

# LEARNING FROM THE MISTAKES OF THE USSR. A BRIEF 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY COMMUNIST MANIFESTO.

## **Preamble.**

Capitalism is the first, but not the last industrial society in history. This remarkable but cruel mode of production has its feet in the era of the horse drawn carriage and its head in satellites orbiting planets and even exiting our solar system. What took months now takes hours, what took the efforts of thousands is now accomplished by a handful and what took days to communicate now takes microseconds. In every way capitalism, this inescapable, inevitable and necessary step in our economic emergence, has laid the foundation for a future and more highly organised mode of production.

The banner of socialism is yet to be unfurled, let alone hoisted proudly high as once it was before the fall of the USSR. The USSR is used to smear communism, used to proclaim the supremacy of capitalism, used to warn workers not to seek any alternative to capitalism. Within the left, groups like the SWP characterise the Soviet Union as capitalist while on the other extreme, groups like the old Communist Party of Great Britain actually saw it as a form of socialism.

It was neither. It was not capitalist, because in the absence of markets, the labour of the individual worker now became part of the labour of society directly and immediately. And it was not socialist because that labour was expropriated by a parasitical bureaucracy using the levers of an oppressive state. It was in reality a socialised economy negated by exploitation therefore doomed to fail. It was further away from socialism than it was from capitalism which is why it decayed back into capitalism in the late 1980s. Unless the social nature of labour in the USSR is fully understood, the contradictions that felled it remain incomprehensible.

It is probable that as the ideological struggle matures and advances, the history of the USSR will be resurrected once again by the ideologues of the capitalist class and used to intimidate workers. But even if they do not, then we must, for unless we learn from the USSR, this first example of a post-capitalist economy, from its mistakes and crimes we will be less prepared for the future. We owe it to the workers and all those who suffered at the hands of Stalin and Mao never to repeat these mistakes.

## **A necessary synthesis.**

This short programme stands on two legs, firstly it embodies the history of the USSR, and secondly, it overlays these lessons with the Critique of the Gotha Programme. It is common knowledge that the Critique was a polemic which Engels encouraged Marx to tone down. Because it was polemical, rather than pedagogical, much of the consequences of what Marx wrote, needs to be drawn out.

Two elements stand out. The first is the distinction between organising the social fund and democratising planning. This has led to much confusion on the part of every Marxist organisation. When they talk of committees, delegations, interest groups helping plan production, in reality they are referring to what occurs within and around the social fund, not planning.

Planning is based on individual choice, hence the term 'consumer led planning'. Individuals give of their labour and are rewarded by the products of their choice. It would be intolerable were their choices to be filtered by committees etc. Rather their choices are sacrosanct. This workers' right is also higher than the freedom accorded to the moneyed consumer in a capitalist society, because while these consumers are free to spend their money, the commodities available for purchase, have themselves been filtered by profit, by a board of directors and if not by the board, then certainly by their marketing department. In the case of consumer led planning, the producers are in charge of what will be produced currently, and they decide what can potentially be produced in the future.

Any interference in this form of planning by committees, elites, the state or whatever, will be justifiably rejected by workers as arrogant and paternalistic.

Secondly, it is the social fund that links the lower to the higher stage of communism. It is the social fund that transforms society because it is the source of all additional investment. Most importantly, it will be this fund that pays for rehabilitating our planet. When Marx discussed the deductions from the social product for this fund, he used it polemically against Lasalle, to declare that the consumption of the undiminished fruits of labour was a myth. His only other comment on the fund was to recognise that it would grow relatively and absolutely as society's productive capacity swelled.

What was not discussed in the Critique, was how the inclusive decision-making processes leading up to these deductions and their disposition, constituted the bedrock of working-class democracy in a future society. This programme remedies this, first by drawing the line between planning to satisfy individual wants and needs, and secondly to understand the role played by this fund, whose importance has escaped so many.

Finally, this programme does not discuss in detail the need to elect every working administrator and manager. It does not discuss how much they are allowed to earn or whether they can be instantly recallable and so on. It confines itself to those rights which were absent in the USSR, an absence which not only led to the economic collapse of that society, but which allowed for the abnormal growth of the state in the first place.

