Class Consciousness and the Revolutionary Party

Polemic against the US League for the Revolutionary Party, Workers Power and the now-defunct Workers International League

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Syntagma Square, Athens. The Occupy movement outlaws class politics; WP and the LRP have made fundamental errors of Marxist theory in the relationship between party and class.

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Preface

This work was written in 1998 when I was a member of the three-strong Trotskyist Group (TG), one of the splits from the disintegration of the Workers International League and the Leninist Trotskyist Tendency (LTT). This was an orthodox Trotskyist international current with sections or supporters in South Africa, Belgium, Germany, Canada, and Sri Lanka (not to be confused with the USFI internal grouping of the same name led by the US SWP from 1969 to 1976). Thirteen years ago the crisis was the Balkans and the pamphlet acknowledged that the serious groups waging for the mantle of orthodox Trotskyism in Britain were Workers Power, its international opposition, the Liaison Committee of Militants for a Revolutionary Communist International (LCMRCI) the remnants of the LTT and the LRP. I was trying to find a path between these in writing this pamphlet.

I was wrong in hindsight not to join the LCMRCI who had the best line; some formulations on the Balkans in the document are weak and others wrong. For example on p. 15, “It (a military bloc with the Izetbegovid government) necessarily ended when the Bosnian-Croat federation became a tool of US (and German) imperialism in the region.” This is mistaken, the military bloc entailed of necessity political support for this stooge of imperialism and this later led WP and the WIL to the far worse position of support for the KLA in Kosovo.

This pamphlet is relevant today because a Trotskyist Caucus has been launched in Manchester and the same political questions that arose thirteen years ago, indeed many which arose twenty six years ago with the split in the WRP, arose anew; what constitutes Trotskyist continuity, is the anti-imperialist united front still relevant, who had the correct line on the collapse of the USSR and Eastern Europe after 1989-91 and what is the Transitional Programme (TP) and Transitional Method (TM)?

The majority of those who are self-proclaimed Trotskyists “howled along with the wolves” on Libya and supported the pro-imperialist Nato-rebels. However some opposition currents emerged in many groups which rejected this ideological grovel before the masters of life and took a principled stance in defence of Libya. There were many outright class traitors on this question, and to this category we must consign Workers Power. “The victory of the Libyan Revolution’s first phase” (http://www.workerspower.net/the-victory-of-the-libyan-revolution%E2%80%93first-phase) is simple class treachery. The successor group of the LCMRCI, the New Zealand-based CWG and their Liaison Committee are now as bad, “The Libyan revolution is the re-opening of a national, democratic, anti-imperialist revolution, notwithstanding NATO military intervention” is the ludicrous position they now have, (http://redrave.blogspot.com/2011/09/advance-libyan-revolution.html). But the LRP are in the middle; “Instead, revolutionaries have to continue to fight for the independent organization of the workers and oppressed in Libya, and more than ever advocate the strategy of international workers’ revolution as the only solution”. (http://lrp-cofi.org/statements/lybia_040611.html).

This is the Third Camp, neither Moscow nor Washington, position as advocated by Shachtman in The Soviet Union and the World War in April 1940.

“The revolutionary vanguard must put forward the slogan of revolutionary defeatism in both imperialist camps, that is, the continuation of the revolutionary struggle for power regardless of the effects on the military front. That, and only that, is the central strategy of the third camp in the World War, the camp of proletarian internationalism, of the socialist revolution, of the struggle for the emancipation of all the oppressed.”

This is the typical get-out clause of those who would not take the side of the USSR against imperialism in 1939 or in their war on a small semi-colony today. Orthodox Trotskyists always take the side against imperialism.

The main legacy of the LTT was the co-operation of the WIL and the Comrades for a Workers Government (CWG), South African section (the only substantial groups), in rediscovering and developing the method of Trotsky’s Transitional Programme of 1938. In our view the TP remains Trotsky’s most famous and most misunderstood work; the central task of Trotskyist regeneration is to rediscover and apply the method of the TP, which is the communist programme for propaganda, agitation and party building in the working class, to today’s class struggle. This pamphlet was written in defence and in development of that communist method of Lenin and the Bolsheviks, the first four Congresses of the Communist International and Trotsky’s life’s work as contained in the TP. As I had high hopes that the TG would develop I put a great deal of theoretical effort into defending and developing the best legacy of the LTT. But the TG split in ideological confusion after a pro-Zionist article was published in Issue 2 of its paper, Workers Fight, and the pamphlet remained unpublished until now.

The CWG were widely and falsely charged, by the LRP and others, with crossing class lines when they advocated a critical vote for the ANC in the first election in SA in 1994, whilst they acknowledge that the CWG ‘has run far to the left of both the MWT and ISSA’. (P. 16) That is a complete slander by those who do not know how to fight in the class struggle using the TP as a guide. What do we make of Lenin’s famous exposition of the tactics of the Bolsheviks in the Russian Duma:

“Prior to the downfall of tsarism, the Russian revolutionary Social Democrats made repeated use of the services of the bourgeois liberals, i.e. they concluded numerous practical compromises with the latter... while at the same time being able to wage an unremitting and most merciless ideological and political struggle against bourgeois liberalism and against the slightest manifestation of its influence in the working class movement. The Bolsheviks have always adhered to this policy. Since 1905 they have systematically advocated an alliance between the working class”

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!
Introduction

What happened to such leaders of the Second International, such highly erudite Marxists devoted to socialism as Kautsky, Otto Bauer and others could (and should) serve as a useful lesson [1]. They fully appreciated the need for flexible tactics; they learned themselves and taught others Marxist dialectics...; but in the application of these dialectics they committed such a mistake, or proved in practice to be so un-dialectical, so incapable of taking into account the rapid changes of forms, and the rapid acquiring of new content by the old forms that their fate is not more enviable than that Hyndman, Guesde and Plekhanov [2]. We must see to it that the same mistake, only the other way around, made by the ‘Left’ Communists is corrected as soon as possible [3] [4].

This is Lenin’s judgement in 1920 on why the Second International collapsed and betrayed the working class. The vote by German Social Democrats on 4 August 1914 to approve the war credits to the Kaiser was followed by most of the other international sections of the self-declared Marxist international. It allowed the capitalist of Europe to wage the First World War. The purpose of this pamphlet is to tackle anew the tasks he points to above. There are the four main theses we wish to defend:

1. Working class (and of course all social) consciousness develops out of the social relations of production in dialectical, mutual and many sided interactions between the revolutionary party, all working class political parties, the parties of the bourgeoisie, the non party vanguard and the broad mass of the working class and oppressed.

2. The great historic experience of the Russian Revolution of 1905 was necessary before Marxists could develop the Leninist theory of the revolutionary party and its relationship to the working class. Only democratic centralism enables the revolutionary party to develop Marxism.

3. Class consciousness does not develop in the minds of individual workers divorced from their social relations. It is lodged in the organisations of the working class. That is the trade unions and reformist, Stalinist, centrist and revolutionary parties and groups vying for leadership of the class.

4. The Marxist method is dialectical materialism and the application of this method to the class struggle is the Transitional Method (TM). This can only operate effectively within the practice of the United Front (UF). That is we must learn how to defend strategic principles whilst utilising all the flexible tactics necessary to build the revolutionary party and advance the struggles of the class towards the goal of the socialist revaluation.

Those who claim Trotsky’s heritage are in a common crisis of method. They are two camps with much crossover between them.

On the opportunist right are those who capitulate to the left bureaucratic misleaders of the working class trade unions, left social democrats and left nationalist many of whom were Stalinists or Stalinist-influenced. On the sectarian left are those who were repelled by this opportunism and retreated from involvement in the real struggles of the working class by proclaiming their ‘revolutionary purity’ and thus become - eventually - dogmatic sects. Between the two there has been those who recognised the crisis of method common to both sides and tried to re-establish the method of the Transitional Programme (TP).

This has been true particularly since the internal struggle in the US SWP in the early fifties. This work is more concerned with the ultra-left Trotskyist’ groups. However, as it is on method, it also applies to the more openly opportunist groups (USFI, Lambertists, Morenoists, US and UK SWP, the CWI against whom the ultra-lefts make many correct but one- sided criticisms [5]. The piece polemises against the positions of the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP), the US sympathisers of the Communist Organisation for the Fourth International (COFI). It also politicises against the League for a Revolutionary Communist international (LRCI, UK Workers Power led) and the leadership of the former Workers international League (WIL).

As Trotsky said:

I have had the occasion to observe how people change with circumstance and I am therefore not ready to pronounce people as ‘hopeless’ on the basis of a few even though serious mistakes. [6]

And we are no Trotskys, we have made many mistakes and have much to learn.
Chapter 1: The source of consciousness

All Marxists should know the source of consciousness. It is a reflection of the social relations people are forced to enter in order to take from nature what they need live. As the struggle between human beings and nature progressed and they became more successful they were forced more and more into co-operative relationships with each other. Engels explains this in The Part Played by Labour in the Ape to Man. Class relations then developed when a surplus was produced as he outlines in The origins family, private property and the state. In the Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1859) Marx sets this out in his classic exposition of historical materialism:

In the social production of their lives, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.

At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or — what is but a legal expression for the same thing — with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters.

Then begins an epoch of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations a distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic — in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as our opinion of an individual is not based on what he thinks of himself, so can we not judge of such a period of transformation by its own consciousness; on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained rather from the contradictions of material life, from the existing conflict between the social productive forces and the relations of production.

No social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed; and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself. Therefore mankind always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve; since, looking at the matter more closely, it will always be found that the tasks itself arises only when the material conditions of its solution already exist or are at least in the process of formation.

In broad outlines Asiatic, ancient, feudal, and modern bourgeois modes of production can be designated as progressive epochs in the economic formation of society. The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production — antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonisms, but of one arising from the social conditions of life of the individuals; at the same time the productive forces developing in the womb of bourgeois society create the material conditions for the solution of that antagonism. This social formation brings, therefore, the prehistory of society to a close.

This long extract explains the fundamental basis of the science of Marxism which was to be developed by Engels, Mehring, Plekhanov, Lenin, Trotsky and others. It does not contain any explanation of the mechanisms whereby class consciousness (revolutionary or reformist) develops under the impact of great historical events and general political developments. In The 18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon Marx does tell us that:

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. [7]

But it does not explain how they are to achieve this. Plekhanov seriously addressed the problem and Lenin solved it in building the Bolsheviks into a party capable of leading the Russian Revolution. This theory could only have been developed under the impact of great historical events, beginning with the failed
For Lenin in 1902 in *What is to be Done* the spontaneous element represents nothing more than consciousness in an embryonic form. The primitive strikes that resulted in the destruction of machinery in Russia up to the 1870s represented one level of revolt against authority; the systematic strike waves of the 1890s represented a higher level of consciousness that began to put forward various political demands, etc.

The problem with this is that we will find that in the earlier strike waves the workers were under the influence of certain political tendencies, perhaps only half formed but nonetheless present. In the later waves the precursors of our friends the Economists and others were present. So what might appear on the surface to be spontaneous, we would discover, was the result of (and produced) internal conflicts where a political vanguard urged the class forward against those who represented the bosses' interests. Therefore, always the class consciousness of the workers developed as a conflict of opposites, with definite political trends fighting both the backwardness of the workers' consciousness and the bosses.

All these political trends were both a part of the working class and an opposition to it at the same time. And the more backward they were the less influence the Marxist intellectuals had on them. The Economists themselves arose, Lenin explains, because the police arrested all the older, educated Social Democrats and the youth who replaced them were not versed in the fundamentals of Marxism. Lenin admits that in his controversial formulation he 'bent the stick' somewhat to strike blows against the Economists. The Economists were a political tendency within the Social Democrats at turn of the century [8]. Most joined the Mensheviks in the split in the Social Democrats after the 1903 Second Congress [9]. They believed the economic struggle of workers of itself would produce revolutionary consciousness. Trotsky also never agreed with Lenin's formulation and pronounced it 'biased' and therefore 'erroneous'. This is how Lenin put it:

We have said that there could not have been Social-Democratic consciousness among the workers. It could only be brought to them from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, i.e., the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation, etc.

The theory of socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical and economic theories elaborated by educated representatives of the propertied classes, the intellectuals. By their social status, the founders of modern scientific socialism, Marx and Engels, themselves belonged to the bourgeois intelligentsia. [10] The major difficulty with Lenin's formulation is that it is schematic, one sided ('biased' as Trotsky said), that is it is undialectical. This does not mean he was totally wrong, just that he had stressed overmuch the 'bringing in' by the Social Democrats alone and directly equated the subjective desires of the masses for revolution with the intervention of the Social Democrats.

