



BRITAIN'S ROAD TO SOCIALISM

Programme of
the Communist Party

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Updated edition

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Britain's road to socialism Updated edition

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Summary

- Capitalism is a system of exploitation that generates crisis, inequality, corruption, environmental degradation and war. It is innately incapable of solving the most fundamental problems of humanity.
- The capitalist monopoly corporations and the state apparatus which serves their interests are the main obstacles to progress on every front: economic, environmental, political, social and cultural and political.
- Socialism is the only form of society that offers the potential for solving humanity's problems in conditions of personal and collective freedom.
- Because the working class has the most direct and immediate interest in putting an end to capitalism and replacing it with a socialist society, its own class interest also represents the interests of society generally.
- In Britain, the potential exists to pursue an alternative economic and political strategy that challenges and ultimately defeats the ruling class.
- More specifically, a popular democratic anti-monopoly alliance can be built, led by the labour movement, to fight for a left-wing programme (LWP) of policies that would make inroads into the wealth and power of the monopoly capitalists.
- Any such strategy and programme must include far-reaching policies and action to reduce carbon emissions, which contribute to global warming and cause climate change with disastrous consequences for humanity.
- Through an upsurge in working class and popular action, a left government can be elected in Britain based on parliamentary majorities of Labour, socialist, communist and progressive representatives, and strengthened by the election of left majorities in Scotland and Wales.
- To carry out the most advanced policies of a left-wing programme, the mass movement and its left governments will have to engage in a decisive struggle for state power (the means by which one class enforces its rule over other classes and in society as a whole).
- A united challenge to British state-monopoly capitalism will require a high level of working class and progressive coordination and unity, maximising the democratic potential of national rights in Scotland and Wales and minimising the scope for division.
- Achieving state power and minimising the opportunities for counter-revolution will create the conditions in which to dismantle capitalism progressively and lay the foundations for a democratic, environmentally sustainable and peaceful future in a federal, socialist Britain.
- A socialist society can then be built in which wealth and power are held in common and used in a planned way for the benefit of all, with the working class and its allies liberating the people from all forms of exploitation and oppression.
- Putting an end to British imperialism – the exercise of monopoly capitalist exploitation and power in other parts of the world – is the biggest contribution we can make to international liberation and socialism.
- A Communist Party that exercises mass influence will be essential if Britain is to take the road to socialism in practice, through political class struggle.

Britain's road to socialism

Introduction

In this programme, the Communist Party of Britain (CPB) explains its view that capitalism must be overthrown in the interests of the working class and humanity.

It identifies the forces and the strategy by which the power of the capitalist monopoly corporations and their state can be replaced by state power in the hands of the working class and its allies.

The programme argues that socialism is the only alternative system of society that can meet the essential needs of humanity, providing the basis for ending all forms of exploitation and oppression. Once the threat of counter-revolution has been irrevocably defeated, nationally and internationally, the transition from the lower stage of communism to its higher stage can then be completed.

This programme is based on the study, analysis and assessment of concrete realities, tendencies and trends. It is a guide to action, not a speculative prediction or a dogmatic blueprint. It is a living, developing programme to be constantly tested in practice and reassessed in the light of experience.

Above all, it is subject to the Marxist insistence that the liberation of the working class and the emancipation of the people can only be achieved by the working class and the people themselves. Freedom cannot be imposed from outside or above – it must be fought for and won by the overwhelming majority of the population.

I Capitalism and exploitation

IN THE FIRST half of the 21st century, after more than 200 years of capitalist domination, humanity faces a series of inter-related crises that imperil the very existence of our species on this planet.

Two billion of the Earth's almost eight billion population lack adequate nutrition, sanitation, healthcare and education. The world faces a catastrophic energy crisis, as finite resources are run down without the development of safe, sustainable alternatives. At the same time, burning fossil fuels is warming the planet and changing climate patterns with potentially disastrous consequences for us all. Wars continue to devastate human lives on a massive scale, while the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction threatens even greater horrors to come.

Communists hold capitalism responsible for these crises, for taking the planet and its peoples towards the edge of the abyss.

The development of capitalism and imperialism

The term 'capitalism' denotes a type of society in which a very few people own the means of production (industrial and commercial plant and machinery, land, energy, raw materials, etc.) as 'capital', while the great majority have to sell their ability to work – their labour power – to survive. Capitalists own most of these means of production (others may be owned by the state or workers' cooperatives). They pay workers a wage in return for their labour power. But unlike the means of production used up in the production process – the costs of which are passed on to the consumer at little or no profit – workers can create more value than that of the wage they need to buy life's essentials. The capitalist reaps this 'surplus value' when the products which embody this labour are sold as commodities. Surplus value is, ultimately, the source of capitalist profit which funds share dividends, loan interest, commercial rent, corporate taxes, expanded investment and the inflated incomes of company executives. Extracting surplus value is, then, the essence of capitalist exploitation. In order to maximise it, the capitalists seek to drive wages down towards the basic subsistence level.

As a type of society, capitalism is relatively recent. Its emergence from feudalism was only made possible in Britain by driving much of the rural population from the land through forcible clearances and enclosures of the commons. They could then constitute a new labour force in the workshops, mills, mines and factories which then attracted more workers from the countryside with the promise of regular work and higher wages. Women abandoned paid homeworking to constitute a significant section of the new industrial workforce alongside young men and boys. The super-exploitation of child and female labour helped accumulate the capital to finance the expansion of overseas settlement and trade. The super-exploitation of slave labour in the

colonies provided raw materials, super-profits and fresh capital to accelerate Britain's industrialisation in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Crucial to these developments was the continuation of women's unpaid labour in the home – cleaning, cooking, caring and rearing the next generation of workers – to help create and replenish labour power's capacity to produce surplus value. The oppression of women maintains this domestic role and became even more important for monopoly capital when workers organised to fight for higher wages.

Capitalist exploitation has always depended on maintaining a labour market in which workers compete for work, on preventing collective organisation by dividing working people against each other through prejudice and discrimination based for example on sex and gender, nationality, race and ethnicity, age, religion, and occupational grade.

Capitalism's drive to maximise profit revolutionised industry, commerce, science, technology, culture, politics and society in general. In the most advanced capitalist countries, a small number of large combines, trusts and syndicates grew to monopolise each major branch of the economy. The drive to above-average monopoly profit stimulated the fusion of industrial capital and banking capital to produce a new financial oligarchy. As monopolisation and the over-accumulation of capital began to depress profitability, the finance capitalists increasingly turned to potential sources of super-profits abroad. Thus, capitalism expanded into its imperialist stage in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As competition intensified between rival monopolies backed by their respective states, so the scene was set for the inter-imperialist 'Great War' of 1914-18.

The chief characteristics of imperialism, therefore, are monopolisation, colonial or – in countries that have won formal political independence – neo-colonial super-exploitation, inter-imperialist rivalry and war.

In the Russian empire, the corruption and incompetence of a landlord-police state helped forge an alliance between the peasants' struggle against landlordism and the workers' struggle against capitalism. Mass protest overthrew Tsarist rule in the February Revolution of 1917, before Lenin and the Bolsheviks went on to lead the revolt against pro-war politicians, bureaucrats and military generals in the Great October Socialist Revolution later that year. This destroyed the Russian imperialist state and enabled the country's workers and peasants to create a new system of state power which opened the road to socialism.

In the leading capitalist countries, the demands of 'total war' in 1914-18 greatly enhanced and expanded their productive forces (the means of production, labour and technology) and the economic relations between society's classes. The state intervened to take command of the war economy, promoting monopoly and methods of mass production which sharply raised the productivity of labour. The war thus accelerated the fusion between the economic power of the monopolies and the political power of the state (the

government and civil service, parliament, the police and intelligence services, the armed forces, the courts and prison system, local government, etc.).

The result was the system known as 'state-monopoly capitalism'. The capitalist state became progressively subordinated to the interests of one section of the capitalist class – monopoly-based finance capital – while the system's growing contradictions led to increasing state intervention. At the same time, the war had created a mobilised working class across Europe which blocked attempts to cut wages to pre-war levels. The decade after the First World War saw further monopolisation across the advanced capitalist countries and a speculative boom in capital values. The Wall Street financial crash in 1929 triggered capitalism's biggest slump so far. Only massive state intervention in the economy, including preparations for war, began to rebuild industry and improve social conditions in Britain, the US and elsewhere.

In Germany, as previously in Italy and Portugal, the ruling class turned to fascism – open terroristic dictatorship in the service of monopoly capital – to destroy the communist challenge and divide the working-class movement. This was also done to prepare for a new imperialist war to re-divide the world in favour of German monopoly capital. Initially, Nazi Germany was able to use the anti-Sovietism of the ruling classes of other imperialist countries to strengthen its own economic and military position.

In Britain, France, Spain, the US, China and elsewhere, communists led the fight during the 1930s to build a working-class united front as the basis for a wider people's front against fascism.

The Soviet government and the international communist and working-class movement were able to use the divisions within imperialism – chiefly between bourgeois democracy and fascism – to prevent a united front of the main imperialist powers against the Soviet Union. This made possible the defeat of fascism in a war to liberate the peoples of Europe.

The Second World War (1939-45) also marked the emergence of the US as the world's leading imperialist power. It had already established its own colonies and semi-colonies in Asia and Central and South America.

The ability of the enlarged socialist bloc to ensure full employment and basic social provisions strengthened people's determination in the capitalist world not to return to pre-war conditions. State-monopoly capitalism had to establish or extend welfare and education systems. In Britain, essential industries and services were nationalised to ensure investment, economic growth and full employment. The drive began in western Europe to build an economic, political and military bloc through the European Coal and Steel Community, the European Political Community, the European Defence Community and the European Atomic Energy Agency that would obstruct socialism at home and confront the Soviet Union and the emerging socialist states in central and eastern Europe. The basis was laid for the rapid reconstruction and development of state-monopoly capitalism in West Germany and Japan.

Thus, imperialism entered its second phase in the late 1940s, characterised

nationally and internationally by the stabilisation and restructuring of capitalism. Capitalist state power was used to regulate economic demand, promote profitability and coordinate international trading and currency relations.

Arising from the necessities of war and then post-war reconstruction, and stimulated by the Cold War, capitalism's productive forces grew at an unprecedented rate in the 1950s and 1960s. This was due in no small part to the scientific and technological revolution (STR) with its large-scale application of computer and microelectronic technology. The research, education and long-term investment needed to underpin the STR could only be organised to the necessary extent through the state. The transnational corporations (TNCs) became the decisive monopolies of imperialism. In the pursuit of maximum profit, their decisions – which sectors and markets to expand or contract and which productive forces to develop or scrap – decided the fate not only of workforces but of whole communities, regions and nations.

Inter-imperialist rivalry was moderated by the common drive to wage the Cold War against the Soviet Union and its allies – hence the founding of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in 1949 – and 'hot war' in Korea and Vietnam.

National liberation movements inspired by the October Socialist Revolution and the victory over fascism led most colonies to formal independence during the post-war era. But the main imperialist powers retained a large measure of economic control through the operations of their TNCs and through such international bodies as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Wherever possible, pro-imperialist regimes were installed in the semi- and ex-colonies and brutal force was used to crush progressive, left-wing and anti-imperialist movements. The US even threatened nuclear war against Cuba's sovereignty and independence.

Imperialist intervention and the operations of TNCs aggravated the uneven economic and political development of capitalism on a global scale. While capitalism grew rapidly in the newly industrialised countries of the Far East, large parts of Africa and South America fell further behind in economic and social development. Western imperialism ruthlessly plundered their natural resources, exploited their labour and plunged them into debt bondage.

In the leading capitalist economies, the prolonged period of post-war expansion – made possible by state intervention, the STR, the rebuilding of Germany and Japan and rising productivity – was based on a ruling class strategy of promoting class collaboration. Workers would enjoy job security, social benefits, employment rights and ever-higher living standards, while their trade union and political representatives would seek only to reform capitalism, not to challenge or abolish it. But cyclical and structural crises reasserted themselves more markedly from the late 1960s. In 1973, the international oil crisis (triggered by Middle East states looking to strengthen their economic, political and military position at the expense of Western imperialism and Israel)

exacerbated one such cyclical downturn. At the same time, it signalled the onset of today's gathering energy crisis.

Finance capital faced rising prices, working-class pressure to maintain living standards, military and political reverses in the Third World (the under-developed and developing countries) and the continuing political and technological challenge from the socialist countries. Moreover, the international monetary system disintegrated in the 1970s, as the main imperialist powers sought competitive advantage through currency devaluation. Speculators contributed to the instability.

In these conditions, the ideologists, economists and politicians of the 'New Right' gained ascendancy in US and British ruling class circles. Their aim was to restore and increase monopoly capital's profits through a wide-ranging onslaught against wages, trade unionism, public and welfare services, progressive taxation, public ownership of industry and the utilities, and against banking and financial regulation. Thus, imperialism began the transition to a third phase of development from the early 1980s.

Imperialist aggression, counter-revolution and the dismantling of socialism in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union from the late 1980s opened up enormous opportunities for monopoly capital to seize control of resources, transportation routes, utilities and markets in the former socialist countries and the Third World.

The result has been a prolonged and continuing worldwide imperialist offensive to maximise monopoly profit through 'neoliberal' policies of privatisation, deregulation, intensified exploitation of labour and the free movement of Western monopoly capital. This imperialist 'globalisation' is presented by its supporters and apologists as an inevitable economic process. However, from the outset, it has been driven politically by the representatives of state-monopoly capitalism.

New and existing international agencies and mechanisms such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), GATT, the IMF, the World Bank and bilateral so-called free trade and investment agreements are utilised to enforce neoliberal policies. The European Union (EU) has played a leading role in this process, confirming its character as an alliance led by the most powerful state-monopoly capitalist powers. It strives to overcome internal contradictions and transform itself into an imperialist 'United States of Europe', complete with its own foreign and military policies aligned with NATO.

The champions of capitalist 'globalisation' confront workers with two options: either yield to its logic of lower wages, intensified labour and permanent job insecurity – and hope to stay in work – or defy it, with allegedly dire consequences personally and for the nation's economy.

Third World and former socialist countries whose regimes may obstruct imperialist power are demonised as 'rogue' or 'failed' states, often on the basis of racist presumptions. They are accused of frustrating the will of the 'international community' (which usually means the US and its allies).

Consequently, bombing missions or full-scale military invasions have been launched against Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Syria and Somalia.

The September 2001 attacks by Al-Qaeda on the US were used as the pretext to launch a bogus 'war on terror'. US, British and NATO forces extended and deepened imperialism's military, political and economic influence across the 'Greater Middle East' region, from North Africa to Pakistan, inflicting their state terrorism on the peoples of Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria on a monstrous scale. Some of the world's biggest reserves of oil, gas and minerals, along with vital supply routes, are located in this area which is strategically located between China, India, Russia and the African continent.

Far from the end of the Soviet Union and Cold War producing a more peaceful world, the imperialist powers led by the US and Britain have since engaged in a massive escalation of armaments programmes, a non-stop series of military interventions and NATO's expansion eastwards – in tandem with the EU – towards the borders of Russia. China is almost completely surrounded by imperialist military bases. Its handful of military facilities in other countries contrasts sharply with the many hundreds of US bases around the world.

A system of contradictions and crises

The whole history and experience of capitalism proves that it is a system of crises and contradictions. The most fundamental, insoluble contradiction of capitalism is that between the social character of production – how society's goods and services are produced and distributed in a vast network across society – and the private character of economic ownership and control.

The economy's productive forces are organised together in a complex, inter-dependent system on which society is based. Yet under capitalism, these forces are mostly owned or controlled by a small minority of the population – the main capitalist shareholders – who direct them to serve their own narrow individual and class interests, not the needs of society generally.

In their drive to maximise market share and profit, capitalist employers fight to raise productivity and hold down wages. The same effort also takes place in the public sector, where the state seeks to hold down wages, pensions and other costs in order to minimise taxation and wages pressure in the private sector.

Here is the primary economic basis for the class struggle: between the monopoly capitalists and their state striving to maximise profit on the one side, and the whole working class striving to maximise wages and improve living standards on the other.

Yet working class purchasing power needs to be maintained if capitalism's commodities are all to be sold at a profit. This becomes increasingly difficult when economic growth turns into boom, as capitalists fight to expand sales, production and profits.

Increasing wages might ease the situation, but this eats into profits and only spurs the capitalists to boost production still further. Expanding private credit or public expenditure might maintain demand in the economy for a limited time, but it has to be paid for as production continues to grow.

So, the point arrives when the working class cannot afford to buy all of capitalism's commodities at prices which sustain profitability. Capitalist growth invariably ends in a crisis of 'over-production'. Commodities can no longer be sold at a profit and companies begin to cut back on production and investment, causing a slowdown or recession. Workers are laid off, further depressing demand in the economy. Production falls – sometimes in a sudden crash – and stagnates or declines further in depression.

Society's productive forces are destroyed as premises are closed, plant and machinery scrapped and large numbers of workers are forced into unemployment.

In the wake of such crises, the trend to monopoly is reinforced as stronger companies take over weaker ones and increase their own market share. This lays the basis for the cycle to begin again. It does so because of another contradiction intrinsic to capitalism, between the drive for technological advance and the source of capitalist profit.

As companies innovate and mechanise to compete more effectively against each other, so the source of fresh surplus value in the economy as a whole – living labour power – occupies a smaller share of the production process. This depresses the general rate of profit. In order to counteract this tendency, capitalism searches perpetually for cheaper labour and materials, higher levels of productivity, new profit-making activities and fresh markets for its products.

