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**A critical and comparative analysis of organisational forms of
selected Marxist parties, in theory and in practice, with special
reference to the last half century**

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD

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The diversity of the proletariat during the final two decades of the 20th century reached a point where traditional socialist and communist parties could not represent all sections of the working class. Moreover, the development of social movements other than the working class after the 1960s further sidelined traditional parties. The anti-capitalist movements in the 1970s and 1980s were looking for new political formations. This work is an effort to study the synthesis of the traditional vanguard socialist party and spontaneous working class movements with other social groups.

The multi-tendency socialist organisation that formed in many countries after 1980 has its roots in the Marxist theories of earlier epochs. It is a mass organisation based on the direct initiatives of activists of all social movements springing from below. Its internal relations are not hierarchical but based on the horizontal relations between organs. This is an organisation belonging to both civil society and political society.

This study does not suggest that the era for a vanguard Leninist party is completely over. In some dictatorial societies a centralised party is the most appropriate political method of organising workers and the poor, and fighting oppression and censorship. After the success of a political revolution such a party would face the question of coalition and cooperation with other progressive forces. Therefore in the transitional epoch of the early 21st century both traditional types of vanguard parties and multi-tendency organisations coexist. The most successful socialist multi-tendency organisation is the one in which the communists and radical socialists are able to maintain the continuity of the organisation and influence a considerable section of the working class and poor.

Though the formations of multi-tendency organisations have experienced setbacks in some countries those setbacks do not undermine their achievements in Latin America. The multi-tendency socialist organisation is the only viable alternative to the present capitalist system.

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INTRODUCTION

After the collapse of the USSR and Eastern bloc, a powerful shock wave hit Stalinist and semi-Stalinist political parties and organisations throughout the world. The political model they had taken for granted for so long had disappeared and the theories of such a model were facing a big question mark. Almost all Stalinist and semi-Stalinist parties and groups in most countries split. While dominant tendencies joined social democracy, the more radical sections started to look for an alternative model that was radically different from the Stalinist party-state model. The alternative, they argued during the 1990s, should be different from the Russian model. It had to be new, inclusive, and bringing solutions to the problem of the divided working class movement.

Trotskyist and other Marxist parties and organisations had criticised the policies of the USSR and Eastern bloc for decades and had been seeking an alternative. However, the collapse of the political system in the Eastern bloc awakened these groups to the realities of the Soviet system forcing these groups to improve their methods of organisation and to distance themselves from Stalinism and so-called Russian communism. In order to achieve this they had to get rid of bureaucratic and sectarian aspects of their policies. Those sections of Trotskyist and Marxist organisations that realised this started to work toward a multi-tendency organisation to represent the interests of the 85% majority of society.

The West interpreted the collapse of the USSR and Eastern European system as the collapse of communism. In order to survive under powerful anti-communist Western propaganda, the left as a whole needed a tool in order to move from its defensive position. It became the most urgent political task of all radical Marxist groups to work toward an anti-capitalist alternative that had clear differences from Stalinism and the bureaucratic system of the Eastern bloc. The socialist multi-tendency umbrella organisation was that alternative.

This work aims to study this alternative and for this purpose different methods will be used. Firstly, to understand the advantages and disadvantages of the multi-tendency umbrella organisation comparisons will be made between the multi-tendency socialist model and other models and in particular with the centralised and disciplined party model. This work will refer to this model as the traditional party model. Secondly, due to the limitations of theoretical sources in the last fifteen years, this work will use interviews with supporters and critics of multi-tendency model as well as political discussions of existing alliances, a survey among the activists, and Marxist literature related to the subject in order to describe the multi-tendency umbrella organisation model as the alternative put forward by the radical socialist left for the 21st century.

There are naturally limitations to this study and it is not within the scope of this work to embark upon a complete discussion about the aims and the structures of the multi-tendency umbrella organisation. This work started in the year 2000 and during the last eight years many multi-tendency organisations have experienced changes in their policies and structures. The multi-tendency umbrella organisation is a new model and it will take at least a few decades before it can endure future challenges. During that journey and like any other system this model will go through changes and improvements. It is because of the changing nature of the existing alliances of the socialist left that this study does not intend to go into the details of their aims and structures. Instead this work will concentrate on the common features of major alliances formed so far.

The formation of multi-tendency umbrella organisations of the socialist left started with the formation of the Brazil Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores - PT) at the start of the 1980s. Multi-tendency organisations formed in many other countries in Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. Nearly two decades since the formation of the PT as the first major multi-tendency organisation, the party and many other umbrella organisations are no

longer the same organisations as when they started. The process was by no means straightforward. Shifts in policies, combined with setbacks, and internal fighting made the progress of multi-tendency umbrella organisations painfully slow. The slow progress consequently affected the length of this study. The leading ideas and organisations in the 1980s and 1990s were an obstacle to progress within the next decades as in the case of the PT in Brazil. In spite of these problems during the final two decades of the 20th century one thing has been clear, the era for the traditional vanguard party was over and the socialist left had only one way forward. That was multi-tendency socialist umbrella organisation. The purpose of this study is to prove this point.

The multi-tendency socialist umbrella organisation as a model will be understood better in comparison with other models. For this reason the next section starts with describing the general characteristics of three models in order to put a foundation for the arguments put forward in this work.

Three models

During the struggle of the working class and poor peasantry during the last century three models of political organisation have developed. They were the disciplined party model, which is better known as the party-state model, the autonomous direct action model, and the multi-tendency political organisation model. The theories and practices of the three models did not develop together or during the same time period. While throughout the 20th century there has been books and research on party models, and to a lesser extent on autonomous direct action models, the literature related to multi-tendency political organisation models did not exist until the last decade of the 20th century. This work aims to study the politics of the third model in two ways. Firstly, by looking at what the activists of the third model say and write about policies and organisation and secondly, by comparing its advantages and disadvantages with those of the first model. That is to say this study will examine the problems of party models and

compare them to the advantages of the multi-tendency model. In order to understand the models that are being compared in the forthcoming chapters and more importantly what each model means the next section will briefly outline the characteristics of all three models.

The party-state model- The advocates of the party-state model argue that for the emancipation of the working class an independent communist party is needed to form the theory of emancipation and convey it to the working class. Russian and Eastern European politics claimed to be based on this model. Needless to say, within this model there is a great difference between what the Bolshevik party leadership advocated before 1920 and what was practiced after Lenin's death, particularly after the Second World War in Russia and Eastern Europe. One needs to make a distinction between Lenin's understanding of the relationship between the party and the soviets between 1917 and 1920, and the ideas of Stalin. However, the advocates of the party-state model from Lenin and Gramsci to Mao and Stalin and other political leaders in Eastern Europe believed that without a communist party independent of the class to lead the class struggle and to answer the ideological and political problem facing the working class struggle, the emancipation of the working class could never be achieved.