In every way, this programme marks a dividing line between those Marxists who continue to argue for the leading role of the workers' state and those who argue for a rights'-based approach which limits the state to enabling and policing these rights and nothing more. In a word, the workers' state upholds the rule of rights, as distinct from the rule of law which regulates the exercise of power by the bourgeoisie. The result is a workers' state which is not allowed to decide what will be produced, nor how quickly, nor at what price, nor what workers can earn, and which is not allowed to levy taxes or any other margins with the purpose of dispossessing workers of their labour.

We have to be crystal clear. Our vision for the future, has absolutely nothing to do with the kind of ruthless bureaucratic and exploitative regime that existed in the USSR. Humans succeed and proceed by learning from their mistakes, and this programme exemplifies that process. At a time when capitalism can no longer reproduce itself except at the expense of society, when a hegemonic economic struggle once again threatens world war, with a planet over-heating and robots stealing jobs, this programme shows that society has a future and that it is worth fighting for.

**PRINCIPLE 1. The abolition of the ownership of the means of production, distribution, information and the land.**

Private ownership of the means of life - the means of production and the land - is the essential condition for disempowering workers making possible their exploitation. It represents the fault line in

society, the class divide forcing workers to work for the owners of these means. Nothing can be achieved until workers are re-united with their means of production bringing classes to an end. This is the essence of true democracy and its realisation. In a society divided between those who own and do not work and those who work but do not own, democracy will always be partial, superficial and precarious.

A common misconception is that private property is replaced with public property. Public property or state ownership is but a mere legal and transitory stage to non-ownership. It is the gathering in and collectivisation of all the individual threads of private property now used to weave the cloth of public property. In turn the workers' state as the temporary legal custodian of the means of production and the land is not allowed to offer title to it, to cede it, to extract a rent or to redistribute it in any form. In the hands of the state, property becomes fossilised.

State ownership thus puts an end to property. When it is commonly recognised and accepted that we all own the factories, the shops, the ships, the land and so on, then it has to be recognised that no one owns it. It ceases to be property; it becomes unowned and with it the purpose for the state ends - the protection of property. In the future we will see the means of production for what they are - proud achievements of our combined labour. The only "no entry signs" will be those found mounted in museums, representing a time when property dominated labour. Hence in proportion to the successful development of the socialist economy and its distancing from the remnants of capitalism, together with the ending of property in production, so withers the state.

A strict distinction is drawn between the means of production and the articles of consumption. Articles of consumption are and will remain personal property. This includes homes. Homes are not means of production, but they are the personal property of those who live in them. The fact that they are the most durable and costly of the articles of consumption and that they form the social landscape is irrelevant. The right to one's own personal home is a socialist right.

Socialism makes no distinction between homes that were previously rented or previously owned. Rents just mean occupiers have paid off the mortgages of their landlords rather than their own mortgages. All properties lived in become the property of their occupiers with the exception of the mansions of the rich and second homes which will be confiscated and redistributed. However, because homes vary in size, quality, and location, a "home's tax" (the only tax found in a socialist society), will be levied for the purposes of upgrading homes, building new ones, replacing dilapidated properties and transforming the locality with the participation of all its inhabitants. This will be a differential tax with larger and better properties paying a higher rate than smaller and lower quality properties. It is thus an equalising tax borne out of the uneven housing stock inherited from capitalism. The term tax, rather than rent, is used to signify an end to the relation between tenant and landlord.

## **PRINCIPLE 2. Subtractions from the social product not the addition of margins.**

In his Critique of the Gotha Programme (the programme adopted by the newly emerged German trade union movement): Marx criticised the Lasallian concept of "workers being entitled to the fruits of their labour". In all surplus producing societies not everyone works to produce things. There are the young, the elderly, the sick and infirm, and those who look after them, educate them, heal them, together with those involved in administration and planning without which society cannot function. If the producers consumed what they produced, there would be nothing left to support all those sections of workers standing outside production itself. Nor would there be the funds needed for new and additional investment to expand production and thereby elevate and transform society.

Accordingly, Marx demonstrated that a part of the social product (the aggregated fruits of our labour) would have to be deducted or be set aside to support these necessary and humanising functions. At the time he wrote these words, Marx could have no inkling of the importance this criticism would have when applied to the Soviet Union and China half a century later. Here instead of a portion of society's product being democratically *deducted* by the producers themselves, the Stalinist bureaucracy claimed this product by the coercive *additions* of tax and profit margins behind the backs of their workers.

