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Build for a Women's General Strike Wheeler

Some critical remarks about WSL politics
towards the LP LOR

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Build for a Women's General Strike

Despite massive media coverage since December 12 & 13 on Greenham Common, our movement has scarcely touched on the issue. I welcomed Cde. Oliver's discussion document for the broad group and although I have some criticisms of the document I will not dwell on these here but urge comrades to read it in conjunction with this one. Its approach is a positive refreshing one, and it clearly argues why we should support the women's peace movement.

The women around Greenham Common have been organising action and making the political links between the arms race and other issues affecting the working class, long before December 12 put them on the map. (E.g.: economic - their blockade of the Stock Exchange on June 6; the cuts - their contingent on September 22 NHS demo carried a banner saying "Hospitals not haulocaust"; alternative technology - they are in contact with workers at Lucas Aerospace; imperialism - they (bravely) demonstrated against the "Falklands Victory Parade").

Now the Women from Greenham Common and the entire European Women's Peace Movement are calling for a women's General Strike!

The following is quoted (whole) from a leaflet produced by one of the Greenham Women for the East Midlands Region:

"omen all out for Peace

May 24 - International Women's Day for Disarmament

After the success of the December 12 and 13 actions women from Greenham Common Peace Camp together with other women's peace groups, throughout Britain and Europe, are calling for a women's day of action for peace on May 24.

We are asking all women everywhere - women in paid employment, unemployed women, women working in the home, women students, etc. to leave their normal jobs for the day and to take non-violent direct action and other forms of creative and imaginative action against the siting of nuclear weapons in Europe. Actions on this day can range from pickets and blockades of nuclear bases and construction complexes engaged in work on nuclear installations, to silent vigils in town centres, to simply meeting together as groups of women to discuss our feeling about nuclear weapons/show slides and videos/put on exhibitions.

Why is May 24 a Women's Day of Action?

Women constitute over half the population and occupy many (mostly low-paid and unpaid) vital jobs. By withdrawing our labour for a day, or part of a day, and taking positive actions for peace we will make a powerful statement about our opposition to all weapons of mass destruction, whilst at the same time drawing the links between low pay, unemployment, the cuts and the increasing amounts of money being spent on nuclear weapons.

As the urgency of the situation increases (Cruise missiles are scheduled to arrive in Britain this year) it is important that everyone who opposes this madness can make their voices heard. A women's day of action is important because it will give women the confidence to act, and the realisation that we do have the power to change things.

In order to make this Day of Action successful we need the support of men. Men are asked to take supportive strike action and to organise creches in workplaces, and look after the children at home, so that women can be free to take action. Men can also help by fund-raising and by working to make this an official day of action within their unions.

What the unions can do.

To make this an effective day of action working women need to know that they can leave their jobs for the whole, or part of, the day without fear of redundancy or loss of pay. We need the backing of the trade unions to make this an official day of action for peace. Unions who have policies in favour of unilateral disarmament should move resolutions in support of this. Below is a list of

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positive things your union can do to support May 24.

- Write to your regional contact asking for speakers for your union branch meeting/regional meeting/annual conference/trades Council.
- Trade Unionists and Labour MPs have suggested that the PeoplesMarch for Jobs becomes the Peoples March for Peace and Jobs and brought forward to coincide with May 24. Build a support for this idea within your union.
- Fundraising and donations. Each Regional co-ordinating group is to have a bank account into which cheques can be paid. Get in touch with your area co-ordinator for details.

What you can do.

- Press within your trade union branch to make this an official day of action for peace.
- Talk to other women you know about May 24. Ask your regional contact for leaflets; Take these to your workplace/clinics/mother and toddler groups/anywhere you can think of.
- Get a motion of support passed in your Labour Party."

It's crucial for the League to support this initiative. With support from the extra forces of our broad groups (S*, Wfb, and maybe S**V), with the success of December 12 and the growing support for the women's peace groups, May 24 CAN BE effectively a women's general strike (it was done in Iceland and Holland).^{*} We should support it unconditionally and involve ourselves fully in the mobilisations for it. Our struggle for support would be a struggle against sexism and give us fantastic opportunities to explain our politics.