Autonomous direct action model - The second model, in contrast, emphasises the capacity of the working class and the poor to emancipate themselves. The early advocates of this model were the young Leon Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg during the early 20th century. They emphasised Marx's idea that the emancipation of the working class is the act of the working class itself. Based on this tradition various movements appeared during the last century. Examples of these movements can be seen in the self-management system in the former Yugoslavia after the Second World War, the Zapatista movement in Mexico at the end of the 20th century, from 1980 onward the National Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities (CONAIE) in Ecuador, the Cocaleros (coca farmers) in Bolivia, Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST) in Brazil, and the local people's

centre or *Bnka* in the Kurdish region of Iran between 1980-1981. There are differences between these examples. In some examples such as the Yugoslavian self-management system where a political party was behind the movement and carefully watched its progress, while in other cases such as the Zapatista movement, the conscious element of the movement never developed a party system of leadership. The Zapatista movement is an autonomous self-management movement of the poorest of the poor based on direct democracy and participation of the entire community in the day to day running of the movement and the decision making processes necessary for their lives and struggle. The movement's starting point was to develop an alternative development strategy to the neo-liberal projects of the International Monetary Found (IMF) and World Bank in Chiapas. Years of struggle, in particular the experience of the last fifteen years has made the movement's objectives clearer. Now the Zapatista movement has realised that in order to fight the neo-liberal policies of the Mexican central government and the world's leading financial institutions, they have to fight capitalism. They now know who their true allies are in the global system and in other areas of Mexico. The supporters of the first model might argue that after ten years it is not ideal to look for allies in anti-capitalist movements and leftist organisations. There is an element of truth in this, but even ten years is not a big price to pay for a life long assurance against bureaucratisation and sectarianism. The future will tell whether the Zapatista movement will repeat the mistakes of other Latin American movements by entering into electoral politics, which has caused divisions and disillusionment with the movement, or continue its method of autonomous direct action.

Multi-tendency political organisation model - The third political model appeared at the end of the 20th century. The multi-tendency model is a synthesis of both the self-management, autonomous, and the independent party models of the Eastern bloc. It is a multi-tendency organisation comprised of the entire left that is formed from the bottom up, allowing the initiatives of all members to flourish and become the base of the organisation's policies in all areas. This

model is based on existing working class movements and allied movements such as women's movements, the peace and environmental movements, etc and cannot exist without them. However, the multi-tendency political organisation that is put forward in this work is different from the other two models. This model conflicts with the hierarchical structure of traditional parties. It does not have a rigid structure and operates through the autonomous existence of its local and regional organs whose relationship to each other is horizontal rather than hierarchical. The leading organ, called the coordinating committee, unlike the central committee of a traditional communist party, is not god like and its power is limited by general meetings, various conferences and seminars, referendums, as well as the policies of local and regional organisations and tendencies that exist within it. Unlike traditional parties of the left, capturing state power is not everything for the multi-tendency organisation. Though they understand the importance of political power in their strategy, the activities of a multi-tendency political organisation cannot only be explained by the search for political power. The reason for this is simple. The demands of most movements did not start and stop with the question of state power. Women's fight for equal rights is broader than the issue of state power. The same is true for other movements. The multi-tendency organisation has clear differences with any or all of the movements that exist within it. Unlike movements, the multi-tendency organisation is not based on spontaneity and the place and effect of consciousness in its formation and activity is very clear. It is not formed on a single issue such as war, women's rights, higher wages, etc. and its existence does not depend on any one of these movements. It rises with one movement and continues with another. In fact, like a political party, it has continuity and knits all those movements together.

The purpose of this work is to advance the theory of multi-tendency political organisations and is based on several postulates. Firstly, the working class at the beginning of the 21st century is not the same as the working class of the early 20th century. Secondly, as early as the first half of the 20th century working class leaders had realised the diversity of their class and favoured a party that had a

variety of tendencies and more than one platform. Thirdly, social democratic and Stalinist parties betrayed the working class cause and therefore can no longer belong to the family of working class parties and organisations. Fourthly, a viable socialist organisation in the 21st century cannot be built on the principle of democratic centralism that was typical of traditional parties. Finally, the following chapters will concentrate on the shortcomings of the party-state and guerrilla warfare that alienates the masses of workers and poor both before and after capturing state power. A multi-tendency organisation which consists of the bottom 85% of society is the only socialist organisational model in the 21st century that allows political unity between the forces of progress, freedom and socialism, while at the same time reduces bureaucratization, sectarianism, and dogmatism among radical working class forces.

The aim of this thesis is to prove, firstly that the idea of a multi-tendency political organisation is wide spread amongst intellectuals, academics, political activists, and working class shop stewards and activists, although it is not fully developed. Secondly, the idea of a mass multi-tendency political organisation of the working class goes back to the 19th century and the formation of the First International. Thirdly, the classical Marxists before the 1940s supported the idea of a centralised mass workers' party that contained the various tendencies within the working class. Moreover, the history of the Bolshevik party during the revolution (1917-1923) demonstrates that many tendencies existed within the party, in addition to the one propagated by Lenin. These tendencies continued to exist after Lenin's death in 1924.

In addition, in Italy Antonio Gramsci argued for the need for unity between the working class movements in the North and peasant movements in the South. His theory of social bloc is very far from a monolithic party structure. Gramsci's theory of the social bloc between workers and peasants is similar to the Comintern's tactic of the United Front in that both theories do not undermine the leadership of the communist party. In spite of the Narodnik tradition in which

strong support came from the peasantry and the Social Revolutionaries Party in Russia, Lenin and Trotsky emphasised the independence of the working class as the agent of socialism. Gramsci, on the other hand, led the way for the social bloc between workers and peasants. The contrast between Lenin and Trotsky's emphasis and Gramsci's was not a contrast between their methods but rather the political situation of the working class movement in the early 20th century in Russia and the 1930s when Italy was threatened by fascism. One should remember, while Lenin emphasised the independence of the working class party, until April 1917 the Bolsheviks and Lenin advocated the revolutionary dictatorship of workers and peasants which meant they were aware of the importance of the peasantry in Russia. On the other hand, Gramsci's theory of social bloc did not contradict his life long support for a working class party independent of all other classes.

A viable 21st century socialist organisation that is able to lead the struggle of the various parts of the majority of the population cannot be monolithic. It must be a multi-tendency mass organisation that can bring together, under a single umbrella, the different working class parties and groups, as well as radical trade unions, the various types of activist such as peace, environmental, women, the permanently unemployed, and the leaders of the poor peasant movements.

The main characteristics of a multi-tendency organisation can be summarised as follows: Firstly, the formation of the organisation would be the decision of political activists from below. This method of formation is different from the method of traditional parties' formation, which is from above by a few intellectuals. Secondly, in a multi-tendency organisation the starting point unlike the traditional left is not a programme, but rather revolutionary action. Thirdly, unlike the traditional left who did not understand the importance of party democracy and practised bureaucratic centralism as opposed to democratic centralism, multi-tendency socialist organisations emphasise inclusiveness and participation of all activists in the process of policy making. Finally, unlike

traditional parties, its organisational structure is not hierarchical but horizontal. That is to say, power is not only concentrated in the centre.