This search and its underlying contradiction will only intensify as robotics, automation and 'artificial intelligence' (AI) systems develop. Instead of applying them in a planned way to enhance workers' control over the labour process and to increase their affordable leisure time, capitalism will try to impose this new technology in conditions of subjection, dislocation and crisis.

These pressures reinforce the tendency of the most ruthless big capitalists to subject oppressed sections of society – women, black workers and immigrant labour – to super-exploitation at work, using them to undermine workers' terms and conditions and trade union strength. In the face of monopoly power, small business owners feel compelled to reproduce these patterns of oppression and super-exploitation.

The general crisis of capitalism

The inherent contradictions of capitalism have intensified and broadened. Their consequences have become more serious during the imperialist era.

They embrace not only the economic but also the social, cultural and political spheres of capitalist society. For much of the 20th century, communists referred to the all-round 'general crisis of capitalism'. Its chief features were identified as:

- The sharpening of capitalism's contradictions, the growth of monopoly, the dislocation in the distribution of the capitalist surplus, conflicts within the capitalist class, economic stagnation and instability, increasing state intervention in the economy and deepening class conflict.
- The degeneration of capitalist politics, ideology, morality and culture with their demagoguery, careerism, corruption, egoism and callousness.
- The crisis and overthrow of imperialism's colonial system.
- The emerging challenge from the forces of socialism led by the Soviet Union and the international socialist system.

This concept of 'general crisis' underestimated the capacity of state-monopoly capitalism to overcome crises, to withstand the socialist challenge, maintain exploitation abroad through neo-colonialism, launch and sustain the STR and retain political, ideological and cultural dominance. It also overestimated, from the late 1950s, the achievements of the socialist countries and their potential for further rapid economic development.

Counter-revolution in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe temporarily reinvigorated capitalism ideologically, politically and, to a lesser extent, economically. This masked capitalism's general crisis for a short time, yet its essential features persisted. Indeed, they have returned to full view with a vengeance.

On the economic front, for instance, recent regional and global crises have assumed a substantially, and even predominantly, financial character. This reflects the increasingly parasitic nature of monopoly finance capital, which increasingly seeks to make money from non-productive and socially useless or harmful activities.

The deregulation and liberalisation of financial markets from the 1980s led to a huge boom in trading as finance capital engaged in an orgy of fictitious accumulation, speculating in financial instruments unrelated to the creation of useful goods and services. In a process known as 'financialisation', all kinds of contracts were turned into very complex, interest-bearing financial 'products' to be traded in the City of London and on Wall Street. This huge bubble in capital values based on unsustainable and often fraudulent financial securities, linked to debt and risk, burst in late 2007. The high levels of private, household and government debt that had maintained demand in the productive economy lost their profitability, making the postponed cyclical downturn all the more sudden and sharp. From 2008, mass unemployment returned to the record post-war levels of the early 1980s as living standards plummeted and public and social services were cut to the bone.

Across the developed capitalist world, governments and central banks then had to rescue the financial monopolies and their markets with the biggest bail-outs in history, using public money and public institutions to do so. In effect, they nationalised the debts and liabilities, forced the working class to pay for them through austerity policies and then restored the banks to the private sector once they had returned to profitability. Since then, the capitalist

monopolies have reaped most of the benefits of recovery and expansion, while workers increasingly face precarious employment, worsening conditions, wage and pension cuts, housing problems and loss of services.

Crisis in the imperialist countries drags down peoples in the Third World, too. In the 'Arab Spring' of 2011, there were widespread popular uprisings against oppressive and authoritarian regimes. People rose up against the extra poverty imposed on them by the post-2007 crisis in the developed capitalist countries. But their revolts were stifled or crushed. A history of repression at the hands of reactionary and dictatorial regimes across North Africa and the Middle East meant that local left and progressive forces could not sustain strategic organisation for very long after the uprisings. Pro-imperialist and sectarian forces gained control, determined to suppress the growing demand for democratic rights and social justice. Western 'diplomatic' and military intervention helped plunge a number of these countries into devastating civil conflict and ruinous wars.

Clearly, the world's major capitalist powers and their agencies such as the IMF and the EU are unable or unwilling to control the immense anarchic, parasitical, anti-social financial forces unleashed by capitalist globalisation. Ever since the post-war international trade and monetary system collapsed in the 1970s, all attempts to construct a new financial and economic settlement have failed. Policies to tighten state regulation of the financial markets and institutions have been feeble, with governments remaining in thrall to the power of the financial monopolies.

Thus, on a global scale, the insoluble contradictions of capitalist production (where corporate ownership holds back social development) have combined with – and been aggravated by – the contradictions of financialised capitalism (where non-productive sectors hold back socially useful production). Together, they constitute the permanent structural crisis in the economic base of capitalist society.

The combined economic and financial crisis that broke out in 2007 also confirmed the recent tendency to synchronisation between the main capitalist economies. Much of the time, they grow and contract together to a greater or lesser degree. Capitalist 'globalisation' has made it more difficult for one major economy to grow out of crisis at the expense of others through state intervention, devaluation or trade.

Monopoly finance capital uses state power to enforce its interests against imperialist rivals and against Third World peoples through super-exploitation, trade inequality, war and forced mass migration. This reality illustrates another fundamental contradiction of capitalism: that between imperialism's incessant drive for domination at home and abroad, and humanity's aspirations for peace, national self-determination and a civilised society. While imperialism has used the crisis as an opportunity for super-exploitation of the Third World, China has become a major engine of world growth, not least in the developing countries.

The disparities in economic and social development between nations and whole regions of the world have tended to increase over the past 30 years, interrupted only by the impact of the 2007-08 crash – which set back the most advanced economies – and China's need for raw materials which has boosted Third World production. This tendency is the product of capitalist economic anarchy – where no comprehensive economic planning takes place above the level of the individual enterprise or conglomerate – combined with the unequal distribution of monopoly and state power between the imperialist countries and the rest.

Capitalism's structural economic crisis has also produced a structural crisis of distribution on a world scale.

One billion of the Earth's almost eight billion people are undernourished, although enough food is produced to feed twelve billion. TNCs organise food production and distribution in order to maximise profits in the most lucrative markets, while Third World governments enslaved by debt collaborate in 'cash crop' farming, which leaves their own populations poor and hungry. Meanwhile, the Common Agricultural Policy supports high prices and profits in the EU by subsidising landowners, paying them to restrict production, destroying part of their produce while also dumping some of it on Third World markets to the ruin of their local producers.

Nearly half a billion people have no access to basic medical services and, every year, more than 13 million children die from preventable or curable illnesses. Three-quarters of a billion people lack safe drinking water and more than two billion have no access to improved sanitation. Medicines, water and other energy resources that could be harnessed for those in direst need are instead exploited, diverted or neglected by capitalist monopolies seeking maximum profit.

Three-quarters of a billion adults are illiterate (more than one-in-eight of the world's adult population), almost two-thirds of them women.

Another dimension of capitalism's general crisis has come to the fore in recent decades, one which threatens the very future of humanity. Capitalism's rapacious short-term drive to maximise monopoly profit now endangers our global environment and ecosystem. Enormous damage is being done by the large-scale extraction of non-fuel mineral resources and the disposal of plastic and other harmful and unnecessary packaging. Intensive agriculture is degrading soils which could be enriched by the return of metabolic waste, while fracking is creating dangerous geological instability.

The continuing growth in carbon emissions plays the main part in heating up the Earth, melting the polar ice-caps, raising sea levels, polluting the oceans, increasing desertification, producing more extreme weather systems and destabilising some of the most vulnerable societies on our planet. Yet big business and the major capitalist powers refuse to take the drastic steps necessary to curb emissions, for fear of curtailing monopoly profits. Instead, they use sanctions, military force and compliant local dictatorships to control oil

and gas supplies. Hence the disastrous record of US, British and European subversion and intervention in the Middle East and oil-rich countries such as Venezuela, Brazil, Libya and Nigeria.

As millions of people flee the famines and resource wars inflicted on their homelands by imperialist super-exploitation, military aggression and global warming, they constitute some of the biggest forced migrations in history.

The depletion of finite resources such as coal, oil and natural gas, without the planned development of renewable alternatives, confronts humanity with the prospect of catastrophic energy shortages within a generation.

Yet instead of investing massively in alternative, safe and renewable energy generation and distribution as some individual member states do, the EU collectively promotes carbon emission trading schemes. These enable the industrial and financial monopolies to trade licences to pollute for profit, while shifting dirtier production to the developing countries when not limiting their industrialisation altogether.

Meanwhile, capitalism's social crisis afflicts countries at every level of development. Almost everywhere, social inequality has widened over recent decades. The alienation of people from their local community and society – especially young people denied prospects and opportunities – has grown, together with associated problems of drug abuse, crime and anti-social behaviour.

In the sphere of politics, big business influence has nurtured naked careerism, hypocrisy and corruption. Large numbers of people in the advanced capitalist 'democracies' – especially among the working class – have turned away from bourgeois politics. This is reflected in declining levels of participation in political parties, together with higher levels of scepticism and hostility towards professional politicians.

Popular disillusionment and anger can also find expression in support for the political forces of the far right and fascism. These propose false and nationalistic, xenophobic or racist remedies for people's real or perceived problems. Nonetheless, people across the globe continue to mobilise in favour of progressive responses to austerity, privatisation, unemployment, racism, pollution, global warming, militarism and imperialist war.

Ideologically, while many people's confidence in any viable alternative to capitalism was shaken across the world by the destruction of the Soviet Union, anti-capitalist attitudes remain widespread and have increased in Britain, the US and Western Europe in the wake of the post-2007 crisis.

Capitalist ownership and control continually undermine the social, unifying and liberating potential of the arts and other cultural activities for working class people, both as producers and as consumers. Capitalism increasingly produces 'culture' as it does other commodities – for sale at a profit and for ideological reasons – regardless of social need or the social good. 'Popular culture' can thereby be turned into a commercial, conservative force that promotes ideas of selfishness, greed and individualism. Monopoly capitalist society is one in

which the price of everything is proclaimed, while the real value of things to society as a whole is denied or distorted.

There is little in capitalist mass-produced 'culture' that reflects the real experience, collectiveness and creativity of working-class life, past or present. This underlines the value of working-class people striving for cultural activities which are affordable, accessible and help bring out our common humanity.

New technology such as the internet and other social media has tremendous potential for education, social inclusion, organisation and mobilisation. But, again, capitalist or state ownership and control decide much of its structure, content, accessibility and application. Thus, it is used to intensify exploitation at work, manipulate consumer and political choices, enhance military capability and to divert, trivialise and create dependencies at the cost of people's physical and mental health.

Economically, socially, politically and culturally, capitalism has long ceased to play a progressive role in human development. Capitalism is dynamic in its drive to maximise profit, but this vital feature of capitalism threatens every aspect of humanity. Capitalism's general crisis is society's general crisis, as much in the nations of Britain as anywhere else.

STATE-MONOPOLY CAPITALISM serves the interests of the ruling class. It is essential to understand the core composition and strategy of this class in order to challenge its rule successfully.

Recent government policies in Britain show how ruling class interests are served and with what consequences for the economy, social justice, democracy, peace and the planet's ecosystem.

Whichever parties are in office, the ruling capitalist class is always in power. This is as true in the case of Labour governments as of any others. Over the course of the 20th century and into the 21st, the limits of social democracy have become clear, demonstrating again and again that socialism remains the only real, fundamental alternative to capitalism.

The ruling class and its strategy

Over the past century, the capitalist state in Britain has increasingly been subordinated to the needs of finance capital and not to those of other sections of the capitalist class – such small business owners – or of the economy as a whole. Indeed, the British state today subsidises or stimulates much economic activity through public sector contracts, including for armaments, and through bond issues in the financial markets, as well as promoting and protecting overseas investment opportunities on which British finance capital depends for a large proportion of its profits.

Although Britain has millions of small firms, the dominant position in each sector of industry and services is usually held by no more than five or six big firms. They control the technology, monopolise access to export markets and use their market power to subordinate the smaller firms which act as suppliers, subcontractors and distributors.

These monopolies, whether public limited companies or private equity ventures, are invariably controlled by financial institutions. Banks and insurance companies own the dominant blocks of shares and use their power to buy and sell in order to extract maximum short-term profit.

Those who own and control the big financial companies, and through them the major non-financial monopolies, comprise the core of Britain's ruling capitalist class. This relatively small group of finance capitalists organise the economy to maximise monopoly profits at home and imperialist super-profits around the world. They largely dictate the key domestic and foreign policies adopted and implemented by the British state apparatus, whose structures and top personnel interlock with those of the capitalist monopolies.

Thus, the Thatcher government's de-control of capital movements and financial markets enabled the City of London to become the world centre for deregulated speculation in currencies, stocks, shares and financial derivatives.

After four decades of predominantly 'neoliberal' economic policies, the British

economy is more dominated than ever by banking and financial services. The consequences for investment to maintain and modernise productive industry have been dire, with Britain's productivity rates trailing far behind those of other developed capitalist economies. Meanwhile, three million manufacturing jobs have been lost and many new jobs in the service sector are low-paid, temporary, part-time and insecure.

Increasingly, the City's power and influence is shared by US finance capital. Until the late 1980s, most of the dominant financial institutions in the City of London were British-owned. Now, the majority of the investment banks (including their private equity funds) are US-owned. A smaller number are German, French or Swiss alongside the remaining British investment banks. National ownership became clear during the banking crisis, when each state saved its own country's banks. Middle East and Far East state-run sovereign wealth funds also own a growing proportion of stocks and shares in Britain, as they do in the US.

Large sections of British industry have also passed into the hands of overseas TNCs, notably in energy, steel, cement, chemicals, ports, airports and the mass media. The private sector services undermining the National Health Service (NHS) and Royal Mail are mostly in foreign ownership. Most of Britain's high-technology production in computing, electronics, machine tools, cars and consumer durables is carried out by externally owned TNCs.

British-owned monopolies are now restricted to a more limited range of areas: finance, oil, gas, mining, retail, pharmaceuticals, telecommunications, food and tobacco and arms manufacture. These areas reflect the colonial and neo-colonial orientation of Britain's economy. In most cases, the bulk of their investment is outside Britain, earning super-profits on the back of cheap labour.

In fact, as of 2018, the British capitalist class continues to own more economic assets beyond its own borders than the capitalist class of any other country except the US. At the same time, the British economy relies heavily on capital from overseas for investment in industry at home.

A top priority of the British ruling class is to make sure that finance capital's profit-making capacity does not continue to suffer as an ongoing consequence of the post-2007 economic and financial crisis.

This means that the burden of narrowing Britain's public budget deficit must be made to fall mainly on public services, public sector workers, welfare claimants and the mass of working-class taxpayers, not on the wealthy and big business. In the name of 'austerity', successive governments have even sacked disabled workers and withdrawn or cut the benefits of people with chronic illnesses and conditions.

New profit-making possibilities in the public sector mean that health, education, social housing and even the prison system have been thrown open to private capital through privatisation and similar policies. Slashing workers' pension entitlements and a new round of attacks on trade union and employment rights prior to privatisation is an essential part of this process, optimising these sectors as sources of profit.

Narrowing the public sector financial deficit through huge social spending cuts is important if British imperialism is to support sterling and the City of London's position as one of the world's leading financial centres.

British and US finance capital intends to maintain its freedom to operate through the City with minimum regulation and taxation. This helps to combat the growing challenge from other financial centres in Europe, Asia and the Middle East. At the same time, British and US finance capital seeks to maintain the City's domination of the Eurobond market and its role as the springboard for deeper penetration across Europe. Hence the support of most big financial institutions for Britain's continuing alignment post-Brexit with the EU Single Market and its rules, including the free movement of capital.

Internationally, Britain's monopoly capitalism's strategic goals are to:

- Maintain high investment levels in western Europe and compete more effectively in eastern Europe against continental rivals.
- Raise already high investment and export levels in the US, thereby strengthening British monopoly capital's stake in US foreign policy.
- Extend its interests in the 'Greater Middle East' region with its enormous energy reserves and vital trade routes.
- Significantly increase investments in India, China and resource-rich regions of the former Soviet Union, balancing this with the requirements of US and NATO strategy.
- Defend and extend substantial economic and political positions in Africa, against rival imperialisms and the rising influence of Chinese state-owned and private capital.
- Protect investments in Latin America from the threat of regulation and nationalisation at the hands of progressive and anti-imperialist governments.

The British ruling class therefore wishes to see British influence maintained and extended as far as possible in alignment with the EU and as a junior partner of US imperialism, acting where it can to reduce the potential for conflict between the two rival powers.

A top priority for British imperialism is to deepen its alliance with the US. This means pursuing a foreign policy which supports the extension of US and NATO military power across the 'Greater Middle East' with its vital resources and transportation routes and into the regions surrounding Russia, India and especially China. The aim is to contain and exert pressure on emerging economic, political and military powers. For the British ruling class, retaining nuclear weapons and a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council is seen as essential to the pursuit of its strategic objectives.

However, Britain leaving the EU threatens to disrupt significant aspects of ruling class strategy. Some elements of British state-monopoly capitalism will pursue an aggressive policy of free trade agreements with the US, China, India, Japan and elsewhere which secure full and easy access to overseas markets, whatever the cost in terms of higher imports and greater domination of Britain's domestic economy by overseas TNCs. Other elements will look to develop new

agreements with the EU which retain 'free market' and monetarist rules. For the ruling class as a whole, continued alignment with the EU's pro-NATO Common Foreign and Security Policy will be a key objective in order to promote British imperialism's interests internationally.

In common with its counterparts in the US and other developed countries, British state-monopoly capitalism also seeks to avoid any burden for combating global warming, placing it instead on the developing countries through unfairly distributed quotas which can then be undermined by carbon emission trading schemes.