He conflated two levels or types of revolutionary consciousness, the subjective will of the masses to make revolution with Marxism - scientific socialism - a highly complex and developed discipline. The LRP continue to make exactly the same error, though from the opposite side. They have not understood at all his self correction so they now allege that his opponents were totally correct - the working class is spontaneously revolutionary they badly asserted in 1985. Lenin says that the economists were claiming that the masses could spontaneously come to 'social democratic' consciousness of their own accord. The modern day 'economists' are usually less crude. Most state capitalist and anarchists groups and others claim that the working class will come to the understanding that the state needs to be violently overthrown by revolutionary action spontaneously of their own accord by more militancy on economic issues - (wrong) and that was all that was necessary and sufficient to lead a successful revolution (doubly wrong). [11]

However it is surely possible that the vanguard (and by this we mean a substantial section of the working class, say 10%) that had come through at long series of severe struggles, learning from defeats as well as victories, could draw the conclusion that revolution was necessary if a mass-based revolutionary party and/or one or more large centrist (not consistently revolutionary) groups had propagated for this understanding. This vanguard could then lead the working class in battle, so that the majority of them would be 'revolutionary'. If we look at the history of apparently 'spontaneous' revolutionary upsurges we will find that, in fact, these were not spontaneous at all. These uprisings happened because, in objectively favourable conditions a variety of subjectively revolutionary forces (despite how counter-revolutionary or confused their leaderships proved to be) had prepared the minds of the broad masses for the conflict. Marx observed that the great Enlightenment figures
like Voltaire, Rousseau and their contemporaries had done just this before the French Revolution. In modern times in 1905 in Russia both wings of the Social Democracy (Mensheviks and Bolsheviks) participated in this work as did many others, including the Economists.

In the great revolutionary upheaval in Spain in 1936 it was surely the Anarcho-syndicalists, the centrist POUM, the left Socialists under Largo Caballero and even some of the Stalinists who prepared the masses for the great revolutionary upheaval [12] [13]. The genuine revolutionaries, Trotsky’s followers the Bolshevik-Leninists, were small in number. Nevertheless there was far more of this type of elementary mass revolutionary consciousness in Spain in the late 1930s than in Russia in 1917.

If Lenin was correct in his 1902 formulation then 1905 should not have been possible. Likewise Spain 1936 should have been impossible. Similarly in Bolivia in 1952 and 1974 it was the POR, the Revolutionary Workers Party, self-declared Trotskyists who were by then obviously centrists, who had prepared the workers to go to the barricades, arms in hand, to fight the state forces. Did not the working class in South Africa approach this level understanding at a few points from the mid 1970s on? And who was mainly to ‘blame’ but the dreaded ANC and the South African Communist Party?

This is proof of Thesis 1.

Chapter 2: What is to be Done? and DC

Lenin arrived at the political positions set out in Left Wing Communism by a long struggle. He had only begun to develop his theories on this question when he wrote What is to be Done? in 1902. It has become fashionable to proclaim that he was wrong on almost everything in that book. Trotskyists on their way out use the admitted confusion over the formulation that the revolutionary party must bring ‘social democratic’ consciousness to the working class ‘from without’ to attack everything in Lenin’s book. On the other hand groups with a despotic internal regime utilise a too literal and a-historical interpretation of the hook to justify their anti-democratic central leadership. In order to do this some even continue to defend the formulation that Lenin himself admitted was wrong. [14]

Let us first off say that the basic political thrust of the book is correct and must be defended against those anti-Leninists who seek to denigrate his three main theses against the Economists;

1. The revolutionary party must champion all aspects of oppression in all classes and not just fight the trade union struggle – “the model for the revolutionary is the tribune of the people and not the trade union branch secretary” Lenin says.

2. DC is the particular organisational and political form that a revolutionary socialist party must adopt.

3. The revolutionary party must give active leadership to the class, be the best fighters for all reforms and so gain the ear of the vanguard for revolutionary solutions.

Lenin was a-historical in his formulation of democratic norms in 1902. These could not be operated in Russia in the severe conditions of illegality at the start of the century but we must acknowledge that DC will lay more emphasis on democracy and less on centralism in conditions of greater democratic freedoms. Nevertheless the political conclusions that he arrived at, and defended, were from the experience of the class struggle and philosophical principles - as quoted from Marx above - and do define Leninism–Trotskyism.

Trotsky makes a self-criticism in 1939 of his position before the Revolution on this question and Lenin’s general orientation to the revolutionary party. He says that in his opposition to Lenin he ‘had not freed himself at that period especially in the organisational sphere from the traits of a petty bourgeois revolution’. By this he meant that he did not understand how the working class and the revolutionary party had to wage the class struggle.

There is a widespread rejection of DC in favour of ‘pluralist’ parties at the moment. All types of liberal anti-Trotskyists wish to be free of the discipline of the class struggle under the guise of escaping from ‘sectarianism’ and ‘dogmatism’. Without a revolutionary party based on DC as its organisational norm it is impossible to educate the membership and the broader vanguard in revolutionary theory. We cannot learn from struggle unless we unite in struggle against the common enemy. Therefore DC is necessary because of the peculiar form of oppression endured by the working class and their fight-back against this. When they engage in serious strike struggles they are obliged to mount picket lines. Whatever the law says they know that to win in the first place they must prevent the more backward of their ranks breaking the strike. If it is a serious struggle like the dockers battle in Australia (1998 Maritime Union strike) all talk of democracy is forgotten and the battle commences in earnest.

Workers’ democracy denies democracy to capitalists to hire and fire at will and to other workers to scab. It requires the fullest discussions before votes are taken and these should be taken at meetings where workers feel their collective strength rather than in individual postal ballots where workers are isolated and subject to media and domestic pressures. Once a majority decides some action then the organisation must enforce compliance from opponents within its own ranks by whatever means available to it. So workers’ democracy is for struggle – workers’ organisations sorting out what they need to do in full discussion enforcing their decisions by whatever
means necessary and at their disposal. Significantly the Tory directed most of their anti-union legislation against these norms of workers’ democracy.

Even majority rule in a formal sense cannot wait because struggle can produce that majority in the correct circumstances. We saw this elementary class instinct in operation when the Cortonwood miners picketed out the rest of the Yorkshire coalfield and began the great miners’ strike of 1984-85. Lenin argued against the Mensheviks that already in the factory we see the principles of DC in the forms of struggle workers’ organisations are obliged to engage in, irrespective of their miseducation about the sacrosanct nature of bourgeois democracy. This is workers’ democracy in action. When a revolutionary, centrist or even reformist group explains the logic of their actions class consciousness can be advanced. The revolutionary party can win recruits.

As the highest form of workers’ organisation the revolutionary party must both reflect and develop the elements of workers’ democracy into a conscious practice and organisational norm. Thus the theory of DC was extracted from and developed out of the practice of the working class in struggle. The democracy is for deciding how to struggle the centralism is in ensuring we strike together so we can learn from our victories and defeats. In deciding how to handle serious political and ideological differences in the group it is surely reasonable to demand that these are first raised internally on the highest body available to the member or members. The right to form tendencies must be facilitated by the constitution and must be seen as a normal part of internal life. It must be positively encouraged when substantial differences appear because these generally reflect real problems within the class. Only by serious debate and struggle can theoretical advances be made.

The more this is encouraged the fewer factions will be formed by disaffected members – and so there will be less danger of splits – and fewer members will be lost through demoralisation caused by ideological frustration and confusion that is merely repressed [15]. Readers will recognise the lack of these norms in the internal regimes of various groupings – the Healyite WRP, the SWP, Militant, the old Morenoite LIT and some of its successors, the Lambertists, etc. The USFI has better internal democracy than most but operates internationally, and sometimes nationally, on a federalist basis to enable them to tail end various left reformist nationalist and Stalinist forces.

However there must be a level of ideological cohesion in a group. Public differences should be normally expressed, and should not be regarded as political treachery – as long as the overall thrust and direction of the group’s policy is defended. Where to draw this line should be determined by the political climate, the degree of political freedom in the country, the internal state of the group and the dictates of the class struggle. But the Party Congress and the democratically elected central leadership must be empowered to draw that line. If a central leadership lacks the respect of the membership then it can only establish that in struggle, not by repression. Otherwise we will train rabbits and not revolutionaries, as so many others have done up to now.

When the workers have spread their organisational norms and methods of struggle throughout society in the formation of pre-revolutionary Soviets or workers’ councils the dictatorship of the workers has begun to challenge the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. If the revolutionary party gains ideological control over the Soviets and the revolution is successful the worker’s state imposes its workers’ dictatorship – the dictatorship of the proletariat – over the capitalists.

The methodological lessons of 1905

Trotsky continually asserted that the Bolsheviks led the revolution in 1917 because they learned the lessons of 1905. We would assert that what the Bolsheviks learned from 1905 was:

1. The need for the UF and transitional politics.
   In seeking to develop these the realisation developed this was the application of the dialectic and a new approach to the UF was needed.

2. The need to study and develop the dialectic itself to defend and develop dialectical and historical materialism against Mach and Bogdanov.

Lenin began this work as early as 1906.

Lenin’s aspiration in 1902 was to recruit the entire vanguard and his schema equated the revolutionary leadership with the vanguard and denied the existence of other forces and the necessity to relate to them in struggle—Kautsky’s ‘party of the whole class’ approach. The Bolsheviks were devastated by the fact that Trotsky and the Mensheviks had led much of the failed revolution of 1905 and they were marginalised. They had to reassess their attitude to the masses, and other groups claiming to be revolutionary and to re-arm themselves theoretically for 1917. Lenin even railed against Soviets for a few weeks in 1905, unable to see the content behind the form.
DC now became much more like the ‘seething internal democracy’ Trotsky said the Bolsheviks had in The Revolution Betrayed. The principle of DC as outlined in the TP row began to operate: ‘Without inner democracy – no revolutionary education. Without discipline – no revolutionary action. The inner structure of the Fourth international is based on the principle of DC: full freedom in discussion, complete unity in action.’ Did Lenin and the Bolsheviks become soft on Trotsky and the Mensheviks after 1905? No. They realised their tactics were proved to be hopelessly inflexible. The consciousness of the working class was not simply either bourgeois ideology or social democratic Marxism as represented by themselves. There were many intermediate stages and different levels. It could veer sharply to the left but not knock on their door. They had to fight for it, and therefore for the leadership of the class, in a different way.

It was not simply that the Mensheviks turned left after 1905 but the Bolsheviks, in a sense, had to turn right. They knew that they were correct about the working class having to lead the revolution but the task was to convince the workers to accept their leadership [17]. Hence the reunification moves with the Mensheviks and consequent intensified political struggles. It we look at the quotes the LRP produce to show Lenin’s revised views after 1905 we see he changed his opinion on the first, more elemental, definition of revolutionary consciousness, only. He did not, and could not, revise his opinion on the second, more profound, meaning. They say:

This very question illustrates the relation between the revolution and the proletariat: we have been arguing. And it occurs even where communist leaders themselves come from non-proletarian backgrounds. Lenin first recognised the inherent revolutionary capacity of the working class through (the experience?) of the 1905 revolution! [18]

Yes but what is the nature and extent of this ‘inherent revolutionary capacity’?

The working class is instinctively, spontaneously Social Democratic and more than ten years of work put in by the Social-Democracy has done a great deal to transform this spontaneity into consciousness. [19]

And they quote from Lenin’s ‘The lessons of the (failed 1905) revolution’:

In combat with this enemy (the capitalist class) the worker becomes a socialist, comes to realise the necessity of a complete reconstruction of the whole of society, the complete abolition of all poverty and oppression. [20]

Yes the first quote is from Volume 10, written during the 1905 revolution. The second quote, from several years after the event (in Volume 16 of the Collected Works, 1910) describes the class conscious worker who has come to see the need for revolution (how? without political intervention?) but not one who is a Marxist, not a scientific socialist. What the 1905 revolution showed was that in 1905 at any rate, the working class might be ‘instinctively, spontaneously Social-Democratic’ but many opted for the wrong Social Democrats, the Mensheviks and Trotsky! Moreover the phrase ‘the Social-Democracy’ implies the Mensheviks also had to be credited with developing the revolutionary consciousness of the masses. But this did not mean that Lenin was therefore about to concede leadership of the revolution to them.

