party and in the wider labour and progressive movement.

A decisive left-ward shift in the balance of forces within the labour movement and in Britain generally depends upon the growth in size, influence and effectiveness of the Communist Party.

### ***The Communist Party and revolutionary leadership.***

The Communist Party was founded in Britain in 1920. From its inception it drew great inspiration from the young Soviet republic and was a constituent part of the international communist movement.

Despite its small size, it has played an outstanding role in many industrial battles, led the unemployed, tenants and anti-fascist movements in the 1930s, organised solidarity with the peoples of Ireland, India and republican Spain, campaigned against nuclear weapons, and actively opposed apartheid in South Africa and US genocide in Korea and Vietnam.

The very success of the Communist Party made it a particular target of the capitalist class.

Having failed to isolate the Party from its working class roots, the ruling class worked to undermine it ideologically from within during the 1980s. Those who saw the danger re-established the Communist Party of Britain in 1988, since when it has been rebuilding its position as the Marxist party of the labour movement.

The aims and principles of the Communist Party make it distinct from all other parties, and equip it to play a leading role in the struggle for socialism. The most important characteristics of the Party are:

Firstly, the Communist Party is based upon the class and internationalist principles of Marxism-Leninism, which enable it both to analyse the nature of

capitalist society and to develop a strategy that will lead to socialism.

Second, it is organised for socialist revolution, and therefore constantly seeks to strengthen its roots in the working class because of the latter's leading role for revolutionary social change. On that basis, it seeks to weld together all progressive movements at a local and national level, initiating and assisting the people's campaigns. In order to help develop political consciousness, it organises itself both in workplaces and localities.

Third, the Communist Party is a democratic party, drawing on the initiative and creativity of its membership in planning and carrying through its policy and activity, and in electing a leadership which is answerable to that membership. To this end, the Party develops and maintains close relationships within its own ranks, between different sections of workers, between women and men, black and white, young and old.

Fourth, the party is centralised, so it can intervene in the class struggle as a disciplined and united force once policy is decided. This combination of democracy with centralism to produce 'democratic centralism' - the highest organisational principle of the Party - helps make the Party capable of acting in a uniquely effective way.

Fifth, the Communist Party has close relations with the communist movement in other countries, based on the independence, equality and mutual respect of each party in a world movement which seeks to lead the transition to socialism on a global scale. This unity, together with international solidarity with other movements fighting for peace, progress and national liberation, is vital for the achievement and building of socialism in Britain.

These essential characteristics of the Communist Party have enabled it to be an effective vanguard party of struggle over the years, generating class and socialist consciousness and showing the need to win state power and advance to socialism.

But the Communist Party is still too small, and its roots among many sections are still weak. It needs to grow both numerically and in terms of its political

influence. To do this, the Party must help to develop activity and discussion not only in the labour movement, but in all progressive organisations and democratic movements.

It needs to show in action, as well as by explanation, that class collaboration must be replaced by class struggle, that the state is not “neutral” between the classes, that only if parliamentary struggle is combined with mass struggle outside parliament can the working class and its allies win significant victories, and that the problems we face can only be successfully tackled by a strategy for socialist revolution. Ready to listen and learn, as well as to provide strategic leadership, Communists will more and more become a trusted and respected popular force.

The Party also aims to encourage positive cultural movements, recognising the place of culture and the arts in the lives of working people.

The Communist Party needs to recruit, organise and educate a new generation of Communists to invigorate, staff and lead its own organisations in the workplaces and communities.

Central to the creation of this new generation is the Party's work with the Young Communist League to address the needs and aspirations of young people. The Party also strives to increase its electoral activity, although Communist contests are undertaken on a selective basis, taking into account the overall political situation, the level of Communist work and influence in the locality concerned, and the nature of the candidates put forward by Labour.

In these ways, the Communist Party aims to become a party of mass influence not just a party with bigger membership, but with members ideologically equipped and drawn from every section and area of our society, a party through which more and more people can be brought into political action.

All of this enables the Communist Party to develop its distinctive role as a force which leads from where the people are, which fights for the unity of the working class, and for the cohesion of the democratic anti-monopoly alliance at every stage. Only in this way can the reformist influence among working

people be overcome and replaced by socialist consciousness.

Nevertheless, however large the Communist Party we do not envisage achieving this by ourselves. Other parties and organisations will play an important role in this process. But the distinctive aspiration of Britain's Communists is to offer this process coherence, vision and democratic leadership.