In pursuing its general strategy internationally and at home, it is clear that British state power remains integral to the interests of British monopoly capital.

This same strategy was reflected in the programme for coalition government drawn up by the Tories and Liberal Democrats in 2010. The coalition was the preferred option of Britain's financial oligarchy after the election, as Labour in government would have been more susceptible to popular and trade union pressure on important economic and social questions, despite the pro-monopoly, pro-imperialist orientation of the Labour Party leadership at that time. Having served their purpose, the LibDems were ejected from the coalition in 2015, leaving the Tories to pursue an extended anti-working class agenda, but opposed by the new left-wing leadership of the Labour Party as well as by the Communist Party and the wider labour and progressive movements.

Preventing the election of a left-led Labour government was the political priority of Britain's ruling class in the period up to the 2019 General Election. Labour's domestic manifesto for an extension of public ownership, trade union rights, collective bargaining and a significant redistribution of income and wealth threatened monopoly capital's material and ideological interests to an extent not seen since the early 1980s. Despite differences over Brexit, therefore, the ruling capitalist class united behind Boris Johnson to secure a Tory victory.

Social inequality and oppression

Britain has become one of the most unequal societies in the developed world in terms of income and wealth, housing, diet, health, and employment and educational opportunities.

At the root of this social inequality is the system of capitalist exploitation itself. In return for providing society's goods and services, workers rely mostly on their wages to sustain themselves and their families (many of which are rearing the next generation of workers or caring for the previous one). Many parents and other carers depend on state benefits or pensions – the 'social wage' – funded from taxes on wages and the profits generated by the working class.

All forms of working-class income have come under increasing pressure in recent decades. Traditionally, capitalism has depended on large-scale unemployment to weaken trade union organisation and bargaining strength. Significantly, therefore, the British ruling class opted in the late 1970s to ditch the

1944 White Paper on Employment Policy's commitment to full employment and begin dismantling the welfare state. A range of strategies was developed to maximise corporate profit at the expense of working-class income, including casualisation, flexible working, privatisation, deregulation, 'pension holidays' and debt bondage.

As exploitation intensified, so the gap between working people and the super-rich has widened enormously. In Britain today, the richest 10 per cent of the population own around half of all declared personal wealth, while the poorer 50 per cent of the population own less than one-tenth of it.

Moreover, capitalism has always utilised differences of sex, ethnicity, education, skill, employment status and mental and physical disability to divide the labour force and drive down wage levels.

In Britain, most women workers are still paid less than many men for doing work of equal value. Black and ethnic minority labour is used to fill many of the jobs with low pay and minimal training and promotion opportunities. In particular, TNCs employ young and migrant workers as casual or short-term labour on inferior terms and conditions, often to undermine collective agreements reached with trade unions. This super-exploitation has been enshrined in law by EU legal judgements and directives.

It is also reinforced by sexist, racist and anti-foreigner attitudes. In an imperialist country with a history of empire, such as Britain, racist ideas are deeply rooted, born of the need to dehumanise and demonise colonial peoples in order to win public support for their oppression and super-exploitation. Today, surviving prejudices can still be manipulated by the ruling class as well as by right-wing nationalist or fascist movements. Social inequalities of class and race are further exacerbated by capitalism's uneven development and structural crises in the regions and nations of Britain.

All these disparities of income and wellbeing among working people are, therefore, the direct result of the way capital extracts surplus value by fragmenting and segregating labour and exploiting existing oppressions. This process ensures that in every generation many more people will face homelessness, insecurity and poverty.

The erosion of the welfare state, as part of the turn to neoliberalism, has entrenched inequalities and divisions between people over recent decades, accompanied by an ideological backlash against women and minority ethnic communities. At the same time, the struggle to reduce and eliminate inequity has the potential not only for promoting unity within the working class, but also for drawing in those people from the middle strata (many self-employed, small traders and farmers, middle managers, etc.) who also experience or oppose gross inequalities, prejudice, discrimination and oppression.

Democracy and the state

Communists have long understood that the state is an apparatus for the rule of

one class over the others in society. This remains the case even though it may mediate between competing sections of the ruling class or organise concessions to the subordinate classes. It is not, therefore, 'neutral' or above the class struggle. Where the ruling class cannot win consent for its system or policies, it will use the coercive power of the state to enforce its interests.

But the struggle to win economic and social reforms under capitalism not only improves conditions for the working class, for as long as those reforms are maintained. It also raises confidence, expectations and demands. Thus, political understanding can grow about the class nature of society, class rule and the need to fight to change them.

Achieving democratic rights of assembly, combination, publication and election for workers, trade unions, political parties and other campaigning organisations creates the most favourable conditions for winning reforms and raising political consciousness.

Through the long campaigns against the People's Charter in the 19th century and against votes for women into the 20th century, the British ruling class opposed electoral democracy. It feared that if the majority who possess no capital secured the vote, they would use it collectively in their class interest. The working-class movement fought with the understanding that the vote would enable the organised majority to counteract the massive economic power concentrated in the hands of the monopoly capitalists. The aim was to establish a real 'social democracy' that went beyond political democracy, to achieve social ownership of the means of production. This understanding was originally expressed in the choice of name for the Labour Party.

Conversely, ever since the 1920s, when it was forced to concede the full and equal right to vote, the British ruling capitalist class has sought to make it 'unconstitutional' for organised labour to use its own collective strength politically. Ceaselessly, this ruling class has sought to redefine democracy in individual terms that leave all those without capital at the mercy of the concentrated economic power of those who have it.

In recent decades, the ruling class has made deep inroads into the democratic rights and liberties previously won by the working class and peoples of Britain.

The Tory governments of the 1980s and 1990s enacted a barrage of anti-trade union laws and abolished the layer of metropolitan local government where the Conservatives received little electoral support. The police, security services and courts were used ruthlessly to limit rights of protest, most notoriously during the 1984-85 miners' strike.

The 1997-2010 New Labour governments failed to repeal most of these measures. But they did fulfil manifesto commitments to set up a Scottish Parliament and a Welsh Assembly and to re-establish an elected authority for Greater London. Without charting a clear course for the reunification of Ireland, the Good Friday Agreement helped bring peace and a power-sharing assembly to the north.

But the powers and resources granted to the new devolved bodies in Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and London were kept to a minimum, in order to limit

their potential to enact policies that could challenge the interests of monopoly capital. Similarly, proposals for regional government in England were drained of any real democratic content. They turned into measures for bureaucratic reorganisation, threatening the already meagre powers of local councils.

New Labour introduced limited reforms to expand trade union rights but refused to repeal the vicious anti-union laws of the Thatcher-Major period. As a result, trade union rights have since been blocked and undermined by employers who use courts and judges to overturn democratic ballots for industrial action. A series of judgements at the EU and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) courts have upheld the right of TNCs to 'post' migrant workers to another EU member state and employ them on inferior terms and conditions, outlawing industrial action to enforce collective agreements and national or regional legislation for equal treatment.

The New Labour governments introduced repressive new laws to suppress the growing opposition to government policies. Particular groups of people (immigrants, benefit claimants, travellers, young people) were made the scapegoats for mass unemployment, rising crime, social unrest and other failures of government policy and of capitalism itself. Huge holes were punched in longstanding civil liberties including rights to peaceful protest and to freedom from detention without charge or trial. The powers of the police and security and immigration services were increased to unprecedented levels. Asylum seekers and refugees were blamed unfairly for government failures to invest fully in health, education and housing. Muslims were demonised as part of the so-called 'war on terror' which cynically used the barbaric 9/11 attacks as the pretext for curtailing civil liberties at home and bombing and invading other countries, thereby stimulating the spread of sectarian terrorism.

Like previous Labour governments, New Labour also embraced the use of military state power to promote monopoly capitalist interests abroad. It strengthened British imperialism's subservient alliance with US imperialism, participated in wars of aggression, supported repressive regimes in Colombia, Israel and the Middle East, offered facilities to the US Star Wars programme and colluded in the illegal kidnapping, transportation and torture of detainees from around the world, including from Britain itself.

In 2010, the incoming Tory-Liberal Democrat government scrapped New Labour plans to introduce a universal identity card system, which would have given the police and other state authorities enormous potential to limit everybody's individual civil liberties. Instead, the coalition launched an anti-democratic drive against collective rights to demonstrate, to enact progressive policies through elected local government and – the main target of the 2016 Trade Union Act – to defend workers' interests through trade union representation and industrial action.

Likewise, the Tory government elected in 2019 made an immediate priority of looking for ways to curb strike action in sectors such as transport and limiting the right of local authorities to conduct an ethical investment policy.

THE URGENCY grows to lift people out of hunger, poverty, sickness and ignorance. Our planet's ecosystem must be rescued before it deteriorates beyond the point of no return. Even under wasteful and destructive capitalism, the productive forces exist that could, if planned and utilised to meet human need instead of maximising capitalist profit, ensure sufficient food, nutrition, health care and education for all.

Indeed, never in history have the rapid advances in science and technology provided such opportunities for the all-round development of every human being.

But while it has proved possible, from time to time, to curb capitalism's tendencies to crisis, deprivation and war, those tendencies have always reasserted themselves because they arise from the nature of the capitalist system itself. The capitalist economic cycle produces gluts, crises, cut-backs, redundancies and then shortages before beginning all over again.

The limitations of social democracy

In Britain, Germany, France, Sweden, Australia and other developed countries, Labour and 'socialist' parties and governments have attempted to reform capitalism in the interests of the working class instead of taking the road to socialism. They have revised 'social democracy' to mean social progress for all within the confines of the capitalist system.

In Britain, the post-1945 welfare state helped masses of people to escape destitution and avoidable ill-health. Progressive taxation – based on people's ability to pay – has at times provided extra funds for public services and achieved some redistribution of wealth.

Public ownership of coal, steel, the railways, electricity, gas, water, public transport, the ports, telecommunications and aerospace ensured enormous investment in basic industries, resources and services in the second half of the 20th century. But these were programmes of capitalist nationalisation, usually carried out to rescue and develop vital industries that the capitalists could not run at sufficient profit. Such state ownership on behalf of the capitalist class has invariably involved high levels of 'compensation' for previous private owners, subsidised prices and lucrative contracts for the private sector, little or no parliamentary accountability and no power for workers in economic decision-making.

Whether separately or together, the welfare state, progressive taxation, public ownership and economic planning do not amount to socialism. They have brought real benefits to the working class as well as to the capitalists, the middle strata and society generally. They even provide a glimpse of socialism's potential. But they also indicate the limits placed upon collectivism and planning by a capitalist economy and society. They have not put an end to capitalist

exploitation and the vast inequalities it creates. Only socialism will do that.

In the main imperialist countries, the failure of social-democratic governments to challenge monopoly capital at home has also been reflected in their foreign and military policies, where they have continued to promote the interests of their own country's monopoly capitalists, up to and including the point of military intervention.

Invariably, social democracy has ended up capitulating to monopoly capital, abandoning its most radical policies and turning on sections of its own supporters in an effort to stabilise, manage or modernise the capitalist economy.

In every case, labour and socialist parties and governments in capitalist countries have had no effective theory and programme to guide them. Their outlook is not based on a Marxist, class-based understanding of how capitalism works and where and when it is most vulnerable. Consequently, social democracy has had no strategy for progressive advance and socialist revolution. Conference policies and election manifestos have been confused with developing a programme for far-reaching change. Government office has been mistaken for state power. Moreover, once in office, social democracy has never had any notion of involving and mobilising the working class and its allies beyond elections, of drawing them into extra-parliamentary action to defend the government and help carry out progressive, anti-monopoly policies.

Overall, capitalism has had a more profound impact on social democracy than vice-versa. In the first imperialist phase of rising monopoly, imperialist war and revolution, many mass workers' parties achieved office, but on terms set by the ruling class. Out of the opposition to social-democratic support for imperialist war came the splits and divisions that gave birth to the communist parties. In the second phase, after 1945, social-democratic governments administered, reformed and strengthened state-monopoly capitalism in return for abandoning the aim of socialism.

Now, in the third phase since the 1980s, many social-democratic parties in the developed countries have capitulated fully to the demands of monopoly capital, with disastrous electoral consequences. Some have been displaced by 'populist' parties of the left or right which will, themselves, be compelled to align more closely with either the ruling class or the working class, or face disintegration. In Europe in particular, the decline and collapse of traditional social-democratic parties in the west, together with the resurgence of nationalism and racism following capitalist restoration in the east, has enabled far right and fascist parties to make big electoral advances and even to enter government.

Socialism – the lessons so far

After centuries of capitalism, the first attempts to build a socialist society arose only in the 20th century, in the ashes of two world wars, mostly in less developed societies facing the advanced, hostile and powerful forces of

imperialism. Both the achievements and the failures of these pioneering socialist systems should be considered in this context, and lessons learnt accordingly.

During its 70-year existence, the Soviet Union showed how socialist state power, planning and public ownership could transform society in the interests of the mass of the population.

With the support of sections of the peasantry, the working class took state power in Russia in 1917 and used it to withdraw from the imperialist war and defeat counter-revolutionary forces. Fourteen foreign armies, including those of Britain, the US and Poland, invaded Russia in 1918 to 'strangle Bolshevism at its birth', in the words of Winston Churchill. This imperialist ambition to destroy Soviet power was to continue through most of the 20th century.

Nevertheless, Russia and the other countries of the Soviet Union were transformed from semi-feudal, semi-capitalist monarchist dictatorships into modern societies with near-full employment, universally free education and healthcare, affordable housing for all, extensive and cheap public transport, impressive scientific and cultural facilities, rights for women and degrees of self-government for previously oppressed nationalities. This was achieved through a world-historic break with capitalist ownership and social relations, on the basis of social ownership of industry and centralised economic planning.

But the struggle to survive and to build socialism in the face of powerful external as well as internal enemies also led to distortions in society that might otherwise have been avoided. In particular, a bureaucratic-command system of economic and political rule became entrenched. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and the trade unions became integrated into the apparatus of the state, eroding working class and popular democracy. Marxism-Leninism was used dogmatically to justify the status quo rather than make objective assessments of it.

At times, and particularly in the late 1930s following the rise of fascism, severe violations of socialist democracy and law occurred in the fight against external threats and internal subversion. Large numbers of innocent people were persecuted, imprisoned and executed. This aided the worldwide campaign of lies and distortions aimed at the Soviet Union, the international communist movement and the concept of socialism.

Yet central organisation and rapid, massive industrialisation enabled the Soviet Red Army to smash Hitler's war machine, halt the Nazi genocide and liberate much of Europe from fascism.

Following World War Two, the US Marshall Plan financed the rebuilding of capitalist economies in western Europe. The Soviet Union, with 26 million dead and much of its land and productive capacity destroyed, was left to its own devices.

The Soviets once again constructed a society of full employment, housing for all, low-cost public transport and high-quality universal health and education services. New socialist states achieved the same in the war-torn countries of

eastern Europe, where the Soviet model of society was promoted in both its positive and negative aspects.

At the same time, the socialist countries launched programmes of solidarity with progressive and national liberation movements around the world that operated over three decades.

But under pressure from the arms race launched by the US and NATO, the Soviet bureaucratic-command system was unable to utilise the full fruits of the STR beyond the military, space and medical fields. From the mid-1970s, economic growth in the Soviet Union declined from previous levels, while continuing to outstrip that of Western Europe until the mid-1980s; the planned economies of Eastern Europe actually grew faster during the 1970s than those of West Germany, Britain, France and the US. Nonetheless, problems of resource allocation, waste, incentive and productivity were not resolved. The ruling communist parties failed to counter the appeal of capitalist 'consumerism' materially and ideologically, as their own citizens made unfavourable comparisons that took no account of imperialism's super-exploitation of the Third World.

While women participated more extensively in politics, science, education and employment than their counterparts in capitalist society, they encountered limits to their promotion. Centralised party control substantially restricted the exercise of national and regional autonomy in practice.

The increasing failure to mobilise the CPSU, the working class and the people to solve these and other economic, social and political problems led eventually to stagnation and political collapse in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, from 1989. There were no significant mass movements to defend the socialist system against counter-revolution.

Yet the weaknesses and failures of the Soviet model of socialism have since been overtaken by the calamities of capitalist restoration. Public economic property has passed into the hands of Western TNCs, state bureaucrats and home-grown gangsters. Millions of workers have lost their jobs, pensions and trade union rights. Public and welfare services have collapsed. The peoples of the former Soviet Union experienced the biggest reductions in life expectancy ever recorded. National and ethnic differences exploded into terrorism and war. In some countries, the brutal trafficking and sexual exploitation of women became widespread.

Determined not to experience counter-revolution and its consequences, China's communists have placed great emphasis on economic and social development. State power is used to combine economic planning and public ownership with private capital and market mechanisms. Alongside a short-term reliance on coal to help fuel its fast-growing economy, China is investing massively in cutting-edge research to pioneer clean energy technologies. So far, state-directed policies have lifted more than 700 million people – almost half the population – out of extreme poverty since 1981, a feat unequalled in history. The aim of the Communist Party of China (CPC) is to build a

harmonious, moderately prosperous and sustainable socialist society in this, its primary stage. The party's five concepts of development are that it should be open, coordinated, innovative, green and sharing.

The foreign policy of the People's Republic of China has sought to uphold the principles of national sovereignty and peaceful co-existence, while carrying out foreign investment policies that also benefit host countries substantially.

Yet, as the CPC itself acknowledges, problems in Chinese society of social inequality, corruption, inadequate welfare provision and underdeveloped trade unionism need to be further addressed and rectified. Advances have been made in extending democratic rights without the CPC weakening its leading role in political life. The importance of renewing democracy inside the party and in wider society should not be underestimated.