He understood that a socialist revolution cannot succeed without the construction of a revolutionary Marxist vanguard party to lead it. And this party must have learned scientific socialism as first elaborated by Marx and Engels and as developed by various others, chief among whom nowadays must be counted Lenin and Trotsky. This was surely contained within Lenin’s 1902 formulation along with the confusion. It permeates all his writings before and after and we must defend that whilst rejecting his 1902 bias which amounted to a measure of party sectarian voluntarism, a la Kautsky. Political theory like this cannot evolve ‘spontaneously’. Marxism cannot spontaneously arise in the working class no more than a building worker could enter a hospital operating theatre and suddenly discover he or she could perform intricate brain surgery.

The LRP say:

The resolution of the question comes through action, class movement and struggle. For altered consciousness arises from practice rather than the other way around. That is a change in the material conditions through class struggle leads to changes – sometimes vast, overnight changes – in political consciousness [21]

This is almost unbelievably wrong. It is pure metaphysical reductionism, simplistic mechanical materialism with no bow in the direction of the dialectic at all. Some theory must guide all practice. Practice is primary but the practice of the working class that is not guided by some form of socialist theory does not lead to any significant increase in class consciousness. Almost all the practice of the working class is guided by bourgeois ideology and theory – as applied by trade union bureaucrats – and does not alter consciousness to any lasting extent.

Lenin:

The working class spontaneously gravitates towards socialism; nevertheless more widespread (and continuously and diversely revived) bourgeois ideology spontaneously imposes itself upon the working class to a still greater degree [22]

By socialism Lenin here obviously means revolutionary socialism as reformism had not yet separated itself out as a definite trend in the Second International, or more pertinently he had not recognised that process in train in the German SDP; Rosa Luxemburg was far more developed on this question than Lenin at the time. The struggles of the working class...
Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!

does create better conditions for socialists (and by socialists here we mean all who are fighting for the class independence of the working class, reformist or revolutionary) to raise the consciousness of the working class. It also creates the conditions for revolutionaries to recruit front the vanguard and raise the revolutionary consciousness of the entire workforce.

The example of the miners’ strike of 1984-85

Let us take the example of the miners’ strike of 1984-85 to illustrate the point. In the course of that struggle the Yorkshire pit villages were under a virtual state of siege as nationally co-ordinated police squads tried to stop the flying pickets. We began to hear miners express sympathy for the plight of the besieged nationalist community in the North of Ireland almost for the first time. Remember that in the north of England there was much sympathy for the Loyalist cause historically. Many trade unions, under the influence of the labour aristocracy, supported the Tory Party. They shifted to the Labour party in the first decades of the century, bringing all their anti-Irish chauvinism with them. Scargill himself had a bad position on Ireland at the time. Then came the Battle of Orgrieve.

The parallels were there for all to see. The nationalists and the miners were in a common battle against the state. Huge donations began to flow to the miners from Ireland, particularly from the northern nationalist community. The Kilburn branch of the old WRP, on the suggestion of comrades in Willesden, proposed to hold a public meeting on the theme, ‘Orgrieve, Belfast, one struggle one fight’. The reaction from the WRP leadership was astounding. I found out later that the decision was already taken not to criticise Scargill’s leadership of the strike, on Gerry Healy’s insistence, against opposition from the News Line editorial board. Sheila Torrance came to a twenty two strong branch meeting in Kilburn to denounce this initiative as a provocation and to enforce acceptance of the line to withdraw from the Miners’ Support Groups. Apparently ‘ultra-left’ criticisms of Scargill and proposals for initiating sympathetic industrial action was damaging to the NUM. The Branch capitulated to the pressure, despite strong opposition from me and Charlie Walsh.

An even more disgraceful incident happened. A public meeting was called in Camden by a Black community group. It had Black, NUM, Sinn Fein and PLO speakers. The News Line ran a story condemning the meeting, saying it was an attempt by police agents to tar the NUM as terrorists. This resulted in an attack by black youth on a Young Socialist disco in East London which put me and another comrade from Willesden in hospital. The NUM speaker was Malcolm Pitt, who was a CPGB supporter and led the Kent NUM.

The struggle itself had made the miners and their communities open to political advances in all areas as shown by the struggles of the Women against Pit Closures, the Lesbian and Gay support groups etc. The Irish and Black support was reciprocated. But it needed a real revolutionary party to concretise those advances in terms at new cadre for the revolution. This largely did not happen, few miners actually joined far left groups but there was a huge influx into the Labour Party. Here the obvious opportunity to qualitatively develop class consciousness on vital issues for the British working class – racism and Ireland – was criminally rejected by the WRP and many other left groups to maintain unprincipled relations with Arthur Scargill. Their ‘united front’ with the NUM was unprincipled and one sided, it amounted to an opportunist rotten bloc with Scargill and the opportunity to win miners to revolutionary politics was lost. This was a major factor in the break-tip of the WRP and other left groups after the defeat of the strike. However it would be wrong to conclude that all is now lost from that strike. The heightened class consciousness still lives on even in the Labour party and in the trade unions.

The mistaken position of the LRP on practice intrigues us. In July 1987 Sy Landy, a central leader of the LRP, wrote a letter to Chris Bailey, a leader of the Workers Revolutionary Party (Workers Press) at the time. He (Bailey) had criticised David North (leader of the US Healyite Workers League, now called the Social Equality Party). In his letter Landy repudiated just this workerist position:

North is, as you say, an idealist encased in a
In Defence of Trotskyism

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!

Chapter 3: Class consciousness is lodged in workers’ organisations

The class as we encounter them at any given point is becoming more class conscious or is retreating from it depending on the booms and slumps of the system and their understanding of why. This depends on what political influences they come under, the presence or absence of reformist or revolutionary parties, whether these are moving to the left or to the right, etc. We stress ‘class consciousness’ because this is the understanding that workers develop of their separate class interests and the need to fight with class struggle methods (strikes, pickets to stop scabbing, etc). The vast majority of workers with this understanding still have a reformist class consciousness. Sectarians deny the mass parties of the working class, Labour and Stalinists, are part of the class or at least deny the need to relate seriously to them and work within them where possible. Because they are we need the UF and the TM to take the struggle forward to increase the confidence of the class by victories won and to embolden the vanguard to think of revolutionary solutions. Their contact with revolutionary propaganda enables them to see the need to join a revolutionary party.

The work of educating the masses in class consciousness is vital but clearly all subjective revolutionaries and many reformists do this. For instance the British SWP, despite all their backward opportunism, clearly do more education in class consciousness (and even
A principled relationship means that we must be ever and class fighters. A revolutionary party must have a principled relationship with other subjectively revolutionaries or at least genuine reformist socialists.

Even the Stalinists educated, and still do to some extent, workers in reformist class consciousness; that workers have separate interests as a class and need to fight for them. The major source of cheap reproductions of the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin was both the USSR and China. And these texts were taught and discussed in these countries and within the Communist Parties in the West. Stalinists led strikes and even ‘deformed’ revolutions. The Stalinists were indeed counter-revolutionary but in defence of the nationalised property relations and as a political current within the working class they could not be ‘counter-revolutionary through-and-through’; that would mean they were capitalists.

We must seek to ensure that these workers’ organisations fall to the left. We must defend them against the right. True, the genuine revolutionary Trotskyist Party (when we build it) will educate the vanguard more consistently, will be more able to propose those demands that will bring the question of state power into question and will better prepare for its overthrow. Only they will fight for and lead the second October.

They will have to do mass agitational work and relate to these groups who do in a principled way. For the majority of the time, outside of revolutionary situations, a revolutionary party has at more important, though closely related, task. It must build itself among the vanguard of the working class. That is it must prepare the minds of the workers’ natural vanguard for the conflict. It must recruit and train revolutionary workers’ leaders. It must relate to as many others as it can by the tactic of the UF and TM. It must vitally acknowledge that, because of the profusion of groups and the pressures of capitalist ideology, it will not be able to recruit all the best elements in the short to medium term.

It must teach and develop this vanguard politically - how to relate to the broad masses themselves, how to unite with them through conflict, that is it must differentiate them out and then set them to agitate amongst their fellow workers. From this it follows that a revolutionary party must have a principled relationship with other subjectively revolutionaries and class fighters.

A principled relationship means that we must be ever willing to form all manner of UF-type alliances. We must always put the needs of the class struggle first and co-operate where ever possible with all those who are fighting and leading struggles. At the same time we must be uncompromisingly critical of their policies and those tactics that weaken, divide or compromise the future of the class for narrow party-political advantage. We must march separately but strike together to use the traditional formulation. We must be prepared to enter and even fuse with larger ‘revolutionary’ groups provided we can maintain the right to fight for our own politics. In the case of mass parties we need to maintain our own press and other means of propaganda.

As we have said subjective revolutionaries and class fighters may exist in the main in the ranks of rival ‘revolutionary’ organisations, in their middle cadres and in some sections of their leaderships. Their importance lies not only in the fact that the correctness of our politics will enable us to recruit more easily from these if we have had a good and principled relationship with them over a long period of struggle. The importance also lies in the fact that subjective revolutionaries and principled class fighters in ‘revisionist’ or even ‘counter-revolutionary’ socialist organisations will have the ear of the masses and will lead them in struggle. So not only is it necessary to have a sympathetic understanding of the reformist attitudes of workers who follow social democratic and Stalinist parties (and, in certain circumstances, mass petty bourgeois nationalist organisations, of which more later) but it is even more necessary to have the same attitude to the ranks and some of the better leaders of rival revolutionary/centrist groups.

A vanguard exists because it is the natural leadership of the masses. We must teach them to protect and deepen their roots in the masses by ‘merging, in a certain sense, with them’ as Lenin said. What we must not do is rip them away from their roots in the class to make them “professional revolutionaries” who can only relate to other groups by propaganda and not at all to the masses. No, they must take the masses through their experiences of struggle, they fight their backwardness utilising agitation for the class struggle for the broad masses in the main and propaganda for revolutionary socialist theory and goals for the more politically advanced workers to recruit them to the party.

So we have agitation for the masses, in the main, and propaganda for the vanguard. But all this hinges on engagement, on uniting with the workers in struggle. In other words the UF is crucial to begin the work of revolutionary education. Similarly the TM is crucial to propel the struggles forward in the direction of revolution.

The first level of class consciousness is reformist class consciousness but this is a definite advance. It expresses itself in the construction of mass trade unions and social democratic/Labour (bourgeois-workers) parties. It differentiates the working class from previous tail coating of outright bourgeois pan-
ics. In Britain they tail-coated the Liberals – and the Tories in some places in the North of England – up to the period around the first Labour government of 1924. In the US they still follow the Democrats – though the blue-collar Reganite skilled workers were a substantial force several years ago.

This definite political advance, recognised by the Bolsheviks, the Communist International and every Marxist worth their salt up to now, must be defended and built upon, of which more later. This development enables the revolutionaries to relate at a higher level to those workers and to employ the tactics outlined by Lenin in *Left-wing Communism*.

If we said the working class, left to its own devices, is reformist this would be undialectical but it would contain a large measure of truth. It is never ‘left to its own devices’ in any case. In order to live the working class must enter a social relationship with the bourgeoisie. It must sell its labour power to them in order to survive (increasingly so as welfare states are destroyed). This relationship is of necessity unequal and subservient. Capital, the surplus value created by the labour of past generations of workers, seems like an insurmountable mountain to the workers because they depend on it to live. Hence the only way that appears natural and sensible to the workers is to improve their conditions within that relationship, lest they cut off their noses to spite their faces’ so to speak. That is they fear their strike action may bankrupt the company and result in the common ruin of all. So the working class is reformist, QED.

A contradiction exists here. The capitalists are constantly revolutionising the production processes. They are moving vast quantities of capital from one branch of industry to another, from one country to another and from one continent to another to seek the maximum profit. So the worker is thrown on the scrap heap, willy-nilly. Reformism has failed. Perhaps he (or she) did not try hard enough to make reformism work, were too slow to accept wage cuts, speed-ups and redundancies? Perhaps they struck too often and listened too readily to the militants and ignored the moderates? Certainly in times of reaction this argument had a powerful echo.

The more far-sighted will rebel. They will see that wages of £5 an hour in England, after all the cuts, cannot compete with 50p an hour in China. The capitalists are playing them for mugs. By succumbing to national chauvinism and racism they are really cutting their nose off to spite their face. A vanguard of workers may go some way down the road of rebelling against this from half understood ideas from other workers or half-absorbed left wing newspaper articles.