Apart from getting resolutions through TU branches to make it official the women have approached Labour MPs, Councillors and TU officials from whom they are receiving positive noises. They are also drafting leaflets for workers in factories, in hospitals and clinics, mother & toddler groups, supermarkets, etc. (where issues of low pay, cuts & unemployment can be more clearly drawn out). The women will be organising pickets of local construction companies engaged in work on nuclear installations (already they're working to get NFZ councils to black them), pickets of the armed services recruitment offices, tax offices, blockades of all the nuclear bases. They have produced a "trade union pack" with a letter of explanation, list of regional cont acts, Greenham blacklist of firms with contracts at the base, map of Britain showing the nuclear bases, list of suggested actions, etc. TUs, LPs should be ordering them. The issue is highly relevant in the pre-election period, wards can be mobilising and pressurising for official TU support.

The women are calling for a political strike in the time of Tebbit. TUs which try to block support on legal grounds will be bowing to Tebbit. This will give the anti-tebbit campaign new impetus and we can involve more women in the struggle against Tebbit. At the same time we are drawing out the class questions inherent in anti-ar protests.

Some comrades argue that our support for the women's peace movement must be critical support. This is true, but whilst we disagree with the uncritical support of the SWP and the sectarian stance of WP we must remain very sensitive to this movement. A women's general strike should not be seen as a diversion but as a bridge to focussing support and building links with the working class. Our "criticism" should be in the form of constructive and positive suggestions as we work closely in the movement. Through our fullest support and through our involvement we should develop that movement. We can learn creatively and self confidently within the movement. The way the women's peace groups organise allows us enormous scope and freedom to write leaflets ourselves where we can more fully develop the political links (nature of the state, imperialism, unemployment, etc.).

^{*}Would be grateful to comrades who could supply more info on this.

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Many of the most committed women are fully conscious of the need to link up with the working class and specially oppressed and to overthrow the economic/social relationships that lead to that oppression. In our leaflets and through our involvement and by developing their (our?) understanding of imperialism we are unlikely to find ourselves at loggerheads with the movement. We should be saying "Let's contact Rulecan women, or women at Lee Jeans (or wherever) or let's contact the El Salvador Campaign - it links in with US imperialism." rather than going in with "You're doing it wrong, what about black women," etc. We should go in with the attitude of sharing our skills in organising and sharing our understanding of capitalism's highest stage and its crisis. The more links we make, the more we can deepen their understanding of capital's crisis and the nature of the working class as a whole as the only force which can shut down the war machine and build a system that meets human needs. We can gain a lot of credibility, as the only organisation seriously struggling for an end to all oppression, defending all sections of the oppressed, fighting for and with the working class.

There has been a strong tradition of women leading anti-war movements as in Germany pre-first World War. A call by women, to women, both at home and in the workplace to come out against war is something that women can relate to and strongly identify with. Even the most oppressed women are likely to respond to this whereas a TUC or LP call would not reach these women. A women's initiative a women-led strike would bring out many women to take action, probably for the first time in their lives. May 24 will be a major force in strengthening women's consciousness and struggles.

The actions will be carried out mostly by women but men are called on to support, their role being clearly crucial to the success of the day. Men should strike in solidarity and of course not cross picket lines. If mothers and women school teachers are on pickets, blockades, etc., men will be needed to look after children.

At the same time as recognising the strength and creativity of this call (and respect the autonomy of women's leadership) we must be wary of the notion that warmongering arises from men and can only be solved by women. "Take the Toys from the Boys" is a politically misleading slogan (our own leading warmonger is a woman). War is a class question and we must take this sensitively BUT STRONGLY into the women's peace movement.

A women's general strike with men coming out in solidarity, with entire labour movement support, directed at the Tory policies of cuts, unemployment, union bashing & warmongering would be a decisive victory for the class in the year of an impending election.

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Resolution to NC March 18.

This NC recognises

- a) that the May 24th Women's strike call is an important opportunity that must not be wasted.
- b) that we have less than 3 months to organise for this.