At first glance the subtracting of a portion of society's product instead of the arbitrary adding of margins may appear to be semantic. It is not. It expresses different relations of production, it speaks about who owns and controls the social product, and it expresses the presence or the absence of working-class democracy. All exploitative societies are marked by the presence of margins, which always and everywhere are the means of exploitation. Margins are possible only when workers are under-paid for their labour creating the space for margins. Within capitalism this takes the form of cost price plus the profit margin. In the USSR it took the form of the wage fund plus the tax margin and later profit margin. In this way workers were and are left with only a residue of what they have produced allowing the capitalists or the Stalinist bureaucrats to live off the rest.

In a genuine socialist society, it is producers who own the social product. It is the workers who then decide how it will be consumed. It is the workers who decide how much has to be set aside for social needs and new investment. Only the workers who produced this social product either directly or indirectly have the right to decide on its disposition. Therefore, this setting aside, can only take the form of a deduction because the producers are in effect voluntarily giving up part of their product for social need and for the expansion of the economy.

Deciding on the scale of this deduction and the use to which it is to be put is complex. It will be a decision which is compounded on the one side by what is possible and on the other by differing priorities. As with rights as discussed by Marx in his Critique, the scope of the social fund cannot rise above the economic structure of society so inherited. Some groups may propose that repairing the planet as quickly as possible is needed, others may argue that reducing the inequality between nations as quickly as possible is needed, yet others may argue that raising all to the skill level of the highest as quickly as possible should be the priority. There is no right or wrong answer to these competing needs. There is only the democratic resolution of these competing needs. The right of all to put their case, the absolute freedom to communicate the merits of all positions without prejudice and more importantly the freedom to criticise the position of other groups, will precipitate a hive of debate resulting in the adoption of broadly correct positions. Television which was used to dupe and dope the masses is now used to debate, to inform and to broadcast diverse views. Instead of being the opiate of the masses it is turned into its opposite, the liberating tool for knowledge and empowerment.

This vibrant collective decision and agreement on the scale and direction of the deductions from the social product is the epitome of working-class democracy. It is the defining moment and the political hallmark of a socialist society. Removing this control from the working class means removing the right of the producers to decide what is to be done with the product of their labour. It presupposes the reintroduction of oppression. It would gut socialism and lead to its failure. To assume that there are privileged or more educated members of society, inside or outside parties, better able to decide above the heads of workers, will disempower workers and destroy their attachment to production. That is the lesson of the USSR. We are against any elitism just as we are against those "Marxists" who believe, that simply because they have raised themselves above the sectional interests of the working class, they are ideally placed to decide what is best for our class.

To ensure that the deductions are not misused or used for personal gain, those employed in its administration may not receive more than the “average” wage. They may not work permanently in this sphere. Finally, there must be complete transparency. Workers’ law will be strictly applied in this sphere and vigorously policed. The workers state’s function is limited to setting up these democratic structures, to ensuring their freedom to operate, and finally to police the disposition of the agreed surplus to prevent fraud. It has no powers to decide on the level of deductions and their disposition.

### **PRINCIPLE 3. Workers’ control and management of production.**

In a society divided between those who own but do not work and those who work but do not own, the producers have to be managed and led. Despite this general rule, companies like Toyota, discovered productivity shot up when they delegated control of production to the shop floor through work groups. Workers involved in the work process are best placed to understand its strengths and weaknesses, thus best placed to manage it. Distant managers in their comfortable offices are not.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century most workers are literate and numerate, unlike their counterparts over a century ago in Russia. In addition, the larger companies have comprehensively computerised their methodologies and data to allow senior management to centralise the firms’ intellectual knowledge. This makes the transfer of this knowledge into the hands of the workforce that much more efficient. Indeed, preventing the erasure, corruption or encryption of this data is one of the central goals of the fight for control of production. It will be a tenet of working-class law to exact severe punishment for those who effect the destruction of this data, or the computer code needed to run modern industry.

Workers’ management stands and falls on one tenet alone – the setting of the intensity of work. Without the right to set the intensity of work, workers’ management is reduced to mere phraseology. Under capitalism intensity is set by competition and mediated by the level of class forces. One of the central goals of the trade union movement has thus been the struggle over the tempo of work. In the USSR, the intensity of labour was enforced by state terror.

In a socialist society, intensity is not set by an external coercive force like competition or the state but by voluntary agreement that becomes collective and accepted across the industry. Such a collective decision will require debate within each production unit and discussion between units and countries. Its resolution is a democratic one and once it is agreed it is binding on every worker. Such a discussion is revisited from time to time in the light of technical developments. The workers’ state is reduced to setting up a commission for this purpose and once done is reduced to only policing the agreement protecting it from abuse.

