

Chapter II

SUMMING UP THE OBJECTIVE SITUATION

The Contention between the Old and the New

Comrades and friends,

In formulating its general line in this period, the Party paid especial attention to analysing the concrete conditions in the country, at the same time as assessing its work in the international context. It has upheld that the development of its revolutionary theory, the apprehension and elaboration of the laws which govern the change and development of a social reality in motion along definite lines, must take place according to the objective and subjective conditions in Britain, on the basis of the experience of the working class and people of Britain, and the experiences of all others taken as a whole. Further, this revolutionary theory and its utilisation and development are vital to the bringing about of a modern society under the leadership of the working class, and are put in its service. It is this stand that militates against any theory of exceptionalism, of a parliamentary road to socialism and the like, or that one's own experience transcends that of all others.

On the basis of its theory and the concrete analysis of the concrete conditions, the Party is of the opinion that the struggle going on in society can be characterised as between the Old and the New. This is also reflected in a contention between the various social forces as to what the objective and subjective conditions in society are pointing towards. Our Party has paid a great deal of attention to this question.

Is the crisis of this present social system to continue or is there a way out? Our Party has declared that there is a way out of the crisis. The objective and subjective conditions point the way forward to a new society. It cannot be otherwise when objectively society has been socialised to the maximum, when one is not born simply to a family which fends for its every need, but is born to society, which is duty bound to meet the claims of its members. Yet the economic system is anachronistic, the political system is outdated, the culture which is promoted is so rotten and debased. Yet the old forces scream that the foundations of society cannot be touched, that this system is at base immutable, only some reforms are necessary. These same forces point to the collapse of "communism" as "proof" for their assertions, stating their case as if nothing further needed to be said, as if it were a universally accepted proposition. It can be said in reply that their facts prove exactly the opposite, that the departure from scientific socialism, the abandonment of using Marxist-Leninist theory to guide the solving of problems in building a new society, led in the end to the restoration of capitalism and the collapse of pseudo-socialism in the Soviet Union and the countries of the former People's Democracies. And, further, that the only reason these old forces can crow about the present-day capitalist system is that, while acknowledging all the problems that beset the people, the economy and the political life of the country and society, they point to a future where against all the evidence what they describe as

“progress” will triumph, and that all the problems are due to mismanagement, to wrong policies, everything they can paint with the brush of “forces of conservatism”. Thus their biggest contention is that the problems are not connected with the social system, and that to assert so is to become the victim of “dogma” and “ideology”, and that the people should avoid all extremes, especially all forms of the class struggle, and chart a course between the “old left” and the “new right”. Then, the argument goes, reforms will sort out all the problems. While utterly condemning such a reactionary outlook, which denies the contemporary reality of a liberal democracy as the social system in existence, an imperialist system vainly trying to espouse and update 19th century values, the working class and its Party focuses on what is necessary actually to transform this capitalist society pregnant with socialism. The issue is not to assert the superiority of socialism, but to actually settle scores with everything that is holding back the work to create such a system. In this respect, the question is not whether to cry out that the models of socialism as existed in the Soviet Union or elsewhere should be followed and issue calls in the air for the working class and people to institute such a system. If there is a lesson to be drawn from the collapse of the Soviet Union and other countries where socialism existed, it is of the necessity to bring into play the human factor/social consciousness, to bring about the subjective conditions for the creation of a new society in which it is the people’s concerns that are at the centre, to organise and mobilise the advanced sections of the working class and people to be the ones whose deed overthrows the old and brings in the new. This human factor/social consciousness is the very factor which is then utilised in building the new society. Indeed, it is this very factor which is at the focus of what the bourgeoisie wishes to snuff out in its protestations and actual sabotaging activities around the theme that the foundations of society should not be touched. In this connection, it is important to stress therefore that the objective and subjective conditions are not pointing towards some “model”, but that guided by Contemporary Marxist-Leninist Thought, the utilisation of the laws of social development, human beings will create the new society, a socialist society, in which the means of production are socialised and the working class leads the people in deciding on the direction of the economy and governing themselves.

It is the whole of the 19th century liberal conceptions of society, the neo-liberal agenda which the bourgeoisie tries to implement in today’s world, of privatisation and the free-market economy, which are in thorough-going crisis. The international financial oligarchy is demanding that it should not even be recognised that society exists, let alone a society which sets as its aim to meet the claims of the people on it. This is what is creating such chaos and anarchy in society at large, as well as globally. The bourgeoisie is demanding that even areas which are supposed to care for the people’s well-being, the social programmes of health, education and so on, be opened up to “free-market” economics and become sources of maximum profit for the monopolies. Indeed, this is even said to be the key to resolving the crisis of capitalism and the road to progress. But the world’s people have other ideas. In this battle of the new overcoming the old, it is the communist party which can be the decisive factor by providing that coherence which enables the people to strike out on that path which will sort out the problems that the old is causing, to create a new socialist society with relations of production that are consistent with the requirements of the times.

The national and international contradictions are sharpening at the close of the 20th century, which is to say that nationally the capitalist crisis is deepening, while on a world

scale all the inter-imperialist rivalries are intensifying and the people are paying the price, at the same time asserting their right to sovereignty. The drive of the monopolies for global domination is increasing. This escalating drive of the monopolies spells great dangers for the world's people. This increasing "globalisation" is pointing towards the need for revolution so that all the needs of the peoples and oppressed nations can be satisfied. In this sense, all the contradictions will find their resolution through the resolution of the contradiction between capitalism and socialism in favour of the latter. The people's well-being should be put at the centre of the economy and not the interests of the monopolies. But moving in the opposite direction, the bourgeoisie follows the whole monetarist policy and the policy of fiscal restraints and of this current phase of paying the rich that were started by Margaret Thatcher together with Ronald Reagan.

Clearly the resolution of this aspect of the contention between the Old and the New is not to make some so-called "criticisms" that more should be done to redistribute wealth from rich to poor. The issue is which social class has a priority claim on the social product. In Gordon Brown's Budget in March, 1999, New Labour gave priority to eliminating the "structural deficit", i.e. the national debt. The claims of the people are merely to be met if sufficient funds are available whilst some small measure on income tax of the low paid is used as an excuse to increase taxes. The financial oligarchy is strengthening its hold on the economy even further.

Virtually no one in Britain has spoken out against the Bank of England. Three hundred and five years ago the Bank of England was set up and given the status of a state institution so private investors could profit from the national debt without the risk of losing their loans by directly lending to the monarch. The whole conception of the "Bank of England" was a "fund of perpetual interest". In other words, its function was to set and administer the national debt to fund the colonial wars of the English bourgeoisie, to subsidise slavery and colonialism. Private investors and the financial oligarchy have profited from it to this day on the backs of the working class and people, who have been made to pay through their taxes.

This perpetual national debt has grown from £1.2 million in 1694 to £308 billion today. Who can calculate how many times the people have paid back this debt? Since 1946 over £400 billion has been paid in national debt interest payments, thus the people have been forced to repay the national debt many times over. Over the last twenty years when this process of turning society into a pay the rich system began under Margaret Thatcher the interest on the national debt has gone from £7 billion in 1978 to £28 billion in 1998. This is almost comparable with the previous jumps in the national debt, which previously only occurred in the world with the two world wars.