In order to develop an integrated understanding of their own oppression and how to fight it they must collectively organise. Trade unions first. Soon the vanguard learns these are necessary but inadequate. So they meet revolutionary socialist one day. They become convinced of the need for international socialism and revolution, the movement grows, they push their backward work males forward to struggle on at higher plane, the state is challenged and overthrown. The working class is revolutionary, QED. So there you have it. The same working class is both reformist and revolutionary? It is reformist for the vast majority of the time. Only at the approach of a revolutionary situation will the vanguard begin to ask fundamental questions about the nature of capitalist society and become amenable to propaganda from revolutionaries about why it must be overturned by revolution. They will then see the need to communicate their new-found understanding to the mass of their work mates.

*This is proof of Thesis 3.*

**Chapter 4: The dialectic**

**Engels taught**

As Engels wrote:

To the metaphysician, things and then mental reflexes, ideas, are isolated, are to be considered one after each other and apart from each other, are objects of investigation fixed, rigid, given once for all. He thinks in absolute irreconcilable antitheses. His communication is "yea, yea; nay, nay"; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil'. For him as thing either exists or does not exist; a thing cannot at the same time be itself and something else. Positive and negative absolutely exclude one another; cause and effect stand in rigid antithesis one to the other. And the metaphysical mode of thought... sooner or later reaches a limit, beyond which it becomes one-sided, restricted, abstract, lost in insoluble contradictions. In the contemplation of individual things it forgets the connection between them, in the contemplation of their existence it forgets the beginning and the end of that existence, of their repose it forgets their motion. It cannot see the wood for the trees [32].

Surely the LRP’s basic methodological fault is the dead, metaphysical concepts that they work with. They are unable understand movement and change, unity and opposite, transformation of quantity into quality. That is they are unable to apply the dialectic to the class struggle, to understand, in the practical questions of the day, how something can at the same time be itself and something else. The ‘yea, yea, nay, nay’ character of the entire document is absolutely disconcerting. It is as if the thing was written by conscious opponents of the dialectic such that even the normal empirical understanding of educated bourgeois commentators is missing. Take Lenin’s famous quota from *Left Wing Communism*,

At present the British Communist very often find it hard to approach the masses to get at
Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!

The LRP must hate this line of thinking. They are beset by dragon-like contradictions on all sides and these have to be slain. The want to reject the term 'bourgeois-workers party' to describe the British Labour party and other 'reformist' parties and replace it with 'petty-bourgeois':

The petty-bourgeois characterisation of reformist parties is more precise than 'bourgeois-workers party'. On the one hand 'petty-bourgeois' specifies the dominate layer of the party, on the other it subtracts no content, since petty bourgeois ideology is a form of, not distinct from, bourgeois ideology [34].

But the term 'petty-bourgeois' obviously subtracts the content worker from the characterisation. Despite the fact that Trotsky and Lenin constantly used this term to refer to the Labour Party the LRP do not like it at all. The reason is quite clear. 'Bourgeois-worker' signifies a contradiction and the LRP cannot abide contradictions. They must eliminate them terminologically in order to deny reality. So bourgeois worker = petty-bourgeois = bourgeois: contradiction eliminated!

The British Labour Party is led by those who are totally hostile to the working class and are committed to capitalism and furthering the interests of the capitalists. It forms a capitalist government when in office. But its base is working class. It is still linked to the trade unions; the working class is still able to exert far more pressure on even this Labour government than it could on Thatcher or John Major.

From this fact flows the necessity for Marxists to work within the Labour Party when conditions are favourable. The 'vote Labour' tactic loses half its importance if the necessity for faction work within the Labour Party and other social democratic parties internationally is rejected. Of course how much time and effort is spent on this work and what proportion of the membership of a group are engaged in it, depends on the particular stage of the class struggle and the internal political situation in the Labour party [35].

So the sleight of hand is the LRP's. It is they who attempt to fool us with terminology. Their further arguments on the subject follow on from the first effort. It might have been OK in the time of Lenin and Trotsky, they imply, but nowadays things are different. The working class no longer has any illusions in the Labour Party, it has betrayed too often it can offer no way forward for struggle.

But this type of argument had an internal contradiction. It supposes that the working class is at a much higher level of class consciousness today than when Lenin wrote his famous lines about 'support like the rope supports a hanged man'. That being so there is no need for workers to go through experience of joining the Labour Party, trying to force it to represent the interests of the working class in parliament, then seeing through it, seeking the revolutionary party and leading the workers to the barricades. No we can skip all that now and just pose the stark alternative – declare now for revolutionary socialism, we are here we are ready to lead you! It does not work, but then neither does anything else, so who is the say it is wrong?

Despite all the backwardness of the British SWP and WRP in the past their call for a Labour vote is one of the things that enabled them to connect with, yes the dreaded reformist but class conscious workers and sustained them as sizable sects. What they do with these workers they have won then is another matter entirely but they have that first step correct. However the bitter truth is that the working class is at a lower level of class consciousness in a certain sense today than in the days of Lenin. The hope for revolution has all but died in the vanguard who have not jointed a revolutionary or centrist group.

Behind this bay window at Chetham’s Library in Manchester, Engels and Marx toiled to produce the Communist Manifesto.
They still do have expectations that the Labour Party will seek to assist them, that they will be able to pressurise them into doing so. Trotsky’s criterion is still valid today; ‘the attitude of the revolutionaries to the Labour Party is their attitude to the working class’. This is because if revolutionaries have scorn and contempt for the reformism of workers they will scorn working within the mass reformist workers parties. The most sectarian will scorn the attempts to build rank-and-file groups in the unions. They will forever consign themselves to the margins.

This does not mean that we must become Labour Party deep entrists. Whenever a group or candidate emerges to the left of Labour with real roots in the class struggle and likely to develop the class consciousness of a vanguard of the working class they should be supported. If sufficient internal democracy exists within these formations then we should work within them to crystallise out a revolutionary vanguard party. The purpose of Labour Party work is to set the base against the pro-capitalist leadership, develop the class consciousness of the working class and prepare the way for building the revolutionary vanguard party. In further seeking to eliminate contradiction in the class struggle the LRP say:

The LRP criticism of Cliffism (Tony Cliff above), “At which car plants, construction sites, mines or mill are these advanced Marxists workers, who have spontaneously arrived at this felicitous condition? This must the best kept secret on the planet because if the rest of the revolutionary left could find them they would immediately trumpet it and sociologists would write learned theses on how this amazing phenomenon arose. I have worked in building sites and driven buses since my early twenties. I certainly did not develop my Marxism (such as it is) ‘spontaneously’ but had to cudgel my poor dumb brain mercilessly. Some would say that even after all that struggle I have not really had to do was learn to ‘echo’ properly! At which car plants, construction sites, mines or mill are these advanced Marxists workers, who have spontaneously arrived at this felicitous condition? This must be the best kept secret on the planet because if the rest of the revolutionary left could find them they would immediately trumpet it and sociologists would write learned theses on how this amazing phenomenon arose.”

The Cliff tradition has as its hallmark the development of a "rank-and-file" opposition to the trade union bureaucrats. It echoes the current level of consciousness not the most advanced workers, not the Marxists, but of the union militants” (our emphasis) [36].

The backwardness of these formulations almost renders one speechless. The SWP is bad because it ‘echoes’ the level of consciousness of mere trade union militants (in fact it more often echoes the level of consciousness of the left TU bureaucrats). If only they would seek out the Marxists workers and “echo” them then all would be well.

What a wally Lenin was to spend so much time and effort in theoretical development – remember over 200 publications studied to produce Materialism and Empirio Criticism in three European cities – when all he really had to do was learn to ‘echo’ properly! At which car plants, construction sites, mines or mill are these advanced Marxists workers, who have spontaneously arrived at this felicitous condition? This must be the best kept secret on the planet because if the rest of the revolutionary left could find them they would immediately trumpet it and sociologists would write learned theses on how this amazing phenomenon arose. I have worked in building sites and driven buses since my early twenties. I certainly did not develop my Marxism (such as it is) ‘spontaneously’ but had to cudgel my poor dumb brain mercilessly. Some would say that even after all that struggle I have not really had to do was learn to ‘echo’ properly! At which car plants, construction sites, mines or mill are these advanced Marxists workers, who have spontaneously arrived at this felicitous condition? This must be the best kept secret on the planet because if the rest of the revolutionary left could find them they would immediately trumpet it and sociologists would write learned theses on how this amazing phenomenon arose.”

The LRP counterpose revolutionary leadership to mobilising the rank and tile. This profound misunderstanding of the duality of the tactic, of the, yet again, dialectic of fighting for revolutionary leadership by mobilising the rank and tile to fight within and without the union is not understood at all. The truth is the trade union (and Labour Party) bureaucracy is both part of the working class movement – it is currently existing leadership – and the vehicle for imposing capitalist austerity and reinforcing bourgeois ideology on the working class.

A rank and file movement must stand for every electable position, must constantly advocate action and class struggle against the machinations of the bureaucrats and it must act where possible as an ‘internal breakaway’. It must therefore demand on the existing workers’ leaders. It must mobilise for action itself and must seek to be in the position of threatening, and calling unofficial action if the bureaucrats refuse to - ‘with the bureaucracy when possible, against them when necessary’. To be really effective it should be led by revolutionaries who will complement its work by wider propaganda for revolutionary socialism itself in their party press and meetings, etc. thereby threatening the political control over the entire labour movement which the bureaucracy (TU and Labour party leaders) have In Britain.
These are tactics within an overall strategy. The LRP has one strategy and no tactics. If they have an academic understanding of the dialectic they certainly have given no thought to its practical application. Their list of 'Marxist don’ts' is impressive: Don’t: vote for the British Labour Party or any social democratic party anywhere, don’t advocate a US Labor Party, workers government or the like, don’t enter popular fronts (correct on that one), don’t enter reformist parties, centrist parties, UFs or fight for rank-and-file bodies in the trade unions. And the 'dos': At all times and at all places build the revolutionary party by pure propaganda, proclaim the political independence of the class to be secured if that is done (no matter how small the party is) and at all time and in all places scorn the ideas of tactics and flexible approach as the purest form of class treachery.

This is proof of thesis 4.

Chapter 5: The application of the dialectic: South Africa

The LTT has very substantial agreement with the COFI and the LRP on the wars in Bosnia and ex-Yugoslavia. In fact, without consultation or indeed being aware of each others’ positions at the time, we arrived at almost the same political conclusions on the character and causes of the war, when to defend and when to positively advocate which national rights to self-determination etc. We equally saw through imperialism’s hypocritical defence of the Bosnian Muslims to analyse what was the real war aims of the various imperialisms, US and the different European.

Yet despite this apparent close agreement there was one point that we did not agree on. The LTT were for a military bloc with the Bosnian Izetbegovic government but the COFI were not. We argued that any real defence of the multi-ethnic communities must necessarily entail an agreement to fire in the same direction, a time-limited and conjunctural military bloc with the Bosnian government. This was not a UF or political support for the government but a temporary alliance to preserve the fighting capacity of the working class. It necessarily ended when the Bosnian-Croat federation became a tool of US (and German) imperialism in the region. The LRP disagree. This apparently small matter of tactics became of central importance in other circumstances, for instance on the question of South Africa. Here the COFI accused the Comrades for a Workers Government (CWG, SA section of the LTT) of ’crossing class lines’ by calling for a vote for the ANC in the first post-Apartheid elections.

Obviously then the apparent high level of agreement in Bosnia hid a very deep difference of method; how you apply revolutionary politics in practice to the class struggle. Here is where we are very far removed from the COFI method. This is not a Trotskyist group. The COFI have done much good work on the South African Revolution and has given serious thought and analysis to the unfolding events there. But it really is necessary to make an all round assessment of the period through which we are passing and where we stand in relation to it. The sectarians who call themselves Trotskyists will forever quote Trotsky on these points to prove entrism is not allowable, that votes for Labour is a betrayal, etc.:

The Communist Party cannot fulfil its mission except by preserving, completely and unconditionally, its political and organisational independence apart from all other organisations within and without the working class. To transgress this basis principle of Marxist policy is to commit the most heinous of crimes against the interests of the proletariat as a class’ [38].