Therefore this NC fully supports and resolves to mobilise for the Greenham Common call for a one day women's General Strike on May 24th.

This NC instructs all comrades to:

1. Get their union branch to
 - a) invite a speaker for their union branch/district/regional meeting/annual conference/trades council
 - b) order a trade union pack
 - c) donate money to the campaign
 - d) make May 24th an official day of action.
 - e) get the People's March for Jobs to become the People's March for Peace and Jobs and the Women's Day of the March to coincide with May 24th.
 - f) publicise and mobilise for the day.
2. Get support from their LP wards, GMCs, councillors, etc.
3. Try to get their workplace to come out or show support in some way.
4. Help organise for local action on May 24th.
5. Strike on the day unless there are clear threats of victimisation.

This NC resolves to organise W**/S* fraction and area caucus to develop the practical organisational work required for May 24th and to develop our political clarity and programme with regard to our relationship with the Women's Peace Movement and CND in general.

Some Critical Remarks about WSL Politics toward the LP

FOREWORD

In the course of April 1982 TILC meeting, the LOR representative put forth on behalf of our organization, criticism of politics the WSL follows with respect to the LP. On that occasion, some WSL leading comrades proposed that such criticism be submitted in written form, in order to facilitate understanding and hence discussion. This short document is just intended to expound and briefly argue our criticism, for opening up a debate to hopefully develop in a positive fashion, so contributing to W' action.

First of all, we should make clear that our criticism doesn't concern the option to develop a special-type "entry" work within the LP. Indeed, the peculiar history of British workers movement, as well as the LP's structure, in our opinion require that revolutionists make any effort to assure their constant presence within the LP itself — like it was an historical patrimony of our movement, since the times of Lenin and Trotsky.

At the very time when the then GBL (Bolshevik-Leninist Group of Italy) contacted the W (1979), some leading comrades of GBL, presently leaders of the LOR, in informal debates about the activities of the British section, stated they did favour deeper insertion *.

Due to the same reasons, our comrades who knew the first S' issues, considered as essentially correct the method used by the I in relation to LP (though we then thought we had major political differences with the I itself). That was the period when S' was issued monthly as organ of S.I.V., the I maintaining weekly 'W' as 'party' paper.

To agree with an entrism tactics (or, in the British case, strategy) obviously doesn't imply to agree with the specific action carried out by an organization committed to that tactics or strategy. Rather, the very mode of developing such an action allows to estimate it as valid or negative.

* Some comrades may perhaps recall a speech of a comrade of ours (Franco G.) at the 1980 TILC Summer School, dealing with this topic and agreeing with a previous contribution (also making reference to Trotsky's booklet "Where Is Britain Going?") delivered by an elderly sympathizer and former Trotskyist militant who assisted to the meeting.

GENERAL AIMS OF ENTRY

In any entry operation, the aim of revolutionary Marxists is to struggle for leadership of the workers' rank-and-file of the party they have joined, winning ^{over} it from the older reformist (or possibly centrist) leadership. In a general sense, therefore, revolutionary Marxists stand opposite to all other tendencies — whether right- or left-wing reformist, or centrist in nature.

Of course, insofar revolutionary Marxists constitute a small minority, they may have to adopt special tactical attitudes, such as united fronts with other tendencies, or participation in ~~other~~ ^{pro} tendencies. Likewise, they should in any case devote particular attention to progressive centrist tendencies possibly existing within the party — political blocs with such tendencies may prove useful in order to definitively win them to the revolutionary Marxist programme.

However, irrespective of particular tactical moves required by definite conditions, the pivotal task of revolutionists must remain unchanged: to build themselves as an alternative leadership to all reformist and centrist forces.