Why traditional party models do not work

The traditional vanguard communist party is no longer a viable leading organisation for the 21st century. It is argued that the traditional communist parties (the vanguard party) have become anachronistic because the working class has undergone structural changes during the second half of the 20th century. The most prominent Marxists before the Second World War supported the idea of a workers' party and tolerated tendencies within the party. After the war Social Democratic and Stalinist parties did not continue the tradition of those great Marxists, and the so-called communist parties in the Eastern block were not communist by any standard. All these factors have led to the urgent need for a multi-tendency organisation. It is not merely the fact that the internal relations of a traditional party, what is known as democratic centralism, are not appropriate for a viable organisation of the future. A traditional communist party is no longer viable because a political party by definition is formed around an ideology or a particular interpretation of an ideology. Today no one ideology is able to answer all the demands of all the social groups and classes. Just as it is not possible to organise the working class for socialism with a bourgeois ideology by a bourgeois party, it is equally impossible for a party that claims to be Marxist and identifies itself with a definition of the working class that is frozen in the early 20th century to organise the 21st century working class and several other social groups. A fair question might be: If a communist party that is naturally based upon a communist ideology can no longer be viable, then why did Lenin and Gramsci advocate it so firmly?

To answer this question one must look at the debates. In exile at the end of the 1930s Trotsky admitted that in all the controversies between Lenin, Trotsky and

Rosa Luxemburg from 1902-1905 about the party's independence from the class, Lenin was right and that he and Luxemburg were wrong. That is to say, he confirmed Marx's life long effort for the emancipation of the working class, their re-education to become a class for itself and the development of the natural leaders of the working class to build a workers' political organisation. In other words, after three decades Trotsky accepted that the party's independence from the class as a whole was a pre-condition for the emancipation of the class. One should note that Trotsky did not specify the points in which he and Luxemburg were right and those that Lenin had agreed with them. One hundred years after their discussions on the party and class it is clear that Lenin's party model in *What Is To Be Done?* was his specific answer to a particular time of police repression and the party's defensive position. Therefore, this model may be undesirable for other times. In other words, any universal generalisations about Lenin's early 20th century model would be totally wrong. Moreover Lenin's 1902 model allowed Stalin to build a huge bureaucracy against the working class. Lenin's model was not galvanised against such use because it could not foresee bureaucratisation becoming the key problem of the soviet system. However, the working class's need for a political organisation as a pre-condition of its emancipation is still an undeniable reality. Unlike what Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg suggested, without a political organisation the working class will not be emancipated by strikes and direct spontaneous actions just as peasants will not be freed from the oppression of capitalism by their direct actions such as road blockades, taking over municipal offices, occupying large estates, etc. This study will argue that a multi-tendency political organisation is a viable organisation that allows initiatives from below by the masses. This is the only model of political organisation that allows full participation of activists and members in the making of local, regional, and general policies. Moreover, tendencies and various platforms within the umbrella organisation are allowed and they exert influence on the general policies of the entire organisation. The centre determines very general policies out of the agreement of all the activists and tendencies. That is to say, the centre cannot interfere with the specific problems of districts and local branches. In other words,

this thesis is arguing for a synthesis of Lenin's 1902 model and Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg's concept of the general strike. The result would be a decentralised multi-tendency organisation of the working class. Instead of a hierarchical top down relationship common to all traditional communist parties, it would allow initiatives from below by members of the organisation. It would be based on a horizontal relationship of organs within the general policies decided by the organisation's general meetings and its coordinating bodies. The coordinating committee after capturing state power would not have any involvement in day to day policies. Its sole duty would be to make sure the general agreement and major principles of the organisation is not undermined by specific policies of branches and tendencies.

The inability of a traditional party to organise other social groups

The destructive forces of capitalism have deeply impacted the environment to the extent that more and more people have become aware of its destructive nature and have joined anti-capitalist movements across the globe. The inferiority of women at work and in the home, the misery and destruction caused by war, the destruction of the rain forests, and the destruction caused by natural catastrophes are all directly related to the dominance of the present capitalist system and its cultural hegemony. About one billion men and women are permanently unemployed to keep the level of profit acceptable for capital. Only in India are 360 million people unemployed. The official rate of unemployment in third world countries is about 20% of the workforce. Capitalism and its agribusinesses in many parts of the world have destroyed agriculture and people's livelihood in the countryside. The motive for capital is profit. Agribusinesses' higher profit is directly related to the destruction of traditional methods of agriculture and the loss of poor peasants' small plots. The increasing power of finance capital at the expense of weaker industry adds to the misery of those who lose their jobs on a daily basis. All these activities, wars, and destruction have caused those directly affected to react. As the experience of the second half of the 20th century has

shown, a monolithic traditional party mechanism is not able to organise all the anti-capitalist movements. However, these movements have the potential to unite with working class parties under an umbrella organisation. It will be the political task of working class parties and unions to step forward for the formation of such an umbrella organisation. The unity of all social classes and groups depends on the agreement of their activists. The activists of many social groups such as women and environmentalists tended not join traditional parties, which for more than half a century neglected their demands and did not recognise them as independent social groups.

Why a multi-tendency organisation?

The socio-political history of the 20th century has proven that neither a social movement without the backing of a political organisation, nor a vanguard party claiming to lead the working class were successful in spite of their great efforts. Only through the strategy of creating a multi-tendency political organisation will the working class become emancipated and with it the whole of humanity. To prove this hypothesis this thesis will discuss the various socio-economic, political, and organisational aspects related to the working class struggle and its class allies.

The first chapter will look at the structural changes of the working class, i.e. the rise of unemployment to a degree never seen before and the negative impact that one billion unemployed in the world has had on the working class struggle. The first chapter will also examine the decline of the industrial working population, the increase in the number of service workers, the mass entry of women into the labour market after the Second World War, and the effect of computers and technology on the unity of the working class. As a result of all these processes, the first chapter will argue that the position of the industrial working class is weakened. The diversity within the working class layers requires a new form of political organisation that is able to respond to the needs of all those groups and layers. Chapter one also studies the changes in capitalism in the second half of the

20th century. That is to say, the first chapter discusses the place of finance capital, the movement of capital from the centre to peripheral countries, and militarism as three distinctive examples of capital's efforts to control its systemic crisis and to postpone its terminal crisis