Recovering from enormous US crimes against humanity, People's Vietnam is pursuing a similar path based on planning, a mixed economy, market mechanisms and the leading role of the Communist Party.

The Cuban model of socialism seeks to involve the masses of people in defending their national sovereignty against US imperialist subversion, mobilising them also to solve economic, social and environmental problems. The result is a society with the most advanced health and education services in the Third World and which outperform many in the most developed capitalist countries. People's Cuba pursues bold policies to expand food production, boost afforestation and minimise carbon emissions. Its internationalist foreign policy assists oppressed and disadvantaged peoples around the world. Most recently, Cuba has embarked upon policies to develop and diversify industry and services.

The experiences of communists and socialists attempting to build socialism indicates the importance of mobilising wide support for progressive and revolutionary change, making inroads into the economic and political power of the monopoly capitalists, taking the bold steps necessary from government office to state power, exerting popular sovereignty and involving the mass of the people at every stage in the revolutionary process, including the exercise of political power.

Each country must find its own path to socialism, applying general principles to specific national conditions in their international context. Each will develop its own model of socialism in tune with the culture and aspirations of its people. In Britain and its constituent nations, taking the road to socialism can only be done successfully by taking those differing national conditions fully into account.

History also demonstrates that taking state power and constructing a socialist society can occur in one or more countries at a time, arising from the uneven economic and political development of capitalism. This explodes the abstract and defeatist myth that socialist revolution can only be a single-stage, multinational or global process.

Public ownership and planning

For as long as capitalist ownership of the economy exists, whether or not the so-called 'free market' is dominated by monopolies, its operations will produce crisis, destruction, inequality and waste on an enormous scale.

Capitalism's drive to maximise profit leads it to turn every area of human need – food, clothing, shelter, healthcare, education, sex, leisure – into a market for the production and sale of commodities for profit. However, when private enterprise cannot make enough profit, it will not produce even the most vital goods and services to meet society's needs.

Capitalist competition invariably means unnecessary duplication, takeovers, 'rationalisation', closures, asset-stripping, commercial secrecy, excessive packaging and large-scale contrivances of style and fashion – all of which represent a waste, limitation or destruction of society's productive resources. Whole economic sectors have developed – advertising, property management, business consultancy – that perform little or no useful function in society, except to promote the interests of monopoly capital and draw income from the working class and middle strata.

In reality, monopoly power blocks or takes over more efficient but smaller competitors, especially those that seek to share the benefits of economic activity more equitably with workers or consumers. Anti-trust, anti-cartel and similar laws have utterly failed to halt the march of the capitalist monopolies towards national and international domination.

Only public ownership of the economy's major sectors and enterprises – the economic essence of socialism – can put an end to monopoly power and fundamentally change the basis on which economic decisions are taken. Pointless and wasteful competition and duplication would be eliminated. Society's productive forces would be planned, developed and deployed to meet people's real needs and aspirations, while protecting the natural environment on which human life depends. Jobs, houses and vital or useful goods and services would be created as the primary purpose of planning and production, not as the incidental outcome of making profits for shareholders.

In particular, public ownership is the only consistent and accountable basis on which energy, land use and public transport can be planned and developed in an integrated way to combat global warming, climate change and environmental degradation while ensuring renewable power supplies.

But fundamental distinctions must be drawn between the different types of public ownership as operated in different stages and conditions.

Up to the present, Britain and other developed countries have only implemented models of capitalist nationalisation. Democratic or progressive public ownership would be conducted on a different basis – in the interests of the working class and the people, not of monopoly capital.

A left government would seek to extend it to viable enterprises and sectors, with compensation paid primarily to pension funds and small investors and on the basis of proven need. Its pricing, contracting and investment policies would

reflect the priorities, needs and interests of society as a whole. Its administration would be democratically accountable to the elected representatives of the people at every level, with workers and local communities fully involved in decision-making.

Socialist public ownership would be based on the same approach, but after achieving state power. It would be carried out in all major sectors of industry and commerce in the drive to end monopoly capitalist wealth and power and build a socialist society based on democratic and, where necessary, centralised economic planning.

Saving the planet

The crisis facing human society as a consequence of global warming is entering a critical stage. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special Report (IPCC) 2018 warned that without drastic reductions in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 to reach net-zero by 2050, the Earth's rising temperatures on land and sea will result in loss of livelihoods, population displacement, food insecurity and worsening health conditions on a wide scale. To resist this, the IPCC proposed 'rapid and far-reaching transformations' in the world's energy, transport and food systems by 2030.

Yet it is clear that the world's major capitalist powers do not have the will to make those reductions, let alone in ways which also protect the right of developing countries to develop so that their peoples achieve levels of education, health care, nutrition and life expectancy equal with those of developed countries.

Giant corporations which prioritise the maximisation of profit through the free operation of market forces have no incentive to make the transition to a sustainable, carbon-neutral economy. Their domination of state power has ensured that regulation towards this objective has been minimal in most of the advanced capitalist countries.

The transformations for which the IPCC calls would require state intervention, regulation and international coordination and equity to an extent hitherto unthought of in capitalist society. In Britain, measures to support a 'Green New Deal' and a 'Just Transition' would be a start, although they will meet ruling-class resistance in defence of monopoly profits. In essence, the IPCC proposals point to a transition to a socialist economy and society, because only socialism elevates the public good above private profit, economic planning above market anarchy and long-term investment in place of short-term speculation.

Furthermore, resolving the global warming crisis cannot be isolated from meeting other great challenges of the 21st century such as global inequality and poverty, population growth and food security, pollution, militarism and war. The history of capitalism in its imperialist stage indicates that this system is the main cause of these problems, not their solution. Only socialism and

communism base themselves on the principles of planning, democratic sovereignty, collectivism and international solidarity that are essential to securing the future of humanity and the planet.

Ending exploitation and oppression

Socialist public ownership of economic property will put an end to the exploitation of the working class whereby surplus labour is performed and surplus value produced for the benefit of the capitalist class. Surplus labour will still take place, but only in order to meet the needs and aspirations of the working class and society generally. This means that workers will have to be fully represented in the economic and political spheres of decision-making, ensuring that surplus labour is not exploited for the benefit of a privileged class or group.

Since society first became divided into classes, the ruling class of the time has used the oppression of sections of the exploited classes to maximise profit and reinforce its rule. As a weapon of exploitation under capitalism, the oppression of women, black workers and other groups has produced super-profits and helped reproduce existing class relations economically, ideologically and politically – not least by perpetuating divisions within the working class itself.

Oppression is sustained by sets of prejudicial ideas and oppressive ideologies, such as sexism and racism, which adversely affect all members of a particular group whatever their social class. Nevertheless, the prime purpose of oppression is to super-exploit particular sections of the working class, whether at home or abroad, often as the prelude to intensifying the exploitation of labour as a whole.

Putting an end to capitalist property relations and the exploitation of labour would remove the material basis for social oppression. No class in society would gain from the super-exploitation of any section of the working class or have the means by which to secure it. The reorientation of priorities in production to meet the needs of the people would further reduce the scope for conflict over scarce provision, whether of jobs, housing, public services or essential goods. In particular, the special needs of people with disabilities would be provided for fully and their potential contribution to society recognised and developed.

The experience of socialism confirms that prejudice and discrimination on grounds of sex, nationality, sexual orientation, age etc., can survive the abolition of capitalism, at least for a period, weakened but not altogether eliminated. But socialism furnishes the material basis, and therefore the potential, to bring all forms of prejudice and discrimination to an end.

With the abolition of capitalism, the most powerful forces perpetuating racist, sexist, homophobic and other reactionary attitudes are dismantled. The forces of socialism must then consign them to the rubbish heap of history, promoting a culture of equal rights and liberation in their place.

Democracy and popular sovereignty

In modern capitalist society, it is the interests of monopoly finance capital which predominate, regardless of proclamations about the sovereignty of the people or of parliament.

The electoral franchise and other democratic rights are subverted by huge inequalities in wealth and power between different classes and sections of the population. Politicians and political parties are bought or intimidated by big business and large sections of the mass media which pursue a pro-capitalist agenda. In Britain, the electoral system is mostly rigged against small, new or left-wing parties, while elected parliaments can be marginalised or dissolved.

The European Union represents a new model whereby monopoly capital can circumvent democratic representation and accountability. The EU parliament is elected by constituencies so large as to break any meaningful organic link between electors and representatives. It has no power to initiate or unilaterally amend legislation. The fundamental capitalist economic and political character of the EU is set in constitutional concrete. Any real sovereignty is shared between unelected and unaccountable bodies – the Council of Ministers, the EU Commission, the European Central Bank and the EU Court of Justice.

The essence of popular sovereignty, on the other hand, is that the democratic will of the people should prevail over the vested interests of a powerful minority and their state apparatus. This revolutionary concept originated in the English Revolution, with the Levellers and the soldiers' parliament, and in the French Revolution with its constituent assembly and constitution. It was also seen in the Paris Commune of 1871, in the workers', peasants' and soldiers' soviets (councils) of the 1905 and 1917 Russian revolutions, and in all mass movements against exploitation and oppression.

In Britain, the struggle for popular sovereignty has expressed itself recently in the mass movement against imperialist war, in the 2016 referendum vote to reassert popular sovereignty against EU membership and in broad-based campaigns led by trades unions, local trades councils and the People's Assembly Against Austerity to defend jobs, pensions, benefits and public services. But popular sovereignty will only prevail when state power is taken out of the hands of the capitalist class by the working class and its allies, whose interests represent those of the people and society in general.

This lays the basis for the active involvement of the people in all aspects of decision-making. Such mass participation is the surest guarantee that democratic rights will be enormously more extensive and more real in a socialist society, free from the distortions of monopoly capital's wealth and power.

Promoting internationalism

Socialism aims to liberate the mass of people from the class-based exploitation and oppression of capitalism, which is in its final, imperialist stage as an international system. Vital issues of trade, transport, development, scientific research, ecology, peace and much else are profoundly international in their scope and impact.

Therefore, international solidarity often plays an important role in helping workers and peoples fight and win battles for justice, peace and freedom in their own countries. Socialism's values, principles and aspirations can only be universal rather than purely local or national. In practice, however, this does not negate the primary, essential need to overthrow capitalism at the level where the capitalist class holds state power. Engaging in this revolutionary task is itself not only an act of national necessity; in a major imperialist state such as Britain, it is also a profoundly internationalist responsibility that benefits workers and countries around the world.

The labour and progressive movements

WHICH FORCES In society can be mobilised to resist the policies of state-monopoly capitalism? Which can be won for far-reaching change and socialism?

Any serious strategy for socialist revolution in Britain must identify such forces at each stage of the process, developing policies that meet people's interests and make inroads into capitalist power. The aim must be to maximise the forces for progress and socialist revolution and minimise those in opposition.

Different classes and sections of society have their own reasons for challenging aspects of monopoly capitalism, even if they do not understand their situation in political or ideological terms. The point is that they share a common enemy which exploits workers here and abroad, oppresses large sections of society, strives constantly to roll back democratic rights, blocks progress on every front, generates militarism and war, and now threatens the future of our planet. As ever, the ruling capitalist class tries to prolong its domination by fostering and exploiting divisions among working people based on race, origin, sex, gender, age, status, and any other feature that serves its purpose. This enemy, state-monopoly capitalism, will have to be overthrown because it cannot be fundamentally reformed.

The leading role of the working class

The working class has the most direct interest in overthrowing capitalism. After all, this is the system which exploits workers, excludes them from real decision-making in the workplace and in wider society, condemns them to poverty at one or more stages in life, and confines most of them to a lifetime of inequality and insecurity.

At the core of the working class have been those engaged in manufacturing, engineering, construction, energy and transport, who produce commodities directly for capitalist profit. Experience of such unconcealed exploitation, especially in large workplaces, has tended to make them the most class-conscious sections. But staff in public services, administration, finance, retail trade, hospitality and other service sectors are equally part of the working class.

Of course, some workers do not recognise themselves as members of the working class. They believe that they are 'middle class', or that class is defined by the type of labour, by professional status, skill, type of residence, personal possessions, accent or social habits. But the reality is that class is defined objectively, by source of income.

The capitalists derive their main forms of income – profit, interest or rent – from their ownership of economic and financial property (usually in the form of stocks and shares, other financial assets and property deeds).

Some workers may own stocks and shares directly, or indirectly through a pension or other fund. But their chief if not sole source of income arises from their labour power. They depend on their wages (current labour), pensions (past labour) or benefits (past or future labour) to live. Furthermore, what all waged workers have in common as a class under capitalism is that they are exploited. This includes those in the public sector whose unpaid surplus labour does not directly produce surplus value for capitalist employers but keeps down the costs of running the capitalist state. The output of their surplus labour is used by the state for the benefit of the capitalist class, whose interests are served in a variety of ways by the public services provided.

Many workers are hired for their labour power by capitalist enterprises as 'self-employed' or through sub-contractors. They, too, produce surplus value for capitalists as though directly employed by them. Moreover, they are further exploited as their employer in actuality provides no pension contributions, sickness cover, paid holidays or redundancy pay.

Yet the conditions of capitalist production, trade and administration also create the potential for the working class to liberate itself. Workers are brought together in factories, offices and other workplaces, where they share a common interest in organising to improve their terms and conditions of employment. They form trade unions which express and develop their collective strength as a disciplined force in society. The unions campaign for changes in government policy and involve themselves in a wide range of economic, social, cultural and political issues both domestic and international. Many lend their support to political organisations.

Nonetheless, trade unionism often finds itself playing a defensive role in the workplace, seeking to protect workers against excessive exploitation, dangerous working conditions, redundancy, bullying and harassment. Union leaders and members at every level see the primary role of trade unionism as securing the best deal for workers within the bounds of capitalism.

Changes in Britain's economic structure and employment patterns, deindustrialisation, privatisation, outsourcing of public services and four decades of repressive anti-union legislation have – with notable exceptions – weakened the trade union movement in terms of membership, participation, collective bargaining, confidence and militancy. Pessimistic and defeatist tendencies have been strengthened at every level.

Many more people today are employed on casual, temporary, part-time or zero-hours contracts, including those in professional jobs in health and education. Employers have tried to use such workers – many of them young, women, black or migrants – to undermine general levels of pay, conditions and trade union collective bargaining.

This makes it all the more important that unions not only resolutely defend their existing members. They must also go on the offensive to improve terms and conditions and to extend trade union organisation into unorganised workplaces, utilising an ever-wider range of tactics and techniques. The

importance of extending trade unionism and its sense of working-class solidarity into many more smaller enterprises, including in the most technologically advanced sectors, should not be underestimated. Victories are still being won in large and small enterprises, in sectors such as retail and the railways, and they demonstrate the enduring value and relevance of class militancy and solidarity. The scandal of low pay must become a central issue for the unions.

It is in the interests of all workers – not only those being super-exploited – to fight for equal pay for work of equal value, for better and more secure terms and conditions for all and for the full implementation of negotiated agreements. Otherwise, discrimination against any particular group of workers will be used by employers to worsen the terms and conditions of employment for others.

Unions have a special responsibility to step up the fight against all forms of prejudice and discrimination. The demands for genuine equality for women, black workers and other oppressed sections are essential aspects of the class struggle. As such, they must be recognised as a priority for the whole working class. Campaigning along these lines will help to build confidence in the role of the labour movement among women, black, young and migrant workers, enabling and encouraging them to take part in it fully on the basis of equality.

At the all-Britain level, the TUC and its equalities committees and conferences must play a leading role in taking bold, broad-based and campaigning initiatives. The Scottish TUC, Wales TUC, English regional TUCs and local trades councils are also crucial to building campaigning alliances for progressive and left-wing policies, although they must have the resources to do so effectively.

Such developments would extend the power of the working class to engage in mass struggle. They ensure that the trade union movement can continue to seek to represent the wider and more fundamental interests of workers in society.

But what enables the working class, uniquely, to be the leading force in the struggle for socialism is its potential collective power to challenge and overthrow capitalism and build a new society.

The working class has gained extensive experience, born of necessity, in developing unity between people. Trade union membership remains strong in the state apparatus, vital public utilities, education, health and in parts of the mass media. Whether in industry or services, in the private or public sector, large enterprises embrace the greatest diversity of workers. They reflect in miniature the diversity of the working class. Building and maintaining trade unions in large workplaces that can confront monopolist employers and the state gives these workers the longest and deepest experience of overcoming sectionalism. They learn why it is essential to combine the legitimate, immediate interests of any one section of the working class with the long-term interests of the class as a whole.

There is no substitute in modern capitalist society for the organised working class as the leading force in the struggle for progressive and revolutionary change.

The labour movement and the left

Through the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and together with socialist organisations, trade unions established the Labour Party at the beginning of the 20th century, not only to represent working class interests in parliament but to strive for a socialist society. The most politically advanced elements of the working class founded the Communist Party in 1920 to fight not only for reform, but for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and for socialism.

These and a host of other organisations built by the working class make up the labour movement. Only this movement has the organisational capacity to overcome the forces of state-monopoly capitalism.

Almost since its formation, the Labour Party has been the mass party of the organised working class. It continues to enjoy the electoral support of large sections of workers. But its politics and ideology have been those of social democracy, seeking to manage and reform capitalism in response to the immediate temporary interests of the labour movement, instead of abolishing it in the fundamental interests of the working class and humanity.

The Labour Party has never fundamentally challenged the ruling class. At best, it has only reflected and represented the 'trade union consciousness' of the working class in political life. The reformist outlook that dominates Labour confines the party to an exclusively parliamentary role within the capitalist system. It sees its campaigning work almost entirely in terms of participation in elections and carries out little or no socialist education.