In "classical-type" reformist parties, namely the "continental" ones, this is as a rule relatively easier. Generally, such parties do have a formal structure more democratic than the LP, better allowing counterposition of even a small minority as against other components. The assumption that the structure of classical reformist parties is more democratic than the LP's one may perhaps seem to be untrue to some comrades. We think we must emphasize that, in our opinion, one should not ~~confuse~~ the term, "democratic" with "open". Surely ~~indeed~~, the LP is (at least presently) more "open" than the overwhelming majority of traditional-type reformist parties, since it accepts presence of revolutionary militants who would soon be expelled from most other parties. Nevertheless, the structure of these parties is per se less antidemocratic. In fact, they normally rest on conventions (congresses) of delegates elected by rank-and-file meetings, or by delegates from these latter, with right of vote proportional to the different existing tendencies, whereby as a rule even small tendencies, opposite to all others, succeed in being represented at every level. When, in particular cases, revolutionary Marxists succeed in entering such parties, this facilitates their activities — for instance, French Trotskyists did present their independent motion to the 1935 Congress of the S.F.I.O. (SP), and, while obtaining less than 4% vote, got represented at the Party's National Leadership. Conversely in the LP, the petty-bourgeois leading bureaucracy transplanted the antidemocratic election patterns typical of the British bourgeois state (majority vote, vote by blocs, and so on), which makes activities of a small minority more difficult, hence requiring some tactical flexibility, especially as concerns alliances.

Even in this case however, no technical or tactical reasons might displace the two cornerstones of our politics, namely 1) maintenance of our own programmatic positions, and 2) endeavour to become as soon as possible a faction counterposed to all others, posing as an alternative leadership.

WHY AND HOW TO CRITICALLY SUPPORT TONY BENN

We consider it was correct to critically support Tony Benn in his campaign for deputy leadership, for the following reasons:

- 1) The peculiar LP structure, on account both of scant democracy and of the presence of unions, makes it impossible for a small tendency to present an independent candidate.
- 2) Tony Benn was the expression of a major rank-and-file movement within the LP, which, although developed on a narrow political basis (especially centered on internal democracy) represented a progressive reaction to the overtly bourgeois politics of the Labour right wing which resulted in Tory victory — in the present stage, it is absolutely necessary for revolutionists to be present within such a movement.
- 3) Benn's victory would have provoked further drop of right wingers, brought the left wing to LP leadership, and widened democratic elbow-room, all this providing a major opportunity for development of activities of revolutionists, and facilitating their task of unmasking, in the eyes of rank-and-filers, the positions of all reformist leaders, including Benn himself.

Generally speaking, however, in no case can critical support to Benn be based on more "progressive", or even "socialist" character of his positions.

We of course do not identify Benn's positions with those of the direct labour lieutenants of the capitalist class, such as Healey or Foot, but we should also not confuse them with the contents — objectively progressive beyond their limits — of the rank-and-file movement viewing Benn as its own "flag-bearer". Indeed, as Trotsky repeatedly stressed, it is absolutely necessary to distinguish mass movements from their transient leaders or ideological expressions. While the rank-and-file revolt movement which developed in the LP since 1979 does contain an anticapitalist potential, "Bennism" constitutes a petty-bourgeois ideology, a variant of left-wing reformism, characterized by all the ideological and practical limitations of the Fabian, pacifist British tradition.

As such, Bennite ideology doesn't represent a strong point, but rather the present limit of the "broad left" movement in the LP, preventing it from advancing a consistent anticapitalist prospect, as well as waging a consistent struggle against Labour "centre" (or "soft-left") and right wing. In that sense, Bennism is ultimately an obstacle to be removed if the left-wing LP rank-and-file has to translate its potential into actual efficacy.

We must adopt the most appropriate, flexible tactics in order to maintain ourselves in a bloc together with broad left-wing militants in the LP, to develop organizational structure of the same wing, to fight right wingers — while at the same time progressively weakening the grip of left-wing reformism, hence of Bennite ideology and of Benn himself, on the left-wing. This requires to demonstrate the impassable limits of Bennism, as well as the need for replacing Bennism with a genuine alternative, revolutionarily leadership. Such a demonstration should start from the present level of consciousness and concrete experience of Left-wingers, and has not to be confused with abstract denunciations, and so on.