The Communist Party does not seek to replace the Labour Party as a federal party of the working class, but rather to strengthen its original federal character.

A much more influential Communist Party is crucial to the future of the Labour Party itself, and to the development of the labour movement and the democratic anti-monopoly alliance as a whole.

If right-wing ideas and leadership in the labour movement are defeated and replaced by people and policies committed to the struggle against monopoly capitalism, and if the Communist Party itself grows in strength and influence unhindered by bans and proscriptions, new opportunities will open up for more developed forms of Labour-Communist unity, including in the electoral field.

Under these circumstances, future affiliation to the Labour Party could become a realistic possibility.

Central to any unity for advance to socialism in Britain is unity of the left. Our programme is fundamentally based on achieving the widest possible unity on a principled socialist basis.

Respect for the differences which do exist is the condition for building mutual confidence and trust, for undertaking work together on specific issues and thereby creating the atmosphere where common understanding can grow.

In this way, too, divisions within the Communist movement in Britain can be overcome on the basis of Marxist-Leninist unity.

### ***Other democratic movements.***

Apart from the main organisations of the working class, many other bodies and movements have grown

up as different groups of people seek to promote their interests against those of monopoly capital. But if they are to be successful, they must be won to work with the labour movement - which must itself be won to fight on their behalf.

The women's liberation movement in Britain is diverse, embracing the National Assembly of Women, women's structures in the labour movement, as well as single-issue local and national campaigns.

These various organisations and campaigns have focused attention on a wide range of issues including the sexual division of labour, equal pay, reproductive rights and violence against women.

They have highlighted how sexism, the role of women in the family, their responsibility for childcare and their economic dependence limit educational and career opportunities and women's participation in social and political life on equal terms with men.

The labour movement also needs to concern itself much more than it has in the past with questions such as the nature of personal relationships, human sexuality and the future of the family.

However, some sections of the women's movement tend to divorce women's liberation from a class context, placing theoretical and practical emphasis on the personal, subjective, individual experience of oppression by men. There is also the tendency by some men to support women's liberation in theory, without undertaking necessary changes in their organisational, political and personal circumstances in practice.

These approaches can only weaken the mass basis of the fight for women's liberation, reinforcing any tendencies to marginalise the issue. In order to counteract this, therefore, a clear Marxist perspective on the question of women's equality has to be projected, with greater efforts to win the organised working class to play a more effective, decisive role in the struggle for women's liberation.

The subordination and oppression of women has been a fundamental feature of the exploitation of working people in all class societies, most notably

under capitalism. Hence the fight for women's equality is not for women alone and cannot be relegated to a secondary question - it is central to the class struggle.

These points apply with equal force to the fight against racism in all its forms.

In Britain with its long history of imperialism, racism is reflected in the dominant ideology, in discrimination and open violence - aspects of which have become institutionalised in the police force, the legal system, in employment, housing, education and the health service.

Black people and other ethnic minorities whose exploitation as members of the working class is combined with oppression on grounds of race, language and culture, are increasingly developing their own organisations and other important initiatives to combat racism.

This struggle will be all the more effective if there is the widest unity between black and white people, and between black and white workers in particular.

Thus the labour movement must play a decisive part in winning the whole working class to reject racist ideas and practices, and to assisting black people to combat discrimination wherever it appears.

Similarly, the struggle for equal rights for lesbians and gay men is an essential part of the struggle for socialism.

In Scotland and Wales powerful national movements have emerged. They reflect the severe economic, social and cultural problems that have arisen from the centralisation of power and control within the British state.

The development of the Welsh and Scottish nations has been impeded and distorted by the grip of monopoly capital on their economic and social life, and by big capital's close links with the British state apparatus.

The nationalist parties in Scotland and Wales are based mostly upon sections of the intermediate strata, notably the professions, intelligentsia, small

capitalists and farmers who have been politicised by the historical conditions in their respective countries. Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg (the Welsh Language Society) has played a vigorous role in campaigns to secure the national and cultural rights of the Welsh people and to defend the continued existence of working class communities.

Both national movements therefore contain anti-monopoly capitalist, anti-militarist and radical democratic elements who have in turn attracted some working class support. There exist wide areas for co-operation with the left.

At the same time, these forces will not themselves develop a class understanding of the roots of national oppression or of the united class power needed to combat state-monopoly capitalism at the British level. The labour movements in Wales and Scotland have an essential role in the fight for national self-determination.