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

The unique structure and composition of the Labour Party has helped ensure the continuation of a significant socialist trend within it. These socialists have at times won major advances in the battle of ideas within and beyond the party. They have supported policies for democratic public ownership, progressive taxation, capital controls, trade union rights and nuclear disarmament that challenge monopoly capital in the interests of working people.

These particular characteristics, together with the first-past-the-post electoral system, have helped the Labour Party in Britain so far to escape the fate of other parties in the social-democratic tradition in Europe during this era of capitalist globalisation.

But the Labour Party left is not a cohesive and united force. Historically, the predominance of the social-democratic trend over the socialist trend in the Labour Party leadership, especially in the Westminster parliament, helped ensure that Labour governments have only reformed capitalism, not abolished it.

The New Labour faction, which seized control of the party in the mid-1990s, represented the emergence of a new trend from within social democracy and backed by sections of big business. Adapting to and then

championing neoliberal policies and imperialist 'globalisation', it broke from social democracy to openly represent monopoly capital in the emerging new phase of imperialism. In its drive to turn the Labour Party into a wholehearted 'party for business', it brought the corrupting interests of monopoly capital into important aspects of party and government activity.

To make sure of the Labour Party's acquiescence in its own political and ideological transformation from the mid-1990s, a series of measures were adopted by agreement with misguided trade union leaders to dismantle democratic processes within the party. The resulting centralisation challenged the Labour's Party's federal character, concentrating power in the hands of a small clique at the top. The rights and participation of affiliated organisations were severely restricted at every level of the party.

Subsequently, however, the party's right wing miscalculated when opening the Labour leadership ballot to all individual members and affiliated and registered supporters, with the intention of weakening the collective voice of the trades unions. No account was taken of the potential for recruitment from within the anti-austerity and anti-war mass campaigns, in which the Communist Party and the daily socialist *Morning Star* newspaper have played a significant part. The combined forces of the extra-parliamentary mass movements, the trade unions and the Labour left then propelled left MP Jeremy Corbyn to victory in the 2015 and 2016 party leadership ballots.

Following Labour's 2019 General Election defeat and Corbyn's resignation, it remains to be determined whether the left trend in the party can – with enough trade union support – win the struggle not only for leadership, but also for policies that challenge British state-monopoly capitalism and imperialism. The election showed that left leadership alone may not be enough to win elections; the development of mass struggle and educated class consciousness are also fundamentally possible. This will require a major shift to the left in ward and constituency party organisations as well as in the Parliamentary Labour Party, where pro-capitalist and pro-imperialist views are strongly entrenched. Left-wing policies are not only necessary – they are achievable as a consequence of Britain leaving the European Union and its Single Market and Customs Union.

The working class and peoples of Britain need a mass political party, based on the labour movement, that can win general elections, form a government and implement substantial reforms in their interests.

For as long as many of the biggest trade unions are affiliated to the Labour Party, the potential exists to wage a broad-based fight to secure the party for the labour movement and left-wing policies. Certainly, this is the most direct route to ensuring the continued existence of a mass party of labour in Britain and is a goal that every communist and non-sectarian socialist should support.

But decisive progress in this direction requires the unions themselves to fight both inside and outside the Labour Party for policies that will challenge state-monopoly capitalism in Britain. Moreover, support will need to be won at every

level of the trade unions and the whole labour movement for an alternative economic and political strategy (AEPS) to that being pursued by the British ruling class. This would create the most favourable conditions in which to resolve the crisis of working-class electoral representation. Here, too, the Communist Party and the *Morning Star* have an important contribution to make to the struggle within the labour movement.

Part of the Communist Party's role is to provide a vision of socialism and a practical strategy for achieving it. Communists therefore seek to work with left trends that have a real, sustained base in the labour movement, urging them to unite around policies and in actions which raise the combativeness, confidence and political consciousness of the working class. This would lay the basis for their convergence in a mass party of labour, one federally organised to permit the affiliation of socialist and communist parties and committed to the fight for socialism.

Socialist and progressive forces and left parliamentary and assembly representatives in the Greens, Plaid Cymru, the Scottish National Party (SNP) and other organisations can also play an important part in the battles for reforms, peace and fundamental social change. However, the class basis of the nationalist parties is essentially that of sections of the intelligentsia and middle strata (notably small business owners – including many farmers – and self-employed professionals). Therefore, objectively, they tend to play a divisive role within the working-class and do not resolve the crisis of political representation and leadership in the labour movement.

Progressive movements and alliances

Workers do not exist in a vacuum. The economic sphere, in spite of its importance, is not the only aspect of people's lives. Monopoly capitalism has its impact on these other aspects and identities as well, and many workers may be brought to political ideas and activity by social, democratic or international issues not directly related to work or the economy. Other people too, including those in the non-monopoly section of the capitalist class, can become aware of the destructive and divisive character of monopoly capitalism, coming to see it either as the cause of problems in society or as the system which obstructs their solution.

Oppression affects people in diverse ways and the movements to resist it are equally diverse.

The economic, social and political subordination of women has its roots in the formation of class society. In all class-divided societies throughout the ages, the dominant class has sought to extract a bigger surplus from the super-exploitation of women's labour power at work, while indirectly benefiting from the housework which helps create the capacity of current and future workers to perform free, surplus labour. Likewise today, the capitalist class seeks every opportunity to extract extra surplus value from women workers wherever

possible, while profiting indirectly from surplus labour performed in the home.

In order to achieve this, it has been necessary for the dominant class to oppress women of all classes. The actual oppression of women is maintained by the ideology of gender, with its social expectations and norms of masculinity and femininity which are reproduced through state institutions, education, the media and popular culture. These limit the potential of women and men and are a root cause of violence and abuse against women, children, lesbians, gays and transgender people.

Women's organisations within and outside the labour movement in Britain have a long and proud tradition of campaigning on such issues as voting rights, reproductive rights, health, equal pay, pensions and welfare benefits, housing and property rights, domestic violence and rape. Rooted in the working class and affiliated to the Women's International Democratic Federation, the National Assembly of Women has won much support in the trade union movement over the decades for its work, including for peace, equal pay, workplace nurseries and price controls. Together with many unions, the NAW has adopted the Charter for Women which was launched by the Communist Party and demands equal rights and treatment in the labour movement, in the economy and in society as a whole.

From the 1960s, there was a growing understanding in the labour and women's movements of the relationship between class exploitation and social oppression. Likewise, many campaigners for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights have become aware of the ways in which powerful vested interests in capitalist society act to perpetuate prejudice and oppression.

Nevertheless, the impact of neoliberal ideas on the struggle for sexual equality and gay rights should not be underestimated. Struggles which were once regarded as part of a movement for radical social change are now often concerned with seeking equality within the capitalist status quo. Analysis of structural inequality is being replaced by some with reactionary identity politics which emphasise the individual over collective experience. In order to meet this challenge effectively, the left and the labour movement must develop their understanding of the material basis of women's oppression and exploitation and of the need to make women's liberation a fundamental part of the class struggle. The full economic, social and democratic rights of all must be fought for and won, without jeopardising the ongoing fundamental struggle led by working-class women against oppression and super-exploitation based on biological sex.

The growth of self-organisation among the black and minority ethnic communities, exemplified by the Indian Workers Association (GB) and the Bangladeshi Workers Council (UK), provides an important basis for challenging the prejudice and discrimination that emanate from empire, colonialism and imperialism. Anti-racist and anti-fascist campaigning by a range of other organisations also plays an important role.

However, much more needs to be done to mobilise black, minority ethnic

and other working-class communities, together with the labour movement at every level. This is essential if government policies are to be changed and racist and fascist organisations halted in their tracks.

As well as movements against oppression, there are other social forces whose interests conflict with those of state-monopoly capitalism. For instance, social and private tenants have mounted local and national campaigns on housing issues through such organisations as Defend Council Housing. Campaigning by bodies such as Health Campaigns Together and its affiliates unites large numbers of people across classes, including the affluent who see the local services they need disappear and understand why the privatisation of health services and facilities must be opposed.

Young people face their own specific problems, whether as students or young workers, as well as those they share with other sections of the population. Insecure employment, under-employment, low pay or mass unemployment, lack of decent affordable housing, student fees and debt have become fixtures for younger generations, aggravating the discrimination felt by young women and black youth. Discontent among young people too often meets with demonisation by the mass media and harassment from the authorities. There is also the danger that continuing youth unemployment will strengthen the appeal of the extreme right-wing to some, given their growing frustration and lack of contact with the labour and progressive movements.

At the same time, the potential in young people to change society for the better has been shown by their magnificent contribution to the anti-war, environmental, climate change and anti-austerity movements. This laid the basis for their mass participation in the political battles to elect Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party.

Therefore, the labour movement needs to reach out to young people, offering them support to meet the challenges they face. Its organisations must welcome new members, help provide social and cultural facilities, enable them to organise together and support their campaigns for decent work, equality, housing, education and environmental security.

The students' movement has shown its capacity to mobilise on issues of access to education, students' living standards and the range and quality of courses. Coordination with teachers' and lecturers' unions has been of mutual benefit. But the whole labour movement needs to recognise the significance of these and related issues for the quality of life of workers and their families.

Trade unions have an important part to play in the fight against mass unemployment and precarious employment, helping to unite the employed and the unemployed around key demands for decent, secure, well-paid jobs, free training and educational opportunities and adequate unemployment benefits. To this end, the role of the remaining unemployed workers' centres as campaigning organisations should be strengthened, along with more trade unions actively recruiting and representing the unemployed.

Forward-thinking trade unions are engaging with their members in

precarious work to develop structures and ways of organising that will support them most effectively, while also extending solidarity to other workers needing support.

Millions of older people face a life of poverty and isolation as social care has been cut back and privatised and the age of pension eligibility raised. Working women, in particular, have suffered additional injustices and there has been a welcome increase in the scale and militancy of the pensioners movement. But the fight for a 'living pension' and support from decent public and social services is not the responsibility of pensioners alone. All trades unions have to understand that this is a fight for their members' future. Although the pensioners' movement has received increased backing from unions, the labour movement needs to help turn this into a truly mass, broad-based and militant campaign. While the fight must continue for occupational, company and second state pensions properly funded in part by employers, the provision of a decent basic state pension is essential to guarantee a financially secure retirement.

It is essential to draw upon the experience and loyalty of trades unionists who reach retirement. Union structures should be established which encourage them to remain active trades unionists. The best mechanism for doing so will vary from union to union. Community-based branches and retired members' sections are ways of achieving this.

Public opposition to militarism and imperialist war has drawn hundreds of thousands, even millions, of people into the campaigning activities of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), the Stop the War Coalition and other peace organisations. While it is essential to maintain the broad appeal and unity of the peace and anti-war movements, the connections between monopoly capital, British and US imperialism, NATO, the EU and the drive to militarisation and war need to be exposed and understood. The revitalisation of the British Peace Assembly as an affiliate of the World Peace Council will strengthen the anti-imperialist content of peace and anti-war campaigning.

Sections of the environmental movement already recognise the extent to which monopoly capitalism threatens to destroy our planet's ecosystem. The imperialist powers resist the measures necessary to protect it, because those measures would challenge monopoly profit and prerogatives. As a matter of urgency, this understanding must be won throughout the environmental and labour movements and wider society.

The nationalist movements in Scotland, Wales and Cornwall contain progressive and left-wing elements which oppose many of the reactionary policies of monopoly capital and the British state. However, the SNP and Plaid Cymru remain committed to state-monopoly capitalism's European Union project, which is itself wedded to the dominant principles and outlook of neoliberalism. Nonetheless, these elements can be won to the fight for measures which favour the working class and challenge at least some of the interests of British imperialism.

In Britain and its constituent nations, there is a long tradition of international

solidarity. Today, there are active movements in solidarity with peoples facing imperialist-backed subversion, foreign occupation or state repression. Such campaigns have won wide support among the trades unions, thereby enhancing solidarity and developing greater understanding of the nature of imperialism.

Working class people make up a substantial proportion – in most cases the vast majority – of the members and supporters of all these movements. Through their activity in them, many people will come to a political, class understanding of society and the need for action to change it.

When assessing the forces that can be mobilised for progress, due account should be taken of divisions within the capitalist class. Some sectors or enterprises orientated towards industry rather than financial services, or the domestic rather than export market, or which are home-owned rather than owned from outside, can be split away from a united front of monopoly capital by appropriate measures. Small business owners may have their own reasons for opposing monopoly power, and their support for anti-monopoly policies can prove important in blocking reactionary mobilisations against the labour movement and the left.

The organised working class needs to show them that lining up with big business against the workers will never solve their problems. It must seek to win small business owners to the side of the labour movement and prevent them falling prey to right-wing and fascist propaganda. This means campaigning for measures such as cheap credit, restrictions on monopoly price manipulation, controls on rent, relief from high business rates, abolition of Value Added Tax (VAT), etc. as well as winning them for the wider democratic demands of the working class, including the struggle for peace, disarmament and environmental protection.

Genuinely self-employed workers who own their own means of production, alongside small business owners including small farmers who employ little or no labour, are part of the middle strata. They are in neither the capitalist class nor the working class. While they are not exploited as workers, neither do they profit primarily from the labour of others. The middle strata also include those senior managers who are still ultimately dependent on selling their own labour power for much of their livelihood. But they also direct the exploitation of labour in the private or public sectors and may receive a proportion of their own income from the surplus value produced by others.

Some of the people in these middle strata can and should be won for anti-monopoly and progressive policies.

The Communist Party and revolutionary leadership

The aim of the Communist Party is to replace capitalism with socialism, as the prelude to achieving a fully communist society.

Founded in Britain in 1920 as a party of a new type, it represented a fundamental break with the class collaboration and pro-imperialist approach

which had prevailed in the Labour Party. The Communist Party bases itself on the ideas of Marx, Engels and Lenin about the class character of capitalist society, the exploitation of labour power, the role of the state, the development of imperialism and the need for a revolutionary party to make sure that the working class and its allies take political power and use it to overthrow capitalism and its state. This is what we mean by revolution.

The Communist Party is rooted in the working class, as the leading potential force for revolution, while also being open to all who share its aims and ideas. The Party also seeks to organise itself in every major area of economic, social, cultural and political struggle. It draws upon the commitment, creativity and initiative of its members in order to make the most effective contribution possible to the labour and progressive movements. It is also a democratic and a disciplined force, striving to involve its members fully in the formation, renewal and implementation of the Party's policies.

As part of the international communist movement, it participates in the annual International Meeting of Communist and Workers Parties and benefits from extensive bilateral links with scores of parties and national liberation movements around the world. Such links enhance the contribution that the communists in Britain make to the trade union, peace, solidarity and other movements.

The basis, outlook, organisation and internationalism of the Communist Party enable it to combine theory with practice effectively. It engages in the battle of ideas while at the same time assisting the labour and progressive movements to fight consciously and strategically across every front, and not just from day to day. As the Marxist party with the longest and deepest roots in the labour movement, communists therefore have a fundamentally different approach to the often superficial, opportunistic, short-term and limited politics of the Labour Party and other reformist organisations.

The Communist Party's class basis, historical experience and Marxist-Leninist outlook also distinguish it from many Trotskyist, Maoist or anarchist groups. These are usually notable for their 'ultra-left' slogans and adventurist tactics, combined with a sectarian approach that puts the interests of their own organisation above those of the labour movement.

But this does not make the Communist Party immune from criticism and mistakes. Indeed, the party had to be re-established in 1988 after revisionist and anti-democratic trends, especially in the leadership, threatened to destroy it.

Within the Labour Party and some far-left parties there are many socialists who make a vital contribution to the working class and progressive movements, and with whom the Communist Party works closely on the basis of common aims and policies. But it is the Communist Party's strategic and political outlook, expressed above all in its programme, which enables communists to analyse the major struggles – including that for socialism itself – and to identify the potential allies at each stage. In this way, on the basis of cooperation and mutual respect, it seeks to give guidance and win leadership

in the mass movement that must be built for socialist revolution.

In order to play its vital role in every stage of the revolutionary process, the Communist Party constantly seeks to strengthen its organisation and improve its membership in both quantity and quality, especially through the systematic study and application of the basic principles of dialectical and historical materialism, the philosophy of Marxism.

A loose association of communists, whether or not part of a wider political party or alliance, would not provide the type of organisation, the resources, the independence of thought, the freedom of action and the international relations that enable the Communist Party to exercise influence and leadership.

This does not preclude affiliation to the Labour Party or other bodies on a genuinely federal basis, where communists retain their separate organisation and the capacity to act independently. But history and experience show that a powerful, influential Communist Party is essential if a mass movement for revolutionary change is to succeed.

Socialists and progressives who broadly agree with the Communist Party's programme should consider joining the party and help put Britain on the road to socialism.

WHAT KIND of strategy would unite the maximum forces for progress, reforms and socialism in Britain at each stage of the revolutionary process?

Its starting point must be to identify the strategic dimensions of this process. In doing so, the Alternative Economic and Political Strategy (AEPS) sets out to engage in the class struggle on the economic, political and ideological fronts.

It also proposes the kind of policies that can promote the interests of the working class and the mass of the peoples of Britain, bringing together a broad alliance of forces that can strive to make inroads into the wealth and power of the capitalist class. Such a left-wing programme (LWP) would need to embrace important economic, environmental, social, cultural, financial, democratic and foreign policy questions. One of its key objectives must be to eliminate the gross inequalities in income and wealth between the nations and regions of Britain, based ultimately as they are on class exploitation and inequality.

This struggle against the policies of British state-monopoly capitalism can open the road to socialism, although any strategy for such fundamental change must be able to outline the distinct stages of revolutionary transformation. This in turn raises the question of how a popular, democratic anti-monopoly alliance would seek political power, including the role of elections and governments.