However, in order to correctly carrying out such a demonstration, we never should pose, or appear in the eyes of those we are addressing, as "Bennites", however critical — conversely, we have to present us as revolutionists arguing for critical support to Benn on quite independent basis and for clearcut, delimited reasons. We feel that such a tactics amounts to a fight to expose the limitations and blind alleys of left-wing reformism. A concise formulation of characteristic of this tactics is in our opinion to be found in the August 1980 WSL pamphlet ~~("The Fight to Expose the Labour Left", p. 15)~~ **BRING DOWN THE TORIES THIS WINTER (\$'THE FIGHT TO EXPOSE THE LABOUR LEFT", P 15)**

"In the present LP conflict we (...) stand alongside the left-wing forces fighting to democratise the Party and the election of its leadership — while we argue for a programme of action to meet the crisis and in no way support the reactionary so-called "alternative economic strategy (...). The fight for a genuinely new leadership of the LP and throughout the workers' movement, like the fight for a socialist programme of action against the Tory offensive demands the building of a principled, revolutionary leadership".

Actually, we feel that S has followed a quite different line.

Instead of very carefully differentiating itself from Bennism, S self-proclaimed as "Bennist", although making reference to "serious differences" with T. Benn (Sept. 10th, 1981). Quotes of Benn and other personalities, especially the much-mentioned Reg Race, were used as supportive evidence for our positions — as if a Marxist paper would necessitate such "authorities" * ; so, for instance, in the serial of C d S. M on socialism and democracy (see below), especially in the first article (Feb. 11th, 1982). Please also consider the publication of the wretched, ignorant "Marx Memorial Lecture" delivered by T. Benn — without any comments, and without subsequently issuing the promised S answer. On this basis, we consider as all the more absurd to present Benn as a "theorician", and even a fault-finder of parliamentary democracy — as well as to make eulogizing reference to T. Benn even irrespectively of the very context, eg in Sam Gordon's necrology (S, March 18th, 1982). Finally, we cannot help mentioning the quote, without any comments, of some Reg Race's sentences on the Malvinas war, exhibiting objectively social-chauvinist contents.

* As shown in a Feb. 9, 1936 letter to the leaders of the Belgian Section, Trotsky opposed use of even per se revolutionary sentences ("Workers masses must crush the bourgeoisie with the force") of opportunist personalities (in that event, Francisco Largo Caballero, the well-known Spanish centrist demagogue).

We think we have only mentioned above some examples of an attitude we don't consider as occasional, but rather repeatedly observable in the whole of post-unification S.

Conversely, we notice a failure to exploit opportunities where it would have been possible and useful to attack Benn and other Left leaders — so, for instance, on occasion of agreements with Foot at Bishops Cleeve, or with respect to Benn's inability and unwillingness to give a sustained organization to all forces which had been committed to his own deputy leadership campaign.

All this amounts to downplaying the central, indispensable aspects of critical delimitation from overall Benn's positions and, in general, from the present ideological and political level of the broad-Left making reference to Benn. This does jeopardize the value and significance of what should be the understanding and practice of critical support by revolutionists.

IS A REVOLUTIONARY USE OF REFORMISM POSSIBLE?
THE QUESTIONS OF STRATEGICAL ALLIANCE WITH LABOUR LEFTS
AND PROSPECTS OF LEFT LABOUR GOVERNMENT

If the aforementioned differences would exclusively concern individual, in our eyes incorrect, formulas, their own scope would obviously be relatively minor. Unfortunately, it seems to us that the mentioned W. positions reflect an organic line, not only tactical but at least to large extent strategical — with which we are feeling we have major discrepancies. In other words, we think that there is a difference on the politics accounting for those special expressions and attitudes, hence maximum clarity should be made on this politics.

At the last TILC meeting, April 1982, our representative, in an effort to focus actual differences, stated that our agreement with support to Benn's candidature also rested on present small size of S. Alliance. In reply to this, C. d. Sean M. (if his answer was properly understood) said that in his opinion, support to Benn wasn't conditioned by the presently tiny size of the organization — on the contrary, such a support should continue even with a "much larger" organization, till it succeeds in "winning mass support". Also in case such assert is understood in a narrow, or restrictive sense, i.e. "mass" is interpreted as meaning the bulk of broad workers' vanguard, such a sentence reflects a political method with which we definitely disagree, as far as we could not win majority, or even a substantial portion, of proletariat without previously exposing in deeds Benn's policies, and, at a certain point of time, withdrawing our political support and standing opposite to him as a global alternative.

