

The future is ours



Political statement from the Communist Party

14th Congress, London



At the previous congress the Party laid out an analysis of the state of Britain and the class which has been utterly borne out by events. The questions for us to consider now are: Where do we go from here? What has changed? How do we strike out for a future?

Read on...



Britain

In Britain the sheer speed of decay is breathtaking. The ruling class has a horrifying future in mind for us: abandonment of Britain as a nation which means abandonment of this working class. Not just jobs but the class itself is to be outsourced.

Don't like this working class (too literate, too skilled, too expensive, too awkward)? Then import another one, from anywhere in the world where people who are so desperate and can afford it are prepared to abandon the aspiration for improvement in their own country, in the hope of something, anything, somewhere else. They'll come and work longer hours for much less money, without expecting pensions. And they don't share our history of organisation.

Blair presides over a court where he assumes absolute powers because he can no longer govern in any other way. Parliamentary government is in collapse, with ensuing chaos to come. The charade of Parliamentary democracy, with its political parties, its cabinet system, its select committees, has become irrelevant to the ruling class. Blair and his executive simply force policies through.

The Labour Party no longer cares about its members. Support from capitalist companies is all that matters. And because we won't vote for them they plan to force us. The deliberate sucking in of our Trade Unions into the state machine and its work – their incorporation – is gathering pace.

EU directives are slavishly followed. In fact traitors Blair and Brown use the EU as the motor to weaken our sovereignty, drive down wages, close down production, sell off our assets to private companies, open our borders to all-comers. The EU is a handy smokescreen – "We have to do it because we signed the treaty" – a useful lie but still a lie. The EU is a flag of convenience to drive the changes required by decaying capitalism – of all EU member states felt most sharply here. Now British workers through taxation must pay for a new underground system in Warsaw, while paying ever higher fares to travel to work packed shoulder to shoulder on their own collapsing transport system.

Wilson and Callaghan paved the way for Thatcher. Blair and Brown have destroyed more manufacturing jobs and production than her. What are they paving the way to? Something worse than Thatcher if we allow them to?

Capitalism and war

Capitalism is a spent force, not dead but weak, with nothing to offer British workers but abandonment of our nation, terrorism and war. In spite of British workers' opposition to wars, the facts show that in recent years we have not stopped them.

Our troops continue to be sent to front Britain's imperialist adventures in Ireland, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Occupation of Afghanistan has led to nothing but impoverishment of its people and a booming heroin crop, much of it being sold on the streets of Britain. No people, in this case us in Britain, can be free themselves if they permit the oppression of other workers in other lands, in this case those people in countries where Blair sends troops in our name.

As before World War I, huge power blocs are forming in the world to fight over control of markets and resources. Oil wars are a given: are gas wars next? How many competing countries need to be placated when fuel pipes cross so many borders?

Yet capitalism has abandoned the concept of energy self sufficiency for Britain. Blair scoffs at it as old-fashioned. Do workers agree? Imagine for a moment how we would defend ourselves, or even live, if the taps were switched off in some other country. National independence is impossible without our own energy production. Three decades of self-sufficiency in gas supply, and generations of self-sufficiency in coal stocks frittered away by an enemy class concerned only that our energy is not supplied by British workers.

Food is now described by Blair as a "global commodity". No need to produce our own, then. Let farmland be concreted over, for property development. A deliberate policy to weaken our independence as a nation now and in the future. Oil wars, gas wars, food wars?

The bloated giant of the EU grows ever fatter, gobbling up countries not even in Europe (but making sure they join NATO first) riven with internal contradictions and corruption, its members incapable of keeping their peoples onside to vote for a constitution. If those peoples pushed further, the whole tottering edifice could collapse. Eventually it will have to be done.

The world is plunging into chaos. A time of great danger, but also of great opportunity for our class. Will we go with it, or take the opportunities presented to assert a decent future?

International class forces

What is the state of class forces in the world today?

Tiny Cuba still survives – in spite of the US "super" power's attempts to finish it off. It survives by using a form of internationalist guerrilla struggle, by strategic thinking combined with sheer grit and determination, using the tools at hand – the ingenuity and commitment of its people – and winning over neighbouring countries to its side. As they say, their most powerful weapons are ideas. That is as true in Britain as it is in Cuba.

Argentina shows what is done to a country if it refuses to be bound to an IMF debt; nothing! The big guns have to back down. The peoples of Latin America have killed FTAA, the Free Trade Area of the Americas, the equivalent of our Eurozone.

For us the lesson from this part of the world is clear; you can exist without the IMF; you can exist without being in a wider power bloc. You can thrive by being independent.