Working-class and progressive unity

Clearly, building a powerful alliance for change would have to take into account the differing conditions in Scotland and in Wales, not least because each has its own parliament or assembly with distinctive politics and policies. The European and wider international dimensions would also have to be taken fully into account.

Nonetheless, the reality is that most of the capitalist monopolies based in Britain depend on state power exercised at British – not Scottish, Welsh, English, European or global – level. Despite the significance of inward investment and international markets, the predominant economic relations in Britain are domestic rather than international. Most production is for home consumption and most consumption and productive investment – including that controlled by overseas TNCs – is supplied from within the British economy, not from outside. Likewise, monopoly capitalist political power is exercised primarily through the apparatus of the British state. That is why the labour movement and its allies must propose an alternative economic and political strategy (AEPS) to that of the capitalist monopolies and the British state.

The struggle for such a strategy will undoubtedly be weakened if it is divided separately between Scotland, Wales and England while the ruling capitalist class remains organised and united at the British level. That is why the type of AEPS favoured by the Communist Party emphasises the need to maintain and

enhance unity between the labour and progressive movements, across the three nations of Britain.

The Communist Party does not advocate separation, because it would fracture working class and progressive unity in the face of a largely united ruling capitalist class. It might also cause substantial economic dislocation as big business uses threats and promises on jobs and investment to exert pressure on Scottish, Welsh and English governments to outbid each other in 'business-friendly' and 'pro-market' policies. Moreover, 'independence' would prove illusory in nations whose economy is still dominated by the capitalist monopolies, the Bank of England and – should the SNP and Plaid Cymru get their way – the anti-democratic, imperialist EU or its 'single European market' rules, and whose foreign policy is framed by NATO and the EU.

Of course, should the peoples of Scotland or Wales express a preference to secede from the United Kingdom, their wishes must be respected and negotiations take place to settle the terms of separation on an equitable basis. For communists, the question of separation for Scotland and Wales is one of revolutionary strategy for united working-class struggle against the British ruling class, not of supporting or opposing the union of the three nations of Britain in principle.

The fight on three fronts

The ruling capitalist class wages its political class struggle on three main, distinct but inter-connected fronts: the economic, the political, and the ideological and cultural. This requires corresponding responses from the labour and progressive movements.

On the economic front, the main strategic goal must be to maintain and improve the living standards of working people and their families at every stage of life, based on full employment in a modern, productive, balanced and sustainable domestic economy. Strong, democratic and independent trade unions are central to fighting for this goal, in alliance with other progressive movements representing particular interests or sections of the population. Central to the labour movement's progress, therefore, must be a concerted, strategic drive to restore free collective bargaining in all key sectors of the economy, raising wages, improving conditions and putting an end to all forms of the super-exploitation of labour. There also needs to be an expanding agenda to promote industrial democracy and workers control.

But if the working class is to put an end to exploitation and oppression altogether, the trade union struggle against employers must go beyond this specific economic goal to embrace the political relation between workers and the state. Industrial militancy is not enough. It is necessary to combat the outlook that sees the fight on economic issues as sufficient in itself. In fact, this fight needs to be linked with a political perspective if it is to produce lasting gains for the working class.

Politically, the labour and progressive movements must have their own organisations to fight for policies and reforms, including in the electoral arena. Here the main strategic goals are to protect and extend democratic freedoms and to take the political struggle into every sphere of the state apparatus – not least parliament, the government and the civil service – to try to impose the interests of the working class and the people generally. The movements need to develop their own organisations in collective action to win their objectives at each stage. In so doing, they will gain vital experience for exercising state power themselves when the time comes.

On the ideological front, the left and the labour and progressive movements have to engage consistently, creatively and rigorously in the battle of ideas against those of the ruling class. A mass understanding must be developed that democracy is not an institution but a process of emancipation. People must be won to participate in the struggle to ensure that all their legitimate needs are met. Notions of 'free enterprise', 'the free market' and 'social partnership'; ideas of national or racial superiority or exclusiveness; sexism, ageism, homophobia, anti-communism, obscurantism, sectionalism and nihilism all serve to divide, disorientate or undermine the working class and the struggle for socialism. To these should be counterposed the ideas and values of cooperation, planning, collective and class interests, the common good, liberation and social justice, multiculturalism, internationalism, rational materialist thought and human liberation. These strengthen the struggle for socialism.

The role of art and culture as a liberating force that can stimulate as well as stifle human development has to be fully appreciated. It is an important medium through which the values, notions, prejudices and thought processes that serve the interests of capitalism must be challenged.

Through the education system, too, the ruling class seeks to propagate its ideas, values and views which must be challenged by the anti-imperialist left. The content of the national curriculum and associated teaching environments, materials and methods is of enormous significance in the ideological struggle.

On all three fronts, the *Morning Star* as the daily paper of the labour movement and the left, with its editorial policy based on Britain's road to socialism, plays an indispensable role in informing, educating and helping to mobilise the forces for progress and revolution. As such, it needs and deserves the support of all socialists, communists and progressives, so that it can further strengthen the working-class movement and its allies in the battles ahead.

The Left-Wing Programme

As well as stepping up the resistance to the policies of the capitalist monopolies and their state, and securing solidarity and coordination wherever possible, the labour and progressive movements need a unifying programme of alternative policies.

Such a coherent, integrated left-wing programme is therefore a vital component of the AEPS. It will give direction to all those fighting against right-wing policies and the capitalist monopolies, adding to their confidence and combativeness as realisable advances are won.

But in important respects, the Left-Wing Programme (LWP) goes further. While showing how policies in different spheres can reinforce one another, it lays the basis for even more advanced policies from a left-wing government at a later stage in the revolutionary process. That is why it must be debated, adopted and fought for at every level of the labour and progressive movements, making possible the kind of popular movement and mass struggle essential for victory.

Building a productive, sustainable economy

The LWP will have to include policies to end the City of London's financial domination of Britain's economy and central government fiscal, financial and economic policies. Such a programme should aim to rebalance the economy, strengthen productive industry, develop hi-tech manufacturing, invest more in our public services, eliminate gross inequality, assist Third World development and help safeguard our planet's ecosystem.

Full employment must be restored as a central objective of government economic policy. Public and private sector investment should be directed into manufacturing and productive industry, with controls imposed on the export of capital. Exporting more hi-tech goods and services to developing countries would help meet their economic and social needs while sustaining productive employment in Britain. Through a comprehensive system of planning agreements, and with the fullest participation of workers and their unions, the government committed to the LWP would make sure that major private companies pursue investment, employment, pensions and other policies that serve the interests of workers, the economy and society.

Democratic public ownership of the financial sector, gas, electricity, water, oil, pharmaceuticals, railways, buses, road haulage and air travel is the only basis on which to plan, modernise, integrate and manage these vital sectors and resources in the interests of society and the environment. Such an approach would help extend rail and tram networks and a massive transfer of freight from road and air to rail and water. An integrated transport system would address the menace of air pollution and would also greatly enhance the safety of people cycling and walking in urban areas. Measures to make more journeys either unnecessary or less noxious would curb greenhouse gas emissions.

Cooperative, municipal and other forms of social enterprise and common ownership can provide an alternative to capitalist enterprise and a glimpse of post-capitalist possibilities, although at this stage they have to work within the confines of capitalism's monopoly-dominated 'free' market.

The LWP would also need policies to invest massively in public services and

end all forms of privatisation. These could include the raising of funds through public sector bonds, financed through economic growth and higher tax revenues.

Offering financial and tax incentives and directing private sector investment would stimulate regional economic development.

A shorter working week and standard working life, with no loss of pay, would help ensure that investment in new technology does not lead to an overall loss of jobs. All young people should be guaranteed fully paid employment, good-quality training or apprenticeship, or a free place in higher or further education. Mass redundancies should be outlawed in viable enterprises, while strategic enterprises threatened by closure are taken into democratic public ownership. Advertising, financial and property services should be limited and their socially useful functions transferred to public bodies. Hostile buy-outs based on debt and asset-stripping must be stopped, along with speculation in commodities, securities and derivatives.

Support for local communities in the countryside will also need specific measures to provide well-paid employment in farming, forestry, conservation and tertiary industries including light engineering, manufacturing and construction. Sustainable agricultural production should be expanded with adequate state support for investment and environmentally beneficial improvement, but subsidies ended to big landowners and agribusiness. Britain should aim to become more self-sufficient in food production, with support for small and tenant farmers, including incentives for cooperative initiatives. Landed estates, luxury tourist establishments and 'second' homes must be brought under the democratic control of local communities. No longer will large landowners, property developers and big business be permitted to impose unwanted development against the wishes of local people.

Securing the economic base of rural communities will help ensure the future of vital local school, public transport, postal and communication services, supported where necessary by central government funding. Such policies are especially necessary if young people are to have a viable and fulfilling future in our rural communities.

We face a global environmental catastrophe caused by the continued extraction and burning of fossil fuels. The brunt of its effects is already being felt by working people worldwide. Global warming, climate change, agricultural failure, rising sea levels and economic devastation are the direct result of capitalism's inability to disengage from fossil fuels. Some mitigation is possible – improved fuel efficiency, carbon capture and green energy – but in the last resort, in order to avoid global catastrophe, fossil fuels must be left in the ground.

A huge expansion of wind, tidal, geothermal and solar power is vital to meet strict targets for phasing out carbon emissions. Policies might include installing solar panels in all large and new public and private sector buildings and harnessing river estuary tidal power through lagoon and submarine turbine technology.

As an interim measure in the transition to a low-carbon economy, Britain's substantial deep-mined coal reserves could be utilised but only with clean-coal and carbon capture technology. This would provide an alternative to the massive open-cast developments which scar the landscape and blight nearby communities through traffic and other pollution. Likewise, fracking for shale gas or oil threatens these and other harmful consequences and should be banned.

Increased reliance on nuclear fission as a source of energy remains a costly, dangerous and hugely irresponsible option. The consequences of large-scale radioactive contamination are calamitous. Decommissioning obsolete plant is enormously expensive. Eliminating or storing waste safely and permanently cannot yet be done. The by-product of nuclear power generation – plutonium – provides the otherwise scarce core material for most nuclear weapons.

Nuclear fusion, on the other hand, neither requires uranium (another core material when further enriched) nor produces plutonium. This safer technology could supply the planet's population with most, if not all, of its power. But major technical problems mean that research and development have been expensive and unprofitable. That is why private monopoly capital refused to invest in it. Britain's nuclear fusion programme, part of an international effort based here, should be kept in the public sector and hugely expanded as part of the drive against carbon emissions and global warming. Likewise, research should be intensified into alternative fission technology based on the use of thorium. It could prove to be safer and more efficient than uranium, does not produce weapon material and can burn up toxic waste and plutonium from scrapped nuclear plants and bombs.

National programmes of energy efficiency and conservation and of waste disposal, reduction and recycling would use the most advanced energy-efficient and environmentally friendly technology. They should include policies to support homeworking, to bring jobs closer to where people live and to encourage greater use of public rather than private transport.

However, even the shift to renewable energy might not guarantee that ever-rising energy needs can be met without much higher production and storage costs. Before the era of relatively cheap energy – despite the profiteering – comes to an end, there will have to be a transition to lower overall energy use.

For social justice and democratic culture

The main social policies of the LWP must aim to raise people's living standards, sharply reduce social inequality, attack all forms of discrimination and encourage people's own cultural creativity.

The LWP will therefore need to include policies to increase state pensions, benefits and the national minimum wage substantially, linking them to rising earnings or prices and ending all discrimination against women and young workers. Compulsory equal pay audits across the private and public sectors would provide a clear framework for trade union and legal action to achieve

equal pay for work of equal value in all workplaces. It is also important to provide training and retraining programmes for workers of all ages, especially women and ethnic minorities, thereby allowing them entry into more skilled, secure and better-paid jobs. The age of voluntary retirement should be reduced for all, with no loss of pension entitlements, thereby making jobs available for the next generation of workers.

Stronger legislation will need to be rigorously enforced against all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex, gender, race, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, etc. The right of women to control their own bodies necessarily involves the right to free contraception and abortion across Britain.

Pregnant women in any form of custody must be treated with care and dignity up to and during childbirth. A comprehensive network of services and refuges for victims of domestic violence must be established throughout Britain, properly funded and regulated.

A massive drive has to be launched to build more council houses, especially in inner-city and rural communities, and to take over long-term empty properties for socially useful purposes. All social housing should be brought back under local authority control, with adequate funding and the re-establishment of direct labour organisations. There is also a need for effective controls on the quality and cost of private rented accommodation, limits on ownership and an increase in the rights of tenants and their organisations. Discrimination in housing law, including that suffered by Romani people and travellers, should be ended. Free or affordable sheltered accommodation and residential care must be available for the elderly, together with free domestic fuel and public transport.

All measures to weaken, break up, commercialise or privatise the National Health Service (NHS) must be halted and reversed. Medical treatment must remain free at the point of delivery, funded largely through progressive taxation. This must include prescription drugs across Britain, while positive alternatives must also be found to the over-reliance on them promoted by the pharmaceutical industry. NHS coverage should be extended for cancer screening and dental treatment. The objective must be to drive profiteering out of the NHS, while involving workers and users more closely in consultative and administrative functions. Health and social care provision should be integrated on the basis of adequate funding and democratic control.

The ever-growing number of people with mental health problems requires not only greater resources for the NHS. New approaches to psychiatry, diagnosis and treatment should take the material conditions of our society as their starting-point and, wherever appropriate, rely less on medication and incarceration.

Widespread drug abuse, crime and anti-social behaviour are – more than anything else – the results of capitalist society's inability to provide all of life's essentials, real opportunities and a fulfilling existence for the mass of people. One of the greatest achievements of the countries building socialism was to reduce violent and other anti-social criminality to very low levels, based mainly

on people's respect for one another and for personal and social property.

In place of an anti-working class criminal justice system which criminalises and imprisons large numbers of petty and non-violent offenders, we need one which understands the value of community and accountable policing, crime prevention, rehabilitation, education, literacy, training, youth services and physical and mental healthcare. An enlightened criminal justice system would endeavour to provide offenders with alternative paths in their own interests and those of society at large. Constructive alternatives to custody should be developed for most non-violent offenders. The decriminalisation of drug use would signal the end of a failed and counter-productive policy. Drug abuse and addiction need to be combated through school and public health education, combined with substantial investment in treatment, not least within the prison system.

The prison and probation services must be brought back fully into the public sector as part of a comprehensive, integrated and democratically accountable approach. The staff and institutions that deliver all these programmes must also be funded fully, recognising that this outlay will be more than repaid as levels of violent, anti-social and self-destructive behaviour fall.

Members of criminal gangs who continue their anti-social activities, regardless of the opportunities offered by progressive economic, social and cultural policies, would be subjected to the full force of the law.

The education system should be of the highest quality, adequately staffed and free to all. Improving nursery and childcare provision and making it available to all, funded by the public and private sectors, will not only benefit the children themselves. It will also make sure that women with children can escape casual work on the margins and obtain jobs in the mainstream of the economy.

The principle of a comprehensive, secular primary and secondary education system must be resolutely upheld and, wherever possible, extended. Breaking up and privatising the current state system, separating children along religious lines and removing schools from democratic control has plunged Britain's education system into a new age of gross inequality, privilege and divisive sectarianism. Academy trusts and so-called 'free' school status should therefore be scrapped and all schools restored to democratic local authority control. The abolition of charitable status for private schools would be the prelude to their incorporation into the public sector.

Further and higher education, including the universities, must be accessible to every section of society, with grants generous enough to support students without recourse to loans or family contributions. Maintenance grants should be the right of all adults engaged in full-time study, with no place for tuition fees or graduate taxes. Large companies should be obliged to provide many more properly paid, high-quality apprenticeships with day-release at colleges and universities.

Social harmony and good community relations can only be promoted on the basis of multiculturalism and secularism, respecting and celebrating cultural diversity while opposing oppressive ideas and practices in all cultures and

religions. Freedom of religious belief and worship must be guaranteed for all, with no privileges for any one religion or church in the machinery of state.

The state must vigorously enforce laws against racial hatred and discrimination. But this should not be relied upon as a substitute for mass mobilisations to deny all platforms to racists and fascists, drowning them in a sea of popular, democratic activity.

On the cultural front, the left and the labour movement have to develop and sustain a cultural struggle against capitalism. This means recognising and valuing the essentially social, liberating nature of the arts and of many popular cultural activities. The state has an important role to play in promoting, supporting, and regulating cultural activities which are too essential to human development and wellbeing to be left to the 'free market' to deliver. A wide range of campaigns need to be developed to initiate and extend working class and popular participation, self-organisation, creativity, democratic control and social ownership.

There is also a need for policies to promote the Welsh, Scots Gaelic and Cornish languages in economic, social, political and cultural life. All immigrants to Britain must have opportunities to learn English and the language of their new home area if Welsh or Scots Gaelic, free of charge. The rights of all citizens should be protected as everyone is encouraged to make their distinctive contribution to Britain as a multicultural society.

Funding the Left-Wing Programme

Such an ambitious range of economic, social and cultural policies will have to be financed through a more progressive tax regime and revised public spending priorities. The LWP might therefore include policies to:

- Increase tax rates on higher rates of income.
- Levy an annual wealth tax on the richest section of the population.
- Impose a 'Robin Hood' tax on City financial transactions.
- Increase the rate of corporation tax on the profits of large companies.
- Place a windfall tax on monopoly profits in specific industries as necessary.
- Close all tax havens under British jurisdiction.
- Develop more effective mechanisms to tackle tax avoidance and evasion by transnational companies and wealthy individuals.
- Cut or abolish VAT on essential goods and services.
- Replace the council tax with local income, wealth, land and property taxes based clearly on the ability to pay.
- Renegotiate and, where appropriate, cancel Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contracts in order to eliminate excessive corporate profiteering.
- Cut British military spending and end all state subsidies for armaments exports.
- Control movements of capital in and out of Britain.