Their close links with workers elsewhere in Britain give them the potential strength and political clarity to build an alliance of forces directed against those who hold state power in Britain. They can do this, however, only if they fully become champions of the democratic national rights of their peoples, while shaking off reformist and right-wing ideas which confuse and divide.

Within local communities a mass of problems exist, alongside growing central government dictation over local councils and local democracy. In response, movements and organisations have developed such as tenants and residents associations, environmental groups, community newspapers and theatre groups, transport campaigns and local committees against social spending cuts.

The ecological movement is assuming particular significance, mobilising people from a wide cross-section of society in a struggle to prevent the destruction of our environment and its eco-systems, to preserve the quality of living and even the basis of human existence itself.

These environmental and community issues - and the battle for local and popular participation in making decisions - are of concern not only to the groups most

directly involved, but to the majority of the population in Britain.

Many of these issues derive from decisions made by or in the interests of the big monopolies, transnational corporations and financial institutions. Therefore it is particularly important that the organised working class takes up these questions and campaigns on them in a concerted way, establishing close links with the various movements involved.

The desire for peace and the removal of all nuclear weapons and foreign military bases from British soil and waters extends across wide sections of the population. Their aspirations need to be expressed by a powerful and broad-based peace movement as part of the democratic anti-monopoly alliance.

To this end, support for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and other peace organisations as broad, tolerant, non-sectarian campaigns needs to be stepped up to strengthen them organisationally and politically at all levels. Stronger links should also be built between peace organisations and the trades unions, drawing unions into a more active role in the peace movement. Clearly, Trade Union CND has an especially valuable role to play here.

Apart from the problems they face in common with other sections of the working population, young people face their own specific problems whether as students or young workers. Mass unemployment has left its mark on an entire generation, also aggravating the discrimination felt by young women and black youth.

Discontent among young people is too often met by harassment from the authorities. There is also the danger that continuing youth unemployment could strengthen the appeal of extreme right-wing trends, stemming from growing frustration and a lack of contact with the labour and progressive movements.

Therefore the labour movement needs to campaign more vigorously on their demands, providing organisational structures and social and cultural facilities for them, recruiting them into the unions, fighting for their right to study and their right to work.

Church, charity and voluntary sector groups have developed a higher profile in recent campaigns against urban decay, nuclear weapons and the arms trade, Third World debt and poverty, and the harsh treatment of asylum seekers.

Again, the labour movement should work more closely with such campaigning bodies, strengthening their initiatives and taking them into the organised working class.

### ***The democratic anti-monopoly alliance.***

The motive force for advance in our society is the class struggle between workers and capitalists. But capitalism not only exploits people at work, it also oppresses them in many different aspects of their lives.

Thus people react and struggle against capitalism and its effects not only in their workplaces, but in their communities and in their social, culture and leisure activities, as men and women, black and white, young and old, and of whatever nationality.

Movements and organisations develop which may embrace people not only from different sections within the working class, but from other classes and strata in society.

However, if these movements and their struggles proceed in isolation from each other, they can only challenge the position of the ruling class on single, isolated issues - never challenging the overall control and domination exercised by that class.

If these movements remain apart from the labour movement, not only will they suffer from the lack of its support, but the organised working class will be unable to fulfil its role as the leading force in society.

It is imperative, therefore, that the organised working class builds the widest possible alliance with all other movements fighting for progress, democracy and equality. The objective basis for uniting these forces is that they all face a common enemy, namely British state monopoly capitalism, which blocks advance on every front.

Thus the combined weight of the overwhelming majority of the population needs to be brought to bear on the power of the capitalist state and the monopoly corporations.

The construction and development of the democratic anti-monopoly alliance will also strengthen unity within the working class itself, as it promotes a deeper understanding of how capitalism creates the full range of problems facing all working people.

In seeking to implement the alternative economic and political strategy, the organised working class can become more conscious of - and confident in - its tasks of leading a popular challenge to state monopoly capitalism, taking state power and abolishing the system of exploitation.

The role of the Morning Star in helping the left to build the democratic anti-monopoly alliance is crucial. It remains the only national daily newspaper which is co-operatively owned and free of big business control.

The Morning Star consistently takes up the cause of working people in their struggle against all forms of monopoly capitalist exploitation and oppression. It forges links between the labour movement and other sections of the peoples of Britain.

All on the left should support the Morning Star and help to expand its circulation and influence within the labour and progressive movements.

## **Chapter 5: The Advance to Socialism.**

The policies of the Alternative Economic and Political Strategy constitute a comprehensive, integrated strategy with a consistent class content.