It might appear that we are overemphasizing one single sentence, but this in our opinion actually reflects a strategical line of long-term bloc with left-wing reformists, which governed in practice its policies over the last few years, and which is ultimately linked to a misinterpretation and underestimate of the role of "subjective factor" in the revolutionary process. That this isn't a product of polemical exaggeration by our part is shown in our opinion by a series of positions about the prospects of a "Left Labour government" and its possible role under mass pressure.

Already when the Fusion Platform W /I was submitted (July 1981), we publicly expressed at the TILC meeting our disagreement concerning an obviously important section such as that on workers government (page 19, second draft text, mimeographed edition). First of all, we consider that section as confused: however, beyond unclarity or weakness of several expressions, our criticism aimed at the following points:

- 1) A lot of confusion was made between a genuine workers government, and a "left reformist" (Bennite) one. In our opinion, discriminants listed in the Theses of the 4th Congress of the Communist International between genuine workers governments, workers-bourgeois governments, etc. hold true now as in the past, especially insofar a genuine workers government should at least establish workers' control as a preparation to expropriation of the bourgeoisie, arm the proletariat and disarm the bourgeoisie.
- 2) The assumption that a left reformist government can become "captive" of the masses simply thanks to development of democracy in the LP and to mass mobilization, is actually quite delusory and conflicting with historical, even recent, experience.
- 3) The spontaneist concept was advanced that in the aforesaid situation, mass movement, by holding government "captive", may per se rebuff bourgeois counterrevolution and march forward towards the establishment of workers power. Such a perspective actually proved false, in the absence of an authoritative revolutionary communist leadership, even in some exceptional, revolutionary situations in the period following the First World War, such as Bavaria and Hungary 1919, or Thuringia and Sax 1923 — where there existed workers' governments formed by coalitions of centrists, left reformists, and (with the exception of Bavaria), also communists. Clearly, this holds all the more true for Britain, where similar conditions cannot be foreseen for the next years, while on the other hand, the Bennite leadership is obviously much less radical than the aforementioned ones.

4) The aforesaid spontaneism was also reflected by the failure to recognize the need of a revolutionary communist (Trotskyist) leadership, supported by the masses, for favourable outcome of the revolutionary process, irrespective of the kind of government is established. This is all the more true in a great imperialist countries, with tremendous democratic-parliamentary traditions and an history of workers aristocracy such as Britain (see Trotsky's writings, Lesson of October, 1924, and Where is Britain Going?, 1925).

5) There was no adequate consideration of the left-reformist leaders' unwillingness and inability to seriously attack the bourgeoisie, nor of adoption by Benn of an economic line (the so-called AES) completely consistent with and internal to capitalist property relationships and British imperialism.

Our criticism, also making reference to some previous positions of both the old W and the I (such as the aforementioned pamphlet "Bring Down the Tories This Winter", August 1970, and July 1977 Manifesto of I, respectively), contributed to introducing an amendment (written by C de John L.) which, though not resolving all points above, stressed that a left reformist government was unlikely to take any anti-capitalist actions, and it was necessary to prepare for opposing its predictable activities.

We however believe that the basic limitations of concepts expounded in that document have been actually maintained in the subsequent W work. They were indeed reproduced in the draft resolution for S AGM, 26-27 June (S., June 17th, p.6), where a call was issued for "a different sort of Labour Government, one under the organised pressure, if not control, of the rank and file (...) under some degree of rank and file labour movement control as a guarantee against any more betrayals". In the light of all this, we are glad that C de Pete Keenlyside from Manchester pointed to the failure to "distinguish clearly between a workers' government and an old-style left Labour government", as well as that C de Sean M. recognized this, and that the section was withdrawn. This however in no way solves the problem, since it is not of a particular formula, but of the underlying line.

