
Marxist-Leninist Organisation of Britain

Principles of Marxism-Leninism

First Published: *No date [early 1970s?]*

Transcription, Editing and Markup: Paul Saba and Sam Richards

Copyright: This work is in the Public Domain under the [Creative Commons Common Deed](#). You can freely copy, distribute and display this work; as well as make derivative and commercial works. Please credit the Encyclopedia of Anti-Revisionism On-Line as your source, include the url to this work, and note any of the transcribers, editors & proofreaders above.

P R I N C I P L E S . . . O F

M A R X I S M - L E N I N I S M

An elementary course

Class Four: The State and
the Road to Socialism.

Published by: -

THE MARXIST-LENINIST ORGANISATION OF BRITAIN

34, Upper Tollington Park, London N.4.

The INTRODUCTION to the course, which contains details of the recommendations of the Marxist-Leninist Organisation of Britain as to the methods of conducting the course and its aims, was published with Class One.

SYLLABUS

- Class One: The Development of Society.
 - Class Two: .
 - Class Three: How Capitalism Works.
 - Class Four: The State and the Road to Socialism.
 - Class Five: The Party of the Working Class
 - Class Six: The National Question.
 - Class Seven: War.
 - Class Eight: How Socialism Works.
 - Class Nine: The World Outlook of Marxism-Leninism.
-

Class Four: THE STATE AND THE ROAD TO SOCIALISM

1. WHAT IS THE STATE?

As we saw in Class One, the machinery of force by which one class rules over the rest of the people. In capitalist society the state is the machinery by which the capitalist class rules over the rest of the people.

2. WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPAL ORGANS OF THE CONTEMPORARY BRITISH STATE?

The monarch, the House of Lords, the House of Commons, the judiciary, the civil service, the armed forces, the police, the B.B.C. and I.T.V., the Church of England.

3. WHICH OF THESE ARE THE KEY ORGANS OF STATE?

The armed forces and police. This is because the key issue in politics is always physical power, not pieces of paper, and the armed forces and police (the latter forming a para-military force) possess physical power.

4. EXPLAIN WHAT IS MEANT BY THE STATEMENT: "'PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY' IS A FALSE FACADE WHICH CONCEALS THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE CAPITALIST CLASS".

British constitutional law lays it down that supreme power is held, not by the House of Commons (the organ principally associated with the concept of "parliamentary democracy"), but by "the Queen in Parliament", which is defined as the queen together with the House of Lords and House of Commons.

This means that the legislative power of the House of Commons is subject to the approval in most cases of the House of Lords and in all cases of the queen. Further, legislation is subject to the "interpretation" of the judiciary, and can only be put into effect with the cooperation of the heads of the civil service.

However, the monarchy, the House of Lords, the

judiciary and the heads of the civil service are not subject to any kind of democratic election; these posts are reserved under the constitution to representatives of the capitalist class (and of the aristocracy, which is now irretrievably blended with the capitalist class).

Furthermore, the key organs of the state -- the armed forces, the heads of which are also drawn from the upper class -- owe their constitutional allegiance not to "the people" nor the House of Commons, but to the queen. Thus, they are available to be used in the queen's name to "defend the constitution" on behalf of the capitalist class.

Thus, "parliamentary democracy" is a false facade which conceals the real apparatus of forcible dictatorship of the capitalist class. "Parliament" is a mere "talking shop" to deceive the masses.

5. IMAGINE THAT YOUR PARTY -- OF HONEST SOCIALISTS -- HAS WON A MAJORITY IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS IN A GENERAL ELECTION. WHAT STEPS WOULD YOU TAKE TO INTRODUCE SOCIALISM CONSTITUTIONALLY?

The question is, of course, a hypothetical one. The development of electoral opinion to the point where such an election result could occur would clearly take a considerable time and could hardly go unnoticed by the capitalist class. Since this class has control of the state and will obviously use all weapons in its power to preserve its wealth and exploiting rights (in the name, of course, of "freedom" and "Christian civilisation"!) it would clearly take steps prior to the election concerned -- alteration of the electoral laws and boundaries, outright banning of your party as "subversive", etc. -- to prevent such an embarrassing outcome.

Let us assume, however, that by some miracle of stupidity the capitalist class fails to take such preventive action.