It is a strategy for planning, restructuring and redirecting the British economy and society in a manner which strengthens the collective position of all working people, and which forces the capitalist monopolies to concede wealth and power.

For this reason, the ruling capitalist class - and its monopoly sector in particular - will not sit back and

allow such a strategy to be implemented but will, on the contrary, do everything to block and derail it.

What type of government - in alliance with the mass movement - can possibly implement such a strategy against fierce resistance?

### ***The left government and capitalist resistance***

In the past, Labour governments of the old right-wing reformist type could be compelled to carry through some progressive measures - but they were basically committed to managing and protecting the capitalist system.

What is needed instead is a new type of left government, based on a Labour, socialist and communist majority in the Westminster parliament, one which comes about through the wide-ranging struggles of a mass movement outside parliament, demanding the kind of policies contained in the AEPS.

Among other things, this would involve a decisive shift to the left in the Labour Party, particularly in its national executive committee and the Parliamentary Labour Party.

In turn, this shift would depend on a significant turn to the left in the trades unions which form the mass base of the Labour Party, and on the growth in size and influence of the Communist Party working closely with the Labour left.

In the course of the struggle to achieve this, leaders will emerge who would make up a government elected on the basis of the alternative strategy. Alongside the mass movement, they would fight to carry it out, in the process overcoming the resistance of the monopoly corporations, the banks and their backers abroad.

The capacity of the ruling class for resistance should not be underestimated. It will try to use the mass media to whip up a vicious campaign against the alternative strategy.

International experience shows that the British ruling class will seek support from international capitalist institutions such as the IMF or those of the European Union, and from the world's transnational corporations, in an effort to browbeat a left government. It might seek to organise a capital strike, or encourage transnationals to withdraw their operations from Britain with the intention of sabotaging the economy.

Efforts could also be made to change the law to make the election or re-election of a left government more difficult, or to impose limitations on the powers of such a government. Illegal methods, sabotage and attempts at an armed coup are all possible.

Every effort to create an atmosphere of chaos and disruption should be anticipated, because this could then be used to justify the use of force against the left government.

However, if the economic, political and ideological power of monopoly capital is not to be underestimated, neither should it be overstated. The ruling class is not all-powerful.

It can only work within the limits imposed by the actual balance of forces, internally and internationally. Its resistance can be overcome, providing two essential conditions are met.

Firstly, steps must be taken to ensure the widest possible democratic involvement of all sections of the working population at every step in the implementation of the AEPS.

The alternative strategy should not be seen primarily as a matter of parliamentary legislation and government jurisdiction. It is a strategy which at all stages must be rooted in mass support and participation, to be implemented not only through parliamentary legislation but also through extra-parliamentary struggle.

As well as the established organisations of the labour and democratic movements, this could involve new organs of popular and working class struggle.

Certainly, the most sustained pressure, mobilising the labour movement and other progressive forces, will

be needed to keep a left government on course and defeat the resistance of the monopolists and their allies.

In this situation, the Communist Party would have a special responsibility for developing and leading the mass struggle, campaigning on key issues in workplaces and localities.

Secondly, steps must be taken to ensure that the powers of parliament and government are utilised to promote the policies of the alternative strategy and restrict the resistance of its opponents.

These steps should include the democratisation of the media, to allow supporters of the AEPS greater access to the television, radio and newspapers to present their views. It is vital that monopoly control over the media is broken up.

The capitalist-owned newspapers and other media are a powerful factor in conditioning working people to accept capitalism and to believe that struggling for a new society is futile. The mass media do all in their power to distort the issues involved in the struggles of working people in Britain and overseas.

They try to undermine confidence in the achievements of socialist countries in order to combat the spread of socialist ideas among the working class.

Only the Morning Star gives full and daily support to working people in all their struggles, arguing the case for the alternative economic and political strategy and for socialism.

The state apparatus itself will quickly become a central arena of heightened class struggle. Efforts to publicise and implement the AEPS will meet with resistance inside the civil service and associated public bodies including regulatory agencies, the Bank of England, state broadcasting bodies and the like.

Steps must therefore be taken to bring the powers of government departments and public sector organisations under tight scrutiny and control by central and national parliaments which themselves are made more responsive to the people and their democratic mass organisations.

The civil service and other key areas of the state - including the police, judiciary and armed forces should be democratised and their top personnel replaced. The aim must be to make these bodies directly accountable to parliament and the people. Members of the police and armed forces should be entitled to join trades unions.