Once the intensity of work, adjusted for capacity, has been agreed, labour time becomes universal and is therefore capable of being costed. It is these costs that the planning bodies work with. Just as the planning bodies do not have the right to decide what it is to be produced (see section on consumer led planning) nor do they have the right to decide how quickly (intensity). This prevents the antagonisms that existed in the USSR where the planners set the pace of work resulting in guerrilla warfare with enterprises and industry.

All studies of work occupations reveal that occupations based on physical strength alone, have disappeared more quickly than any other. Forklift trucks, power steering, power tools and pneumatics has voided differences in muscle power. Today a large man is no more productive than a small woman when working with this equipment. Hence physical differences in capacities no longer constitute an obstacle to homogenising intensity.

Moreover, three negative results flow from this individualising of intensity. Rewarding the intensity of labour would reopen the gender gap. It would disadvantage older workers. And it would require an army of overseers to witness and tabulate individual contributions based on intensity. Finally, as we shall see, rewarding intensity in the USSR was a disaster. On the point of rewarding individual intensity and only this point, is there an error in the Critique.

However, workers' management on its own will not prevent exploitation re-emerging. That requires working class control of the commanding heights of the socialist economy or as it has been put in Principle 2, control over the deductions from the social product. Only such controls can prevent these deductions being converted into a surplus, and those who administer it into a new bureaucracy.

**PRINCIPLE 4. What workers contribute to production or society they receive back after deductions.**

Under capitalism what workers produce is owned by the capitalist class who reimburse workers only partially for their production. The balance, their unpaid labour, forms the rent, interest, profits, and tax of the capitalist class. Socialism replaces working for the capitalists by working for one-self. What each worker contributes, they receive back after the collectively agreed deductions for social need, administration, and additional investment.

This equal right is necessary to unite a working class divided by unequal skills. More skilled workers who contribute more to production will receive back more than less skilled workers who contribute less. If all workers were to receive an average return this would require an unequal right, as the more skilled workers would receive less than they contribute, and the less skilled workers would receive more. This unequal right would be divisive and require the continued presence of a state to enforce it, replacing the voluntary and collaborative association of workers by enforcement.

This programme is a programme of principle not of detail. However, it is recognised that as the capitalists and their retinue consume over half of the current output of society, their expropriation creates the conditions for the immediate upliftment in the standard of living of all workers. Further it is recognised that wage differentials under capitalism are widened by the demand and supply of labour with different skills. This ends under socialism, ensuring the hierarchy of pay is diminished.

Alongside the right to receive in proportion to contribution arises the end to the artificial and ideological separation of production and education. Its ending represents financial independence for the young on the one side, and "free" lifetime learning on the other. Shorter working days will no longer be based on the barring of workers from education nor on the barring of the young from safe rewardable work. This together with the redesign of the work process to progressively eliminate the division between physical and mental labour will have as its purpose, the elevation of all workers to the level of the highest.

If we were to define the higher and later stage of socialism - communism - it would have the following twin features; firstly, the elimination of the vertical division of labour and secondly sufficient abundance so as to bring to an end the miserable calculation of one's own personal contribution to production. At that point society will no longer be divided by production but united by it, allowing for the emergence of purely personal relationships no longer contaminated by economic considerations.

**PRINCIPLE 5. The Rising Profits of Capitalism is Replaced by the Falling Prices of Communism.**

Under capitalism the law of value prevails. It represents the elastic relation between market prices and actual costs of production allowing prices to reward capitalists with a profit in proportion to the sum of capital they have previously invested. The purpose of prices under capitalism is to redistribute profits. With the abolition of the private ownership of the means of production, distribution, and

information together with commodity production, ends the law of value. It is replaced by prices being directly connected to actual costs of production. The prices found in the realm of consumption reflect weighted average labour times.

Weighted average labour times, the basis of universal labour time, recognises that workers work with different means of production, some of which are more modern, others less so, and they work with different quantities of means of production. Consequently, their productivity differs. But because the working class own the means of production collectively these variations cannot be allowed to advantage one group of workers against the other. By creating a pricing system based on weighted average labour times, a communist society ensures that these variations are cancelled out and no worker is disadvantaged.