The LRP reproduces this quote in the introduction to ‘Reformism and rank-and-fileism’. The quote is unquoted and outsourced. It is from Trotsky’s writings on Germany and refers to a Communist Party with a membership of some 300,000 that polled almost six million votes (16.9%) in November 1932. To directly equate the tasks of the LRP or similarly sized groups (a few dozen members at most) with the tactics appropriate to a mass party of the working class which Trotsky was attempting to win to revolutionary politics is incredibly stupid. They obviously hope that readers were unfamiliar with his advice to the French Trotskyists to enter the Socialist Party and his similar advice to Cannon and the US Trotskyists to adopt similar tactics. A-historical quotation chopping can...
learn or teach nothing.

Never and under no circumstances may the party of the proletariat enter into a party of another class or merge with it organisationally. An absolutely independent party of the proletariat is a first and decisive condition for communist politics [39].

quotes the COFI to make an amalgam between the Marxist Workers Tendency (MWT, SA fraternal section the Socialist Party, formerly Militant), the International Socialists of South Africa (ISSA, split from the Cliffite group in SA) and the CWG. Of course if you were the ‘party of the proletariat’ this structure would apply. The CWG cannot claim that, or even yet to the real nucleus of this party but perhaps the LRP feels it can.

The charge that ‘in voting for the ANC, the CWG crossed class lines’ is a very serious one to level at revolutionaries and it needs to be seriously refuted. Whilst they acknowledge that the CWG ‘has run far to the left of both the MWT and ISSA’ and recognising their role in getting the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa (NUMSA) resolution on the workers party passed, nevertheless they see the decision to withdraw support because of the collapse of the attempt to build mass support in the unions and advocating a vote to the ANC as a sell out.

It is clear here that whilst the COFI might have done much theoretical work on South Africa (much it ‘borrowed’ unacknowledged from the CWG) they have absolutely no notion of how to develop tactical relations to the existing leadership of the working class. And the consistent absence of tactics amounts to a sectarian concept for the working class. How else could the presence or absence of mass trade union support be dismissed as an irrelevance?

The quotes above are designed to imply that it was Trotsky’s position that you never, under any circumstances, enter the ranks of another class, yet any serious Trotskyist who has read Trotsky on China will know that he was not opposed to entering the Kuomintang on 12 April. It was not simply a question of a vote then but remaining within the counter-revolutionary organisation under certain conditions. What Trotsky understood was that whilst the vanguard of the Chinese proletariat were clarified on the counter-revolutionary nature of Chiang Kai Check (central leader of the Kuomintang) after Shanghai they did not then necessarily draw the conclusion that the left Kuomintang were fundamentally of the same class character. it was therefore necessary to continue the entry tactic there provided sufficient internal democracy could be guaranteed to the CP to enable them to take the vanguard through the experience of testing and rejecting the left Kuomintang. This is Lenin's famous exposition of the tactics of the Bolsheviks in the Russian Duma:

Prior to the downfall of tsarism, the Russian revolutionary Social Democrats made repeated use of the services of the bourgeois liberals, i.e. they concluded numerous practical compromises with the latter... while at the same time being able to wage an unremitting and most merciless ideological and political struggle against bourgeois liberalism and against the slightest manifestation of its influence in the working class movement. The Bolsheviks have always adhered to this policy. Since 1905 they have systematically advocated an alliance between the working class and the peasantry against the liberal bourgeoisie and tsarism never, however refusing to support the bourgeoisie against tsarism (for instances during second round of elections, or during second ballots) and never ceasing their relentless ideological and political struggle against the Social Revolutionaries, the bourgeois revolutionary peasant party, exposing them as petty bourgeois democrats who have falsely described themselves as socialists [41].

Note the significance of 1905 as the date Lenin says they began to adopt these flexible tactics. It is clear from this that if the CWG crossed class lines by calling for a vote for the ANC in 1994 then Trotsky, by the same logic, descended into the very pits of class betrayal in 1927 and the Bolsheviks were inveterate class compromisers from 1905. Of course this is nonsense. The CWG did retain full freedom of action and criticism and did publish their press. This would teach the COFI something about the UF and the TM if they were willing to learn. But not enough because the COFI were only able to read the formulae and could not understand the method which produced these formulæ.

The ANC were not simply a ‘bourgeois nationalist’ party at this first election. They were a petty-bourgeois nationalist group with a history of leading armed struggle and a mass following in affiliations...
from mass-based trade unions in the process of transforming themselves into a ‘bourgeois nationalist’ party. That is they were a movement in rapid change. The hope of the CWG was that the struggle that they had initiated in NUMSA for a Workers’ Party would take off in a serious way.

For that reason they allied with the the International Socialists of South Africa (ISSA) and the Workers Organisation of South Africa (WOSA, which contained members of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, (USFI) to fight for the Workers Party

But the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) moved to block the movement and the mood of the vanguard for political independence of the working class was crushed by the elemental mood of the masses for their first taste of democracy. The CWG decided to abandon the struggle for a Workers Party for that election and to call for a vote for the ANC. The Workers List was then promoted by WOSA alone and, despite now having a most pathetic reformist programme, gained absolutely derisory votes. The CWG estimation was proved correct and they were correct to maintain their connection with that vanguard in order to take them though the lessons of the struggle. The vote for the ANC was for that election alone, it was to connect with that mood.

The fact that, under the impact of a big assault from the ANC, the CPSA has partially broken from the ANC and began organising semi-independently shows that they recognised the ‘danger’ and moved to head it off. The new strictures that all trade union officials must support and campaign for the ANC has created big tensions within the ‘triple alliance’. It is clear that some of the best militants support the CPSA. Now one of the chief tasks in building the revolutionary leadership is to relate to that militant vanguard in a principled way by UF, TM ‘march separately, strike together’, etc.

The LRP has paid great attention to the Workers International Vanguard League, who broke from the WRP (Workers Press) group in SA. They were impressed that the WIVL did not call for a vote for the ANC in 1994. They are impressed at the struggle for the political independence of the WIVL but then propose the standard inflexible straight-to-the-masses sectarian formulations that are their stock-in-trade. They present ‘a programme of basic revolutionary positions’ to assist the WIVL, which, if heeded, would only confuse and revive the old Healyite sectarianism from the past [42].

There are four main points in their programme:

1. The need to fight for a revolutionary party at all times – by proclamation and rejection all tactical approaches to other workers’ organisations.
2. The strategy of permanent revolution which they completely misinterpret to mean that no alliances or conjunctural blocs with ‘petty-bourgeois nationalist parties like the ANC’ is or was possible.
3. Opposition to popular frontism – no vote for the ANC ever.
4. The struggle against Stalinism – from the Stalino-phobic positions of the LRP.

Significantly there is no mention of the TP and TM in their suggestions. The basic defining method of Trotskyism has no place in the arsenal of those who see no need to relate to other parties of the working class, let alone national liberation movements. If there are any ‘Marxist workers’ in SA (in the sense of those who want a socialist revolution) then the majority are now in the SACP.

The CWG recognises this and is orientating towards those workers whilst maintaining an implacable political and theoretical struggle against CPSA leaders like Jeremy Cronin who defend the ANC’s treachery within the working class. The demand to break the triple alliance, recognise the SACP as a bourgeois workers party and place demands on its leaders is surely the prime task for South African Trotskyists now.

The WIVL should fight alongside the CWG and not go off in a sectarian hinge of self-proclamation as advocated by the LRP or capitulate to the ANC as other leftist groups do. This is further proof of Thesis 4.
Chapter 6: The application of the dialectic 2: state capitalism

The COFI hold a ‘left’ version of state capitalism in relation to the Soviet Union. They believe that capitalism was restored in the USSR in the 1937-39 period. Fundamentally this is based on an abandonment of the class struggle and the necessity to relate to and develop the class consciousness of the international working class with all its regressions and retreats, all its contradictions and its hidden contents beneath the deceptive forms.

In tackling their theory of state capitalism we must say that, as with all state capitalists, the notion that capitalism was restored in either 1927, 1939 or at any time before it actually happened in 1989-91 is a rationalisation of this abandonment of the working class. It is based on impressions, on one-sided analysis, on failure to examine the entire contradictory phenomenon that was the USSR. The Cliffite tradition clearly abandoned this struggle in the 1950s (though they swung left in later years, as centrists do) because defence of the Soviet Union in the middle of the cold war (the Korean war was the catalyst) was deemed just too difficult a revolutionary task for English petit bourgeoisie members and potential recruits to sustain. It was political cowardice.

The LRP publication Capitalism in the Soviet Union (early 1985) clearly reveals their method. They make at great fuss therein about the central importance of the law of value. Both Ernest Mandel of the USFI and Workers Power apparently have got this wrong when they proclaim that 'planning and the law of value are counterposed'. But neither do this. What they say is that a planned economy 'suppresses or curtails the operation of the law of value'. This is clearly what happens and this does not amount to counterposition. The law of value in the sphere of distribution cannot be eliminated without super abundance.

The Stalinist regimes promoted all types of differentiation (Stakhanovism, privileges for party members and the entire bureaucracy, etc.). But there were limits beyond which they could not go and maintain the regime of a degenerated workers’ state. They could not own property themselves or make a will to leave property to their children. They could not break the monopoly of foreign trade. They could not abolish state planning despite the LRP claims that this happened, unknown to Trotsky, the bureaucracy, the entire revolutionary left and the entire capitalist class in 1939.

There are two periods when state capitalists usually assert that capitalism was restored in the USSR. The most common one is the 1927-28 period, held by the Cliffites. This is the obvious and logical one to choose. In the US the Schachtmanites broke from Trotskyist with a bureaucratic-collectivist theory (a sort of agnostic state capitalism where one said the

nature of the bureaucracy was unknowable and did not matter) in 1939. This is also that date that the LRP choose in solidarity as left-Schachtmanites. The reason for choosing 1928 is that that was when Stalin defeated both the left and right of the party. He smashed the Left Opposition (LO) with the help the right and then smashed the right. He dealt with the kulak grain strike by forced collectivisation and initiated the first five year plan.

This ushered in the ‘third period’ of Stalinist ultra-leftism, where Social Democracy and fascism were equated as twin pillars of capitalism. This theory and practice resulted in the victory of Hitler. Far from allying with Bukharin and the right Trotsky’s entire orientation in Germany at the time was – and had to be – to fight for a UF between the German Communists and the German Social Democrats against Hitler [43].

Had he adopted a state capitalist position and allied with Bukharin, as some suggested he should, he would not have been able to approach the German working class at all. He would have been branded as a class traitor in the eyes of the six million voters who supported the German Communist Party in 1932. Neither could he accept the left turn of Stalin as genuine because this would have left him unable to fight the rise of either Stalin or Hitler. Revolutionarity continuity would have been broken in 1927-28.
and the wealth of experience made by Trotskyism since then would have been lost.

The response of Rakovsky, on behalf of the LO and with Trotsky’s approval was to propose a bloc with Stalin against Bukharin. The entire LO recognised that the forces that Bukharin represented, the Kulak and NEPmen, represented the immediate threat of counter-revolution [44] [45]. Stalin and the bureaucracy represented grave danger to the revolution also, but not immediately. It was more that their actions and methods were undermining and striking blows against the class consciousness of the international working class which would eventually inevitably lead to disaster. This it did but the sixty three more years existence of the regime presented many opportunities to turn the tide but for objective and subjective reasons Trotskyists failed to lead the working class to do this. This span may seem a short one indeed if success comes later but we reject with scorn those who said we should have abandoned all in 1927 or 1939.

As this writer said in his document *International socialism cannot ride to victory on the back of a peasant’s nag*,

In the Declaration of August 1929 Rakovsky acknowledged the left turn and the value of planned industrialisation, maintained his absolute opposition to the theory socialism in a single country and its consequences but called for a bloc with the leadership against the restorationists. Whilst Rakovsky’s declaration went too far in appeasing Stalin nevertheless the basic tactic of seeking a UF to enable the LO to buy sonic time and to connect with the Party base was correct [46].

The LRP defend the Trotskyist position on the Soviet Union from 1917 to 1939. They defend Trotsky’s line in 1921-29 ably and well in all aspects apart from the vital position of Rakovsky on the UF outlined above [47]. It is possible to defend many correct revolutionary positions in history but to be unable to stand the pressures of contemporary anti-communist witch-hunts. These can be partly deflected by proclaiming ‘no defence’ whilst a leftism could be maintained in relation to 1917 to 1939.

No anti-communist can stomach this defence of the Soviet Union combined with the conjunctural UF with Stalinism that this defence entails. The path was narrow in 1927-29 but revolutionary socialism survived both by fighting Stalinism and refusing to bloc with Bukharin and the right – and thus rejecting state capitalism. Why should we reject it in 1927-29 and accept it in 1939 when no material change in the structure or leadership of the USSR had occurred?