Today, the Labour government is trying to perfect even more the technique of making society pay the rich. It has made some changes to the Bank of England and other changes in the City but by far the most important is the way it is continuing the anti-social offensive against the people. The previous government was unable to privatise the Post Office, so the Labour government recently announced that it was to keep the Post Office in the public sector for the time being. In reality, it is turning the Post Office into a global monopoly and opening up the postal services to private competition.

Government spokesmen are boasting how they have revitalised the Private Finance Initiative, which was foundering under the Conservatives. The government is getting it to work in sectors like the health service where it has not worked before. It is taking actions

which are making it easier for the private sector to take over the hospitals, schools and other assets of the public services so that the private monopolies can rent them back to the state at enormous cost to the people. Recently, the government announced that it has signed contracts which commit it to pay £83.8 billion in “revenue” to private companies up to the year 2026 instead of providing the funds necessary for the building of these projects. The government’s own figures show that this figure will increase by around £3 billion a year until 2018 reaching £140 billion paid from the Treasury to the monopolies each year. In this new “modernised welfare state” the government is guaranteeing massive payments to the monopolies and financial oligarchy up to 2026 yet it refuses to guarantee even a hospital bed for over one million people in Britain in 1999.

One of the most important areas in its consequences for the people, in how society is increasingly being geared to paying the rich, is the increasing number of what have been described as “mega-mergers”. Of course, it has become quite fashionable for the financial press to go on about the phenomenon of mega-mergers as if it had just been discovered recently. But the main content of its propaganda towards the people seems to be that such aggressive mergers are giving capitalism a bad name and things should return to a status quo. This increased drive of the monopolies for global domination even further confirms the need for the alternative where the people themselves decide the direction of the economy. The issue is not just about how many jobs will go. The issue is that the people’s well-being should be put at the centre of the economy and not the interests of the monopolies.

The bourgeoisie is today making arrangements to preserve the status quo, it is adapting the “solutions” of 19th century liberalism. The old arrangements in society have proved inadequate, whether they be based on Keynesianism, the social welfare state, privatisation, representative democracy, the United Kingdom, or any of the old structures of ordering society. It is precisely in the new arrangements that the bourgeoisie is making, now that its economic and political system is facing renewed crises in the 1990s, that the dangers which lie ahead in the 21st century can be seen. But the new arrangements themselves are born of crisis, they are not born of transforming society so that it meets the needs of society and all its members and collectives.

The issue here is that the bourgeoisie maintains itself in power, maintains the status quo, especially in the context of the political system in Britain in which universal suffrage exists, with arrangements to marginalise whole sections of the people and their collectives, the working class, women, youth, and national minorities for example on the one hand, while accommodating certain individuals from these collectives. Illusions are created concerning bourgeois rule, arrangements are made which marginalise the people and which keep them apolitical.

One of the most important arrangements is the bourgeois electoral system itself which came into being as a system based on the competition between political parties which represented the political interests of the men of property. In the past, it was only the men of property who were permitted to vote. Now, as a consequence of the struggle for universal suffrage and the efforts of the progressive forces, all members of the polity have gained voting rights. But the system of party rule was then further developed and perfected to make sure that the people were kept out of power. Thus today, on the eve of the 21st century, it is 19th century political arrangements which still define the political life of society. Under these arrangements, it is the height of democracy simply to vote every few

years for one of the parties of the bourgeoisie, the programmes of which the people have had no part in formulating or adopting, and for candidates that they took no part in selecting. The important point here is that in this bourgeois democracy the people are reduced to the role of spectators in the field of political affairs, voting cattle who are only permitted to choose between the policies of the main political parties, but should not empower themselves and be sovereign in their own right.

What the Conditions are Pointing Towards

The question of what the conditions are pointing towards is the most important thing for the communists. The disinformation of the bourgeoisie hides the context of the maturing objective conditions. This disinformation disarms the working class and people by taking things out of context and not analysing the developments and not pointing out what is inherent in the situation, what the situation is pointing towards. Once the working class and people are armed and can understand what the situation is pointing towards, then they are in no danger of abandoning their principles or falling into the traps set by the bourgeoisie.

The bourgeoisie has been in all-round crisis for most of this century. The October Revolution of itself in 1917 gave rise to the greatest crisis of capitalism in this era. The socialist system which was established in the Soviet Union dealt a very severe blow from which the imperialist powers developed their warmongering policies to try and smash the socialist Soviet Union, and rescue themselves from their crisis and wipe communism from the face of the earth. However, they were foiled in their attempts. The Hitlerite aggression against the Soviet Union was defeated, communism still kept burning, and not only in the hearts of humankind. It was not the armed might of imperialism that smashed the socialist system.

In the present crisis of capitalism, when the whole society is geared to paying the rich, when Tony Blair is carrying forward the anti-social offensive in a different guise, it is even more important to explain that the objective conditions are still pointing towards the fact that society must undergo a radical transformation. The monopolies are still ruling the roost. If anyone thought that monopolisation could not go further, this past year or so has completely dispelled that.

The objective conditions are pointing towards socialism. The working class as the revolutionary class, as the class whose interest it is not to exploit any other person, which produces all the wealth, is the class in whose interest it is to lead the transformation of society to socialism. Where society is socialised to the maximum, where else is there to go, how else can society be extricated from the crisis? Socialism is not just those categories of doctrines that the communists preach to the people, a dogmatic collection of ideas. Neither is present-day society capitalist just as a matter of definition. It is not just a matter of providing a description of the society that is causing such problems for the people. The working class and people desperately want to get out of this crisis. Struggles are going on in society, the struggles against the anti-social offensive in health, education, and all the other social programmes that are being attacked. The workers themselves are being drawn into this fight over the question of monopolisation, when whole sections of industry have been put on the line, when the scientific, technical revolution itself is being used as a factor against the people and is causing further crisis.

In other words, all the factors are there for the people to break with the system. The working class, which is being drawn into the struggle, must politicise itself and take centre stage. We cannot draw back from shattering the illusions about New Labour which has been brought to power to continue administering the capitalist system simply because it has links with the “labour movement”. In fact, illusions are being shattered simply through concrete experience. The working class and people should draw the appropriate conclusions, and these appropriate conclusions are that society must move forward to socialism. What other future is there? Socialism is the future, it is a proletarian future and nothing else could be the society of the future in the 21st century. This is what the objective conditions are pointing towards.