Higher productivity and efficiency leading to reductions in labour time are now rewarded immediately by lower prices in the sphere of consumption. Falling prices are therefore the reward for collective labour, while the right to receive in proportion to contribution (after agreed deductions) is the reward for individual labour. Together they form a unity.

The capitalists have always hated and lied about deflation saying that it delays consumption. The opposite is the case. Every mass market, from the motor car, to flying, to electronics has been preceded by the cheapening of the commodities so described. Instead of delaying consumption, falling prices has allowed the market to grow leading to further economies of scale. The real reason the capitalists fear deflation is that they know it is more difficult to cheat workers of their productivity because deflation requires cutting wages.

Under socialism, the reward for higher productivity and efficiency will not be higher wages so to speak. The term “wage” is used here in shorthand but with a different content to that of capitalism. Higher wages tied to higher output can only give rise to sectional interests. This is the lesson of the USSR. In the USSR, the use of higher wages based on an increase in piece rate production (intensity) led to the cutting of corners, the misuse of materials and the unnecessary wearing out of machinery due to lack of maintenance. This was predictably caused by workers trying to increase their individual output to boost their wages without regard to the consequences for the economy as a whole. What one group of workers saved penalised workers further down the production line who had to waste their labour correcting or compensating for these inferior and defective goods. What was gained on the one side was more than lost on the other. In the end higher wages led to a rise in labour times and not its fall within the USSR. It is the death knell of any post-capitalist society to incentivise productivity on the income side, rather than as we have seen on the pricing side.

Prices in the USSR were fictitious and not connected to actual costs (weighted average labour times). In the USSR prices had two purposes: to cheat workers of their labour and secondly to reconcile the material elements of the plan. Fictitious prices robbed rather than rewarded the producer and they blinded rather than informed the planners. The USSR was the first modern economy without a coherent pricing system. This gave rise to uneconomic production, waste and ultimately to collapse.

In a democratic socialist society, collective effort is rewarded through falling prices. Effort and reward are united, exactly the opposite to what happened in the USSR. A reduction in labour time because of higher productivity and better organised work reduces the actual costs of production yielding lower prices from which all benefit. The workers who design the new and more advanced machinery, the workers who produce them and the workers who use them to produce cheaper products are all rewarded equally by the resulting fall in prices. The pricing system therefore unites collective effort and prevents sectional interests emerging. It ensures that workers who own the means of production

collectively, are rewarded collectively through the pricing system. Rising profits under capitalism, the motive of capitalist production, is replaced by falling prices, the motive of socialist production. The prices found in the realm of consumption honestly follow the path set by costs of production. Exactly what was missing in the USSR.

The crude and clumsy use of profits to guide investment decisions under capitalism is replaced by the precise guide of direct or objective prices. Prices reflecting actual and expected costs allows society to efficiently allocate the resources of society to both expand and replace existing production. In this way socialism economises on the expenditure of labour time by ending the wastefulness and duplication of capitalism and it does so in a manner unavailable to capitalism. Planning and organising investment and production now becomes a conscious process.

Capitalism which reduces prices indirectly only in order to raise profits is replaced by a mode of production which sees the direct reduction in prices as its sole and primary purpose.

#### **PRINCIPLE 6. Consumer led planning.**

The ending of the separation of production and consumption, and therefore the basis for markets, makes planning necessary. Instead of companies reacting to changes in the markets, planning anticipates these changes because the producer is at the same time the consumer. This planning is called consumer led planning. Workers knowing what their income is and what things actually cost to produce in real time can decide what they will be consuming and how much. This applies not so much to day-to-day products but to the more expensive and durable products. In addition, they will also be made aware of all the technical possibilities currently available and potential new products. In this way conscious decisions about what should be produced and how much will be made.

Here the legacy of capitalism, in particular the internet, makes consumer led planning eminently possible. If capitalism had not invented the internet a future socialist society would have done so out of necessity. The internet is the essential means for conveying the decisions of consumers to the planning bodies who will aggregate these decisions and organise production to fulfil these orders. Compared to the USSR the roles are now reversed. In the USSR the planners (part of the state) were active while consumers were passive, now it is the consumers who are active and planners passive.

The planning agencies will not be state bodies and will survive the state long after it has withered. The function of the workers' state will be limited to a purely political role, the setting up of these planning bodies, but the state cannot decide what is to be produced.

In the USSR consumers had to accept what the planners had decided for them. Planning was therefore alienating, paternalistic and generally insulting to consumers and their needs. In a socialist society the opposite is the case. Planning becomes invigorating, participatory and precise. Workers who expend their labour and are rewarded by their product do not want their labour wasted by inferior or inappropriate products.