The LRP claim that in 1939, just after the great purges, there was a breakdown in central planning and that production henceforth was for profit and not planned centrally. They cite various sources for this which does indeed seem to indicate an acute crisis with the breakdown of much of the central planning. But the main reason for the breakdown, according to the LRP, was the elimination of revolutionary socialist consciousness from the state;

...The theory of permanent revolution showed that in the epoch of capitalist decay it is only the proletariat that can carry out progressive tasks and defend its conquests. The final step in the counter-revolution against the soviet workers’ state was the destruction of the last remnants of the Bolshevik Party, symbolising the elimination of both the revolutionary socialist class consciousness from the State and the start of the destruction of the economic achievements of the revolution [48].

In the first place the theory of permanent revolution never stated or showed ‘that in the epoch of capitalist decay it is only the proletariat that can carry out progressive tasks’. Social Democrats, Stalinists and the bourgeoisie themselves carry out ‘progressive tasks’ in all epochs. Social Democrats and Stalinists carry out defence of past conquests of the working class in so far as they rest on these for their own positions of privilege. This is ABC to any serious thinking leftist.

Secondly the most grievous blows against the Bolshevik Party were struck in 1927-29 at the latest. All that was left in power after that were little more than the ‘yes-men’ for the Stalinist bureaucracy. The blood purges eliminated almost all living links with the revolution but that did not mean that in the ranks of the working class itself all consciousness of the progressive nature of the revolution and the need to defend it had been defeated. Lenin speaks of the ‘class instinct’ of the working class supporting the revolution in *Left Wing Communism* and this is exactly what came into play after the war.

What the LRP ignore in setting 1939 as the date of the counter-revolution (and no doubt it came close then) is the outbreak of war that year and the invasion by the Nazis in 1941. That titanic struggle of the Soviet workers and masses against the Nazis was not simply a defence of the ‘Russian Fatherland’ (as Stalin portrayed it) but a real defence of the gains of the revolution and a battle against Nazism on behalf of the international working class. The was a revival of revolutionary socialist consciousness in the masses – and Stalin had to propagate Russian chauvinism to counter it and – of necessity, a revival of central state planning which was more successful in the USSR that any other economy in the world because of the continued existence of the nationalised property relations [49]. There can be no doubt that during and after the war and up to 1991 the Stalinist regimes ‘guarded and defended nationalised property relations’ and ‘curtailed and suppressed the law of value’, as the safest guarantee of their own privileges.

Trotsky’s *In Defence of Marxism* was written during 1939 to prove that the USSR was still a degenerate workers’ state and combat the state capitalist bureaucratic collectivist positions of the ‘petit bourgeois

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!
On Nov. 21, 1989, approximately 200,000 people gathered in Wenceslas Square to demand the end of communism. Proletarian Revolution No. 36 in winter 1990 had as its headline, 'Revolution Sweeps East Europe' and in the article they ridiculously said: "a revolutionary wave, as widespread as the historic international upheavals of 1848 and 1917-19 has toppled a succession of hated rulers and challenged the existence of the pseudo-socialist state system".

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!

opposition' in the US SWP. He cites the phenomenon of peasants seizing large estates and a 'revolutionary wave' surrounded the advance of the Red Army into eastern Poland when the country was divided by treaty between Hitler and Stalin in 1939 [50]. This he puts forward as proof that the revolution still lived in the consciousness of the masses internationally.

At the very end of the war the German working was forced to fight to the last because of the murderous chauvinism imposed by Stalin on the 'Red Army'. But there were instances from Warsaw to Czechoslovakia of workers who rose in revolt at the advance of the Red Army. They were put down viciously by the advancing 'Red Army or, even more disgracefully, they waited until the Nazis did it for them. Many state workers seized large estates in Poland and Czechoslovakia and failed to take power directly, the bourgeoisie were expropriated by the Stalinists. World imperialism lost their bases there during this period, despite Stalin's initial attempts at appeasement.

This was indeed a contradictory situation. It was a partial and truncated victory, which consolidated and enhanced the prestige of Stalinism in the eyes of the international working class while demobilising the working class behind the 'iron curtain' and crushing international working class while demobilising the working class behind the 'iron curtain' and crushing its vanguard. It therefore marginalised the genuine revolutionary socialists, the Trotskyists. Because the working class internationally saw this as the gain it was there was a huge growth of the Communist Parties internationally after the war. This should not have happened if the LRP were correct.

In 1939 Trotsky identified the lack of understanding of the transformation in Poland in 1939:

It is more likely that in the territory scheduled to become part of the USSR the Moscow government will carry through the expropriation of the large estates and statification of the means of production. This variant is most probable not because the bureaucracy remains true to the socialist programme but because it is neither desirous nor capable of sharing the power and the privileges it entails, with the old ruling class in the occupied territories. Here an analogy literally offers itself. The first Bonaparte halted the revolution by military dictatorship. However when the French troops invaded Poland Napoleon signed a decree; 'Serfdom is abolished'. This measure was dictated not by Napoleon's sympathy for the peasants nor by democratic principles but rather by the fact that the Bonaparte dictatorship based itself not on feudal but on bourgeois property relations. Inasmuch as Stalin's Bonapartist dictatorship bases itself on private but on state property the invasion of Poland by the Red should, in the nature of the case, result in the abolition of private property so as thus to bring the regime of the occupied territories into accord with the USSR [52].

This is also what happened post war but Stalin attempted to live with capitalist states under the control of the Red Army to achieve a compromise with the US. When that compromise had clearly failed by the late 1940s, and the bureaucracy itself were threatened by a revived bourgeoisie arising from Marshall Aid, then they were obliged to convert the buffer states into deformed workers' states, similar to how Trotsky's description of the Polish overturn above. Trotsky did not draw the conclusion that the Kremlin had changed its character because of the transformation of property relations in Poland in 1939 and most Trotskyists did not do until after the late 1940s.

But the LRP contend from this that deformed workers' states were not set up in the late 1940s in Eastern Europe because the working class did not lead the overturns. "It was a workers' defeat, not a victory" they say of those events [53]. However whilst the working class was suppressed by the Stalinists and failed to take power directly, the bourgeoisie were expropriated by the Stalinists. World imperialism lost their bases there during this period, despite Stalin's initial attempts at appeasement.

In 1939 Trotsky identified the lack of understanding of the dialectical method as a fundamental problem in the Burnham and Shachtman opposition which resulted in their capitulation to the pressures of petit bourgeois moralism [54]. We cannot do better that repeat his advice to the US SWP activists against the anti-dialecticians:

Beware the infiltration of bourgeois scepticism into your ranks. Remember that socialism to this day has not found higher scientific expression than Marxism. Bear in mind that the method of scientific socialism is dialectical materialism. Occupy yourselves with serious study! Study Marx, Engels, Plekhanov, Lenin and Franz Mehring. [55]

The post-war situation created huge problems for Trotskyists who had all but lost the method of the dialectic by the late 1940s. Nevertheless they arrived at a reasonably correct answer even if their incorrect
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methods signalled the onset of the long crisis of Trotskyism. Logically if you hail the truncated victories of the late 1940s as defeats you must hail the defeats of the late 1980s and early 90s as victories despite all the empirical evidence to the contrary. The LRP, however, were joined by a vast array of nominally Trotskyist groups by then, signalling the far deeper crisis reached by movements who call themselves Trotskyists by the late 80s. The USFI (though with internal opposition), the Morenoite LIT (though opposition emerged later), the WRP (Workers Press), the LRCI, the Lambertists etc. all hailed these counter-revolutions as the beginnings of political revolutions. Though the march of history has proved them all completely wrong they are still unable to correct themselves. [56]

Proletarian Revolution No. 47, summer 1994 said:

The collapse of Stalinism and the headlong retreat of social democracy were not defeats for the workers but rather openings for revived revolutionary proletarian consciousness

Proletarian Revolution No. 36 in winter 1990 had as its headline, ‘Revolution Sweeps East Europe’ and in the article they ridiculously said:

This political estimation of the LRP was totally and completely wrong. Every aspect of their perspectives and predictions were falsified by the outcome of the ‘revolutions’. Mistaking counter-revolution for revolution is about as wrong as you can get politically. They arrived at these conclusions because their entire method is wrong.

This is also further proof of Thesis 4.

Chapter 7: The Leninist vanguard, the WIL, WP and the LRP

In this chapter we will examine how three political tendencies deal with these questions. Richard Price, central leader of the old Workers International League and now of Workers Action, made the following points on What is to be Done? and Spain 1936 in a document of 24 March 1993. We had discussed the subject internally quite a while previously. He says:

None (of the left parties in Spain in 1936) qualified as a revolutionary leadership. In spite of this Spanish workers and peasants all but overthrew the capitalist state. All that was left was, in Trotsky’s phrase ‘the shadow of the bourgeoisie’. Factories were expropriated and run under workers’ control, land was collectivised and militias improvised. As a social revolution it ran much deeper than October 1917, although it had no revolutionary party to consummate the mass movement.

This assessment manages to be both opportunist and sectarian at the same time. It confuses the revolutionary consciousness of the Spanish masses in 1936 with Marxism and as the existing leaderships did not
constituted a programme: the translation of key Marxist texts and these somehow found the Emancipation of Labour Group in 1883.

Herein lies the ideological justification for the passivism of the old WIL. and the capitulation of Workers Action to the trade union militancy represented by the Socialist Caucus lefts. 'In spite of this. Spanish workers and peasants all but overthrew the capitalist state' he says. So it is straight to the masses, who will go the barricades anyway and we must just be at hand to give this final push. UFs, TM’s, the solving of the ideological problems of the vanguard and mass agitational work for the 'workers and presents? are a waste of time.

The second Workers Power speaker was obviously essentially correct against both Price and his own comrade. To deny that the Anarcho-syndicalists, POUM, Socialists and Communists brought revolutionary consciousness to the masses in Spain is just stupid. The mass revolutionary movement clearly bore the political stamp of its educators, in particular the Anarchists, as anyone with the slightest knowledge of the Spanish Revolution will realise. To say that this 'revolutionary consciousness' was 'all but' sufficient to overthrow the capitalist state is to abandon the Leninist theory of the revolutionary party and open the door to opportunism [57].

**Dave Stockton, DC and the omniscient nucleus**

We must recognise the inadequacy of even the most profound revolutionary fervour in the masses to ensure success of a revolution. On the other hand it is possible to understand a great deal of revolutionary theory and be almost completely passive and non-revolutionary by failing to make any serious attempt to apply it by giving serious leadership – as the old WIL, leadership and many others have proved.

Workers Power’s Dave Stockton, in Trotskyist International Issue 23 writes an eight page mini-history of the Bolsheviks in order to justify their version of DC [58]. He has to go through a long theoretical justification to arrive at the conclusion that the ‘nucleus’ are omniscient. He tells us that Plekhanov helped to found the Emancipation of Labour Group in 1883. They produced a 'string of books, pamphlets and translation of key Marxist texts' and these somehow constituted a programme:

**Key tactics of that programme is, necessarily, the task of a small nucleus of political cadres, intellectuals or worker intellectuals. A new programme, a new party, cannot be born and in this way in the world except against pre-existing parties or movements and their ideas and their programmes. Such an original nucleus must, therefore, develop the maximum homogeneity in order to see its ideas triumph. Polemical conflict is central to the original stage.

Many such nuclei will perish in the attempt. Those whose ideas are in accord with the fundamental trends and tasks facing the working class will triumph – if they are upheld by a determined and creative group of fighters. In the early stage of party building the first centralisation is programmatic, i.e. all work centres on the eventual creation of a revolutionary strategy. Democracy is the freedom of ideas and debate within such an organisation.

This stage is far from the easy going free for all of ideas and theories that the petty bourgeois intelligentsia imagines. It is harsh, full of conflict, 'intolerant' of error; for systematic error represents the influence of the bourgeoisie. The earliest years of Russian Marxism were dominated by such struggles.

This describes how Stockton thinks Workers Power should have developed. It was certainly not how the Bolsheviks developed. The Bolsheviks had no programme as such before the 1917 Revolution and a key part of their perspectives was wrong. Their 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasants' orientation was falsified by the revolution itself and Lenin's April Theses only just managed to correct the error in time [59].