The old forces, the reactionary bourgeoisie, the rich, and their political representatives are intent on blocking the forward motion of society, and not solving any of the problems the working people are faced with. They are saying that conditions are pointing towards globalisation. Those countries which defend their own road to development are declared rogue states and accused of not being democratic. On the eve of the 21st century, when the competition between the monopolies has never been fiercer, the slogans of the 19th century colonialists and imperialists are being revived. Today, slogans such as those of “free trade”, a “free-market economy” and such-like are in no way consistent with the stage of world development. The international financial oligarchy is putting them forward in order to bring the entire world under their dictate. Globalisation is taking on an ever-increasing pace. It is bringing benefits only to a handful of multinational companies, widening the gap between rich and poor, threatening the environment and undermining social structures. The financial oligarchy is concerned with giving globalisation a “human face”, speaking of a “new age” of globalisation. Under this new age, there will come “economic development and poverty alleviation”, economic affairs will be managed “co-operatively”, and the needs of all will be dealt with globally. The government puts forward that the “essential answer to the problems of the moment is not less globalisation – not new national structures to separate and isolate economies, but stronger international structures to make globalisation work in harder times as well as easy ones”. It says that “globalisation and liberalisation together can be a decisive force for good”. But what is old is being presented as what is new, and vice versa. The values of globalisation are being imposed under the banner of “civilisation”. Under globalisation, the unregulated “free-market” power of multinational corporations is demanding that governments put the state’s assets at their disposal. The medieval principle of devil take the hindmost operates. In other words, the financial oligarchy recognises only its own interests, and tries to ideologically back this up by holding that this is in the interests of the individual, while the general interests and the interests of collectives do not exist. The 19th century conception is of the rights of the individual through the ownership of property. However, the 19th century was also the time of great “social works”, as the development of capitalism demanded a workforce of a minimum health and educational standard, at the same time as providing an infrastructure for the capitalists. Under medievalism, the conception was truly of everyone fending for themselves and having their place “under heaven”. The financial oligarchy, under globalisation, is demanding that the “social works”, as represented by what was built by the “welfare state”, be open to their plunder leaving the general interests and the collective out of account and truly placing the onus on the individual to fend for themselves. There is in progress an ongoing destruction of everything achieved in the long struggle against

medievalism. Human beings are made incidental to the making of maximum capitalist profit. The medievalist slogan of “Might Makes Right” is also redolent of the “peacekeeping” and “moral imperative” to intervene on “humanitarian” grounds that were characteristic of the 19th century colonialists, as they scrambled to divide up the world and with a heavy heart took on the “white man’s burden”.

That this is blocking the progress of society is evident from what is happening in society with mega-mergers, the prospect of a world depression, workers being thrown out of jobs on a massive scale and all and sundry being urged in these circumstances to fend for themselves, while the whole society is supposed to pay tribute to the rich.

With the conceptions of globalisation, neo-liberalism, and competing in the global market which are being pushed by bourgeois political circles, the impression is created that the nation state is a thing of the past. It is said that state sovereignty, in its most basic sense, is being redefined by the forces of globalisation and “international co-operation”. Actually, as can be seen, national sovereignty is not so much being consigned to history as the maximum confusion and diversion created over the question. At the same time as Tony Blair has been exhorting the workers to engage in social partnership to “Make Britain Great Again”, the emphasis has been put on making business successful by competing in the global economy. The people have been invited to become “stakeholders” in globalisation. In other words, the national context is left out of account, and even more the question of “which nation?” is not even raised, or raised half-heartedly. The bottom line is that more ways are being found of putting the assets of the British state, both material and human, at the complete disposal of the financial oligarchy. This is accompanied by an ideological offensive to make the workers forget that their struggles are carried out in a national context, as well as in an international context.

The issue therefore presents itself that the struggle for rights and freedoms must be taken up and led by the working class itself. In laying claim to taking control of and directing the assets of the state, the working class engages in a project of nation-building, while the financial oligarchy has no interest in such a project, is opposed to it, and counts independence and sovereignty as nothing.

Within the geographical territory of Britain, the English bourgeoisie has ensured that the state has been organised not along national lines but on the basis of the suppression and exploitation of the peoples of England, Wales and Scotland, as well as the occupation of Ireland. This British state has also plundered and conquered large parts of the peoples of the world. “British” and “Britain” became the chauvinist figment behind which English capital carried out its rule. Confusion has been spread about national identity, and the bourgeoisie has mixed up the concept of nationality with that of citizenship with measures such as the British Nationality Act of 1981. The bourgeoisie goes out of its way to imbue the workers with this chauvinism. It is promoted that things are basically fine in England compared with abuses of human rights elsewhere in the world, that one should be proud to be “British”. In these circumstances, how is it possible for people to sort out the relation between the English as a nation and the British state?

Within this situation the working class raises the banner of fighting for national rights. It raises as a starting point the necessity for modern sovereign states for the people of each nation. In such states it is the people in whom sovereignty will be vested, who themselves decide and participate in governance, who hold power. The question arises as to what this means for the English working class. The issue is that in order to break with the

chauvinism promoted by the English bourgeoisie, to exorcise the legacy of hundreds of years of colonialism and racism, the English working class has to affirm its own rights. It has to call for modern sovereign states of England, Scotland, Wales, as well as Ireland. With modern sovereign states, the working class can begin to make its own history.

The working class must constitute itself as the nation, it must attain political supremacy, it must rise to become the leading class in the nation. The bourgeoisie has proved that today it is not concerned with the national economy; it is concerned with making and amassing the maximum capitalist profit. In this, the financial oligarchy utilises the state so that the whole society is forced to pay the rich. The working class constituting itself as the nation means that all these assets – national and international trade, the human and material resources – are put under their control. Its character is such that, unlike the bourgeoisie, it will not use these resources only for its own benefit, and exploit the people. On the contrary, in putting its stamp on the nation, the working class affirms the individual and collective rights and claims of all. It takes steps, practical mechanisms and arrangements, so that the people themselves are empowered, have control over their lives and the direction of the economy, and ensures that a modern constitution is in force that vests sovereignty in the people. Such a modern constitution also spells out the national rights of the peoples.

The working class upholds the right of sovereignty and self-determination of the Scots, Welsh, English, Irish and all peoples. It therefore stands for modern sovereign states of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. The issue arises, what arrangements do these sovereign states make with others. The working class advocates a free and equal union between them, but only if the peoples of these states so decide. A union cannot be imposed.

The struggles of the working class and people are waged in a national context, as well as an international context, and the working class must consciously take up this national project. It must break with a vengeance from the chauvinism of the English bourgeoisie that represents British as a nationality and confuses the question of nationality and citizenship, and affirm its own rights as a collective and harmonise these with the general interests of society. The working class must constitute itself as the nation and vest sovereignty in the people.

Hitting at the Illusions of the “Third Way” which are Designed to Conciliate the Class Struggle

In the face of the evidence of this struggle between the Old and the New, between the demand for a new society and the insistence of the rich that the old should be preserved, that there is no next stage of development, Tony Blair declares that there is a “Third Way”. The electoral coup of New Labour, Tony Blair’s “Third Way”, his promotion of “social partnership”, have the primary aim of trying to divert the working class and people from going for socialism.

This “Third Way”, however, consists of intensifying the anti-social offensive against the people. It represents the stand of Tony Blair that in the face of his predecessors’ dismantling of the social welfare state there would now be no going forward for socialism as the situation demanded, but instead the elimination of everything “socialist”, a further step backward in development. Single mothers should have their children removed, they should be institutionalised, those that constitute a “danger” to society should be detained

without trial, there should be a “new contract for welfare” to replace the “something for nothing society”, the “walk-on by society”, children under ten should be condemned for their anti-social behaviour and curfews imposed on them, and young teenagers should be branded as criminals. The “Third Way” tries to side-step the issue as to who is to have the priority claim on the social product. The social product itself, which under 19th century liberalism was clearly seen to be appropriated by the magnates of commerce and industry, disappears by sleight of hand with the “weightless economy”. Under this and similar smokescreens, it is covered over that it is the financial oligarchy that is given priority in all aspects of the claims on society, that every decision by government is made to ensure that the rich are paid, and that the people are condemned when they make their claims on society. They are told they should remember that they have duties as well as rights, and with that truism it is their rights and claims on society which are denied. The claims of the various collectives of the people are not to be granted as of right, but are limited by the “cost” of the exercise.