In this context, the struggle for disarmament assumes added importance. The existence of a large professional army, together with foreign US bases and US military personnel, would pose a potential threat to a government determined to implement the alternative strategy, since they could obviously be used in any military coup that might be attempted.

Nevertheless, the point remains: democratic mass activity is the decisive factor in guaranteeing the effective use of government power to legislate and implement the alternative strategy, and to overcome resistance to it.

### *State power and socialism.*

From the moment a new type of left government is elected - one committed to implementing the alternative strategy - the class struggle in Britain will enter a more acute and protracted phase.

At the point where the struggle for advance envisaged in the AEPS brings into play the question of state power, and its use by the working class and its allies, the fight for the alternative strategy becomes transformed into the fight for socialism itself.

The capitalist class will seek by every means to resolve that struggle in its interests, while the working class and its allies will seek to resolve it in theirs. Which side wins will be decided, ultimately, by which class controls state power.

As long as the capitalist class continues to maintain control over every layer of the state apparatus, policies for increasing living standards and extending democracy can never reach the point where capitalist exploitation itself is abolished, and a new system - socialism - is established.

Only when democratisation of the key sectors of the state is taken to the point where the working class actually takes over the whole state apparatus, and transforms it into an instrument that enforces its policies, will it be possible for the working class to remove the basis of its own exploitation.

Through this process of struggle, parliament and the mass movement must begin to enforce changes in the structure and top personnel of state bodies, in particular the armed forces and security services, the police and judiciary, and the civil and diplomatic services.

This will help ensure that they begin to carry out their functions in the interests of the working class and its allies. Depending on the circumstances, it would be necessary to create new structures and to abolish those which exclusively serve the interests of monopoly capitalism.

The process would also include steps to involve the independent organisations of the working class, along with elected MPs, in exercising the functions of the state.

In this struggle for state power, the strength and political consciousness of workers and their trades unions within the state apparatus - including its 'coercive' sectors - will be vital factors in deciding how and when revolutionary change will be achieved. These workers will constitute important contingents of the labour movement at the head of the democratic anti-monopoly alliance.

How can the working class and its allies be won to understanding the tasks ahead of them?

Here the alternative economic and political strategy plays an indispensable role.

In mobilising to secure a strategy which serves their economic, social and political interests, working people will - in the concrete conditions of modern Britain - themselves place the issue of state power on the agenda.

Their realisation of the need to take state power to block state monopoly capitalist opposition will be formed in a mass, practical way - shaped and

conditioned by struggle itself. So, too, will the realisation that the economic and political base of that opposition will have to be removed altogether, and replaced by socialism.

The achievement of state power by the working class and its allies will open up a qualitatively new stage. Socialist state power - now based on democratic participation and control by working people at every level - will be used systematically to take resources out of the hands of monopoly capital and allocate them in a planned way for the needs of society.

This will make possible a new type of democracy, one which ensures the economic conditions for personal freedom and an unprecedented extension of human rights.

This must include safeguards for the pluralism of views and their political expression, freedom of dissent, respect for the views of minorities, religious freedom, and freedom for all the shades of interest that will exist in a socialist system to press their demands.

Socialism will be merely the first, lower stage of communist society. The state would still be needed - not only to help plan production - but to defend the socialist system against internal and external attack.

But by continuously planning and expanding production to meet everyone's material needs, liberating humanity from exploitation and want, socialism will lay the basis for a second, higher stage.

As the threat from capitalism recedes nationally and internationally, the socialist state begins to wither away, except for some technical and administrative functions; humanity can finally create a world free from all forms of oppression, based on common ownership of the means of production, working them co-operatively and ecologically to produce abundance for all.

The guiding principle of full communism will be: "from each according to their potential - to each according to their need."

A new morality will characterise the social relations between people: the egotistical individualism of



capitalism will be replaced by collective care and concern for every individual and for the full, all-round development of the human personality.

### ***Conclusion.***

This programme sums up what the Communist Party stands for. It provides a strategic perspective for action and struggle which can bring about the unity of the working class and its allies to win political power and establish socialism.

If there is working class unity in Britain, and international solidarity with all the other major forces in the world fighting for progress and socialism, then we can defeat the moribund system of state-monopoly capitalism in Britain.

This will contribute to the liberation of working people everywhere. The socialist society for which Communists are fighting in Britain will have essential features in common with other socialist societies - but it will be constructed by the peoples of Britain, on the basis of our democratic and revolutionary heritage.

We invite all who share our aspirations, our world outlook and class commitment, to join the Communist Party and help us win that fight.