Stockton was part of the 'original nucleus' which sought 'maximum homogeneity' and thereby repressed and stifled the necessary debate. The result was that Keith Harvey, leader of the defeated semi-state capitalist tendency in the early 80s, was effectively frozen out of leadership because he lacked 'homogeneity'. However this know-it-all original nucleus, having made the advances on method reflected in the repudiation of state capitalism, were clearly unable to have the serious debate necessary on the collapse of Stalinism in 1989 - '91. They had abandoned the struggle for method and all salvation was then sought in the production of The Trotskyist Manifesto. The struggle for a re-elaborated TP is vital to guide a revolutionary party today but it cannot become the be all and end all of revolutionary theory. Workers Power became programme fetishists.

Once they had produced their programme the LRCI leadership did not need to listen to internal opposition or relate to any other groups in a meaningful way. The Trotskyist Manifesto has singled out the 'original nucleus' as the sole custodians and source not only of revolutionary Marxism but of the will of the masses themselves to make revolution. They knew, because they were it!
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they said, opened up a new period of revolution [60]. However they were then forced to acknowledge that these revolutions were injurious to the working class so we had a counterrevolutionary phase in this new revolutionary period because they could not admit to having made a mistake in the first place.

The confusion and loss of direction of the old leadership had to find its expression in a shift to the right. Logically the Stalinophobia led back to the semi-state capitalist positions of Harvey. It could not have happened in that way if there was a proper DC and ‘seething internal democracy’ in the group.

Now Stockton must humiliate himself and produce this defence of the new leadership against himself. They must now be ‘intolerant’ of his error because surely he, together with the late Dave Hughes, were the ones who most represented the ‘influence of the bourgeoisie’ by their systematic error over nearly two decades? They had championed the Trotskyist defence of the deformed and degenerated workers’ states. How could any serious Marxist boast of being ‘intolerant’ of the ‘error’ (decided by yourself) of your own comrades in such matters?

Stockton takes the view that Lenin was totally correct in his polemic against the Economists in 1902. He wants a pre-1905-type group so this is the schema in his quote; The small nucleus group works out the Programme - obviously The Trotskyist Manifesto in Workers Power’s case - and when that is done they proceed to the masses with it. This is the period when debate and exchange of ideas is necessary but not very much of that. Obviously the ‘nucleus’ will not suffer fools gladly – i.e. they won’t allow that much debate.

But once that early period is over and theory has been sussed out there will have to be even less internal disagreement than there was within the draconian regime outlined above by Stockton. We can see that Stockton is forced here to travel the old Stalin, Healy, Lambert, Grant road. He must pretend he does not know the historical limitations of What is to be Done? He ignores the controversy surrounding Lenin’s formulation. In any case, Lenin’s position was not as Stockton says:

Leon argued that socialist consciousness is not spontaneously and gradually developed by the workers as their own. Here we emphasise that Lenin is not talking about general class instinct, awareness of the common interests of workers as workers, but of socialist consciousness. He insists that this has to be brought into the working class “from outside” - outside, that is of the everyday, piecemeal economic class struggle [61].

But look at Lenin’s actual formulation:

We have said that there could not have been social democratic consciousness among the workers. It would have to be brought to them from without.

Here we see that Stockton changes ‘social democratic consciousness’ to ‘socialist consciousness’ and deepens the confusion. For Stockton the term ‘socialist consciousness’ has the obvious benefit that it is so imprecise it can mean any of three things or some combination of them all. It can mean;
1. reformist (utopian) socialist consciousness
2. the consciousness that revolution is necessary to achieve socialism or
3. the scientific socialist theory (Marxism) that must guide the revolutionary party so that it can lead a successful revolution.

He leaves out the question of the relation between

Lenin in 1917: “So the increasing Stalinophobia of WP led it to welcome the counterrevolutions in east Europe and the USSR in 1989 and 1991 as revolutions, which, they said, opened up a new period of revolution. However they were then forced to acknowledge that these revolutions were injurious to the working class so we had a counterrevolutionary phase in this new revolutionary period because they could not admit to having made a mistake in the first place.”
these; the whole dialectic between the revolutionary party, the vanguard and the working class itself. Stockton therefore believes that Lenin was incorrect in correcting himself. In defending his version of DC he deals extensively with Lenin’s opposition to Bogdanov’s methods but fails even to mention Lenin’s main political philosophical struggle against him. He ignores completely Lenin’s struggle on method, his defence of dialectical materialism against Bogdanov and Mach.

Stockton tells us that, though the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks had earlier split, the 1905 revolution, confounded the plans of both the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks and sent them hotly on the path to reunification. Why? Because the Mensheviks’ perspective was falsified and the Bolshevik one confirmed. Quite simply the Mensheviks’ illusions in liberal leadership of the revolution were quickly dashed while the Bolsheviks’ belief in the revolutionary character of the workers and peasantry was confirmed [62].

If the Bolsheviks were proved correct which of their plans were confounded? Even though Lenin was proved correct on ‘the revolutionary character of the workers and peasantry’ it must have been small consolation to him. For Stockton to ignore this major problem is incredible. Of course if you do not have an explanation you are forced to ignore many contradictions. This does not rate a mention from Stockton whose mini-history of the Bolsheviks is not dedicated to learning from the past but serving the internal needs of Workers Power.

The LRP wrote a long article against Workers Power on the question of class consciousness and rank and fileism in the spring of 1985 in their magazine Proletarian Revolution. In it they say;

The proletariat itself contains the potential for growing over from reformism to revolutionary consciousness. [63]

This idea is repeated in several different ways throughout the article, and is the central thesis of the piece. This was reprinted as part of a pamphlet in 1987 with a ‘correction’ at the back. The ‘correction’, in fact, renounced the central thesis (though they did not admit this) but replaced it with more confusion. We have italicised those formulations in the ‘correction’ with which we particularly disagree;

The article from Proletarian Revolution No. 23, “Workers Power: a Powerless answer to Reformism” contained one error of formulation. We wrote, “The working class is not simply trade unionist, it is spontaneously revolutionary” We went on to add, “Spontaneity is no answer; leadership by the revolutionary party, the proletarian vanguard, is decisive – the crucial question of our time”. In looking back on this article last year, in the context of a faction fight occurring in our fraternal Australian section (see PR No. 46), we did indeed note that there had been a contradiction between the two sentences within the article. As well the picture caption stated workers are spontaneously revolutionary – if there is a vanguard willing to draw uncompromising lessons from such struggles. Our intention was to emphasise that the working class isn’t just spontaneously trade unionist but is capable of revolutionary consciousness and is the class source of that consciousness. However the Marxist term ‘spontaneity’ refers to non-revolutionary activity or struggle. It is wrong to say the working class is, or can be, ‘spontaneously revolutionary. Workers cannot reach revolutionary consciousness spontaneously, but only through the work of building the revolutionary proletarian party. This is indeed the main point of the article [64].
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'revolutionary communist consciousness' and the understanding of what 'spontaneity' is. If it means that the working class cannot automatically evolve the programme of a revolutionary socialist party that is obviously correct but 'scarcely profound' as Lenin would say. It is obviously a confused formulation which blends the science of Marxism with the subjective desires of the masses, or sections of them, to achieve a revolution.

The formulation 'class source of that consciousness' is rubbish. What are we to do then, either re-baptise Engels (outright bourgeois), Marx (swayed university professor) Lenin (lawyer) and Trotsky (son of a rich peasant) as working class or else proclaim that they were not proletarian revolutionaries? The whole ideology of the LRP is patronising workerist nonsense. There was one worker on the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party when it led the greatest revolution in history, the first and only genuine proletarian revolution. Not that he did not deserve his place but who remembers his name?

The LRP say:

But leadership is a relation within the working class, not between intellectuals and proletarians. Building the Marxist party to lead the class is the only way to defeat the alien intrusion of petty-bourgeois ideology [65].

Here we can see again the determination of the LRP to eliminate all contradiction and rubbish What is to be Done? Every second page refutes this workerism in great detail. Lenin's stricture that the model for a revolutionary was 'not the trade union branch secretary but the tribune of the people' was not made only because of the need to overthrow feudal absolutism in Tsarists Russia but has universal application for revolutionaries everywhere.

All state capitalists theories, left versions and right, are a failure to apply the dialectic to living reality. For instance, despite their apparent fundamental opposition to Tony Cliff and his theories, the Healyite SLL and WRP developed a state capitalist theory of Cuba in conflict with the US SWP because they refused to examine the contradictions of a deformed workers state brought into being by Castro, a leader of petit bourgeois nationalists who became Stalinists. The fact that the SWP was politically capitulating to Castro does not justify this. Even today the phenomenon still appears as groups attempt to deflect the ideological pressure of bourgeois society. The Alliance for Workers Liberty became a bureaucratic collectivist/state capitalist group over the last ten years, the LRCI and our comrades in Workers Action are clearly now going the same road [66].

The anti-working class Stalinophobia contained in these positions invariably go hand-in-hand with an inability to develop Marxists tactics to relate revolutionary theory to workers' consciousness. Because how can we make a UF with Stalinists if they are capitalists in reality? How could you defend the social base by propagating political revolution if all was lost in by 1927 or 1939? The 'vote Labour' of the Cliffite tradition is merely a pragmatic adaptation to the illusions of workers and not the tactic advocated by Lenin [67]. They speak merely of the 'socialist alternative' and do not counterpose revolutionary politics to reformism.

In opposing this opportunism the 'left' state capitalists propose to abandon tactics altogether. Propaganda is the only way they proclaim and so perpetrate the division of the working class into industrial and political. The SWP 'lend the industrial a political character', that is they see mobilising the working class in defence of their own wages and conditions so as to force parliament to repeal reactionary legislation and enact progressive laws as the only goal we can now fight for in the labour movement. The LRP simply counterpose the revolutionary party to all organisations of the working class. What the three groups above have in common is Stalinophobia, to one degree or another: The LRP is obviously the worst and the old WIL leadership the least infected. But there is a definite capitulation to bourgeois ideology in the adoption of three variants of state capitalist theories.

This is also further proof of Thesis 4.

Conclusion

In all manner of theoretical magazines over the last decade the concern has been to separate the early Marx from the 'mature' Marx. Once this is done then Marx is separated from Engels, Mehring, and Plekhanov. But the ultimate goal of all this revisionism is to separate Marx and Engels from Lenin and Trotsky, to say that the Leninist theory of the revolutionary party was where Marxism went wrong. Thereby they hope to separate the theory of revolution from its practical application, the great Russian Revolution itself. Lenin's book Marxism and Empiri-Criticism is a target for all manner of pseudo-Marxist fakers who want to turn the science into an academic debating subject rather than develop it as a guide to revolutionary action. This pamphlet is dedicated to the fight against those who seek to make revolutions in their heads and ignore the real contradictions faced by living workers in real struggle.

We feel we have proved our four theses in this pamphlet. The crisis of method pointed to by Lenin in 1920 and Trotsky in 1939 has not been solved and the struggle for it has almost been abandoned. It is time to fight back and learn, defend, and develop the method of Marx and Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, dialectical materialism, which guides the practice of the TM within UF work.

Perhaps the time is now ripe to take up Trotsky's suggestion in In Defence of Marxism and form an international non-party 'Friends of the dialectic' to tackle the crisis of method among revolutionaries.

Gerry Downing December 1998

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!
Endnotes

1 Kautsky, Karl (1854-1938) and Bauer, Otto (1882-1938) were Marxist theoreticians and leaders of the Second International and of the German and Austrian Social Democrats respectively. Kautsky was known as the 'Pope of Marxism' such was his international standing as a Marxist theoretician. Both claimed to defend genuine Marxism against the Russian Revolution but quickly became open counterrevolutionaries.

2 Hyndman, Henry Myers (1842-1921) was a founder of one of the first British Marxist groups, the Social Democratic Federation, but retained many of the ideas and attitudes from his bourgeois origins. He broke from the British Socialist Party, with which the SDF had merged, in support of WWI. Guesde, Jules (1845-1922) was a member of the Paris Commune and a founder of the Parti Ouvrière Français in 1882. On 31 July 1914, the 'revolutionist' Guesde endorsed 'his' France’s plunge into chauvinist war and joined the government. Plekhanov, G V (1856-1918). This 'father of Russian Marxism' taught Lenin well. He did not agree with him on the relation of the revolutionary party to the masses in *What is to be Done?* However he abandoned the movement in the years of reaction after 1908. All three openly opposed the Russian Revolution.

3 This remark is directed at those ultra-left supporters of the Russian Revolution in Britain, Denmark, Germany and Italy in particular who were inflexibly refusing to use all dialectical tactics in relation to other parties of the working class.