At the same time as ignoring the responsibility of society towards its members and targeting the vulnerable, Tony Blair declares to the world that Britain’s “responsibilities do not stop at the English Channel”. In other words, while withdrawing the responsibility of the state to care for the well-being of its citizens at home, on “humanitarian” grounds it must intervene throughout the world. How is it that a government which is so unresponsive to the vulnerable at home can suddenly be unable to resist the distressed calls of the suffering abroad? Of course, the issue is that this too is a smokescreen and it is the economic, strategic and geo-political interests of the monopolies that too are at stake in the government’s intervention at points of crisis internationally, carried out as the big powers engage in their battles to redivide the world into new spheres of influence.

Ideologically speaking, the “Third Way” has been characterised as a “renewal” of social democracy. In other words, the crisis of social democracy in the face of neo-liberalism, the dismantling of the welfare state and the implementing of the anti-social offensive is to be answered by the “Third Way”. In this respect, it sets out to chart an ideology that is neither “left” nor “right”. Using words to make them mean anything he wants them to mean, Tony Blair defines it as “progressive politics distinguishing itself from conservatism of left or right”. For example, on the issue of “globalisation”, the government wants a typical “Third Way” solution: a global age where the neo-liberal “market fundamentalism” is ameliorated with talk of agreement between states on a truly world level for mutual and universal benefit, while at the same time rejecting the principle that a people have the right to determine their own path of development and adopt their own social system. In such a way, the “Third Way” is put forward as the ideology of the “centre-left”. Its essence is to create illusions about capitalism and imperialism and to reconcile the class struggle. At the base of the illusions is that the crisis can be overcome within the confines of the capitalist status quo and that its severity and the havoc that is caused is merely a passing phenomenon to be dealt with by some adjustment of government policies. While stepping up its neo-liberal agenda, the Labour government is still relying on such social-democratic illusions. When these illusions were being stretched to breaking point while Margaret Thatcher and John Major were in power, Tony Blair came to the rescue with the unity of the left with the centre under a “Third Way”. The government is waging the class war while declaring that the class war is over. It is attempting to promote the most outrageous illusions about the system, and inviting the working class and people to

participate in every kind of draconian “solution”, so long as they desist from working to transform the system from capitalism to socialism.

According to the words of Tony Blair, “There is an emerging consensus today about the economy which the political centre and centre-left are leading, in Britain and round the world. I have called it the Third Way, but in reality it is a modernised idea of social democracy. It seeks to distinguish itself from the old left and the new right.” What has been the genesis and history of this social democracy which Tony Blair has modernised? With the transition of capitalism to imperialism, the turn of the century saw a re-awakening in the working class movement and a demand for its own independent political party. The Labour Representation Committee was formed in 1900 as a coalition between different groupings, some “left wing” and some not so “left wing”, and the large trade unions. Ramsay MacDonald was elected as secretary and set the tone of the new party, which put forward a mixture of revolutionary-sounding journalism, enlightening social propaganda and compromise in the struggles in the workplace. In 1906, because of anti-union and anti-working class legislation, it was decided that the workers had to have a Party in parliament and the Committee adopted the name of the Labour Party and became a fully constituted political party. However, the Labour Party accepted neither socialism as its aim nor the class struggle as the basis of its tactics. Trades union membership doubled between 1911 and 1913. Builders’ strikes, dockers’ strikes and transport workers’ strikes followed one another. By 1914 the British bourgeoisie were in great trouble and the Labour Party was not able to keep the working class in check. The immediate internal political problems were solved by the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, which was accompanied by the complete militarisation of the economy, suppression of dissent and the channelling of the surplus social product into war production. At this juncture, the Labour Party performed a great service to the British bourgeoisie by reversing, within a matter of days, its anti-war policy, voting for war credits and encouraging workers to join the army as cannon fodder. The war, of course, fought by the imperialist powers for the redivision of the world, brought the mass slaughter of these workers and, ultimately, economic ruin, but greatly increased the power of the capitalist state.

The Labour Party took a leading part in the re-establishment of the Second International in 1919. This International was established on the basis of opposition to the path of revolution that had been opened up by the Great October Revolution in 1917 and the establishment of the Soviet Republic. At this time, the Labour Party was equally active in declaring itself against the revolutionary struggles of the peoples in the colonies of the British empire, such as India. The same was true in relation to the revolutionary struggles of the Irish workers.

The temporary reconstruction of capitalism in the post-war crisis was accomplished by means of wage cuts, longer hours and worsened conditions for the British working class, with the capitalist onslaught starting in 1921. The Labour Party attempted to undermine the workers’ resistance to these attacks by putting forward overt collaborationist slogans such as “Peace in Industry” and “Produce More”. They also undermined strikes such as the 1921 miners’ strike and attempts at inter-union co-operation.

When the Nazis seized power in Germany in 1933, Oswald Mosley’s advocacy of fascism as a new instrument of bourgeois government found substantial support among the Labour Party leadership then in power and responsible for the introduction of wage cuts, the Means Test, the reduction of social services and so forth. The Labour leadership

declared that the rise of fascism was a consequence of the rise of communism and encouraged the working class to follow more “moderate” policies. This policy facilitated the appeasement of Hitler and created the conditions for the second world war.

Right after the defeat of Hitlerite fascism, there was talk of a “third way”, the issue being to abandon class partisanship in the face of the sentiment of the working class and people for socialism at this time. There was a great impetus for basic and radical social change. In Britain, the Attlee government of 1945-51 effectively side-tracked these aspirations and used the mechanisms of the command economy to sort out the post-war crisis in Britain. The Wilson/Callaghan government of the '60s and '70s tackled the problems of decolonisation and the social and educational changes required to re-marshal the working class in the new world situation which the bourgeoisie faced. The Labour Party became a “natural party of government”, alternating with the Conservatives.

The point in very briefly examining this history is to underline how the “Third Way” is a present-day development of the illusions the bourgeoisie promotes about the capitalist and imperialist system, a “renewed” or “modernised” social democracy, and how it is integral to the whole course the bourgeoisie has set. The abandonment of anything “socialist” about the Labour Party, the elimination of the old Clause IV calling for common ownership, the birth of New Labour, were all preparations for and consistent with the adoption of the “Third Way”, necessary components in prosecuting the neo-liberal agenda in today’s circumstances of profound crisis, the headlong rush to medievalist values, and the call that the working class should abandon once and for all an independent programme and the fight for its interests.

