

CONGRESSES

Communist Party of Britain
(Marxist - Leninist)

40p

I N T R O D U C T I O N

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CONGRESS

The Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) was founded at Easter 1968, and the first issue of its paper *The Worker* was published in January 1969. At its 8th Congress, which took place in London in April 1988, the delegates assessed the development of the Party so far, took stock of the current situation national and international, and arrived at appropriate conclusions.

Robbers have broken into the house of the Working Class. They are stealing the valuables and vandalising the property. They are there because we the owners left the door unguarded and have allowed our attention to be distracted while the pillage continues.

Congress was a time of self-scrutiny by the Party when it was decided to "change gear" in order to climb more quickly the gradient ahead. Is it not time for others to decide likewise? The deliberations are summarised below. Congress re-dedicated the Party to Marxism-Leninism, the Working Class and proletarian revolution. First task: Thatcher out!

C H A N G I N G G E A R

Last summer, prior to the Election, the Secretariat asked Comrade Reg Birch, from his vantage point as a member but standing outside the daily routine of the Party, to open our pre-Congress deliberations with an address to the Central Committee. Summarising our birth and growth he said (in part):

“We began of necessity, were amateur, quite nervous and of small beginning. Aware that we could be badgered and bullied by the seeming articulate, nationally and internationally, real and unreal. We were in many a front of veteran history and skill, but without references. But since at least the evil of ego was not our reason, nor dominant, we were clean.

“We are almost of age — a mature Party, beholden to none save the British Working Class, patronised by no external force or person, nor internally so within Britain. And at this time without cult figures, overpowering zealots,

potential defectors ambitious for place, and such. These we have had, and they will show again.

“The greatest number of departures from the ranks arose from faint hearts, lack of stamina; stemming from environmental reasons, domestic and economic, but in sum from lack of conviction.

“So here we are, small but strong, and grown up.”

In our first 20 years we have grown into a national Party, with a regional organisation encompassing the whole of Britain. For obvious reasons of security we never state our membership numbers in detail. Numbers can anyway mislead, as they imply an equal contribution from each member counted.

Suffice it to say that our membership is enough to justify our claim to be a national Party but far from enough to achieve the tasks we have set ourselves.

Recruitment must be an aim of every Branch, but let us never be so desperate to recruit as to permit a falling-off from the standards we require of new

members. We seek to recruit from the Working Class, not from the rag-tag-and-bobtail of the "left". Previous membership of an allegedly "political" organisation is not a recommendation but a warning.

Nor must we seek to take in those whose personal or domestic circumstances make them especially vulnerable. Life under Capitalism today is hard for all workers but doubly so for a Communist, and we need members who will stay the course.

What of the present?

We are living in difficult and dangerous times. Capitalism, in absolute decline, knows that decline is part of its inescapable evolution but knows also that decline will only change into fall through revolutionary action of the Working Class — hence the Thatcher counter-revolution designed to forestall that change

The period might be compared to that after the Restoration, with all its licence, with a rearguard as in Puritan bigot in so-called "lefty's" (Whites or Blacks), wide open to sycophancy and

hypocrisy, a complete unity of rights and lefts, fostering an ignorant, unlettered culture, equally shared by both and imposed on society overall.

Consider some implications for us as a Party of this period.

1. Thatcher has said "death to Socialism". Of course she means death to the USSR, and destruction of Britain under cover of the word "socialism", but we alone have kept up the unending offensive of "Thatcher Out"! — she knows.

Hence Congress must attend to the protection of the Party. The lessons of Indonesia must be learned.

Care must be taken over all publications — *The Worker*, pamphlets, leaflets, public meetings (which are also a form of publication). There must be no infantile behaviour, no slovenliness in what we write or say.

Care must be taken over security: no jobs are to be sacrificed; no careless talk in pubs; no inter-branch chit chat; no use of telephone or post except when necessary and appropriate.

2. This is not a time of moving forward

for the Class. Have we recognised the implication of this fact? Are we mature enough to accept them?

We have been used to a measure of "progress" — for example, from monthly to fortnightly to weekly publication of the paper. Now there can be no thought of a daily, nor of a regular 6-page or 8-page weekly. Let us instead appreciate what we have — a 4-page paper with as much reading content as an issue of the "Daily Telegraph" (about thirty minutes worth). We criticise it but it is still the best.

Let us not deceive ourselves that an advertising-man campaign to "raise the profile" is the answer. We have an identity, built up over two decades. We alone never give press interviews as a Party, never call press conferences as a Party, never launch publicity-making stunts. We are what we are, and the Working Class knows it. We seek their recognition only and will not put our heads above the parapet as targets for the enemy.