It was not the centralisation of the plan in the USSR that made planning impossible. Instead, the problem was that the plan was imposed on society from above and this required its centralisation. Consumer led planning or planning from below is not based on centralising or decentralising the plan. It is based on what is technically and organisationally the most appropriate means for carrying it out. As long as planning is led by consumers, it will deliver what is required.

The right to decide what is to be produced is an absolute right. Provided it does no harm to others, there can be no interference with any individual's specific preferences. If workers want cars, that is what they will have and that is what will be produced in the numbers ordered and in a form most



adapted to the environment. The only penalty will be that, unlike capitalism where the price is limited to the narrow production costs of the vehicle, it now includes all the additional environmental and impact costs. This applies to every other product as well. In a socialist society there is no longer a distinction between paid costs and actual costs. Actual costs include the overall cost of consuming any product as well as producing it.

In return for this inviolable right to choose what will be produced, comes the duty to work in accordance with the plan. Individual workers cannot decide how and when they will work, for this privilege would disrupt the plan making it unworkable. The working class is a collective class, and its freedoms and responsibilities are based on this recognition. The complex products that improve our lives and constitute our standard of living, are not produced by individual craftsmen or women. They are the combined product of thousands of interconnected workers gathered together in workplaces often hundreds of miles apart.

In time, the combination of a shortened working week and artificial intelligence will provide the space and opportunity for everyone to be an artist one day, a pianist the next while all the time learning new skills. In the interim however, we inherit a complex and advanced industry two hundred years in the making, and the first order of the day is to ensure we can operate it and build on it.

#### **PRINCIPLE 7. All necessary labour is rendered social.**

Under capitalism four forms of labour are thrown up. Productive labour, functionally unproductive labour, personal unproductive labour and domestic labour. The first produces commodities and therefore the wealth of capitalist society. The second is employed in the buying, selling, accounting and administering of these commodities not forgetting the labour wasted by arguing over who owns them (legal). The third provides supervisory roles policing the production and circulation process or providing services directly to the capitalist class such as servants, chauffeurs, advisors and so on. All these forms of labour are partially paid. The fourth form of labour, domestic labour, is the exception, for it is never paid.

Socialism renders these different forms of labour redundant. Firstly, it abolishes most functionally unproductive labour such as legal, advertising, marketing, personnel departments, etc., which are no longer needed and reassigns these workers. Secondly it abolishes all personal services again reassigning workers. Fourthly it transforms private domestic labour into social labour. Alongside labour in production which provides the means for life and its upliftment stands the labour that reproduces life, that educates, heals and maintains the quality and dignity of life. Capitalism separates these forms of labour because the former produces profits while the latter costs profits or subsidises profits (domestic labour). Socialism no longer requires these different forms; it treats all necessary labour as work of equal worth.

Socialism thus ends the slavery of women at home and with it the sexual division of labour. It also introduces the regular rotation of workers between production and the sphere of social needs (funded by deductions) so that no sectional interest may arise between those who produce the social product, and who may wish to limit deductions for personal gains, and those funded by these deductions.

#### **PRINCIPLE 8. Internationalism.**

In 1948, one of history's greatest astronomers, Sir Fred Hoyle formed the opinion that: *"Once a photograph of the earth, taken from the outside is available, a new idea as powerful as any in history will be let loose."* He was right. Within twenty years, astronauts would be looking at the earth from the moon witnessing our small blue planet floating alone in space, appearing as fragile as it was

beautiful. *"When you're finally up at the moon looking back on earth, all those differences and nationalistic traits are pretty well going to blend, and you're going to get a concept that maybe this really is one world and why the hell can't we learn to live together like decent people."* (Frank Borman, *Apollo 8*, Newsweek magazine, 23 December 1968). A unified planet is possible when nations are dissolved, but for this to be accomplished the basis of nationhood – private property – must first be abolished by the only class that has no interest in its preservation - the international working class.

It was the steam train, nearly two hundred years ago, that united the nation state during the youth of capitalism. Now space flight unites the entire planet at the demise of capitalism. Nationalism was to capitalism what internationalism is to socialism, a step upward. Capitalism has developed a world economy which now forms our inheritance. Every substantial commodity is the product of many nations and multiple continents. The production chain now spans and unites the planet.