In concrete terms, the “Third Way” is the sowing of illusions in the conditions of an intensification of the anti-social offensive, of globalisation and impending world recession, where the working class is marginalised. It is an exhortation to the workers to abandon their rights and interests and pull together with their exploiters, the rich, so that the whole of society pays tribute to the rich. It is an ideological offensive to convince the working class and people that there is no alternative to the course on which the financial oligarchy is set and which the offensive of the government’s policies and legislation is facilitating. It also incorporates the falsehood that communism means enslavement, is the twin brother of fascism, whereas “Western” democracy is synonymous with freedom and progress. First and foremost, it is an offensive to convince the workers that they should on no account organise for a socialist Britain, that entering into social partnership and the stakeholder economy is the best they can get, and to ideologically and spiritually disarm them.

Tony Blair began 1999 with declarations to the British people that the Labour government will not be deflected from its “Third Way”. This “Third Way” is supposedly neither pro-worker nor pro-capitalist. Indeed Tony Blair has gone to such ludicrous lengths as declaring that “we are all middle class now”. This itself is part of the pressure being put on the working class movement to become part of the bourgeoisie against the interests of the working class itself. It goes hand in hand with turning workers into declassed elements as the manufacturing base of the economy is destroyed. However, the scientific-technological revolution, the growth of the “knowledge-based” economy, the increase in the numbers of people employed in the service industry – none of this alters the fact that the proletariat by definition consists of those workers who are the product of modern industrial production, who must be brought into action in various ways.

Tony Blair is carrying forward the programme he put forward at the Labour Party Conference in October 1998, as well as elsewhere, whatever the consequences for the people at home or abroad, whatever the growing opposition to its policies. Tony Blair brazenly stated that his government would not be deterred by any accusations of destroying the economy, betraying the poor, or affronting civil liberties. In the 1999 New Year Message, he reasserted that they will carry on the same road whatever the difficulties for the people.

The government will carry on with its policy of cutting social provisions, robbing the state treasury in all manner of ways in order to finance the monopolies, and encouraging huge mergers, all with the aim of making Britain number one in a globalised economy. This is a recipe for disaster, for conflict and eventual war, which the creation of the Euro in direct competition with the dollar will only exacerbate.

The attacks on the poor and disadvantaged sections will continue under the guise of “welfare reform”, with Blair listing further measures to be pushed through affecting benefit claimants, the unemployed, the disabled, single parents and pensioners. The criminalisation of the youth and the attacks on their rights are being intensified under what Blair describes as “the toughest attack yet on young offending”, unashamedly adding that his measures will be “harsh and authoritarian”.

In the face of growing demands for sovereignty of the people in Scotland and Wales, the government will push ahead with the plans for elections this spring to a Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly, bodies which subordinate sovereignty to Westminster and will not resolve the continuing and intensifying constitutional crisis. In the north of Ireland they will continue to attempt to push through the Good Friday Agreement which, whatever the possibilities it opens up, denies sovereignty to the Irish people and institutionalises British rule and the divisions resulting from it.

Most shamefully, in the face of isolation and world-wide condemnation of the recent barbaric bombing of Iraq as the loyal junior military partner of the United States, the Blair government makes clear that, under the guise of having “rebuilt a position of strength and influence in the world”, it is to continue such collaboration and other acts of aggression and blatant interference in the affairs of various regions like some 19th century colonial power. The Commonwealth under the government’s policy of globalisation will be given “the potential to play an important role in the new century”, representing the fact that Britain is once more concerned to benefit from its 19th century colonial possessions. The government, for example, has its strategy for “a new partnership with Africa”, based on its policy of “backing success” in Africa. In the new scramble for Africa, the British government is supporting those African countries committed to “democracy, human rights and economic reform”. In other words, only those African countries which support the Eurocentrist values of the Paris Charter are to be allowed to exist. Behind this strategy are the enslaving “aid” packages and other means to bind these countries to Britain and to interfere in their internal affairs. They are not to be allowed to forget the “benefits” of colonial rule. For example, Britain is the largest bilateral donor to Uganda, the third largest to Kenya and the government has recently agreed to provide £60 million in “aid” to Tanzania. But the aim of such “aid” is to benefit the big monopolies in Britain. For example, in 1998 Britain maintained a trade surplus with Kenya of over £9.4 million. At the same time, it is pursuing its policy of “strong in Europe, strong with the US”. The Labour government is continuing with its aim of turning the European Union into a

superpower, which might rival the other major blocs in the world. The government argues that its increasing “influence” in Europe means that it has “more respect in Washington”. In this context, the Labour government continues to see itself as “the bridge between both parts of the Atlantic” and not only plays a reactionary role in Europe but also through its role as the most zealous ally of US imperialism.

Tony Blair, in his 1999 New Year message, asserted that his government’s programme is one of reform and renewal, which provides a clear vision for Britain of a world class economy and a just society. Nothing could be further from the truth. Blair’s programme is a programme to preserve the rule of capital under modern conditions and in the face of demands for a modern society. The Thatcherite-Reaganite theory of the “trickle-down” effect of how the working people benefit from the maximisation of profits had become discredited. Tony Blair, hand in hand with the trade union leaders, has come up with the theory of “social partnership”. This theory says that the future of the workers, the prosperity of society, can be guaranteed simply by deals being struck between the workers and the capitalists, so that there is a so-called “win-win” situation for both the workers and the capitalists. In recent months, one has only got to look at the situation of the Rover car plant in Britain under the control of the German BMW monopoly to see this theory being smashed to smithereens in practice. All the benefits of full employment, health care for all, education, education, education, are being put forward as policy objectives. This is to say that the actual objective of these policies is always just beyond the horizon, while the measures that are taken supposedly to bring them about only serve to enrich the capitalist class, while actually exacerbating the crisis which is the cause of mass unemployment, the denial of health care and education for all at the highest standard, and the other ills of capitalism. Whereas Margaret Thatcher came up with the theory of “people’s capitalism”, Tony Blair has come up with the theory of the “Third Way”. Thus, while the government hones its rhetoric of the vision of a just society and uniting in social partnership for progress, its “Third Way” policies are taking Britain further down the road of Thatcherism.

The particular issue with Tony Blair is that he was brought to power as the champion of the bourgeoisie. The form this took was that of the opposition to Thatcherism in order to carry Thatcherism forward.

The Party at the time of the election campaign pointed out the capitalist class had prepared this new deception carefully and over a long period, using all the apparatus of the state, all the power of the monopolies, including their vast propaganda machinery. The deception had consisted of preparing a Labour Party for power which would both carry through the offensive against the interests of the people initiated by Thatcher, yet attempt to fool large sections of them that here is something new which will serve their interests. The Party pointed out that New Labour claimed that it would govern from the centre and represent everyone bar a small right-wing of hereditary peers and exceedingly rich. The Party explained that New Labour had been prepared for power in order to carry through the agenda of the rich against the interests of the people, in a situation where the Tories could no longer carry the offensive against the people. In fact, the Party emphasised, the election was nothing less than a coup being carried out by the rich against the working class and people. As such it was being organised as the greatest danger to the people which would lead to untold disasters. The Party discussed in this connection what was required to end the passivity of the working class in these circumstances. This issue was that no independent programme was being put forward for the working class. The working class

was thoroughly divided. A large section of the working class was being organised to back the coup, and the bourgeoisie was in effect calling for the unity of the backward section of the working class with the broad section against the advanced section. What would be required to counter this strategy of the bourgeoisie was a converging point for the working class to put forward their independent politics, a space where they could operate to work to transform the situation. The Party gave very serious thought to this issue and worked very hard to create this space. What was creating the divisions in the working class was the ideology that was being pushed by the Labour Party and those forces that were conciliating with it, that the “left” should unite with the “centre”. The whole question of what stand the workers and the various sections of the people should take to deal with the deep all-round crisis of British capitalism was not even being addressed. The system cannot provide for the people, poverty is increasing, the attacks on education, health and social programmes are being stepped up. What was required was a fighting programme around which all the forces against the anti-social offensive could unite. If a coherent programme which embodies the independent demands of the working class was put forward, it would provide a rallying point for the vast majority of the people. This rallying point was the demand to *Stop Paying the Rich – Increase Investments in Social Programmes*. It is the interests of the people and providing for their needs which must be the priority, not paying the rich. The Party called on all workers, all progressive and democratic people to take up in the election period and after the fight for this vital demand, a demand which will open the way for a new society fit for the modern age. In this way, a focus was given to the opposition to the anti-social offensive, to Thatcherism, that was not diverted by the promotion of the “popularity” or “unpopularity” of this or that political party or political leader as being the issue.