As mentioned earlier the second chapter deals with the political theory of the mass workers' party. That is to say, chapter two will discuss the ideas of four classical Marxists i.e. Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg, and Gramsci. The author has explicit reasons for choosing these four Marxists. These reasons are as follows: Lenin, Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg and Antonio Gramsci were the top working class leaders of their time and were directly involved in working class movements; their theories had a deeper impact on the working class movement than other political leaders; they did not compromise their radical stand; and they were faithful to the emancipation of the working class until the end of their lives. While Lenin and Trotsky became working class heroes during the successful October Revolution, Rosa Luxemburg and Antonio Gramsci lost their lives attempting the proletarian revolution in their respective countries. In spite of Rosa Luxemburg's and Antonio Gramsci's tragic deaths, today all four theorists' ideas are being re-read by millions of workers and poor. This chapter will also briefly discuss the movements of other social groups such as women and environmentalists and their relationship with the working class movement. The importance of this section is that it underlies the necessity of multi-tendency socialist organisations for the 21st century. That is to say, the necessity of a multi-tendency organisation stems from a degree of proletarian diversity that has never been seen before. The four classical Marxists before the Second World War identified a degree of diversity within the proletariat. They thought that a mass communist party of the proletariat containing tendencies and platforms representing different sections of the proletariat would answer the problems caused by such diversity. Today at the beginning of the 21st century not only has the diversity of the proletariat increased more than ever, but there are also powerful social movements outside of proletarian movement. These movements

are not necessarily for communism but they are certainly anti-capitalist, for equality, a healthier environment, peace, human rights and indeed women's rights. These new movements are different from traditional proletarian movements and have different methods of organisation. Their experience and the history of their struggle, at times, might lead them to oppose the interests of other social groups. To promote the unity of, for instance, the women's movement with the proletarian movement does not necessarily require the denial of the women's movement's identity. The history of the 20th century proved that the monolithic organisation of a proletarian party cannot fully and equally represent the different and sometimes opposing interests of the above mentioned movements. Allowing the existence of tendencies in a political party does not necessarily mean allowing the independence of all those movements within the party at all times. All four Marxists addressed in this study agreed to the existence of tendencies within the mass party. However, the experiences of the last century under Stalinism neglected the demands of the various social movements and created a historical gap between some of those movements and the proletarian movement dominated by Stalinism. As a consequence it has become even more difficult to unite all those movements within a proletarian party.

Chapter three discusses the failure of Stalinism and social democracy. It will argue that Stalinist and social democratic parties, as two different treacherous parties, betrayed the cause of the working class, prevented the spread of revolution, and saved capitalism during the most serious crisis of its time. It will argue that social democracy changed between 1913–1920 and the social democrat leaders defended capitalism in Germany by suppressing proletarian uprisings in many German cities. Social democracy's war policy was not a simple miscalculation or a tactical mistake by the party. It was an epoch making policy with world wide consequences. This chapter will also discuss the betrayal of Stalinism and Stalinist parties around the world. Stalinism reduced the class struggle to activities within the framework of the state and competition between states. Capturing state power was at the centre of its attention and any method of

getting state power was justified. In many countries such as Russia and Spain, Stalinist parties directly or indirectly suppressed and murdered many working class activists. In their opposition to communist leaders, there are similarities between the social democrats and the Stalinists. The multi-tendency organisation of the 21st century does not exclude Stalinists and left-wing social democrats. Unity in action is the most important reason for this. As long as radical Marxists, anarchists, social democrats, and Stalinists create divisions between working class activities, the conditions of the working class will go from bad to worse. However, any improvement in the life and struggle of the class is dependent on its unified action. A working class multi-tendency organisation is the answer and the magic formula. It is the pre-condition for the unified action of the working class.

Chapter four will deal with the concept of democratic centralism and its function in traditional Stalinist parties. This chapter will compare Lenin's original understanding of the term with the contemporary bureaucratic centralism practiced in traditional parties. The importance of a disciplined Leninist party as a pre-condition for the emancipation of the working class and poor in all dictatorial repressive states of the third world cannot be denied. However, when the situation allows those parties should try to unite with other progressive movements and create an umbrella organisation for the bottom 85% of the population. Despite arguing that the principle of democratic centralism is not suitable for such an umbrella organisation, this chapter does not suggest that the time for a Leninist party is over. On the contrary, a well-disciplined Leninist party is the working class' organisational response to censorship, repression, and dictatorial regimes. Capitalism has not removed these political features from most developing countries. In fact, it is in the interest of capitalism to support their existence. A military regime in Pakistan or Brazil a few decades ago is a safety belt for the development of capitalism. This has a direct relationship with militarism on a world scale. It is not a mystery that Saddam Hussein in Iraq, Pinochet in Chile, King Faisal in Saudi Arabia, and many other dictators in the Middle East and Latin America were the darlings of Western capitalist leaders. It

is not possible to fight these backward and repressive dictatorial regimes with an open organisation. However when the balance of power and the pressure of popular movements forces the dictatorships to retreat, even in those societies, the disciplined, underground, and highly centralised party should seek a coalition with other socialist organisations and movements in order to expand revolution to all corners of society.

Chapter five starts with a discussion about the shortcomings of traditional Stalinist parties, guerrilla movements, and political parties whose activities exclude the direct actions of workers, peasants, women, peace activists, environmentalists, the permanently unemployed, and other social movements. The major problem with those parties is that they ignore the experience of the last five decades in the Eastern bloc.

During the second half of the 1980s and the early 1990s, the so-called socialist systems in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe collapsed. The majority of the population in those countries did not try to defend the system. On the contrary, in most of those countries they were against the so-called socialist system. Whether they were right to replace their old systems with capitalism, and more importantly whether they could foresee an alternative system, is a question for future sociological researches. However, the fact that they did not support the system and joined popular movements against it has an important meaning. It means that those so-called socialist systems had alienated the working class and majority of the population and the ruling parties in those countries suffered from problems such as arrogance and bureaucratic illnesses resulting from Stalinism. One of the most important problems and illnesses was their ignorance of change in society and the specific demands of various social groups.

The ruling parties in those countries alienated the working class. They were working class parties only in name. Moreover, right from the beginning, the poorer sections of the population in all those countries were alienated. The

problem with those systems was not only the lack of pluralism and a multi-party system but also the lack of socialist democracy, which means power in the hands of the people and their direct rule i.e. the rule of workers' and poor people's councils. Ruling for over four decades corrupted the leaderships. Although corruption in those societies was even greater than in Western societies, it was the result of the party-state system. The problem started in 1917 when the Bolshevik party was not able to organise the society on the new rule of soviets and decided to rule directly, reorganising the society on the basis of a party-state system.

After a brief outline of the problems of traditional parties and guerrilla movements, the main discussion in this chapter deals with the nature and characteristics of a multi-tendency organisation of the left. Firstly, this organisation avoids a heavy programme. This is one of the most important features of a multi-tendency socialist organisation. A heavy detailed programme (characteristic of all traditional parties) was responsible for most splits and divisions amongst the left during the second half of the 20th century. The utility of a programme is to strengthen the party position in society and provide a basis for its unity. The detailed lengthy programme of traditional communist parties was their weakness, as all members of the party could not unite around every detail. A programme that has remained unchanged for nearly a century in a capitalist society which has gone through many stages of change has become problematic. It is exactly for this reason that a multi-tendency organisation should avoid a detailed programme.

Secondly, unlike traditional parties who neglected working class and social movements for many decades, multi-tendency organisations are aware of the importance of the direct actions of the working class and other social groups and are trying to base their policies on the needs and demands of these movements.

Thirdly, socialism is the aim of a multi-tendency organisation but its socialism is different from the bureaucratic political system practised in the Eastern bloc under

the guise of socialism. This would be a system based on democratic economic planning from below by conferences of producers and consumers. It would be a system of participatory socialism and direct democracy, a system of councils of producers and consumers. In this system no political organisation would stand above the council of workers and poor. It is equally important to say that in this system the relationship between the workers' movement, women's movement and movements of other social groups would be horizontal. The conferences, seminars, and many other similar methods of public debates would enable the masses to decide on the most important policies in referendums.