3. This is not a time of ready-made activity. In our early years the un-

ceasing activity of trade unions gave members the feeling, often illusory, that they were doing something important. Do we now believe that there is activity where there really is none? Do we build up an episode of struggle beyond its true size out of wishful thinking? We must beware of giving a simple economic fight a lofty "political" significance beyond all measure — because it has never sunk home that the "merely economic" may itself be political, and never more so than now. (Are we still afraid of being called "economists"?) But in our desperation to see the defeat of Thatcher we must not regard each such battle as "the key".

More recently the General Election has provided an instant focus of activity. We worked well in the election — perhaps our highest point so far in action as a Party. We told ourselves that we must take it in our stride, and we did so in the sense that, despite all this activity, we kept to our own discipline and timetable; the Branches continued to meet, *The Worker* continued to be published; we did the things we had to

do and the Election as well.

But we did not equally take election defeat in our stride. The tendency to see everything in brighter colours than reality offered afflicted us again. We persuaded ourselves that we were sure to win. Instead of taking the election as one stage in a protracted class struggle we regarded it as an end in itself. Consequently, having failed to win it, instead of recognising that our aim must still be "Thatcher out: vote Labour", we began to cast around for other things to do.

A justification for this is to say that social democracy is dead. Have we forgotten so soon what we wrote for last Congress — that social democracy is the Janus face of capitalism? Social democracy is liquidated with capitalism, not before. When the Working Class, in time long overdue, decides to destroy capitalism then social democracy, the philosophy of living with capitalism, will be dead. That stage is still far off, and while social democracy survives we must use it. We will not say "Vote Labour" unless there is an election

afoot, but our work for a Labour victory must continue, if necessary through successive elections, without remission until that victory is secured.

When we say that social democracy is dead, do we really mean that "the Working Class is dead"? Do we see the Class not as a Class but as a collection of "special interest groups", each pursuing its "special issue" and each complaining that its lot is worse than that of the rest upon whom it blames its predicament? If we do, we forgo the right to call ourselves Communists. Let us recall from the Communist Manifesto: "The Communists have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole".

We see in the Labour Movement, and especially among the "left", continual attempts to divert and digress; to escape from the reality of Thatcher and the hastening Thatcherite destruction of Britain into a fantasy world.

Very soon the diversion becomes deviation — active succour and assistance to the enemy. Those who pretend the Labour Party can deliver

socialism, given a new leader, impede what it can do, namely defeat of Thatcher in parliamentary election. Those who proclaim that Islam or Voodooism should have parity with the established Church (tamed by workers over the centuries) encourage the return to barbarism. The call for each foreign minority language and culture to have equal status with English in the schools and public life is a call for the break-up of Britain.

Are we clear about these matters or do we compound the confusion?

Recent discussion in the Party has brought out issues that take us back to our beginnings, the reasons for founding a new party and basic policies argued out in our early years. Let us ensure that this does not become our own form of diversion. New members (and older ones who have second thoughts) must understand that they belong on the basis of acceptance of the Programme and line. Let us clarify certain points and then close the debate.

Workers are thinking beings, not led or misled by anyone except themselves.

As a Party we are an organic development of that Class. We are not the theorists who will tell them what to do. We recognise always that we have more to learn than to teach.

We seek unity of all workers against Thatcher. Britain today is in chaos created by capitalism — fertile ground for fascism. We must stop immigration until the chaos has been reduced to order. Let workers in all countries apply themselves to the problems of their homelands and not seek greener pastures elsewhere (probably non-existent). To immigrant workers we say: "Integrate; learn the language and manners of the indigenous people and abandon those of the land you have abandoned. You are now part of the chaos. Help sort it out! Join a Trade Union." To the indigenous workers we say: "We are mongrels all; now welcome this addition to our mongrel stock. We are one Class, one blood."

We are for life and against death. To survive as individuals we must produce, and anything that prevents us producing is disabling. To survive as a

species we must reproduce, and anything that prevents reproduction (such as impotence, sterility or homosexuality) is disabling. To call the blind disabled is not an insult but an objective statement. We defend their right to live in dignity but do not call blindness a superior state — if we did so we would all walk around with our eyes shut.

The Working Class is not dead! The fight to preserve industry and the trade unions still goes on. Even in the areas that have been devastated the struggle emerges again in new or seemingly primitive forms. We must be involved. Above all we must as a Party *study* — remind ourselves of the principles on which we began; apply ourselves to investigation of today; and reach out to embrace our fellow workers in this investigation.

To conclude with Reg:

“In connection with the election, if a Tory return there could be a tendency to draw in closer, close ranks, not from fear but for security reasons — real but not appropriate.

“I have never believed that the

written word is more powerful than personal contact. I think the goodness of the Party comes from the education so arduously carried out from the beginning. In this period we should intensify this work within, but especially in drawing non-members to us — hence continuous personal contact.