It is now more than ever crucial that the working class and people of Britain unite in a consistent programme against Tony Blair’s “Third Way”. At the same time, all serious groups and individuals should work to strengthen and consolidate the communist and workers’ movement in Britain. Marxist-Leninists must develop their unity on the basis that in this present historical period, it is no longer acceptable to merely seek agreements on the basis of general line or to form coalitions on the basis of the “left”. This new historical basis must include challenging in concrete form the very political forces which are organising the anti-social offensive and those forces that spread harmful illusions that social democracy can be relied upon to fight for progress and change. As a matter of course, communist parties will have to carry out discussions with each other on questions of concern. All questions of revolutionary theory and practice must be discussed in the course of the work to create the subjective conditions for revolution. RCPB(ML) has itself taken steps to initiate and participate in such discussions in the context of starting this work.

A most important issue facing the working class is that of organising to occupy the space for change. It is for the working class to organise for the economic and political changes favourable to itself and society. Occupying the space for change at this time is necessary for the working class to advance its independent programme for the entire society. The working class movement must reject the programme of New Labour and put forward its own alternative programme, *Stop Paying the Rich – Increase Investments in Social Programmes!* What is particularly important to raise at this time is that what is on the agenda is the work to actually organise the workers to occupy the space for change and demand that the rights of all be recognised. It is a most crucial step that its independent

programme itself not be left simply as a policy objective but find its reality in contests with the bourgeoisie on specific fronts in the space which is objectively available for the workers to carry out such battles.

The Political Programme of the Working Class

Comrades and friends,

The workers are not aloof from these developments in the objective conditions, and are not able to remain aloof. It is the working class which holds the solutions to these problems. The workers need to prepare to turn things around so as to be in a position to take control of their lives, so that the people are in the position of decision-makers. It is the elaboration and the implementation of a fighting pro-social programme which is the stand the workers must take right now as the necessary step in preparing for the coming revolutionary storms. This is the programme *Stop Paying the Rich – Increase Investments in Social Programmes!* The fight for the victory of this programme is the immediate task in preparing for the triumph of socialism in the strategic sense. In a world going through its present historic shift, workers taking up the work for the victory of this programme will find their bearings in the revolutionary storms ahead and take the road to a new socialist society.

The programme *Stop Paying the Rich – Increase Investments in Social Programmes!* has arisen out of the objective problems in society and the demands of the working class that rights be recognised, that the claims of all on society be met, and that the people be empowered to control their own destiny. It begins from the premise that all have rights by virtue of their humanity, that these rights are inalienable and inviolable, and can neither be given nor taken away. It begins from the premise that all are born to society and have claims on society in relation to their concrete and objective needs which society is duty bound to recognise and guarantee. The Party launched this slogan in April 1997 in the midst of the election campaign in which the bourgeoisie staged the electoral coup which brought Tony Blair and New Labour to power. In launching this slogan, it put forward the analysis that at present in Britain today everything is geared to paying the rich and nothing else takes precedence. The slogan encapsulated the programme the Party had been advancing for the economy. This calls for a moratorium on the national debt repayment, more to be put into the economy than is taken out, a reversal in the cuts in public spending – more to be invested in education, health care and other social programmes – an end to militarisation of the economy, and the people themselves to decide the direction of the economy. However, the programme *Stop Paying the Rich – Increase Investments in Social Programmes!* is the focus for all the demands of the working class. It is the fighting programme with which RCPB(ML) has furnished the working class which it must take up, elaborate and fight for as its own.

The elements of this programme are problems in society which demand solutions. It is the working class which holds the answers to these problems, and the crucial way the working class solves these problems is that people demand and stand up, they demand what is due to them. They demand, because they have rights, for these rights to be recognised.

The youth are standing up. They are taking their place at the forefront of all the sections of the people demanding their rights. Women are also making their stand. What is crucial is that the workers should equally stand up and demand what is due to them, and they

should recognise that the first and foremost thing to inscribe on their banner is that everyone has rights by virtue of being human, that everyone has their claims on society. This is what is inherent in the programme. It is not just a list of key issues. The point of elaborating these issues is that it gives the masses of people confidence in the outcome of their forward march.

The values promoted by the British government, the mixing up of the notions of nationality and citizenship, its programme to “Make Britain Great Again” and its so-called “ethical foreign policy” – all these point to a government whose conception of society is an anachronism at the end of the twentieth century.

Diametrically opposed to these conceptions is that of the defence of the rights of all, a recognition of the equality of all members of the polity in a modern society which protects those who are the most vulnerable, where state-organised attacks and every other attack on rights are opposed and eliminated on the basis that defence of the rights of minorities is defence of the rights of all, and which provides for the flourishing of the languages and cultures of national minorities.

In this connection, it is important to point out that the bourgeoisie is marginalising the national minorities, is keeping them at the margins of the polity and working to ensure that they should not take their rightful place as citizens participating in political affairs on an equal footing. In implementing and developing the programme of the working class, forms must also be developed to bring about a converging point in the struggles of all sections in defence of the rights of all.

The youth are the future. Youth must always be at the forefront of the progressive and revolutionary movement if it is to be successful. The bourgeoisie has attempted to suppress the youth’s natural instincts to question, and marginalises, depoliticises and criminalises them. All the educational, cultural and other facilities for the youth are being destroyed. The youth are subjected to all sorts of pressures and problems, yet it is the youth who are being made the target of attacks as being the main cause of social disorder. They are always being accused in schools, in the communities, on the streets, wherever, of having an “attitude problem”. However, the youth are, as always, fresh and open to new ideas. The question that presents itself is how to channel the energy of the youth that is being suppressed, to combine action with analysis, and bring the youth to the forefront of the struggle for a new society.

The youth are the heirs to the experience of the revolutionary forces not only here in Britain but internationally. On the road to building a new and socialist Britain, the youth place themselves shoulder to shoulder with all the people of the whole world who are part of the world-wide movement for social and national liberation, of the communist and workers’ movement internationally. It is a central question that the problems the youth face as a collective are not going to disappear without opening the door for the progress of society. All the problems facing the youth, whether it is university fees and loans, whether it is bad working conditions, whether it is racist attacks, whether it is poverty or whether it is drugs and the so-called “youth culture” – are inseparable from the state of the society itself. These problems have their objective basis in the society as it exists today. This analysis shows that the problems facing the youth exist because these problems are inherent to the society, and that therefore the issue facing the youth is to build a bright future for themselves and end their marginalisation from the affairs of society by taking up the

programme to open the door for the progress of society, and create a society that defends the rights of all.