Yet worldwide the working class is at its lowest ebb. With the collapse of socialism in the once great bastions of the Soviet Union and China, capitalism appears all-powerful, rampant. The lessons of Russia 1917 are being forgotten by our class and by the new generation in the ex-Soviet countries which have consciously opted for capitalism. Yet the ruling class does not forget the cataclysmic shock of having its power wrested from it. It lives in fear of the people it must exploit. The economic reality of



modern capitalism is that they are weak and we hold huge potential strength.

Although the Soviet Union transformed the world by destroying Hitler's armies on its own soil, its brave experiment in creating a dictatorship of working people came to an end. That does not make the experiment a mistake. The choice in 1917 was stark, and the Russian people chose the brave path, never before tried, of leaping straight from feudalism to socialism. Similarly in China, in possibly even more difficult circumstances. In both cases, revolution had to be made in non-capitalist societies by a people made up of a small (in China, tiny) working class and a large peasantry. In each case, the revolutions lasted for only one generation. Did the inherently backward, petty-minded thinking of the peasant finally win out over the progressive thinking of workers? Or was the thinking of workers not progressive enough? In both countries, the changes in ideology proved not established deeply enough to survive.

Now capitalist economic forces are growing in China with extreme rapidity, and with them an industrial working class. Trade unions are not permitted in the new mines, factories and building sites. The Communist Party is using the old structures to rule over this rampant growth in the interests of capital, yet remnants of the massive Communist educational drives must survive on the bookshelves and in the minds of people.

Inevitably there will be a development of workers' movements in factories, as is beginning in the new industrial cities of India and South East Asia. Will it reach Africa? It is already developing in South America.

In its need to exploit the labour power of workers, capitalism cannot help but create its own gravediggers. In its apparent resurgence it has nothing new to offer the world, just more of the same, no revolutionary dynamism of its own, just the familiar tired old story of war and exploitation, ripping out the country's natural resources to create mostly cheap shoddy goods. What happened in Europe in the 19th century is being replicated in Asia and South America, and probably Africa is next. Wherever there is capitalism, there must be a working class. The 21st century will see significant growth in working class forces throughout the world, and, eventually, of huge potential for revolution.

British working class

In early 21st century Britain the degeneration of working class politics is manifest. Thought either advances or declines. Workers here view politics either as spectator sport or with extreme distrust.

The sight of a G8 summit in Gleneagles, a bunch of capitalist predators, posing as latter-day Knights of the Round Table, ready to save Africa from poverty, when they were just gearing up to work out how best to exploit its peoples, was gut-wrenching. For workers it was politics without politics. A few pop concerts and millions of wristbands later – Disney politics with celebrities – and capitalism continues as before, as if it could do anything else.

The level of debate about poverty was abysmal. Is it a disease for which a cure might be found? Is it a defective gene? Or is it the consequence of a system which puts profit first, middle and last?

They can't help it, capitalists. They are caterpillars, eating machines without the metamorphosis at the end, just bigger caterpillars.

British workers see through the motives of politicians, and this extends to anyone who sets themselves up to represent their interests. That's why they won't vote for them. Not in parliamentary elections, not in local government elections. And not in their own organisations, union elections. Leftist posturing in unions is an excuse not to get involved, when it could be dealt with easily if workers decided to.

Politics are a big turn-off. There is a massive turning away from trade unions, which shelter together in ever-larger US-style "super-unions", the proportionally smaller the membership, the seemingly larger the organisation and the more strutting with self-importance on the national and even, at its most corrupt, EU stage.

Trade unions are increasingly incorporated into the state machine through the continued adherence to the centralised power of Downing Street. There, of course, they are ignored, and to hell with the working class. A result of, and a reason for, workers showing contempt for their own organisations. For sheer treachery, witness the joint statement by Number 10, the CBI and the TUC about how good migration is for the economy.

We have said before that the worst mistake British workers made was the creation of the Labour Party a hundred years ago. The politics was: you do our thinking for us, you represent us in the house of the enemy. As if this were possible. It is the ultimate superstition. We'll organise at work, you get on with the politics on our behalf.

Now that workplace organisation is at its lowest level, involvement in unions similarly, cynicism about the Labour Party absolute, what remains? A class doing its best to turn its back on class politics. There is a whiff of the peasant mentality, of doggedly bowing our shoulders under the blows of fate in the face of the terrible reality of Britain 2006, with its disappearing industry, terrorist menace, declining wages, bankrupt hospitals, an impoverished old age.

With workplace organisation at its lowest level in generations it should come as no surprise that the level of class-consciousness among workers in Britain is also at its lowest level for generations. To believe that class-consciousness improves as things get worse is the same dangerous illusion that pretends that the poorer you are, the more revolutionary you are. This lack of class-consciousness is at the root of the failure of all working class organisations – bar none – to recruit and thrive. It must be reversed for growth to come.