And yet many workers continue to cling to their sinking national ship as the globalisation storm rages. This is understandable for many workers feel increasingly left behind if not swept aside by the rise of the multi-nationals. However, if workers are to seize power they can only do so by uniting internationally, otherwise the capitalists will play one national group off against the other. This is the lesson of the USSR.

Stalin's "socialism in one country" was not only a pragmatic response to the defeat of the German revolution in 1923, but it was also a non-aggression pact with imperialism. In exchange for the imperialists (the USA and Britain in particular) respecting the territorial integrity of the USSR, Stalin offered to sabotage or at least disorientate the international workers' struggle. This was the only devil's pact the imperialists would respect. Accordingly, Stalin instructed Mao to disarm the workers in China in 1928 enabling Chiang Kai-Shek to massacre them. In the early 1930s, Stalin convinced the German Communist Party (KPD) that their main enemy was not Hitler but the social democrats whom he labelled social fascists. By precipitating a civil war in the ranks of the German working class, the political space opened up for Hitler to march to power. In 1936 at the height of the Spanish Civil War, Stalin's death squads killed many members and leaders of the POUM (anarchists) thereby weakening the Republican side and helping Franco seize power. The rise of Hitler and the defeat of the Republicans in Spain made war in Europe inevitable and with it the invasion of the USSR, the very act Stalin had sought to avoid.

Therefore, at every level internationalism is not an option. No single nation can exist economically outside the world economy ever again, even a country as large as the USA. Secondly, a peace between a socialist island and the capitalist sea in which it finds itself, can only be struck on terms which are fatal to the international working class. Furthermore, nationalism unites workers with their capitalist masters. Support for immigration controls, means support for the capitalist state which alone can implement these controls. The enemy is seen as outsiders, migrants seeking work, and not insiders, their own capitalist class. Instead of calling for the removal of their own capitalist class they seek the removal of the migrants, workers suffering a common oppression and exploitation. Once workers support the state oppressing foreign workers, they are unable to defend themselves when this same state turns around and attacks them.

Finally, the problems facing the working class are global in scale. Reversing global warming requires a concerted, united and international response. This is particularly true for ridding the planet of fossil fuel burning. A globalist recognizes that somewhere on our planet there will be found a place where the sun is shining or the wind blowing. Transcontinental DC power grids, linking up wind turbines and solar panels thousands of miles apart can provide sustained and sufficient power 24 hours a day thus ending the need for fossil fuel base load power stations. Workers can and must think globally in a way

that competition and nationalism prevents the capitalists from doing. Big may not be beautiful, but it is bountiful and liberating.

### **In conclusion.**

The international working class, whose numbers are counted in the billions not the millions, needs a charter of workers' rights to unite it. The eight principles constitute the core charter. Falling prices which rewards collective effort, the right to receive in proportion to contribution which rewards individual effort, consumer led planning which rewards the expenditure of labour, workers control of production and the right of every producer to decide on the deductions from the social product, forms an indissoluble whole. Their combined purpose is to unite an unequal working class, while their function is to end these inequalities.

This synthesis of purpose and function is understood thus, on the one hand they unite an unequal working class making possible a dynamic socialist economy, secondly and in turn, this dynamic economic makes possible the enlargement, both relatively and absolutely, of the deductions from the social product for "social needs" (Marx). At first these deductions will be limited by the degree of economic development involving many compromises, but later these compromises will diminish as the economic possibilities increase. In time these deductions will be equal to the task of raising every worker to the highest skill in every part of the world. Precisely because compromise will be needed at first, ensuring that the process leading up to them is inclusive and democratic, is of the utmost importance.

This workers' constitution is not abstract, it has to be empowered. It requires the prior seizure of state power by the international working class.

Capitalism faces four connected and compounding crises in the immediate future. (1) its difficulty in reproducing itself as manifested by the crisis of productivity. (2) The introduction of artificial intelligence and the social disruptions this will herald. (3) Its inability to deal with global warming let alone reverse it. (4) The growing struggle between the US and China for world economic hegemony. Together they present the greatest political crisis facing capitalism, in magnitude exceeding 1914 or 1939.

The question is not whether capitalism has the capacity to deal with this crisis, it is whether in succumbing to this crisis, it succeeds in dragging humanity over the cliff of history. The intent of this programme is to demonstrate that humanity has an alternative to capitalism, that securing the future of humanity is not only necessary, but possible.

Brian Green, July 2019 – July 2022.