It has to be said here that the UK Socialist Alliance (before its set back), Workers' Party (PT) in Brazil before winning the election, Worker's Left Unity (WLU) in Iran, Part of the left and Democratic People's Party (DEHAP) alliance in Turkey, Party of Socialism and Freedom in Brazil, Party of Socialist Revolution in Venezuela, Movement for Socialism in Bolivia, Broad Front in Ecuador and many other multi-tendency organisations have been unable to stress their understanding of socialism clearly. This is apparently deeply connected with their realities. So far several organisations have gained electoral success in Brazil, Bolivia, Venezuela, Chile, and Nicaragua, not to mention Argentina and Ecuador. Despite this gain they are facing huge problems such as under investment as in Bolivia and Nicaragua, poverty, drug related problems, weak industry, health and education system, etc. Apart from Venezuela, where oil money has allowed some investment in various areas, these problems have forced the other countries to compromise socialism and real democracy for investment and economic growth. Lula's compromise with the World Bank and the IMF to continue neo-liberal projects in Brazil, Evo Morales's call for investment in Bolivia by Iran, Brazil and Venezuela, and Daniel Ortega's visit to Iran and his close relation with the Islamic Republic of Iran can be explained by their need for economic growth and sustainability. However, Venezuela's, Bolivia's, and Nicaragua's relationship with the Islamic Republic of Iran and its fascist president Ahmadinejad cannot be justified by any socialist principles. All these compromises are the result of on the

one hand the international balance of forces which allows capitalism to be on the offensive against the working class, and on the other hand the domestic situation in those countries, i.e. their economic and political problems. These countries must either form an economic bloc enabling them to compete against international capitalism, which in turn releases pressure and allows them to take more steps towards their aim for a better future, or in their isolation sooner or later one by one they will lose future elections to bourgeois coalitions. In spite of their different histories and backgrounds, the leadership of all these multi-tendency electoral alliances is controlled by right wing tendencies. A radical socialist tendency is not dominant in any of them. In Venezuela, the radical left has pushed reforms forward as the strong economic position of the country has allowed it. In Brazil the socialist tendency had no option but to leave the Worker's Party (PT) and form the mass party of Socialism and Freedom (P-SOL) with about half a million members. In spite of their radical stand, neither the P-SOL in Brazil nor the party of Revolution and Socialism in Venezuela and its coalition of twenty-four groups and organisations have put forward a radical Marxist understanding of socialism, i.e. one that is against market, wage slavery, and commodity fetishism.

Until they are able to overcome this obstacle and put forward a radical Marxist view of socialism, the working class and urban poor will not be able to identify their advantages over traditional parties, social democrats, or Stalinists. Based on such views they will be unable to attempt to create a radical multi-tendency socialist organisation. In addition, there is at least one more reason to justify the need for a socialist multi-tendency organisation. As the experiences of seven Latin American countries proves, multi-tendency umbrella organisations allow socialists as marginalised political forces to occupy the centre stage of politics in an era when the working class is in the defensive position and the jobs and achievements of the previous generations of the working class are attacked by neo-conservative regimes in most of the capitalist world on a daily basis.

These are the three main differences between a multi-tendency organisation and traditional communist parties. There are many other differences such as methods of organisation, which will be discussed in chapter five.

The peasant movement and the necessity for a multi-tendency organisation

Studies of peasant movements in Latin America over the last twenty-five years suggest that, along with other rural movements, peasant movements have become increasingly central to any process of social change and resistance against the neo-liberals in this region. Most peasant movements have built their local and regional bases of political hegemony as springboards to political power and challenges to state power. The cases of the Rural Landless Workers Movement (MST), in Brazil, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) in Ecuador, the coca farmers (Cocaleros) in Bolivia, and the Zapatista movement in Mexico are some examples of powerful radical peasant movements in Latin America. While re-vindication of ethnic rights and autonomy are central to many peasant movements, they are strongly linked to class interests and horizontal alliances with other exploited classes.

Paradoxically, this has happened at a time when the level of industrial working class organisation has weakened. According to James Petras, who is an adviser to the landless and jobless in Brazil and Argentina, “the weak link in any potential peasant-worker alliance is to be found in the decline of militancy and organisation among industrial trade union leaders, not from the rural organisations.”¹ In spite of Marxist theorists’ arguments for the marginality of the peasant movement as opposed to the centrality of the industrial proletariat in the revolutionary struggle, the examples of powerful peasant movements in Brazil, Mexico, Bolivia, and Ecuador challenge these assumptions. “In many countries, peasants have

demonstrated a greater capacity for collective action and solidarity than many urban workers and frequently their actions are more broadly focused on national or class issues than the narrow wage demands of unionized industrial workers.”²

In Latin America rural movements are associated more with movements for equality than the unionised movements of the industrial working class for higher wages. The radicalism of mass revolutionary movements in Argentina can hardly be explained by the activity of organised workers in bureaucratic trade unions. In Brazil from 1985 to 2002 the Rural Landless Workers Movement (MST) occupied thousands of large plots of land and settled over three hundred and fifty thousand rural families in cooperatives and family farms. Lula, who comes from a trade union background, is deeply engaged in the neo-liberal policies of the IMF and World Bank. His reluctance to support MST and its radical action of land occupation, allows landowners’ criminal gangs to assassinate MST activists without being brought to justice. “In Bolivia, the peasant movements, Cocaleros, and Indian organisations relying on a broad horizontal coalition of miners, urban poor and trade unionists of La Paz and Cochabamba, succeeded in overthrowing the repressive neo-liberal regime of Sanchez de Losada.”³ The mistake of one of the key peasant leaders, parliamentary deputy Evo Morales, who supported the neo-liberal president Carlos Mesa, severely weakened the peasant movement. Morales’ support for Carlos Mesa was to further his presidential ambitions in the 2007 elections. After his success in the presidential race, Morales will have to show how far his strategy reflects the interest of the poor peasantry in Bolivia.

Under Lula, Brazil is a neo-liberal regime run by and for agribusiness, which has led to problems for his second term re-election, while Chávez in Venezuela follows a populist policy. In spite of the recent referendum set back and Chávez’s personal style and ambitions, a different horizon is possible in Venezuela if the cumbersome and incompetent agrarian reform bureaucratic structure can become operative. In the case of Bolivia, under Morales one will have to wait to see whether the new regime radicalizes towards a socialist democracy, abolishes the

state machinery of capitalism, allows the workers and poor to organise themselves, and with that reorganise the society for socialism, democracy and freedom, or whether instead it will betray its electoral rhetoric and finds itself in opposition to the majority of the population by leaning towards neo-liberal policies.