Essentially, this line can be identified as an orientation towards "revolutionary use of reformism" — which should be properly distinguished from recognition of a need for critical relationship to present consciousness of mass movement. To believe that reformism, even "left" reformism, either due to any intrinsic dynamics, or to its contradictions and weaknesses, might somewhat provide a launching pad to revolutionary initiative — or that it is possible to make a long way not only together with section of workers bearing reformist delusions, but with reformist leaders themselves — is in our opinion a dangerous mistake, which can ultimately contribute to strengthening, as opposed to weakening, the "grip" of reformist leaders on the masses.

SOME IDEOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF ADAPTATION TO BENNISM

The aforementioned policies were such as to begin to result also in contaminations of some central, irreplaceable positions of Marxism. This became evident in C d Sean M.'s series on "Socialism & Democracy". We are obviously not interested in criticism of individual sentences or unhappy expression, but instead of some basic premises and inferences.

- 1) Nowhere in this lengthy serial was adequately stressed the basic principle that bourgeois democracy is a dictatorship of capitalist class — nor even the more general impossibility of speaking about abstract "democracy", without specifying its inevitable class nature. This entails both a series of concession to the trivial opposition of democracy vs dictatorship, and a representation of relationships of "consistent" bourgeois democracy (such as petty-bourgeois democrats like Benn delusory think it may exist) to workers power as if these relationships ultimately were or purely quantitative difference.
- 2) All this overtly relates to the concept that revolutionary and "consistent reformist" options are ultimately distinct but "interwoven", and compatible at long term, thus allowing an "historical bloc" or prolonged alliance (at least up to winning of masses by revolutionists) with left reformists whose example is Tony Benn.
- 3) Such view of "splice" of the two distinct options leads to the completely wrong concept of "grafting" elements of proletarian power on the body of bourgeois democracy. Thus Trotsky's quote (S Feb. 4th, 1982) with respect to the Programme of Action the French Section worked up in 1934 with his help:

"In 1934 Trotsky suggested a united front with reformist workers in France for a similar programme", i.e. a programme similar to that of Sylvia Pankhurst: "an extremely radical programme of democratic reform attempting to graft on the British parliament features of the workers' council system" (emphasis of S.).

Not only the French Programme of Action (a forerunner of the Transitional Programme) did not imply such a mixture, which Trotsky politically fought several times (see eg "Problems of Italian Revolution", May 14, 1930, in Writings, 1930, pp. 221 ff.)— but it was aimed at utilizing a series of extremely radical democratic objectives (to be summarized in the very reference to the French 1793), viewed at any rate as an eminently transitional tool for revolutionary breakup of bourgeois-democratic frame.

In such a connection, other questionable positions are contained in the comments (cf S. December 16th, 1981) to the inherently, in our opinion, unhappy article by J.P. Cannon vs G. Munis (this latter certainly waged exaggerated criticism, according to his own evolution towards ultraleftism). Comments in our view actually worsen the most negative aspects of Cannon's text, particularly as concerns the majority issue, where class nature and relationship to organized revolutionary vanguard of such a majority are presented at least in a confused fashion.

As Lenin and Trotsky repeatedly argued against both centrists and ultralefts (see in particular the Third Congress of the Communist International, 1921), the basic issue of revolution is to win to revolutionary party's programme the political majority (which doesn't necessarily imply the numerical one) of the proletariat.

For instance, among many passages by Lenin, we can quote the following (from: Election to Constituent Assembly and Dictatorship of the Proletariat — Dec. 16, 1919, our translation):

(chap. VI, paras 4-5)

"4) ... The hue and cry German "Independent" Social Democrats and other leaders or rotten Socialism make against "dictatorship of a minority", etc., only demonstrate that they don't understand the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, actually ruling even in the most democratic republics, nor the conditions allowing the latter's destruction through proletarian class struggle.

5) Such a misunderstanding particularly consists in the following: one forgets that bourgeois parties largely rule thanks to deception of people's masses, oppression by the capital — and, in addition, there is self-deception about the very essence of capitalism, which is characteristic especially of petty-bourgeois parties that commonly want to replace class struggle with more or less masked forms of class collaboration.