Your party must then hope that the queen will invite the leader of your party to form a government. It has long been customary for the monarch to invite the leader of the majority party in the House of Commons to form a government, but there is no requirement in constitutional law for her to do so.

Let us assume, however, that she takes this step and that the leader of your party selects his provisional Ministers. Before these can take office, they must under constitutional law, take an oath of allegiance to the queen. Since your electoral platform must have included pledges to democratise the state and remove its undemocratic organs such as the monarchy, the arrest of these Ministers on criminal charges of perjury is more than probable. Of course, if these Ministers can convince the magistrates that their electoral pledges were a fraud and that they have no real intention of interfering with the monarchy, they may be found not guilty -- but such a course of action could hardly be undertaken by honest socialists. And when sufficient of your M.P.s have been legally imprisoned, your party will no longer have a majority in the House!

Let us, therefore, assume another miracle -- that the capitalist class is too stupid to take any constitutional action to prevent your party's government from taking office and that it introduces legislation to take over the principal means of production.

Such legislation can only be effected with the approval of the House of Lords and the queen (the latter can hold up any legislation indefinitely), so that further miracles would be required to bring this legislation into effect.

The capitalists may then appeal to the courts against such legislation, and the judges have power to "interpret" the legislation as they see fit. A further miracle is thus required to assume that the upper class judges

"interpret" the legislation as your party intended.

Furthermore, the carrying out of this legislation requires the cooperation of the heads of the civil service, who are also drawn from the upper class, so that still another miracle is required to secure their cooperation in socialist legislation.

One must also assume yet another miracle -- that during all this time the armed forces -- headed by representatives of the upper class -- have remained passive and have taken no action to "save freedom and democracy" by taking over power on behalf of the capitalist class. That reactionary mutinies of generals are not confined to distant countries is shown by the infamous Curragh mutiny which led to the separation of Northern Ireland from the rest of Ireland.

Such a wholesale series of miracles does not occur in real life, and it is clear that the concept of the constitutional transition to socialism is completely absurd.

6. WHAT IS REVISIONISM?

Not the creative bringing up-to-date of Marxism-Leninism in changing conditions, but the perversion of the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism to remove its revolutionary core in the interests of the capitalist class.

The publication of "The British Road to Socialism", the programme of the Communist Party of Great Britain, in 1951 revealed that this party had repudiated the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism by -- among other serious errors -- preaching that socialism could be established through the mechanism of "parliamentary democracy".

With the usurpation of power by revisionists in the Soviet Union following the death of Stalin, revisionism became openly dominant in the great majority of parties which had formed the world communist move-

ment.

7. WHAT IS A POLITICAL PARTY?

An organisation which represents the political interests of a social class.

8. THIS DEFINITION ENABLES US TO UNDERSTAND WHY POLITICAL PARTIES ADOPT PARTICULAR POLICIES. For example, IN THE SECOND THIRD OF THE 19th. CENTURY, THE WHIG PARTY, UNDER THE SLOGAN OF "FREE TRADE", STOOD FOR THE ABOLITION OF THE DUTY ON IMPORTED GRAIN (THE "CORN LAWS"), WHILE THE TORY PARTY STOOD FOR THEIR RETENTION. WHY WAS THIS?

At that time the Whig Party represented the interests of the industrial capitalists, who wanted cheap imported grain to keep down the wages of their workers. The Tory Party, on the other hand, represented the interests of the country landowners, who saw such cheap imported food as a threat to their agricultural interests.

9. THE BRITISH PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS "ESSENTIALLY A TWO-PARTY SYSTEM". WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS?

The system is designed to give the electorate a choice at an election in practice between two large parties. Both parliamentary parties -- the collective M.P.s of each party -- base themselves on the undemocratic "principle" that they are in no way bound by decisions of their party conferences, and both support capitalist society. Thus, after an election, one of these two large parties forms Her Majesty's Government, the other Her Majesty's Opposition (with a salary for the Leader of the Opposition!). When, after a period, a majority of the electors becomes dissatisfied with the government of one party, this may be replaced by the other party at the next election. The capitalist class would be happy to see this process of alternation continue indefinitely.