In spite of the rare exceptions the “peasant movements have achieved positive changes despite the state, not because of it.”⁴ The achievements of the Zapatista movement in Mexico for example have had nothing to do with the state. One of the main reasons for this new capacity of the peasant movement is the fact that “a new peasant leadership has emerged. It is much better educated, politicized, and independent of the tutelage of urban elites and party machines than past peasant leaders.”⁵ In spite of the peasant movements’ achievements, Petras does not deny the weaknesses of the peasant movement when it comes to state power and the alternative for the bourgeois state. “The question of the state and political power, and political strategies to achieve the latter, remain as the leading challenges to the peasant movements.... Peasants have carried out significant protests and even achieved reforms but, lacking state power, these reforms have been reversed when the movements ebbed”.⁶ Again the example of the Zapatista movement in Mexico is illustrative. For more than a decade this popular movement left the question of power out of its political strategy. Their unique method of struggle avoided political power not only because the movement was based in south eastern Mexico but because the leadership of the movement was not interested in capturing political power. The Zapatista movement’s neglect of political power for many years equally did not spring from illusion in the Democratic Revolution Party, and negotiation with the central government.

Thus, two and a half decades of peasant movements in Latin America is another reason to emphasise the need for a political organisation that is able to link these movements with other social movements within Latin America, as well as struggle for state power. That political organisation cannot be a traditional

communist party but rather it must be a multi-tendency organisation. Over the last three decades there has always been a traditional communist party in most Latin American countries. However, those traditional parties have not tried and could not try to link the organised working class movements to peasants, women, environmentalists and the unemployed movements. The reason for this is simple. Neither their ideology nor their structure allowed them to implement such a task. Only a political organisation that allows the existence of various ideologies within its ranks, which is not based upon an ideology, with a structure that is compatible with the horizontal relationship of the various movements is able to link and coordinate all these movements and link their struggle to the political struggle for state power.

The strengths and weaknesses of the Multi-tendency political organisation model

The discussions about the advantages of a multi-tendency socialist organisation over the traditional communist party in the following chapters will be as follows: While the traditional party neglected popular movements including of the worker's movement, the multi-tendency organisation tends to base and associate its struggle with social movements which include all social classes and groups. The traditional party's rigid party discipline and structure thwarted socialist attempts to build socialism and unity in the second half of the 20th century. Multi-tendency organisations have the capacity to solve these problems. Unlike traditional parties, multi-tendency organisations are compatible with the diversity of the working class, complexity of 21st century capitalist society, and are capable of representing the great majority of social movements. In spite of these strengths, there are also several weaknesses of the third model. The first is the inability of multi-tendency organisations to capture state power. The second points to their lack of popular support in many countries and the third has to do with their limitations under dictatorial regimes in the third world.

The part of the left that has not joined multi-tendency organisations believes that the most important weakness of the multi-tendency organisation is that they do not put the question of state power at the centre of their activity. J. Resa an ex-member of the Iranian Communist Party puts an example of such an idea forward. In his opinion (appendix three of this work) Respect is a pressure group. This criticism is not based on real facts. Over the last two decades multi-tendency organisations in Ecuador, Bolivia, Brazil, South Africa, and some other countries have toppled neo-liberal regimes and in at least five countries have gained political power. This was at a time when traditional communist parties had not been able to gain political power for the last twenty-five years. To say that multi-tendency organisations are not able to achieve socialism is different from this criticism. Chapter five discusses the weakness of multi-tendency organisations i.e. their understanding of socialism and where they put it in their aim and principles. Their socialism is either similar to the Stalinist mechanistic understanding of the term or the social democratic and Rawlsian definition of socialism as justice. In their socialism the abolition of wage labour, market relations, and money are absent. However, because their socialism is not faultless one cannot say that they cannot or would not obtain state power because that would only be possible for a political party. In addition to all these reasons, the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa was a multi-tendency and even a multi-factional organisation. Regardless of what they have done with their power, it has been a decade since they gained power in South Africa. The same principle applies to Chávez in Venezuela, Morales in Bolivia, and even Lula in Brazil. Some critics reject these movements because of their nationalistic character. This line of criticism appears to have no clear analytical difference with the traditional left. The Bolsheviks gained power because of Lenin's correct policies regarding land and peace. Mao gained power because of his radical policies regarding land, independence, and anti-imperialist war. Vietnam, Cuba, and any other revolution in the 20th century were based on peasant movements, land reform, independence, and other popular democratic questions. If, in all those countries, the

revolutionaries were not able to create a system of participatory socialism and bring the masses of workers and poor into politics, it was not because they were soaked in nationalism. On the contrary, it was because they were bureaucratic and leading bureaucratic sectarian parties that could not share power with the rest of the workers and poor.

In his interview, J. Resa suggests that in the UK organisations like Respect are nothing more than pressure groups. In essence this comment is in line with the above criticism about the nature of Respect. Respect participates in elections, the anti-war movement, coalitions, and demonstrations. It also deals with the question of religious minorities, working class movements, and women's issues. A pressure group by definition concentrates on one issue. This by no means suggests that Respect is a perfect example of a multi-tendency organisation as it is only one example and perhaps has some inappropriate policies in some areas. The critics of Respect point to the presence of the UK Muslim Association as a useless partnership. This is a fair criticism as far as Political Islam is concerned. Unlike Christian theology, Political Islam is a philosophy, an identity, which is very anti-communist. It is based on an ideology that has nothing in common with equality, freedom, and democracy. Its presence in Respect does not contribute to the struggle for those objectives. On the contrary, it is using Respect for its dogmatic and anti-communist aims. However, in spite of one bad policy, multi-tendency organisations as a method of socialist organisation for the 21st century is still at the beginning of its campaign and will undoubtedly learn from its mistakes. Just because Respect has compromised in one policy it does not mean that multi-tendency organisations could not have a more appropriate policy about religious groups.

The second weakness of the third model is what the critics call their lack of popularity. It is true that the explosion of popular support everywhere did not accompany the appearance of left-wing multi-tendency organisations. In Bolivia and many other countries in Latin America the support is enormous, whereas in

countries like Iran and other Middle Eastern societies formations of multi-tendency organisations have not gained popular support. In this regard, this weakness is not equal to the strength of the traditional party. Wherever the multi-tendency organisation is weak, the traditional parties are also weak. The weakness and strength of multi-tendency organisations in terms of public support is about strengths and weaknesses of popular movements. In Middle Eastern countries because of the obvious reasons of censorship, oppression, and the brutality of the dictatorial regimes against leftists, the working class, and women activists, popular movements suffer from many setbacks and any popular action faces heavy oppression from the state repressive apparatus. However, in those countries traditional parties also lack popular support for the same reason. Therefore one cannot blame multi-tendency organisations for the weaknesses of popular movements. This point will lead us to the third criticism, the claim that multi-tendency organisations are not a suitable model for the third world where bourgeois democracy does not exist or is very weak.