As a class we are clear about regionalism and the euro, but less clear about the EU and war. We are clear about the value of manufactured goods but unclear about the importance of manufacturing them in Britain. How do we imagine a country without industry or agriculture can sustain itself economically? We respond with calm and collective skill to dying and injured workers attacked by terrorists on tubes and buses, but are unclear that we – only we – can prevent barbarism. The fascist attack on London in July 2005 was met by a heroic working class response. If we do not root out the cause though, political



fundamentalism, it will happen again. And again. No such attack was possible during the time of the Soviet Union, even though we were lied to and told that it was they that made the world unsafe. It was precisely the removal of Socialism in Europe that made such obscenities ever more likely.

Blairism is the shrug of the shoulders – "What can you do? It's all beyond us." "We can do something about it" becomes the most controversial – and revolutionary – thought.

What's missing is the recognition that if capitalism wants to abandon us, we can do without capitalism. That we have to work out what is needed and get on with it. As the song puts it, we have nowhere to run, nowhere to hide. We are not suicidal, so have no choice. Workers today clearly do not want a dictatorship of the proletariat, workers in power, but this is what is necessary.

Energy

If we put our minds to it, what kind of future might we create?

Energy was and is key to the development of capitalism, and therefore of the working class. The next hundred years will determine whether global warming is a real threat, and if it is, we will have to learn how to deal with it. Capitalism by its nature wastes resources and fritters away energy, but ludicrously calls on workers to cut down on energy consumption by turning down the heat (in chilly Britain) and not going out.

Similarly, assumptions that in the growing capitalist economies of countries like India and China, with their huge populations, people will not want to drive cars and have air conditioning in sweltering temperatures, if such things become generally possible, is outrageous. Energy needs are set to grow, massively, inevitably, and workers are perfectly capable of finding solutions to these problems.

We need to develop new forms of energy. The Stone Age did not come to an end because we ran out of stone. Steam, gas, electricity, nuclear – what next? In Britain we have resources which could still be exploited, and we need to overcome the irrational fear of nuclear energy, but this will not be enough for the future. Who could want a return to the past, even if it were possible? Did miners aspire for their children to spend their working lives digging coal in the dark?

We need to recognise what is special about British inventiveness. We have a sophisticated working class – highly literate, skilled, rational, experienced, creative. At the highest level, a group of scientists in Britain led the way to the complete sequencing of the human genome, finishing the task in far fewer years than were dreamed to be possible, a magnificent achievement. This scientific discovery is proving of great significance for human progress, even under capitalist conditions, with knock-on effects on research and development in the fields of medicine, food production, fertility.

This was only possible because of the particular conditions in Britain, with an intellectual, educational and scientific infrastructure created by workers here, and run by workers here, just about surviving although with serious difficulty, used for the benefit of all.

A similar thing could be done in the field of energy technology – a

great contribution to Britain's future economy. In wartime Britain, scientific inventions and productive progress were rapid because of the concentration of creative energies devoted to what was needed in a desperately urgent situation.

Now we should harness this attitude for the future. Like the human genome project, we need an energy project, with the best minds concentrating on it, to assure the future energy needs of the country are met and that Britain no longer depends on buying in energy from other countries. There is no reason why this could not be done. It requires a capacity, which we have, and a commitment to the future, which we must have to survive.

Party

The Party has something to say to workers that nobody else will. For many, our message is the most unappealing possible. No illusions, no seductive idealism; away with all your superstitions. Nobody else can tell you what is to be done, it's down to you. This includes our Party – never a substitute for the class. For honest, worried workers, this message is the only one which can make them listen.

The Party is unique in its honesty, audacity and integrity. Never self-serving, as a party or as comrades: only the class interest matters, so Party first. Persistence over years and decades has enabled us to survive where others have not.

WORKERS is a magnificent organ of thought and tool for the class, if we use it. A voice of reason in the morass.

As a Party, we reflect the class in its current state. Workers in Britain never did flock to the CP, even post 1945 when workers were preventing the ruling class from ruling, and will not do so now. Yet we must stimulate growth. The situation is grim, but communists never can be because we take the long view of history.

Like many communists elsewhere, our challenge is to pass on our thought to a new generation, ready to take up the reins as Party members.

The future

In this chaotic world how can working class power be achieved? Only by setting the agenda for what we need and forcing the pace. There is huge weakness in the capitalist system. Working class struggle can have a powerful effect in this situation.

The enemy is tiny in number, we are millions.

Our working class and this, its Party, are the only live force in Britain. What might be the economic future for Britain? First we need to do the simple, primitive things – join the debate, organise workplaces, fight locally, struggle for wages – to reassert our dignity as a class. Such struggles may look different from what has gone before, but new times require new solutions and the class will find them.

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