Over time, as inequalities in income and wealth are eroded, economic growth would expand the basis for increased tax revenues.

Extending and deepening democratic rights

The struggle to promote the economic and social interests of working people is directly linked with the battle to expand democracy against the power of big business. The institutions of state and their top officials must be made answerable to elected representatives, who in turn must be fully accountable to the people. More extensive democratic rights are necessary, not least so that people and their organisations can take action more freely and effectively.

The LWP should therefore include measures to restore the democratic and civil liberties abolished or eroded by Conservative and Labour governments since 1979, especially those relating to assembly, demonstration and detention without charge.

This would also mean repealing the anti-trade union laws so that trade unionists are free to govern their own organisations and decide their own policies. The right to take industrial and solidarity action without the threat of sequestration and imprisonment is a fundamental human right, enshrined in international law. Full trade union rights must be extended to police and prison officers, intelligence staff and armed forces personnel, who should also be encouraged to study and discuss the wider social, civic and political context in which they operate.

All workers should qualify for full and equal rights at work from day one of a job with automatic enrolment in an appropriate trade union. Zero-hour contracts must be outlawed. Workers and their trade union representatives should have more extensive rights to consultation and veto over company plans for restructuring, mass redundancy or closure.

Britain's asylum, immigration and nationality laws must be purged of all direct and indirect racial discrimination, and the internment centres for asylum seekers must be closed. Law and practice must distinguish between refugees, immigrants, and migrant workers. To counter the super-exploitation of foreign workers, and the resulting divisions in the working class, all workers must have the most favourable wages and conditions negotiated by British trade unions.

So that Britain's parliaments and assemblies more closely represent the preferences of the electors, they should be elected by single transferable vote in multi-member constituencies. This would bring about proportional representation without breaking the direct link between elected representatives and meaningful local constituencies. Such representatives would be made constantly accountable if electors had the right to petition for a by-election.

Political parties should not receive any state funding, so that they have to rely largely on voluntary donations from the people they claim to represent. There should be a cap on individual private donations. Corporate political donations should be submitted to a ballot of the employers and employees of the enterprise concerned.

Setting the age of adulthood, including the right to vote, at 16 would reflect the other freedoms and responsibilities acquired by many young people at that age.

The role of the mass media in promoting and sustaining democratic rights

would be transformed by breaking up monopoly ownership and control. Greater diversity of sources and views, a statutory right of reply and an end to the use of injunctions and libel laws by the wealthy and powerful would hugely expand media freedom in Britain.

To revive and develop community participation, accountability and self-government, powers and resources should be restored to local government in areas such as business taxation, council housing, management of schools, public transport and contract procurement and compliance.

The House of Lords should be abolished and the Church of England disestablished as the official state church. Wherever possible, powers repatriated from the EU and its institutions should be devolved to democratically elected national, regional and local bodies.

In England, regional mayors should be replaced by democratic regional assemblies with members elected by a proportional representation system (such as a Single Transferable Vote in multi-seat constituencies) and with powers to develop regional economies using public ownership, state aid and public procurement.

The distinctive national, cultural, economic and social characteristics of Cornwall should be expressed through a directly elected Cornish Assembly, with powers that match local aspirations. Further steps need to be taken to promote the Cornish language in schools – especially as a medium of education and play at nursery, infant and junior levels – and on public signs and notices.

For progressive federalism

It is essential that the Scottish Parliament and Welsh National Assembly have the full economic, legislative and financial powers necessary to protect and develop the economic, social and cultural interests of their peoples. Such powers and resources are particularly important for the Scottish and Welsh governments to enable them to intervene decisively in the economy, to exercise popular sovereignty over monopoly and market forces.

Communists advocate a federalism that is progressive. This means it should aid and not hinder any attempt to shift the balance of power in favour of the majority and enable working people and their allies to exercise increasing control over the allocation of resources at federal, national and regional level. Its institutions must be able to respond to the democratically endorsed demands of an anti-monopoly alliance, expressed through political parties, to shift wealth and power away from monopoly control. A British federal parliament, elected by STV in multi-member constituencies, would have jurisdiction over foreign affairs, defence, macro-economic policy and national insurance, the power to raise taxes on wealth and income and the responsibility to redistribute income among the nations and regions on the basis of social need. National parliaments in Scotland, Wales and England together with English regional assemblies should be elected on the same basis, with powers to raise revenue and specifically to advance

democratic control through public ownership, state investment and public procurement. A federal upper chamber elected by the national parliaments and regional assemblies should have responsibility for upholding national and regional rights and revising all legislation.

Such a coherent class-based policy of progressive federalism would also counter the anti-democratic and bogus 'devolution' being promoted by Tory governments, which centralises power in the hands of directly elected mayors, their cabinets and unaccountable big business interests.

The special status enjoyed by monopoly capital in the Isle of Man and Channel Isles, which are run as semi-feudal big business fiefdoms, will have to be ended. Instead, the peoples of those islands should be democratically represented in the upper chamber or senate of the British federal parliament, with their own democratic parliaments – Tynwald and the States – strengthened by proportional representation and economic powers like those proposed for Wales and Scotland.

An independent foreign and defence policy

In the international arena, the aim of the LWP must be for Britain to pursue its own foreign policy, independent of the United States and the EU.

Implementing the domestic and international policies of the LWP would have to mean no submission to the treaties, laws, directives or institutions of the EU and its 'single European market'. New bilateral and multilateral agreements would need to be negotiated for mutually beneficial cooperation with European and other countries. In the meantime, and as an independent state, Britain should also reject all attempts by the EU or Council of Europe to equate Communism with the ideology, policies or crimes of fascism and to suppress communist and socialist organisations on that basis.

A left government in Britain would strengthen relations with progressive regimes and movements around the world on the basis of practical and political solidarity.

It would seek to develop fair economic relations, except where people demand the boycott of an oppressive or occupying regime in their own country.

Major new trade and technology agreements with developing countries would bring mutual benefit. British TNCs overseas would be regulated to ensure compliance with the highest labour and environmental standards. Cancelling Third World public debt to British financial TNCs would enable those countries to invest, develop and benefit from fair-trade relations with Britain and other developed economies. It follows that the left government would therefore oppose neoliberal economic and financial policies in all international agencies of which Britain is a member.

Enhancing the United Nations and its associated institutions as agencies for progress will depend on strengthening working-class and anti-imperialist forces at national level. Making the permanent membership of the UN Security Council more representative of the world's peoples, with states such as China

retaining their veto, would provide some counter-balance to the abuse and manipulation of the UN and member states by the imperialist powers.

An independent, progressive foreign policy for Britain would also include support for measures to rid the world of research, testing, deployment, storage and use of all weapons of mass destruction (WMD), including nuclear ones. Unilaterally abolishing nuclear weapons, as Ukraine and South Africa have done, and renouncing all other WMD would enable Britain to promote multilateral nuclear and conventional disarmament more effectively. The resources currently wasted on unnecessary armaments research, development, production, state subsidies and corporate profiteering should be redirected to socially useful purposes, notably in such fields as renewable energy technology and advanced communications, transport and rescue systems.

Britain should retain military forces that are sufficient to deter aggression and to participate in humanitarian activities at home and abroad, in strict compliance with international law.

Clearly, the subservient alliance with US imperialism, including collusion to violate fundamental human rights and international law, would have to cease immediately. All British involvement in military invasions and occupations of other people's countries must also end, as should diplomatic support and arms exports to repressive regimes. The closure of all British military bases overseas will prevent their future use by British, US and NATO forces for aggressive purposes. Any further enlargement of NATO should be opposed. Britain should promote NATO's dissolution while withdrawing from it at the earliest opportunity.

In the absence of any significant progress towards creating an independent, sovereign Palestinian state on the basis of UN resolutions, alongside a secure Israel, the British government should pursue unilateral and multilateral sanctions against the Israeli state and its institutions until real progress is made.

Britain should actively support the legitimate democratic and cultural rights of the Kurdish people and other minorities in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria.

In Ireland, as well as fulfilling all the terms of the Good Friday Agreement in the north, the British government should advocate and offer every kind of support for a peaceful process of Irish reunification by consent. Working with the Irish, Scottish and Welsh governments to strengthen and extend the work of the Council of the Isles would also help create a positive context in which Irish unity could come about.

A popular democratic anti-monopoly alliance

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

Thus, people experience capitalism's negative effects not only in their workplaces, but in their communities and in their social, cultural and leisure activities. Students, pensioners, tenants, environmentalists and other

movements, pressure groups, local community-based bodies, charities and the like challenge significant aspects of the current system, even though they may not always see their stance in ideological or political terms. They embrace people not only from different sections within the working class, but often from other classes and strata in society.

However, if these movements and struggles proceed in isolation from one another, they can only challenge the ruling class on single, isolated issues but not its overall domination and control.

Yet they all face a common enemy: British state-monopoly capitalism, which blocks advance on every front. Here lies the objective basis for uniting these forces in an anti-monopoly alliance, in favour of redeveloping Britain's productive economy and combating the anti-democratic use of state power against the interests of the great majority of people.

Experience of joint campaigning with the labour movement and the left, which can project wider political perspectives, will lead many more activists to a fuller understanding of the nature of capitalist society and why it must be replaced by socialism. If these movements remain apart from the labour movement, not only will they lack its valuable support. The organised working class itself will lose the opportunity to gain valuable experience in its role as the leading force in society for progressive and revolutionary change.

It is imperative, therefore, that the organised working class builds the widest possible alliance with all other movements fighting for progress, democratic rights equality and justice. It will be vital to maintain the unity and respect the sovereignty of all the forces involved.

The left and the labour movement will need to transform an array of defensive battles against the capitalist monopolies, right-wing governments and reactionary policies into a united offensive across a broad front, winning support for the LWP.

The policies of the LWP challenge state-monopoly capitalism on every front. They also advance the interests of broader movements in which the working class is active and other sections of the population who can be won to support substantial aspects of the programme. Thus people will be persuaded through experience that the organised working class alone has the capacity to strengthen and lead a popular democratic anti-monopoly alliance.

This alliance will be popular because it will win the support and embrace the interests of the people as a whole, seeking to achieve their sovereignty over the monopoly capitalist minority. It will be democratic because it is posed against the anti-democratic essence of state-monopoly capitalism and seeks to mobilise the collective power of the working class and its allies against it.

The labour movement has to win its leading role by fighting for the whole range of policies in the LWP and respecting the independence and particular interests of other progressive movements.

Winning a left government

The first stage in the revolutionary process in Britain will be signified by a substantial and sustained shift to the left in the labour movement, growing support for key policies of the LWP among the working class and the population more widely, and the development of an anti-monopoly alliance of forces across a range of battles and campaigns.

Belief in the right of the people to decide who governs them is deeply rooted in England, Scotland and Wales. The opening stage in Britain's socialist revolution will therefore have to culminate in the election of a left-wing government at Westminster, based on a socialist, Labour, communist and progressive majority at the polls. A left-led Labour government elected on a social-democratic manifesto by a minority of the popular vote would not represent such a development, although it would mark a significant advance and intensify the political class struggle.

Moreover, it will be very important to win the election of left and progressive governments in England, Scotland and Wales, also backed by a popular democratic anti-monopoly alliance of forces but with the possible involvement of left and progressive elements in the Welsh and Scottish national movements.

Whether such governments are won with or without electoral alliances or pacts is less important than the need for socialists and communists to approach electoral strategy with a combination of political principle and tactical flexibility.

Different levels of left cooperation, coordination and unity are possible in election periods, although the Communist Party's preference is to build strategic alliances based on mass campaigning in between elections rather than rely upon short-term, expedient tactical agreements.

Mass, active, popular and working-class support will be essential to implement key policies of the LWP. The peoples of Britain are unlikely to give such support without also having the opportunity to express it in the electoral arena. Indeed, such democratic endorsement will be vital in order to mobilise the working class and its allies to overcome all forms of resistance and sabotage, as a left-wing government implements policies that challenge the interests of big business and the state apparatus.

It is likely that such developments will also produce new forms of working-class and progressive organisation. The history of resistance and revolutionary movements in every country is that they give rise to new forms of self-organisation. In Britain, working class and popular struggle produced the Working Men's Associations, the National and Female Charter Associations, workers' and consumers' cooperatives, workers' and soldiers' councils, councils of action, the People's Convention, the National Assembly of Women, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions, miners' support groups, Women Against Pit Closures, anti-poll tax unions and the Stop the War Coalition.

The financial crisis of 2007-08 led to one of the fastest growing mass

movements in Britain's history. After the Communist Party and some left-led trade unions had launched the People's Charter against New Labour neoliberal policies, a broad coalition of left, community and labour movement forces came together in the Coalition of Resistance and then the People's Assembly Against Austerity. Big national demonstrations were held as more than one hundred local People's Assembly groups united with unions, trades union councils and NHS, women's, pensioners', disability, housing and other campaigns to challenge government cuts and privatisations at every level. This upsurge of militancy and politicisation helped lay the basis for the mass influx of young people and trade unionists into the Labour Party to elect a socialist as its leader.

The People's Assembly movement illustrates how the forces drawn to the popular democratic anti-monopoly alliance will take new forms and create new structures. It will be important that these play a full role in the AEPS as it unfolds.

Communists also understand that electing a left government guarantees nothing. Democratic rights are limited, distorted and precarious in a capitalist society. They do not extend into people's working lives, which comprise up to one-half of their waking hours. They can be countermanded by the enormous wealth and power of the capitalist class and its mass media. Furthermore, capitalist democracy can itself be eroded by the actions of the government and the state. Even the much-proclaimed 'sovereignty of parliament' is contradicted in reality by the power of the executive, the state apparatus, the mass media, the monopoly capitalists and their 'market forces', the EU and international agencies such as NATO, the IMF and the WTO.

Experience also indicates that the British ruling class and its allies can be utterly ruthless in defending their interests, not only through the use of state power at home but also abroad through the use of economic sabotage, military force, anti-democratic subversion, military dictatorship, state torture and death squads.

This underlines the need for a popular democratic anti-monopoly alliance to secure the greatest possible support for policies that challenge any aspect of state-monopoly capitalism. A left government in Britain will need to be rooted in mass extra-parliamentary campaigning and militancy if it is to survive and succeed.

ELECTING A left government committed to the alternative economic and political strategy (AEPS) and its left-wing programme (LWP) will mark the transition of the revolutionary process to a second stage.

This stage will be characterised by a combined parliamentary and extra-parliamentary struggle to implement major policies of the LWP. The left government will need to work closely with – and be held to account by – the labour movement and the other forces of the popular democratic anti-monopoly alliance, mobilising the maximum support inside and outside parliament.

Every effort will have to be made to involve the labour and progressive movements, and new organisations formed in the course of mass action, in formulating policy, strategy and tactics and enforcing government measures based on the LWP.

Because European Union fundamental treaties and institutions cannot be radically reformed without unanimous agreement between all member states, a left government in Britain would need to be free from all the neoliberal and anti-socialist provisions of the EU Single Market. It must be able to assert the principle of popular sovereignty in order to develop free and equal trading, commercial and political relations with other countries across the globe – including those in Europe – and to act in solidarity with oppressed peoples, promoting such values in the United Nations and other international bodies.

The drive to implement the LWP will undoubtedly meet with resistance from powerful sections of the capitalist class and from within the state itself. The British ruling class will seek support from anti-socialist allies within Britain and abroad, in the world's financial and currency markets, the boardrooms of transnational corporations, the institutions of the EU, the US government, NATO, the WTO and the IMF.

The example of Chile demonstrates the willingness of the US and British ruling classes to destroy long-established parliamentary democracy in order to defend imperialist interests. In 1973, the elected Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende was overthrown by a military coup orchestrated by the US administration, carried out by Chilean generals and backed by US transnational corporations and Chilean landowners. Policies of progressive nationalisation were reversed by 'made in the USA' neoliberalism. British governments subsequently lent military, financial and trading assistance to that murderous dictatorship.

The defeat in Chile confirmed the importance of limiting the opportunities for outside interference, understanding the difference between government office and state power, replacing reactionary personnel in top state positions, consolidating broad alliances (and curbing ultra-leftist adventurism), building a Communist Party able to exercise decisive influence and developing a military policy that relies upon the mass of the people.

In Britain, the popular movement – with the organised working class at its core – and the left government would need to be organised and ready to counter and overcome all covert and overt counter-revolutionary activities.

The international balance of forces

The damage that could be inflicted on a left government and its programme from outside should not be underestimated.

The major capitalist economies face a structural crisis of corporate and banking debt, low levels of productive investment and declining productivity. Globally, these features are combined with continuing instability in the commodity markets, growing concentration of monopoly control and increasingly uneven economic and political development between nations. As monopoly capital intensifies its drive for exploitation and domination, backed by state power in the main imperialist countries, a new political and economic offensive has been launched against those governments and states that do not submit to US and Western imperialism's diktats. This offensive includes systematic attempts to destabilise progressive governments in Latin America and southern Africa and increasing economic and military pressure on Russia and China.

A left government in Britain could therefore expect to face the threat of economic and financial boycotts and sanctions; attacks on the pound sterling; an investment strike; capital flight; a huge political propaganda offensive; and diktats from the EU Commission, the European Central Bank and the EU and EFTA courts should Britain still be under their jurisdiction in any way. All and more are possible as international capitalism seeks to block Britain's road to socialism.