“The education should be in depth, with careful analysis.

“In seeking the non-member to study, we should try to secure to us the truly worried worker who sees the chaotic situation for what it is and is moving to true political morality. (Quite rare).”

I N D U S T R Y

The future of Britain and of the Working Class depends upon industry — our capacity to create a life for ourselves in these islands. We need now to survey the whole canvass of industry, to warn and to redirect.

Such a task is clearly immense. The election of Thatcher for a third time (due largely to the weakness of industrial workers) and the continuing retreat testify to our failure so far to influence industrial Britain.

We have nonetheless undertaken some valuable and important tasks. We have continued to warn of the consequences of destruction of our manufacturing base. We have proclaimed the over-riding importance of our industrial and scientific capacity for the future. We have started the task of surveying industry where we live and work. We have held conferences to exchange thought and information.

We have concentrated on the changes that have swept across the map of industrial Britain — in particular the scale and consequences of destruction.

Now we must concentrate on the outlook and aspirations of industrial workers — especially in this difficult situation.

We must compel industrial workers to enter into dialogue with us on a continuing basis, difficult though this may be from the outside. We must listen to and understand their response. Use *The Worker* to engage with their ideas — but above all, rely on consistent personal contact.

Thatcher's aim is to obliterate the force of socialism in Britain. Our immediate task therefore is to survive. This task dictates a return to the elementary issues facing the working class and survival of our organisations — the trade unions. The fight for a better life begins with the fight for a better working life. Without such energy there can be no drive towards a new Britain created by and for the working class.

Our main task is to unify, preserve and develop new understanding and conviction amongst all those who oppose what Thatcher is doing. We

must think for ourselves, eschew all fake left and right squabbles. For the most part this may not be in big factories, depots or building sites but the fragmented world of industrial estates, subcontracting and self-employment. New ways to unify must be found where capitalism divides.

The period ahead of us will be more difficult than before. Where we cannot fight we will have to fall back — so patience and determination will have to be our watchwords. Desperate responses or attempts to by-pass or leap-frog the basic struggle will only aid the enemy as will calls for all-out action and fighting to the death.

Industry remains the priority.

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

Our Party has always said that internationalism begins at home, that our primary internationalist duty is to destroy British Imperialism at its source. For us it is always *Britain* in the world.

Our starting point is Thatcher, her foreign policy and its impact on the world, her contribution to the world capitalist forces in contradiction with socialism and the working class.

For hundreds of years the British ruling class has waged war on workers at home and abroad. For 70 years they have pursued a relentless struggle against the USSR. The advent of Thatcher has given this a new quality. We have always argued that she represents a new force in Britain, and since domestic and foreign policy are inextricably bound, she obviously represents a new force in the world.

Her conceit is that she has become the senior statesman of the Western world, that she has put the "Great" back into Britain and now claims leadership on a wider stage.

Her pretentiousness should not blind

us to the fact that she seeks to be the rallying point for the most reactionary circles of the world; those sections of the British, European and American ruling classes never reconciled to the USSR nor even to the constraints of Parliamentary democracy.

Thatcher's visit to Moscow in March 1987 amply illustrated her world view. She espoused the policy of "flexible response" for NATO, ie. first use of nuclear weapons. She was firmly opposed to the denuclearisation of Europe, in fact she amazed her hosts by her enthusiasm for nuclear weapons and her insulting lies on Soviet nuclear and conventional superiority. She returned to tell the British Parliament that elimination of nuclear weapons was a "distant dream" and that the Trident programme would continue.

Thatcher's Britain is not just a poodle of the USA, although she has certainly given a new twist to the slavish 40 year old "special relationship" in her subservience to American interests. Britain has been an important ideological prop and source of encouragement in the

USA's onslaught on the world.

Remember how she ran to Reagan's side after Reykjavik and argued against bargaining away nuclear weapons, how Britain's "independent" nuclear deterrent must be retained at all costs — a deterrent, it now appears, that is only leased from the USA.

In the dangerous international climate created by the USA in the 1980's, egged on by Thatcher, it has been the USSR who have proved to be so much more adroit and flexible in their negotiations and so much more obviously in favour of peace. Their seizure of the initiative in 1987 and the manoeuvring of a weakened US Presidency into the INF agreement are a major triumph for peace and progress. Further Soviet pressure for more arms reductions will be supported by all workers, who will condemn any attempts to thwart this process.

The Greenham women, the millions of campaigners for peace in Europe and America in their many organisations, and the USSR, in short the people of the world, have won at least a temporary

but significant respite. The rhetoric and bellicose statements from the West's politicians have ceased for the time being.