The extent to which women are free and equal in society is the extent by which the progressive nature of that society can be measured. Without women taking their place at the forefront of the struggle for emancipation of humanity, no lasting solution can be found to the progress of society as a whole. Without the emancipation of women, the working class cannot emancipate itself, and without the emancipation of the working class, women cannot be emancipated.

In fact, women are taking their place at the forefront of all the struggles being waged in society. If they were not doing so, it could be said that they were accepting their marginalisation from political life, were accepting their ghettoisation as a collective. If they were not doing so, it could be said that they were accepting the relegation of their problems to “women’s issues” – for example, the upbringing of children, which it is supposed to be the woman’s responsibility to look after and fend for themselves, as though children were not born to society and they somehow existed as the property of women – as though these were their only concern and which was up to them alone to solve. In fact, the arrangements in society actually block women from providing for their children, and the government is relinquishing the conception that society should fulfil its responsibility to provide all that is necessary, not only for bringing children into the world, but so that they grow up to thrive and develop in mind and body.

Through the practice of elite accommodation, a select few women are accommodated to positions of power and influence, to the ranks of the elite. This is a policy to deliver the vote of women for the political parties. New Labour has been gleeful that a hundred and eighteen women have been elected as Labour members of parliament. A number are given the role of mouthpiece for the government and as such are involved in the marginalisation not just of women but of all sections of society. As a whole, the election of that number of women does nothing but foster the illusion that women in general have made advances, while the reality is that under the present society, women continue to suffer humiliation and degradation. Their objective claims on society are denied, and their second-class status is not addressed.

The government ensures that the rich are able to squeeze every last drop of profit from the labour of the people, and in this respect women are utilised as a source of cheap labour. Not only does competition in the global market demand that the rich do not have to pay for the nurturing and education of the children who are the next workforce, but the care and education itself is made into a source of profit for them. The so-called “single mothers” are targeted as being the source of the problem, as was done by Tony Blair in one of the first speeches he made when the Labour Party came to power. The reality is that the polarisation of society between rich and poor is increasing, while it is women who make up the majority of the workforce, earning on average only two-thirds the income of men. The majority of children are being brought up in households run by women in part-time employment.

This situation raises that society must be changed so that women exist in conditions which allow them to affirm themselves, where society recognises the claims of women as a collective, as well as the rights of women and men as human beings. This is a question for everyone in society to take up, and equally women in affirming their rights must take and are taking a stand for the emancipation of the whole of humanity.

Since the start of the 17th century the issue of sovereignty, that is the issue of where political power lies in society, has been one of the most contested notions in political theory and practice. The system of government as we know it today, that is the system of representative democracy, has evolved from this struggle over where sovereignty lies.

The political institutions and processes in Britain are based on political and constitutional theory and practice which dates back over several centuries, back even to the time of Magna Carta (1297) and before. The political system is archaic and this is highlighted by the fact that the constitution has never been written. The archaic nature of the British parliament and the need to change it is one of the crucial questions facing the people at this time. But the problem is not just that the political institutions and processes are out of date but that their character is fundamentally at odds with the modern definition of democracy, which is to say a political system where the people themselves hold political power rather than the political parties whose role it is to keep political power from the people. In a modern democracy the people are empowered to govern themselves. The ultimate goal of modernising political institutions and the democratic renewal of the political process is the empowerment of the people and the placing of sovereignty in their hands. It is in this context that the demand for a modern constitution becomes part of the programme for the working class. The aim of the working class is to undermine and expose bourgeois democracy, so that it can take the lead in rallying all sections of society around it on this issue. The demand for democratic renewal and a modern constitution is not an aim in itself but is made with the aim of facilitating the path whereby the working class takes political power, and utilises it to empower the people.

As society goes deeper into crisis and as the anti-social offensive is stepped up, the struggle of the people against unemployment, redundancies, increasingly exploitative work practices, against the cuts in the health service and in social provision, and against the government attacks on the youth and students, on single mothers, on women in general, on asylum seekers, national minorities, etc. – all this points to the conclusion that for the people to be able to solve these problems and guarantee their rights for the future they must be in a position to take decisions for themselves. They must become the politicians, they must have sovereign power vested in them. The demand embodied in all the struggles of the people at this time is for the democratic renewal of society from top to bottom. The electorate is constantly told that it lives in a democracy, and that government reflects the will of the people through the system of universal franchise and the mandate given to the government. The question must be asked, how is it that even the most basic rights of the people to shelter, food and a livelihood are not being and will not be met by the present system of government, no matter how democratic it claims to be? It is in this context that the demand for a modern constitution is raised, based on the modern definition of democracy. Such a constitution must embody fundamental law and principles that have their source in the struggles of the people and enshrine their sovereignty. The demand for democratic renewal and a modern constitution is in reality a reflection of the historically determined class struggle going on in society as to who should wield political power, and the development of political and constitutional theory expressing this reality.

A class struggle is already under way in society to determine the nature of the constitutional reforms required. The issue is, will constitutional reform be used to bolster the status quo or will it serve the aim of the electorate to empower themselves and gain control of their lives? The last Conservative government staunchly defended the status quo.

They openly championed the interests of big business and denied any claims of the people on society by trumpeting the lie that “society does not exist” and “people have to look after themselves”. On the constitutional front they were in crisis over the growing national movement in Scotland and Wales, which posed a serious threat to the whole system. Fortunately for the bourgeoisie, the people focused their hatred for the political system on the Conservative government and it was able to stage an electoral coup and bring New Labour to power with the promise of change for the better. Faced with an archaic political system, whose undemocratic and absolutist nature was becoming clearer by the day, New Labour promised to “clean up and modernise British politics”. To this end they offered their programme of constitutional reform which constitutes decentralisation of power, opening up of government, reforming parliament and increasing individual rights.

Taking the issue of the national question in Scotland and Wales, it is only the policy carried through by Labour of establishing a Scottish Parliament and a Welsh Assembly, while retaining all sovereignty in Westminster, that was capable of heading off the demands for national self-determination and alleviating the threat to the whole system of the bourgeoisie, even if only for the time being. This imposition of another layer of Westminster government, albeit with a Scottish or Welsh name, is an example of one of the many arrangements that the bourgeoisie makes to maintain the status quo and stop the demands of the people from becoming a reality. Likewise, the proposed reform of the House of Lords and the election of a Mayor and an Assembly for London show Labour attempting to head off the growing demand for empowerment with reforms that the Tories could never have made, but which leave the essential 19th century character of the political institutions intact and preserve the rule of the financial oligarchy which both Labour and Tory serve.