The system deliberately places great obstacles in the way of smaller parties: large deposits are forfeit where a candidate does not obtain a certain proportion of the total vote; there is no proportional representation, so that a party could obtain 49% of the national vote without securing the election of a single M.P.; T.V. propaganda is restricted to parties putting up a certain number of candidates; electors who are dissatisfied with both parties yet often regard one of them as "the lesser evil" and vote for it, on the grounds that it is impossible for the smaller party which they favour to form a government, so that a vote for it would be "wasted" and might indeed assist the "greater evil" party to win the election by "splitting the vote".

The British parliamentary system is thus clearly designed to give the electorate a choice in practice as to which of two groups of capitalist politicians shall govern them for the next five years.

10. ANALYZE THE STATEMENT:

"THE STATE IN MODERN BRITAIN CAN TRULY BE CALLED A 'WELFARE STATE'".

It must be remembered first that the social services had their origin, not in "humanitarian concern" on the part of the capitalist class for their workers, but in the spread of epidemics from the slums to the residential areas inhabited by the upper class and in the discovery at the time of the Boer War that 50% of working class recruits to the army were medically unfit for military service.

Experience, therefore, forced the capitalist class to realise long ago that the state, as the machinery of their rule, had to take such action in the field of social welfare as would ensure that workers had the minimum of health necessary to work hard in the production of surplus value and to fight their wars effectively.

This principle accepted, the aim of the capitalist class has been to keep the social services down to the minimum necessary to fulfil this purpose -- in particular to ensure that benefits were significantly less than wages -- and to see that, as far as possible, the working class itself pays for the social services it receives (in many cases after a degrading means test) out of wages (by means of taxation, insurance contributions, etc.). These points have, of course, been influenced by the class struggle of the working class for an improved standard of living, but the popular notion that the social services represent a redistribution of income from the capitalist class to the working class is quite false: statistics show that the average working class family pays considerably more in taxation, social insurance contributions, etc. than it receives in terms of all the social services combined.

11. WHAT IS NATIONALISATION?

The taking over of an enterprise by the state out of private ownership.

12. IS NATIONALISATION UNDER A CAPITALIST SOCIETY A SOCIALIST MEASURE?

Since the state in a capitalist society is the machinery of rule of the capitalist class, nationalisation is in no way a socialist measure: it represents the transfer of an enterprise from the control of a single capitalist firm to the control of the capitalist class as a whole.

The most reactionary governments have carried out measures of nationalisation, affecting principally the fields of communications and fuel which serve the capitalist class as a whole (e.g., the post office, railways, air lines, gas, coal, electricity, etc.)

The motive for nationalisation is to provide a cheap and efficient service in these fields for the

benefit of the capitalist class as a whole, and nationalisation is usually carried out where private enterprise is using monopoly power to charge excessive rates to other capitalist firms or where private enterprise appears to be no longer capable of providing a reasonably cheap and efficient service.

When an enterprise is nationalised by the capitalist state, the former owners are usually generously compensated with state bonds bearing a fixed rate of interest; this enables them to continue to exploit the workers involved at a rate of profit guaranteed by the state. The boards which manage such nationalised industries are dominated by representatives of the capitalist class (often, indeed, the former owners, who receive high directors' fees in addition to the interest). Thus, as the workers in nationalised industries well know from experience, the class struggle continues within them, but it is now necessary for the workers to struggle not against a single private management but against the capitalist state.

13. WHAT IS STATE MONOPOLY CAPITALISM?

With the development of monopoly capitalism, of imperialism, the capitalist state comes to be less and less the machinery of rule of the capitalist class as a whole; it becomes increasingly subordinated to the dominant clique of monopoly capitalists, to become the state machine of the financial oligarchy.

The imperialist stage of the development of capitalist society also sees an immense expansion of the state apparatus, both in the field of physical power -- now directed not only against the working class of the imperialist country concerned, but also against non-monopoly capitalists, the exploited peoples of the colonial-type countries and rival monopoly capitalists in other countries -- and in the field of the regulation of economic, political and cultural life.

This great expansion is sometimes referred to as "socialist" in character, but -- as we have seen with nationalisation -- there is nothing socialist whatever about it. It is undertaken in the interests of monopoly capital, and that is why Marxist-Leninists call this development by the name of state monopoly capitalism.

14. WHAT IS A CORPORATE STATE?

A concept of the capitalist state put forward by right-wing Catholic politicians. Its official aim is "to abolish class struggle" (in fact, of course, to try and repress it) within capitalist society by replacing "parliamentary democracy" by a state which embraces within its machinery "corporations" composed of employers' associations, professional organisations and trade unions, with the government elected on the basis of these "corporations" instead of on that of political parties.