Yet the ability of a left government and its allies to resist these dangers should not be underestimated either.

The policies in the LWP are intended to reduce vulnerability to outside pressure and sabotage. This can be done, for instance, by taking strategic sectors and enterprises in the British economy into public ownership. Imposing exchange and capital controls, closing down tax havens and taxing the wealthy and monopoly profits would counter an attack on sterling and reduce the need for government borrowing.

The re-emergence of capitalism's general crisis has generated mass opposition to its most important aspects in many countries. Anti-globalisation, anti-war and environmentalist movements continue to challenge capitalism's severe deficiencies as an economic and social system. Workers and their trade unions are fighting back against deregulation, privatisation, cuts in public and welfare services, low paid and precarious employment, mass redundancies and the use of non-union labour to undermine trade union rights and terms and conditions of employment. As ever, communists and socialists come to the fore in such battles, providing strategic leadership.

Clearly, a left government and mass movement in Britain will need to seek

allies in the international arena, strengthening economic and political relations with non-imperialist and developing countries and exploiting inter-imperialist contradictions where necessary, without compromising integrity and fundamental principles. Communist, left-wing, progressive, anti-imperialist and non-aligned governments abroad may be in a position to extend diplomatic, political and economic assistance. In this context, for example, the emergence of China as a major world power could prove to be very important to the revolutionary process in Britain as elsewhere.

The trade union, left-wing, peace and environmental movements in other countries would be called upon to exert pressure or take action in solidarity with their allies in Britain. Certainly, there is every prospect that the international links of Britain's working-class, progressive and communist movements will continue to develop. Broadening and deepening such relations would already have been a very high priority for all sections of the popular democratic anti-monopoly alliance.

Above all, it is unlikely that substantial political advances in Britain would have been made in isolation. Working-class and revolutionary movements in other advanced capitalist countries in Europe and in Latin America, Africa and Asia may also be putting their own ruling class under increasing pressure.

In any event, communists do not accept that there is a law of history that makes it impossible to achieve socialist revolution in one country before others, or that one of the wealthiest, most developed societies in the world is incapable of proceeding to construct its own model of socialism. The uneven economic and political development of capitalism makes it possible to break weak links in the imperialist chain. The fundamental contradictions of capitalism ensure that the necessity for socialist revolution suggests itself everywhere, sooner or later.

Taking state power and defeating counter-revolution

Previous experience of social-democratic governments in Britain, notably in the 1960s and 1970s, indicates that a real left government must expect attempts at economic and financial sabotage. An investment strike, the flight of capital, an attack on Britain's currency, trade sanctions and a boycott of government bills and bonds should all be anticipated.

This is why the left government must take steps to control the movement of capital, close all tax havens under British jurisdiction and use the requisite powers to control and liquidate British-owned economic and financial assets abroad. There may also be tactical value in prioritising the public ownership of sectors or enterprises according to the economic or political threat that they pose to the left government and socialist revolution at any given point.

In order to counteract anti-revolutionary propaganda, the grip of a small number of monopoly conglomerates on the capitalist mass media would have to be decisively broken. A more diverse pattern of ownership and control in

the print, broadcasting, film, telecommunications and web-based media would reflect the wide range of legitimate interests and aspirations in a modern, democratic and tolerant society.

Efforts to publicise and implement even the mildest LWP policies will meet with resistance inside the civil service and associated public bodies, including regulatory agencies, the Bank of England and the state broadcasting system.

The election of a popular, left government does not mean that the apparatus and forces of the state are now on the side of a fundamental transformation of society. They are not, nor have they ever been, neutral on the question of which socio-economic system should exist.

Key parts of the state apparatus will try to continue operating in the interests of the system for which they were designed, as will many of their top personnel who have been selected, trained and promoted to operate it.

Therefore, the state itself will quickly become a focal point for heightened class struggle. To what extent will the monopoly capitalists and their supporters be able to use the state machine to obstruct the LWP? Will the working class and its allies be able to take control of the administrative and political apparatus, restructure and then replace it with one designed to dismantle capitalism and construct a system that serves the interests of society as a whole?

From the outset, the left government will have to introduce extensive changes in recruitment, staffing and management policies within the civil and diplomatic services, the judiciary, the police, the secret services and armed forces in order to replace key personnel with supporters of the revolutionary process.

The police, secret services and armed forces will have to be made fully and openly answerable to elected representatives of the people at national and British levels. Their functions and priorities will need to be reviewed and, in some respects, altered fundamentally. The introduction of wide-ranging trade union rights and civic education programmes will also help to break down oppressive and reactionary ideas and practices. Substantial improvements in the terms and conditions of employment of uniformed as well as civilian public servants will show them that the left government upholds the interests of all workers.

The state's corps of military reservists would have to be expanded and linked with large workplaces and local working-class communities. The trade union movement could be involved in its recruitment, education and administration. Over time, reflecting the development of an independent foreign policy based on peaceful coexistence, the balance of resources will tilt away from a full-time selective professional army towards popular military reservists with specialised professional units.

Throughout this process, the positive involvement of public sector trade unions will be essential. At every stage, they are well placed to help develop policies which aim to defend working-class and popular interests. It will also be vital to secure the widest possible public support. This is more likely to be

forthcoming if the left government's policies regularly receive democratic endorsement by the people in elections and referendums, and all parliamentary means are used in the effort to implement the government's programme.

New bodies of working-class and popular power are likely to be necessary to monitor or take over state functions and ensure implementation of the LWP. These are likely to emerge from the class struggle itself as trades unions, community organisations and other forms of popular action engage in the contest for power at local, regional, national and state level. Communists will seek to work within such new structures in order to maximise their potential for revolutionary change.

The drive to implement key LWP policies relating to the state, capital controls, media ownership and alignment with the EU or NATO will almost certainly meet the most determined resistance from monopoly capital and its forces within and outside the state apparatus.

Enormous confrontations will signify that the revolutionary process has entered its third, most crucial stage, following those in which the left government has taken office and then, with the mass movement, fought to enact the LWP. These new confrontations will decide whether the monopoly finance capitalists retain state power or have it taken from them by the working class and its allies.

It is also at this point that different and even contradictory interests within the popular democratic anti-monopoly alliance might come most sharply to the fore, encouraged and exploited from within the ruling class. In such circumstances, the left government and the labour movement will have to make enormous efforts to maintain the unity of the alliance through the best prioritisation of policies and choice of tactics, short of undermining or abandoning the revolutionary process itself. In particular, new forms and ways of cooperating together will have to develop to ensure that unity is maintained and cemented between the forces in the alliance and the new left government.

If progress in implementing key policies of the LWP has been obstructed to a significant extent, then the revolutionary movement and its left government, facing an unfavourable balance of forces, might have to pursue other policies in the LWP, rather than proceed immediately with those likely to spark decisive confrontations of state power.

If, on the other hand, substantial inroads have already been made into the wealth and power of the finance capitalists, conditions will be all the more favourable for taking the advanced measures necessary to remove political power from their hands, decisively and completely.

The ruling class will battle for its very survival and can be expected to use every weapon at its disposal against the revolutionary movement and the left government.

For example, as in the 1970s, private armies might form under the direction of ex-military chiefs, supported by big business leaders and sections of the mass media. This possibility will be reduced by the measures already proposed

to democratise and unionise the armed forces and to break monopoly power, not least in the media.

Direct foreign military intervention against a left government in Britain with mass support is unlikely. Nevertheless, there is the possibility that US and NATO military bases in Britain might become centres of intrigue and subversion. Once again, this underlines the need for an elected left government to move swiftly to close all foreign military bases in Britain and withdraw from NATO and EU military structures.

The key factor in this decisive, third stage of the revolutionary process will be the balance of forces outside parliament and in wider society. In particular, it will be vital to mobilise the popular anti-monopoly alliance – led by the organised working class – to uphold popular sovereignty and help the elected government to enforce its policies.

The extent to which this process involves physical or military violence will depend upon the revolutionary movement having the best strategy to minimise the capacity for resistance of the capitalist class. As the working class invariably bears the brunt of counter-revolutionary violence, it is the duty of all serious revolutionaries to devise such a strategy, rather than propose simplistic notions of violent insurrection and armed struggle.

In any event, there can be no question: the democratically elected left government will use all the official and popular forces at its disposal to crush each and every attempt at military subversion, rebellion or invasion.

Popular sovereignty means the sovereignty of the people and their elected representatives in parliaments, governments and mass movements. This requires the abolition of all powers and institutions relating to the monarchy, including such posts as head of state and commander-in-chief of the armed forces, together with the royal prerogative, the Privy Council and similarly unaccountable offices of state. Such measures, for which mass support would have to be won, will themselves reduce the scope for counter-revolutionary violence against the people and their elected authorities.

Sweeping measures of reform, restructuring and democratisation will aim to replace the capitalist state apparatus with one that represents the interests of the working class and the whole population. This would establish what Marx and Lenin called 'the dictatorship of the proletariat', by which they meant simply the ruling power of the working class – in Britain the vast majority of the population. This would displace the present ruling power – or dictatorship – of a tiny capitalist class.

Building a socialist society

Holding state power will enable the working class and its allies to complete the process of removing all economic and political power from the monopoly capitalist class. As capitalism is dismantled, so the construction of a new type of society – socialism – can proceed.

In Britain and its constituent nations, this will have to take place along the lines determined by the working class and the mass of the population. No alternative model can be imported from other countries, from different conditions and different times.

But this does not mean we cannot learn from successes and mistakes elsewhere.

For instance, the former Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China have demonstrated how centralised economic planning can play a vital role in promoting scientific education and rapid economic growth. Cooperative ownership helped secure a thriving agricultural sector in Hungary and solved severe housing shortages in the German Democratic Republic and Bulgaria. Self-management in Yugoslavia showed how workers can be drawn into democratic decision-making at workplace level. The German Democratic Republic provided collective, social and workplace facilities on an extensive scale. In the Soviet Union, people's courts in large workplaces brought the criminal justice system closer to the people. In Cuba, Committees for the Defence of the Revolution are at the heart of the country's socialist system and draw together local communities and people's mass movements in a wide range of social, environmental and political campaigns. The former socialist countries demonstrated how different ethnic and national populations can live in harmony on the basis of cultural development, equal status and mutual respect.

All the former socialist countries placed a high priority on achieving full employment, universal healthcare and education, equal status in law for women and men, affordable housing and public transport for all, and on reducing inequalities between people living in urban and rural areas.

In the nations of Britain, socialism will have to be built with the maximum participation of people in government at every level. These must be full accountability of state power to the people, with free and wide-ranging debate facilitated by accessible and diverse mass media. Workers must have real powers in workplace decision-making. Indeed, in order to defeat attempts at counter-revolution and to involve the mass of the people in socialist development, democratic rights and freedoms would need to become deeply entrenched in every aspect of economic and political life, now free from the restrictions and distortions imposed by monopoly capital.

Moreover, it will be essential that new forms of popular participation and direct democracy arise in the workplace, localities, regions and nations of Britain to counteract any tendencies to over-centralisation, elitism, careerism and bureaucratic control.

All sections of the state apparatus at every level of society should be directed by the elected representatives of the people and monitored by non-state bodies appointed by working class and popular organisations. Freed from the requirements of maintaining capitalist rule and commercial confidentiality, most activities of the state must be open to public scrutiny and all should be open to scrutiny by the public's elected representatives.

The constitutional relationship between England, Scotland and Wales should develop according to the sovereign will of their peoples, whether that relationship takes the form of co-existence in a federal state, a confederation or wholly separate from one another. The first of these arrangements might best maintain working class and progressive unity and solidarity. But, in any event, it is likely that socialist societies in those three nations will develop specific features of their own, reflecting their different economic, cultural and political conditions.

Socialism in Britain will also be characterised by diversity, tolerance and a healthy resistance to state interference in people's personal lives and choices.

Freedom of opinion and criticism must not only be guaranteed in law. It has to enjoy means of expression previously denied by monopoly ownership and control of the mass media. Religious freedoms must also be protected, although organised religions and their adherents should have no privileged position from which to undermine or negate the democratic rights and freedoms of others.

The Communist Party will strive to gain enough active support to play a leading role in the revolutionary process, based on mass participation in a multi-party democracy where freedoms are guaranteed for all who do not advocate or conduct violent counter-revolution.

On the economic front, social ownership will have to be extended into the major enterprises in every significant sector of the economy including construction, engineering, armaments, land and property, shipping and chemicals, while consolidating the sectors already in public ownership. These measures would enable economic planning to meet society's needs and aspirations, combining local and sectoral consultation with centralised policy-making in strategic sectors, all under democratic control.

Liberated from the waste and destruction of capitalist competition and crisis, society's enormous productive resources can be devoted fully to economic, social and cultural development. With the ending of capitalist advertising and the tyranny of fashion, when things are made to last, and when both work and leisure become more fulfilling, the constant growth of material production can be restrained, allowing the creation of a truly sustainable economy that no longer causes global warming or plunders the earth's natural resources.

Big landed estates in urban as well as rural areas should be taken into local, central and cooperative public ownership. Sustainable agriculture and fisheries must replace degradation and depletion, with support for ecologically efficient producers and the maximum possible re-use, recycling and safe disposal of all forms of waste.

Advances in information and communications technology have revolutionised the prospects for combining central economic planning with local flexibility. Assessing individual and social demand, allocating resources, organising production and distribution and other related economic functions could be integrated effectively and efficiently to an extent not possible until very recently.

At the same time, socialism does not require all economic enterprises to be in the public sector, let alone to conform to a single model of public ownership. Even as socialism is being built, there should be scope for small businesses, self-employment and for cooperative, voluntary and municipal sectors in the economy. However, these too must be subject to progressive laws relating to size, ownership, taxation, terms and conditions of employment, equal treatment and industrial democracy.

A substantial extension of democracy throughout the economy will have to take place, in cooperation with the trade unions, so that the knowledge, experience, interests and creativity of working people can be drawn fully into the processes of administration, decision-making and planning. Economic planning will also have to involve a wide range of other groups and forces in society besides government ministries and major enterprises, including local government, non-governmental organisations, consumer groups and community organisations.

The overall goal of advanced social policies must be to complete the abolition of private, privileged education and healthcare for the wealthy and the development of public services of the highest possible quality for all citizens.

Aristocratic titles should cease to receive any official recognition and the hereditary monarchy should be replaced by a democratically elected and accountable head of state.

The transition to full communism

The guiding principle of wealth production and distribution during the earlier, socialist stage of communist society would be: 'From each according to their ability, to each according to their contribution'. People's material reward and status would broadly reflect their contribution to society made by their skills and effort. This will greatly reduce the extreme inequalities promoted under capitalism.

As the threat of counter-revolution and war recedes with the advance of progressive, anti-imperialist and socialist forces at home and abroad, so the expenditure of society's resources on war and the threat of war can be reduced. As cooperation, planning and the full application of science and technology begin to produce an abundance of the most important goods and services in society, so the principle in the higher stage of communism – full communism – becomes: 'From each according to their ability, to each according to their needs'.

Wages and money would begin to lose their usefulness, as more of life's essentials become free or of little cost. Of course, the production, distribution and deployment of society's economic output will have to be planned to meet people's needs and safeguard our environment and eco-system, restoring the metabolic link between nature and humanity that capitalism has destroyed.

Without exploitative capitalists and landowners, the division of society into antagonistic social classes will cease to have any material basis. In place of class conflict and social discrimination, social cooperation and equality will predominate.

As the amount of human labour required to produce society's needs decreases, every citizen will have the time and facilities to develop their skills and talents to the full. The basis for many social problems and tensions will be removed, while resources of every kind are devoted to solving or alleviating people's problems and incapacities.

The victory of socialism in other countries will eventually remove the threat of capitalist restoration by outside forces.

As the danger of internal counter-revolution recedes, the role of the state as the coercive force used by one class to suppress another also diminishes.

The collective organisation of working people required to prevent capitalist restoration will be replaced by autonomous, self-governing communities of people. Workers' self-management of industry and enterprises will be free to develop its full potential. The great majority of people will increasingly understand the need to organise and fulfil essential work as the pre-condition for their freedom and ability to benefit from the expansion of educational, cultural and leisure provision.

Communists do not accept that such a society is impossible to achieve or that there is a 'human nature' too negative to allow the development of socialism and communism over time.

Our ancestors became human by cooperating in order to access and produce the necessities of life – creating language, inventing tools, hunting together, protecting each other and telling stories around the camp-fire – in a society of primitive communism. Later, people's thoughts and behaviour were shaped, distorted and exploited by living in class-divided societies. Even so, human beings have always displayed an enormous capacity for reason, compassion, cooperation, courage, self-sacrifice, invention and commitment to creating fairer and more just human societies. Are these not also characteristics of 'human nature'?

There is no reason why people should not understand that we share this Earth in common, that we are interdependent, that the individual good of the vast majority requires the collective good and that cooperation is better than conflict. As the great communist William Morris wrote: 'We are living in an epoch where there is combat between commercialism, or the system of reckless waste, and communism, or the system of neighbourly common sense'.

It is capitalism that seeks to make a virtue of greed, egoism, exploitation and inequality, while claiming that these are the ruling characteristics of 'human nature'. It is capitalism that creates so much misery, destroys so many lives, despoils the planet and now threatens the very future of human existence.

In a fully communist society, a new morality would characterise the social relations between people: the egotistical individualism of capitalism will be replaced by collective care and concern for every person and for the full, all-round development of the human personality. From these conditions will emerge a truly free society. Humanity's pre-history will have come to an end as – no longer divided between antagonistic classes – we begin to make history together as a free people.

For the sake of humanity, the future is communism!

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