None of these reforms addresses the fundamental question of where political power comes from. The resolution of this question of where political power lies in society is the one thing that will decide whether society goes forward on the path of progress or whether it goes backwards to medievalism. The class struggle at the present time is represented on the one hand by those who want to destroy all the gains made through the struggle of the working class this century, who want to deny the obligation of society to its members and take it back to medieval times when peasants were turned off the land and left to wander the countryside and die for want of food and shelter. On the other hand there are those who are struggling for society to recognise the demands of its members on it and to provide for all human needs, regardless of a person’s race, religion, gender or lifestyle. Whoever holds political power determines which path society will take.

A fundamental struggle for power took place in 17th century Britain but Britain’s “unwritten constitution” does not spell out where this power derives from. Political power evolved from the time of the beheading of Charles I and the English civil war. The execution of Charles I did not fully resolve the question of political power. There were aspirations at this time that the people should be sovereign and wield political power. And these aspirations were expressed through the struggle of the Levellers, who demanded that the country should be “governed by neither parliament nor the army but by the people themselves”. The Levellers did not have the strength of organisation nor the backing of the army to be able to take advantage of the vacuum left in sovereign power after the execution of Charles I. They were voted down in the parliament and their campaign was forcibly suppressed by Cromwell’s New Model Army. The champions of the “natural aristocracy”

during this period were representatives of the rising merchant class, men of property, champions of “good government” and civil rights, which were the rights of private property. They had no aspirations or interests to recognise the rights of the ordinary people. After the monarchy was restored, the battle for supreme political power became acute. This struggle gave rise to the development of the constitutional monarchy. The ascendant classes wanted to limit the power of the sovereign but at the same time they wanted sovereign power to remain indivisible. This contradiction could only be resolved in constitutional terms with the idea of the “King in Parliament” whereby supreme decision-making power no longer resided in the person of the king himself but actually resided in the parliament. The constitutional monarchy was further limited by the “Bill of Rights” of 1689 when certain of the King’s prerogative powers were limited and William and Mary in accepting the throne had to agree to govern according to the statutes in Parliament. Today it is still the monarch in Parliament that is sovereign and this together with the royal prerogative gives the Cabinet absolute power. The form that this absolute power can take is that the Prime Minister can single-handedly on his own, without any reference to the will of the people whatsoever, take a decision like he did recently to bomb the people of Iraq.

This system through the way it has evolved is appropriate only for defending the rights of men of property. It is not appropriate for a modern society where every man and woman has the right to vote, and where every member of the polity is supposed to have the right to elect and be elected.

In this situation of absolute parliamentary power and in the absence of a constitution, there is no yardstick against which government legislation can be judged. This means that Blair and New Labour or whichever party is in power can put forward whatever policy or law they choose without challenge. There is no fundamental law of the land, there is no authority which can rule against anti-people, anti-social laws passed by government. Laws like, for example, the Crime and Disorder Act are a flagrant breach of human rights but there is no authority in the land that can rule on this and order the law to be repealed. There is no fundamental law which enshrines the rights of people. A modern constitution must enshrine the rights of the people so as to guarantee those rights for all time.

The struggle for a modern constitution is part of the class struggle against government attempts to further deprive the people of political power through their programme of constitutional reform, and in this sense forms part of the overall struggle for a pro-social programme of the working class to give the people control over their lives.

One of the key problems facing both the Party and the class is the question of breaking with Eurocentrism, with the outlook of English chauvinism under the guise of “Britishness”, of “Making Britain Great Again”, with everything that is reactionary and old and which attempts to bind the Party and the class with outdated ideas. This question has to be seen in particular in the context of the government’s foreign policies, those of making Britain number one in the global market. The whole aim of defending the interest of the monopolies was done under the guise of an ethical foreign policy which is the modern equivalent of the 19th century slogans of civilising missions, of the “white man’s burden”. Just as these were the justifications for colonialist plunder and imperialism in the last century, so they are the justification for the reactionary foreign policies of the British government today. It is with such justifications, the idea of promoting so-called civilised values abroad and ethical foreign policies, that the bourgeoisie tries to blind the working class to its own aims, tries to line up the working class behind these aims which are leading

the country down the road to war. The consequences of this foreign policy can be seen in Kosova, in Sierra Leone, in other parts of Africa, with the bombing of Iraq and so on.

The whole way in which this is presented is not that Britain is going to bomb the people of Iraq but that this is a country which does not follow civilised norms, and that Britain is going to civilise it. The same is true in the Balkans.

The basis on which this is done is the whole range of Eurocentric values which were expressed in the Paris Charter of 1990, when the bourgeoisie of Europe with North America advanced its values which it has attempted to impose on the world – the idea of the free-market economy, multi-party system, and what it calls “human rights”, based on its own outmoded notion of democracy. The point about this document and these values is not only that they form the basis for the foreign policies of Britain and other countries, not only that the bourgeoisie of Europe and other parts of the world are trying to impose these values on the rest of world, but also that they are trying to impose them within Britain itself. Here the central issue is that they advance the notion of only one form of democracy, Anglo-American bourgeois democracy based on the defence of private property, and to this there is no alternative, this is the last and only form of society. With the promotion of these values, they have a clear intent which has a clear anti-communist orientation. For the bourgeoisie, the future of socialism as an alternative to their system as far as they are concerned is dead, there is no alternative. The promotion of these values can be seen not just in terms of foreign policy but also within Britain itself. It is a very important question for the Party and the class to take up, that this whole weight of the past, of colonialist prejudices and of Eurocentrism is something which has to be thoroughly understood and combated.

In the same context of these values are the related notions of Anglo-American exceptionalism, the idea that is advanced that Britain is the most democratic country in the world, that the people in Britain do not really need to worry, that they have ways of resolving questions through parliament, through various peaceful means, through the wonderful democratic institutions we have in this country. It is this notion which has given rise to, in the past, the “British road to socialism”, various ideas about the Labour Party, that it is other than what it is because it is something peculiarly British. The impact is that they have an influence on the class in that they are designed to keep the working class and people entirely marginalised. They promote the view that there is no alternative, they promote that the monopolies and their representatives have to decide everything and the working class and people should remain disempowered, should just vote because essentially everything is okay in the country, in the world.

As regards international relations, Britain acts and behaves as one of the big powers. Its participation in the international political, economic, financial and military blocs is all done from this perspective, that it has the “right” to call the shots, to impose its thinking, to intervene wherever it chooses under the line of “moral imperative”. It is contributing to the contention and disequilibrium internationally. It is an open champion of “globalisation”. The values promoted by Tony Blair and the Labour Party are that “Britain” and the “British” are inherently superior and need no further justification or excuse to assert that what they say goes and impose these same values on everyone. As a part of breaking with this chauvinist big power outlook, the working class demands that Britain withdraw from all international blocs. As regards the United Nations, it is totally out of step with the times that Britain or any of the big powers should retain the power of veto. The United Nations,

especially its Security Council, must be democratised based on the principle that all nations, big or small, must have an equal say.

Finally, it must be stressed that the orientation of the independent programme of the working class is one of uniting the working class and people politically. This is crucial when it comes to opposing the anti-social offensive of the bourgeoisie. The people find a converging point in the fighting programme of the working class and its respective demands. What is a characteristic of this converging point is that a society is needed which recognises the rights of all. The subjective conditions for revolution, the work to prepare to establish a socialist Britain, are created within this very movement to *Stop Paying the Rich – Increase Investments in Social Programmes!*