4 Lenin, Left Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder CW Vol. 31.

5 These are the largest groups claiming to be Trotskyist or at least claiming some of his heritage.


7 *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Later political Writings, Cambridge University Press p. 32.

8 Revolutionaries of the Second International called themselves Social Democrats from the 1890s up to the founding of the Third (Communist) International in 1919.

9 The Social democrats split into Bolsheviks (majority) and Mensheviks (minority) after their 1903 Second Congress. However they re-united for a period after the 1905 revolution then split again and later still moved closer. They did not finally split until the Mensheviks clearly opposed the Russian Revolution. There were many joint branches even for a period after the Revolution.


11 This position is often attributed to the influence of Kautsky and the German Social Democrats. Indeed it is easy to see how they could conflate the consciousness of the vanguard or even the whole class with that of the party at times such was its size and influence over the German working class, which no other self-declared revolutionary party has approached under capitalism.

12 The Unified Marxist Workers Party, a fusion of former followers of Trotsky and the right-Bolshevik leader Nikolai Bukharin.

13 The Spanish CP participated in the 'Asturian Commune' in 1934, having initially opposed the Anarchist-led uprising. And even during the Civil War the defence of Madrid was conducted by the CP with methods of revolution for a brief period when all else had failed. This surely impinged on the consciousness of the masses.

14 For a comprehensive debunking of this misuse see *What is to be Done? in historical context* by Tim Peach, Communist League, Australia jointly published by the WRP (Workers Press) and the CI, in Tasks of the Fourth International March 1987. The CL was it split from the SLL who supported David North’s Workers League (US). The article is a powerful rebuttal of despotic sectarian misuse of Lenin’s book ripped out of its historical context.

15 We define a tendency as a party grouping that aims to change this or that aspect of the party’s line or programme and a faction as a grouping that aims to replace the existing leadership.

16 Founding document of the Trotskyist Fourth International in 1938.

17 Though, in fact, Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution was correct against both Mensheviks and Bolsheviks; the coming revolution had to be a socialist one. The confusion on this question undoubtedly contributed to the marginalisation of the Bolsheviks in 1905. It did not affect the Mensheviks so much because, contradictorily, of their opportunism.

18 Ibid. p. 8.


21 Ibid. p. 10

22 Lenin, *What is to be Done?* p. 42 footnote.

23. How prophetic that was given North’s present rejection of trade unions, the right to self-determination of oppressed nations, etc. In fact everything, but ‘the (his) revolutionary party.


26 Lenin CW vol. 14 p. 15.

27 Lenin CW vol. 38.

28 A conference of the editorial board of Proletary, the Bolshevik newspaper of the time, adopted a statement by Lenin that ‘to present differences on philosophy as factional was racially wrong’ (Lenin, CW Vol. 14 p. 391).

29 A V Lunacharsky (1875-1933) took his idealism as far as ‘mentally projecting for himself a god wrote Lenin but he (Lunacharsky) rejoined the Bolsheviks in 1917 and became the first Soviet commissar for edu-
This undialectical phrase was never used by Trotsky and he never held this position. It was coined by Joseph Hansen, a leader of the US SWP, in the struggle against Pablo, post war leader of the FI when the Fourth International split in 1935. This one-sided characterisation of Stalinism signalled a brief Stalino-phobic lurch by the US SWP which married up with the positions of the French OCI Pierre Lambert and Gerry Healy’s group in Britain. The US SWP quickly readopted their Stalinophilus but the French and the British groups retained their Stalinophobia.

31 JP Cannon, in his book The History of American Trotskyism at the end of the second paragraph of lecture 7 entitled Turn to Mass Work wrote. ‘In the terminology of the Marxist movement, as it was defined most precisely by Plekhanov, agitation and propaganda are two distinct forms of activity. Propaganda he defined as the dissemination of many fundamental ideas to a few people; what we perhaps in America are accustomed to call education. Agitation he defined as the dissemination of a few ideas, or only one idea, to many people. Propaganda is directed toward the vanguard; agitation toward the masses’ p. 118 1979 Pathfinder edition.

32 Frederick Engels, Anti-Duhring, Progress Publishers p. 31.

33 Lenin, Left Wing Communism, (‘W Vol. 31. if

34 Reformism and ‘Rank and Fileism” p. 7.

35 See the article, Trotskyism, the United Front and the Popular Front against Class collaboration and Sterile Sectarianism in the magazine Revolution & Truth for a good defence of Trotsky’s position on this in 1935/36 in France against both the Spartacists and their political offshoot, the International Bolshevik Tendency. The R&T group is a recent split from the IBT in Britain.

36 Reformism and “Rank and Fileism” p. 9

37 Ibid. p. 16.

38 Reformism and “Rank and Fileism” p. I.

39 Leon Trotsky on China, New Park p. 403.

40. Trotsky Problems of the Chinese Revolution, New Park p. 64.

41 Lenin, Left Wing Communism, CW Vol. 31.


43 The advocacy of a bloc between Trotsky and Bukharin against Stalin is classic state capitalism. Price tries to justly this position – and he is clearly not simply talking about a joint defence of democratic rights – by saying that Stalin was the immediate danger, Bukharin’s policies would have led to crisis in the ‘longer term’. Of course the opposite was the case as the Kulak grain strike of 1928, threatening immediate counter-revolution, was produced by Bukharin’s policies, which he never repudiated. It is completely wrong of Price to say that ‘their views’ economic or other ‘were not quite as far apart as most Trotskyists think’ or that an ‘internal party bloc’ would have ‘little bearing on the united front in Germany’.

44 Rich peasantry.

45 The NEP was the New Economic Policy of economic liberalisation to alleviate a huge economic crisis. It was introduced in 1921. It allowed a measure of capitalism to be restored in distribution, agriculture and light industry but retained control of the ‘commanding heights’ – heavy industry. The Nepmen were the city based small capitalist that arose as a result (NEPmen).

46 ‘And allow the international revolution to develop’ he should have added.

47 Some more ‘orthodox’ groups like Workers Power and our comrades in Workers Action could learn much from this defence, particularly on the point of who represented the ‘main enemy’. See in particular A Bukharinist theory of state capitalism in the LRP’s Capitalism in the Soviet Union p. 34-35 where they say Trotsky advocated a joint campaign to restore democratic norms during the Stalin/Bukharin conflict but ‘saw this as a secondary matter’. They strongly reject the ’Stalin was the main enemy’ position. ‘The slaughter of the proletariat under such a regime (a victorious Kulak-imperialist one) would have been no less bloody than under Stalin’s’ they correctly say.

48 Capitalism in the Soviet Union, p. 8

49 All the economies of the belligerent nations went over to a war footing, i.e. they planned and centralised to a high degree, without imposing on the profits of the capitalists too much outside the USSR.

50 Norden’s (whose Internationalist Group split from the ICL, in 1996) left opposition group in the French ICL group quote the wartime French CP slogan, ‘everyone must get a Kraut’.

51 See Chris Harman, UK SWP, Bureaucracy and Revolution in Eastern Europe, Pluto Press 1974, for a very useful account of how Stalinism operated there, albeit from a state capitalist viewpoint

52 Trotsky, In defence of Marxism New Park p. 22

53 Capitalism in the Soviet Union p. 69.

54 Burnham and Shachtman were two leaders of the US SWP and the Fourth International who formed an opposition group which split the party in 1939 over the question of whether the USSR was still a degenerate workers’ state.

55 Trotsky In defence of Marxism New Park p. 98.

56 The abandonment of the national liberation movements and left nationalist governments to the tender mercies of world imperialism witness Iraq and the sharp drop, almost ten years now, in male life expectancy in the former USSR are proof of the advance of neo-liberal reaction.

57 Three things were necessary in Spain in the Civil War, Trotsky said; ‘A Party, a Party and a Party’.

58 The Leninist Party and DC by Dave Stockton Trotskyist International (TI) Issue 23 January -- June

59 The Bolsheviks believed that the coming revolution in Russia would be bourgeois but that the working class would have to lead it. This was expressed in the slogan ‘the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry’.

But in 1917 soviets (workers’ councils) appeared everywhere. Lenin wrote his April Theses and succeeded, with Trotsky’s assistance, in convincing the Central Committee to accept the slogan, ‘Down with the Provisional Government’ and set the Bolsheviks the task of overthrowing the new Provisional government by a second, socialist revolution.

60 Stalinophobia and Stalinophilia are one sided, undialectical fear of and capitulation to Stalinism respectively.

61 TIID Issue 23 p. 47.

62 Ibid. p. 49.

63 Reformism and Rank and Fileism, The communist alternative. p. 10. Quotes are from this 1987 reprint.

64 Ibid. Added page at end.

65 Reformism and Rank and Fileism, p. 8.

Introduction from p. 2 and the peasantry against the liberal bourgeoisie and tsarism never, however refusing to support the bourgeoisie against tsarism (for instance during second round of elections, or during second ballots) and never ceasing their relentless ideological and political struggle against the Social Revolutionaries, the bourgeois revolutionary peasant party, exposing them as petty bourgeois democrats who have falsely described themselves as socialists.” (p. 16)

If the LRP are right Lenin and the Bolsheviks must have been complete class traitors because this wonderful passage is full of what later became known as ‘Leninist flexibility’, the maximum tactical flexibility whilst never compromising on principle. This TM method is almost lost to Trotskyism and all social revolutionaries we would suggest, they either compromise on principles or refuse to engage at all using ultra-left demagogy. The CWG made the best modern effort we know of to thread the Leninist path on this.

Here is Trotsky in May 1927 arguing with the same method at the Eight Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Comintern (ECCI), “I can accept remaining within a really revolutionary Kuomintang only under conditions of complete political and organisational freedom of action for the Communist Party, with a guaranteed common basis for action by the Kuomintang together with the Communist Party.” (p. 16)

The TM was not just the method of Lenin, it was the class struggle method of the Bolsheviks, it was the method of Trotsky as it must be the method of the regenerated Fourth International.

Gerry Downing, 10 December 2011.

Where We Stand – Socialist Fight EB

1. We stand with Karl Marx: ‘The emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves. The struggle for the emancipation of the working class means not a struggle for class privileges and monopolies but for equal rights and duties and the abolition of all class rule’ (The International Workingmen’s Association 1864, General Rules).

2. The capitalist state consists, in the last analysis of ruling-class laws within a judicial system and detention centres overseen by the armed bodyguard of police/army who are under the direction and are controlled in acts of defiance of capitalist property rights against the interests of the majority of civil society. The working class must overthrow the capitalist state and replace it with a workers’ state based on democratic soviets/workers’ councils to suppress the inevitable counter-revolution of private capitalist profit against planned production for the satisfaction of socialised human need.

3. We recognise the necessity for revolutionaries to carry out serious ideological and political struggle as direct participants in the trade unions (always) and in the mass reformist social democratic bourgeois workers’ parties despite their pro-capitalist leaders when conditions are favourable. Because we see the trade union bureaucracy and their allies in the Labour party leadership as the most fundamental obstacle to the struggle for power of the working class, outside of the state forces and their direct agencies themselves, we must fight and defeat and replace them with a revolutionary leadership by mobilising the base against the pro-capitalist bureaucratic leaders to open the way forward for the struggle for workers’ power.

4. We are in full support of all mass mobilisations against the onslaught of this reactionary Con-Lib Dem coalition. However, whilst participating in this struggle we will oppose all policies which subordinate the working class to the political agenda of the petty-bourgeois reformist leaders of the Labour party and trade unions.

5. We recognise that class society, and capitalism as the last form of class society, is by its nature patriarchal. In that sense the oppression of women is different from all other forms of oppression and discrimination. Because this social oppression is inextricably tied to private property and its inheritance to achieve full sexual, social and economic freedom and equality for all we need to overthrow class society itself.

6. We fight racism and fascism. We support the right of people to fight back against racist and fascist attacks by any means necessary. Self-defence is no offence! We support ‘No Platform’ for all fascists but never call on the capitalist state to ban fascist marches or parties; these laws would inevitably primarily be used against workers’ organisations, as history has shown.

7. We oppose all immigration controls. International finance capital roams the planet in search of profit and Imperialist governments disrupt the lives of workers and cause the collapse of whole nations with their direct intervention in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan and their proxy wars in Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, etc. Workers have the right to sell their labour internationally wherever they get the best price. Only union membership and pay rates can counter employers who seek to exploit immigrant workers as cheap labour to undermine the gains of past struggles.