"First of all, by maintaining private property, i.e. the yoke and power of capital, let the majority of people declare in favour of the proletarian party. Only then can and must this latter take power". Such are speaking those bourgeois democrats who actually the lackeys of the bourgeoisie, and are calling themselves "socialists".

We say instead: "Let first the revolutionary proletariat overthrow the bourgeoisie, break the capitalist yoke, destroy the bourgeois state apparatus — and then the conqueror proletariat will be able to rapidly attract favour and support of the majority of non-proletarian toiling masses, by meeting their needs at the expenses of exploiters". The contrary will represent a rare exception in the history (and even in a similar exceptional case, the bourgeoisie will be able to resort to civil war, as shown by the Finnish example)".

On the other hand, the proletarian dictatorship itself cannot be mechanically reduced to a question of arithmetic majority (in all cases and at any cost) of the working masses themselves, as it was well clear to Trotsky, even in the light of criminal Stalinist totalitarianism:

"... The masses are by no means identical: there are revolutionary masses, there are passive masses, there are reactionary masses. The very same masses are at different times inspired by different methods and objectives. It is just for this reason that a centralized organization of the vanguard is indispensable. Only a party, wielding the authority it has won, is capable of overcoming the vacillations of the masses themselves. To invest the mass with traits of sanctity and to reduce one's program to amorphous "democracy", is to dissolve oneself in the class as it is, to turn from a vanguard into a rearguard, and by this very thing, to renounce revolutionary tasks. On the other hand, if the dictatorship of the proletariat means anything at all, then it means that the vanguard of the class is armed with the resources of the state in order to repel dangers, including those emanating from the backward layers of the proletariat itself. All this is elementary; all this has been demonstrated by the experience of Russia, and confirmed by the experience of Spain"

("The Moralists and Sycophants against Marxism",
June 9, 1939)

Basically, we want to say that — due allowance made for necessary tactical cautiousness in a paper of an organization within the LP, under attacks by right- and centre-wing fakers, etc., which may necessitate leaving some of our arguments unsaid — positions were expressed to some extent distorting some important Marxist concepts, and introducing democratist-type ideas and arguments.

On the other hand, we think that such a trend is reproduced and extended in further, not secondary areas and topics, as are the Afghanistan and Malvinas issues.

As for Afghanistan, let's remark that the difference isn't centered on the proposed solution (calling back the Russian troops), although we consider such a demand, at this point of time, as wrong and unrealistic — but it focuses on the method whereby the question of right to self-determination is placed above all further democratic objective and all considerations of international politics.

We don't enter into details on the Makvinas issue, however, beyond overall considerations (being separately debated), we consider ⁹³extremely serious a deviation to focus the whole issue on the alleged democratic rights of 1,800 pro-imperialist settlers.

All this isn't unrelated to softness towards "broad" Labour left — instead we think it flows from such an attitude.

IN GUISE OF CONCLUSION

We in the LOR always felt deeply convinced of the importance of W as senior TILC section. On this ground, and on account of the specific function of TILC as grouping consistent Trotskyists fighting for building revolutionary organizations in the workers movement and for rebuilding the FI, we adscribe paramount value, and hence devote maximum attention, to W policies. We once more state we consider of absolute relevance for building a revolutionary leadership of British proletariat, to work inside the LP and to develop an adequately careful and flexible policy towards left-reformist sections. Clearly, however, a small revolutionary organization committed to such an activity has to resist a tremendous amount of pressure. All the history of workers (and especially Trotskyist) movement shows that under these conditions the worst danger is opportunist adaptation to the environment one is working within. In the specific case of W, we believe that such a danger is partially becoming concrete — on the basis of the signs and symptoms, both political and ideological, we have tried to describe.

It seems to us necessary and urgent to completely clarify these questions (including our possible misunderstandings or mistakes), and, if required, to soon emend deviations that may prove capable of severely negatively affecting both the W and the TILC as a whole.

on behalf of the LOR CC

Franco G.
Fernando V.