The present moves of the Labour Government to abolish collective bargaining and establish state control of the trade union movement are, thus, moves in the direction of a corporate type of state.

Where the concept of a corporate state has been officially put into practice, as in Portugal, it has been as a false facade to try and disguise the reality of a fascist dictatorship.

15. WHAT IS FASCISM?

The open, terrorist dictatorship of monopoly capital. The name is derived from the "fasces", or bundle of sticks, the emblem of the Roman Empire that was taken over by the Italian fascist party.

A fascist party is recruited principally from the middle class and from the lumpen-proletariat (the degenerate, petty criminal strata of the working class) but it is financed by the monopoly capitalists and armed by their armed forces.

A fascist party directs its appeal demagogically to the most backward elements of the working people (calling itself, perhaps, a "national socialist" party) and of the middle class (claiming, perhaps, that it will "control Big Business"), but its main propaganda appeal is based on racialism and nationalism. It is used for the purpose of trying to smash by force the organisations of the working people, as well as the facade of "parliamentary democracy", in order to replace the latter by an open dictatorship which exerts repressive control over every sphere of social life -- economic, political and cultural. Within this dictatorship, the fascist party rules (often in the name of an "infallible leader") on behalf of monopoly capital.

16. WHAT IS A MILITARY DICTATORSHIP?

A state in which the capitalist class rules by means of an open dictatorship exercised through its armed forces (as in contemporary Greece).

17. A CAPITALIST CLASS ATTEMPTS TO IMPOSE AN OPEN DICTATORSHIP WHEN "PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY" NO LONGER FUNCTIONS SATISFACTORILY IN ITS INTERESTS. UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES does it attempt to organise a military coup and under what circumstances DOES IT ATTEMPT TO ORGANISE A FASCIST COUP?

This depends primarily upon the organised strength of the working class and its political preparedness to defend democratic rights. If this is weak, a military coup to establish a military dictatorship may be all that is necessary. But if this is strong, it is necessary for the capitalist class to organise a mass movement of fascist thugs in order to try physically to destroy the organisations of the working class prior to the attempted coup.

18. IN WHAT CONTEMPORARY BRITISH POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS CAN THE GERMS OF FASCISM BE DISCERNED?

Not only in the comparatively small (for the moment) openly fascist groups (such as the "British National Party"), but also in the Conservative Party (the white racialism of Powell and Heath) and the Labour Party (the Wilson government's moves to establish state control of the trade unions).

The germs of fascism can also be discerned in certain groups of the pseudo-left, e.g., the coloured people's organisations which base themselves on "black racialism" and in certain maoist groups, which preach adulation of "the infallible leader, Mao Tse-tung", which support the fascist-type "cultural revolution" in China directed at the destruction of the Communist Party and the establishment of a military dictatorship on behalf of the capitalist class, which support "black racialism" together with Scottish and Welsh "nationalism", which adopt fascist methods of violence against progressive organisations. One of these maoist groups, the so-called "Workers' Party of Scotland", has already degenerated to the stage of presenting the Hitler-fascist coup in Germany as "a working class revolution".

19. SINCE SOCIALISM CANNOT BE ESTABLISHED THROUGH "PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY", HOW CAN IT BE BROUGHT ABOUT?

Only by the working class building up its own machinery of force strong enough to destroy the capitalist state.

20. UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES COULD THE WORKING CLASS ESTABLISH ITS POLITICAL POWER PEACEFULLY?

This has happened only in the exceptional circumstances where the capitalist class has found itself without an effective state machinery of force at its disposal capable of resisting seizure of political power by the working class (as in Finland and Hungary at the close of the First World War).

In theory such a peaceful transition could occur in a country where the capitalist class possess a state machinery of force but finds itself isolated from foreign assistance and faced with a working class machinery of force that appears so overwhelming powerful that violent resistance seems pointless. In such circumstances the possibility could exist of "buying out" the capitalist class on a principled basis.

This theoretical possibility makes it clear that the stronger the apparatus of revolutionary force built up by the working class, the greater is the possibility (it is no more) of a peaceful transition.

P
N
D
J
i
v
S
I
D
-
D
.

The next class will be:

THE PARTY OF THE WORKING CLASS