The data does not support this claim. Firstly, in comparison with Western Europe bourgeois democracy is much weaker in Latin America where multi-tendency organisations are supported by millions. Secondly, in Europe where bourgeois democracy is at its best, the Socialist Alliance before its dissolution in England, the Socialist Party in Scotland, and Refoundation in Italy have not been able to gain the popular support of the working class and other movements such as the women's movement, the peace and environmental movements, etc. Finally, as examples from Middle East, Latin America, and Africa suggest, multi-tendency organisations cope with police repression and are able to reproduce themselves. The MST in Brazil and the Zapatistas in Mexico survived under heavy pressure from the state and private repressive apparatus. In his interview with the author, Mani Azad a member of Worker's Left Unity (WLU) and a central committee member of the Iranian Revolutionary Workers Organisation (IRWO) discusses this matter. See appendix two in this work. Without the presence of popular movements the fact is that both traditional and multi-tendency organisations are

unprotected. Therefore the question is not which model better resists police oppression, but rather which model best deals with those popular movements. The answer is a model that is open to the members of those movements, one that is able to learn from them and teach them at the same time, and one that links all those movements together and maintains their continuity. In this regard the experiences of the past tell us that a multi-tendency organisation does better than a traditional communist party.

As mentioned earlier the greatest obstacle before these multi-tendency organisations is their understanding, or rather lack of understanding, of socialism. This is a serious problem that cannot easily be solved. These multi-tendency organisations could not repeat the methods used by Stalinists and other traditional communist parties in building their organisations. The traditional method was to agree on a communist programme and put it before society so that the party could recruit from those who accepted the programme. The maximum they could do in their initial organisational foundational meetings was to agree on a few general principles. Any over clarification of their principles during the early stages of a multi-tendency's organisational development could be dangerous and cause unnecessary splits. However, during the later stages of its development, depending on the composition of forces within the umbrella organisation and in case of the heavy presence of non-communist elements, it would be virtually impossible to radicalize the aims and principles of the organisation. In such a situation, once the multi-tendency organisation has gained power, as in the case of Brazil and Bolivia, it can hardly talk about socialism let alone implement it. Therefore, if from the beginning multi-tendency organisations do not have a Marxian view of the term socialism, there is not an easy way out of this problem. It appears that Trotsky's suggestion about the method used for the United Worker's Front is the only sensible answer to this problem. Trotsky suggested when a communist party led a quarter or one third of the working class then that party could confront the question of united front in order to win over the rest of the class. That is to say, communists should have a certain amount of political and

organisational power and influence before launching a multi-tendency organisation as well as a clear understanding of socialism in line with Marx's view of the term.

The two interviews and one questionnaire

The appendices of this work contain two interviews and a survey questionnaire. During the summer of 2001 more than one hundred activists from two leftist organisations (in this work they are referred to as Iran's Communist Party -ICP- Komala and Komala Party) in Iranian Kurdistan participated in the survey. The methodology for this thesis is not interview based. However, due to the lack of serious theoretical discussion in Iran during Stalinist domination, the author chose to conduct interviews to develop a deeper understanding of the left-wing environment in Iran. The author interviewed academics and activists, however, the author has selected two of the most prominent for this work. Interviews with academics and political activists will compensate for the shortage of theoretical work on the subject. The aim of this thesis is to show how activists and political thinkers perceive the question of unity in the working class struggle and therefore the question of multi-tendency socialist organisations. This is the first time research has been conducted in this area. Jafar Resa's and Mani Azad's interviews were specifically selected because these two individuals are well known in Iran and have been active in the working class movement in Iran for the last three decades. Resa is the author of numerous books and articles and comes from a tradition that rejects multi-tendency organisations. Azad has also written many articles in *Rahe Kargar* for thirty years and has had an active role in the foundation and activity of the WLU. To protect the identity of the two interviewees the author has used their pen names. They have used these names for the last two decades to sign their writings. These two interviews support the main idea of this thesis. The socialist left is divided to the point that its fragments cannot agree on almost anything. There are obvious disagreements between the

two interviews. In his interview Mani Azad believes that traditional communist parties are unable to organise a more diverse working class let alone other social groups. Jafar Resa points to the fact that in the past some popular communist parties organised the working class and concludes that there is no reason why they cannot do it in the future. Mani Azad looks to the popular movement in Latin America with hope. Jafar Resa is suspicious and blames them for their bourgeois nationalistic aspirations. These two activists, Mani Azad from Iranian Revolutionary Workers Organisation (IRWO), and Jafar Resa a former member of the Iran's Communist Party (ICP) have different understandings of many concepts. While Resa still hopes that a Bolshevik type party will re-emerge and solve all problems of the left, Azad is looking for a multi-tendency organisation. These two interviews represent to a large extent the difference between the activists of IRWO and ICP. These two interviews demonstrate that leftist activists are divided in their opinion of most aspects of the struggle for socialism and it is impossible to organise them into one working class party. In the UK, the Socialist Worker Party (SWP) and Socialist Party (SP) had differences about the policies and organisation of the Socialist Alliance (SA) and such differences eventually caused a split in the SA. This division between various sections of the left is not limited to a country or region. This is a serious problem for international communism. Resa's interview also reveals that he still thinks of the proletarian party as the only means of liberation and emancipation. Resa's interview shows that it will take some time before all activists realise the importance of multi-tendency organisations.

During the summer of 2001, the author designed a questionnaire to distribute between activists of two sections of the Komala organisation i.e. the ICP Komala and the Komala Party. The purpose of this survey was to decipher what the activists thought about the necessity and characteristics of multi-tendency organisations. This survey proved the author's hypothesis that because of the diversity of the proletariat and emergence of social movements other than workers' movement in many countries, it will be impossible to organise all

sections of the workers and poor into a traditional communist party. However it is possible to unite all social movements under a socialist umbrella organisation. The survey proved that the activists do not approve of sectarianism and bureaucratic problems typical of traditional communist parties. They favoured the unity of the entire socialist left under an umbrella organisation. The Iran's Communist Party during the last three decades has been reluctant to unite and cooperate with other sections of socialist left and considered them sects. The change in the opinions of ICP activists is the change in the opinions of those who supported division and were the last section of the left to welcome the idea of multi-tendency organisations.

The concluding chapter reiterates the ideas put forward throughout the thesis. Many of the political parties who acted in the name of the proletariat and communism during the 20th century had nothing to do with the proletariat and communism. These parties were sects whose primary interests were to promote the immediate interests of their sects but in the name of the proletariat and communism. The destructive activity of these sects over an extended period, while acting in the name of socialism, communism, and the communist party has meant that any future struggle against wage slavery and capitalist market relations, for justice, equality, freedom, and self-rule can no longer be associated with Marxist terminology. The way forward is a political movement that includes all sections of the working class and poorer sections of society. This will be a united movement of all popular movements against capitalism and all its exploitative activities; against neo-liberal projects and parasitic finance capital; against privatisation and the destruction of nature; and against racial hatred and capitalist war and its mass murder and destruction. This is a movement for the freedom of all humanity and human society from exploitation, slavery, inequality, oppression, censorship, human rights abuse of any kind, crime, drugs, prostitution, unemployment and any other phenomena associated with capitalism and class society. This is a movement for the self-government of people on their

local, regional, national, trans-national, and global level, for life and prosperity of all regardless of colour, race, sex, age, social and educational background, ideological and religious belief or non-belief, for the reconstruction of the environment, and for real freedom of all.