Thatcher was exposed as a war-monger, anxious to retain nuclear superiority to threaten the USSR and the world working class. Opportunist statements welcoming the INF treaty and peace and a lessening of international tension must blind no-one to her continuing threat to world peace.

Those forces that spoil for war at home and abroad still exist. They still believe the gains of socialism in some countries, of reforms in advanced capitalist states and of national liberation can be rolled back.

Thatcher openly claims that the UK leads the way in a world rejecting Marxism, where privatisation, deregulation and market forces go hand in hand with repression of workers' rights and attacks on democracy. The lure of an international deregulated free market, a playground for multi-nationals and finance capital, is offered to world imperialism. The City pushes for the planned single EEC-wide internal

market by 1992. In essence, a world counter-revolution which Thatcher peddles around the world and fondly hopes to lead. But the world counter-revolution has hit a few snags.

The strategy of forcing the USSR into an arms race which would break her has rebounded on the USA. The most massive military build up since World War Two has made the USA the world's largest debtor nation. The twin budget and trade deficits and the accelerating deindustrialisation created by Reagan are not a sound basis for leadership of world imperialism.

In the USA, as in Britain, the dominance of finance capital and the lack of regard for productive industry has laid waste the economy.

The collapse of world stock markets is recognition that the bubble has burst. It has exposed the pretentious claims for free markets and the fantasies of a benign and ever expanding capitalism. The collapse heralds a new twist to the already existing recession. A permanent deflation has characterised Europe for all of the 1980's with nearly 20 million

unemployed as governments abandoned "full employment" as policy.

The next downturn will accentuate every contradiction within capitalism: those between the imperialist states and the semi-colonial and developing world, those within the imperialist camp, and those with the socialist countries. Most certainly the burden will fall on the working class as the contradiction between it and the ruling class intensifies. Thatcher represents the desperate attempt by imperialism to escape these contradictions, to restructure the world system.

Why is it that the working class in the advanced capitalist countries and most significantly in Britain has been so unwilling to grasp and combat the absolute decline of capitalism and the drive to a new fascism? Why has the working class in the West so rejected its history and culture?

But even though the response of the working class has been woefully inadequate imperialism cannot find the elixir of rejuvenation.

The USSR has remained steadfast throughout the onslaught and has

emerged with enhanced respect as the leading force for peace and progress in the world. The processes of glasnost and perestroika show courageous attempts at renewal. Workers should study carefully those processes to fully understand developments within socialism.

The Western economies, with few exceptions, are desperately weak. Class conflict constantly breaks out. In Britain, where the attack on the working class has been fiercest, the Labour movement remains intact if reduced — a constant reminder of Thatcher's weakness.

In other parts of the world the fight for national liberation and socialism continues, inviting counter-revolutionary insurgencies in Nicaragua, Angola, Mozambique and Afghanistan funded and encouraged by the USA and her surrogates, but since Vietnam never involving US ground troops. This is particularly important for Central America.

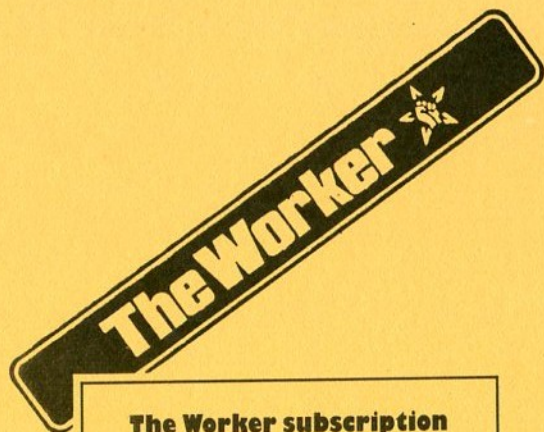
The Middle East amply illustrates American impotence. Defeated in the Lebanon, frustrated by Iran, unsure of the long term worth of Israel the US embarks on an adventurist exercise in

the Gulf. True to form, Thatcher too becomes embroiled in an action without clear objectives. Such adventurism demonstrates the weakness of imperialism in decline and the dangers to the world from such actions.

For Thatcher, Ireland remains an insoluble problem. Weakness led her to the Anglo Irish Agreement, yet its failure is apparent. Her attitude to South Africa has split the Commonwealth and brought derision upon her head. She trumpets her block on sanctions as a victory while her moral and political defeat is apparent to the whole world. Wherever she goes she sows dissension and yet with the demise of Reagan she sees an opening for the tail to wag the American dog.

Thatcher's claim to leadership has a desperately comic quality to it. That she has got so far is because she has stepped into a vacuum created by the abdication of the British working class from effective political life. She is a pygmy upon the stooped shoulders of a giant. The working class must straighten its back and propel her to oblivion.





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