In this movement all political parties and social movements; all trade unions and guild associations; all women's groups and student associations; environmentalists and peace activists; the permanently unemployed; and refugee groups, etc. will all unite and fight for the same aims and objectives. They can keep their internal discipline and particular activities as long as they give up their own particular interests for the interest of all. In other words, they will put the general interest of the organisation before their particular interests, and they will agree to unite and fight against capitalism for the reconstruction of the environment, peace, education, health care and free housing for all, for equality and real freedom, and for their self-government and autonomy. This is a united movement for the rule of their councils', both at work and where they live. This is participatory socialism without using the name associated with the 20th century.

This work does not suggest that after the appearance of multi-tendency organisations and its success in Latin America there would not be any effort to organise political parties. As discussed in this work, in some parts of the world where dictatorships do not allow the development of multi-tendency socialist organisations the only viable organisation for resistance against oppression would be a well-disciplined party. In those societies when the dictatorial regime is pushed back such a party would face the question of a broad coalition with popular movements.

Notes

1-: James Petras, “The Centrality of Peasant Movements in Latin America: Achievements and Limitation,” *Counter Punch Political Newsletter*, June 4/5, 2005.

2 – Ibid

3 – Ibid

4 – Ibid

5 – Ibid

6 - Ibid

CHAPTER ONE

Socio-economic change and the working class

“At the end of the 1980s, there were four democracies in the whole of Africa. Today there are as many as seventeen.”¹ This quote from the *Financial Times* symbolises one of the greatest socio-economic changes that took place in the second half of the 20th century. These changes left deep impressions on the working class and its struggle for socialism. The aim of this chapter is not to study all aspects of the socio-economic changes that took place in the second half of the 20th century. Such a task is neither possible nor useful. This chapter will concentrate on those changes that had the deepest and most direct impact on the working class struggle.

Until the 1960s the main actors in the struggle for freedom and socialism were political parties and trade unions. Since then, however the participation of women and students’ associations has changed the political scene in most societies. Today in countries such as Iran, Argentina, Brazil, and Indonesia the participation of the urban poor, women, students, and peasant associations is as important as that of workers and trade unions. How can this change be explained? At the start of the 21st century the political weight of the unified action of the working class is less effective than it was half a century to a century ago.

The casualisation of the work force, high unemployment, and job losses are the main causes for the reduction in working class militancy in most capitalist countries. In this regard the role and place of finance capital, the introduction of computers and modern technology, and the globalisation of the economy will be examined. In other words, to understand why the working class today is less organised in its unions and indeed in its political organisations one needs to look

into the root of the problem and see what it is that makes the working class today less united. That is to say what is behind diversity of 21st century proletariat This chapter will begin by looking at some facts concerning the scale of unemployment.

Unemployment and the working class

Many compared the massive unemployment in advanced capitalist countries in the 1990s to the high unemployment of the 1930s. Such a high rate of unemployment has had a deep impact on the working class struggle. Walter Korpi compares the unemployment rate of 14 developed countries. On one table he shows unemployment figures for Australia, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. According to this table, after the end of the post war boom, unemployment started to rise once again from 1970 onwards. The average figure for these 14 countries rose from around 2% in 1974 to 4.5% in 1980, 6.5% in 1985, and 8.5% in 1993.² In addition to the officially registered unemployed, after the Second World War, part-time waged work became a global phenomenon. According to Faruk Tabak, since 1945 wage labour as a proportion of the world's labour force has been steadily declining: the proportion of waged and salaried workers fell from 51% to 40% between 1945 and 1985. The socio-political consequence of this change is that a smaller number of the labour force is being proletarianised. That is to say full scale proletarianisation remained limited to the core and semi-periphery zones, which makes up less than one third of the world's labour forces.

There is little doubt that the real rate of unemployment is higher than the official figures. Istvan Mészáros in 'Unemployment and casualisation: A great challenge to the left' emphasised on the globalised nature of unemployment and casualisation of the work force. He claims that the real rate of unemployment in

all major industrialised countries is much more than official figures. According to Mészáros, in Britain by the admission of the *London Economist* the government revised the unemployment figures 33 times in order to make them look better.

This high level of unemployment is not limited to blue collar workers. It includes all layers of employment.

The dramatic rise in unemployment as the necessary and ever-worsening feature of the structural crisis of capitalism is no longer just the plight of unskilled labourers but also that of highly skilled workers who are now chasing, in addition to the earlier pool of unemployed, the depressingly few available jobs.³

There are more than 40 million unemployed in most industrially developed countries. Of this figure Europe accounts for more than 20million and Germany for more than 5 million. 336 million people are unemployed in India. Unemployment in other countries from Mexico to Russia to Hungary is just as high. He concludes: “We have reached a point in historical development at which unemployment is a dominant feature of the capitalist system as a whole.”⁴Hillel Ticktin in *Critique* 26 draws attention to the high unemployment and writes:

The standard of living in the most advanced countries, United States and Sweden has gone down for around twenty years for most of the population. Levels of unemployment are either similar to or not far from depression levels in many countries around the world. This is, of course, particularly true of the third world, where unemployment rates of over half the employable population seem to be common.⁵

Mészáros’ and Ticktin’s claims are supported by the available data in many countries. In the last two decades of the 20th century job security came under attack. Redundancy of the workforce was familiar news of this period. In fact this practice is still very much the case. The so-called modernisation of industry is interpreted by the workers as an attack on their job security. Modernisation is

nothing but a Damocles Sword on the workers' strike. Any agreement to a pay rise is subject to modernisation or redundancies of some part of the work force by the employers.

As a result of downsizing and outsourcing work, in a mere twelve years between 1986 and 1997, 3.3 million full-time workers were retrenched. Of these 2 million were blue-collar male workers. By the mid-1990s, more than half of all Australian organizations had been downsized, with the public sector leading the way. Among large corporations, downsizing became almost a standard practice. Between 1990 and 1995, about 55000 jobs were lost in just twenty large corporations. Most of these firms cut between 20% and 80% of their work force.⁶

In his classic historical work "The Economics of Global Turbulence," Robert Brenner looks at the rate of unemployment in two periods (1950-73 and 1973-93) for the US, Germany, and Japan as the three leading economies as well as the G7 countries and comes up with the following figures. In the USA the rate of unemployment for these two periods rose from 4.2% to 6.7%; in Germany it increased from 2.3% to 5.7%; and in Japan unemployment only raised from 1.6% to 2.1%. During these two periods, unemployment in the G7 countries averaged 3.1% and 6.2%, which suggests that the average rate of unemployment doubled during 1973-1993. "In 1996 unemployment in the eleven European Union countries averaged 11.3%, for the 28 member of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD countries) including the US 7.3%, and for the US was 5%."⁷

It must be added that the present figure for US unemployment is 6% and is increasing. The standard working time is defined, in most Western countries, as an eight hour day worked over a five day week, during eleven months of the year, and over forty-five years of a person's working life. This standard working time is now a dream for a large portion of the working population. At the turn of the millennium only a fraction of the workforce retained standard hours each week. In Australia, according to Rob Lambert, "by the late 1990s, only about one third

of the workforce has retained standard hours each week.”⁸ The following figures for different countries and industries show the scale of the temporary and casual employment.

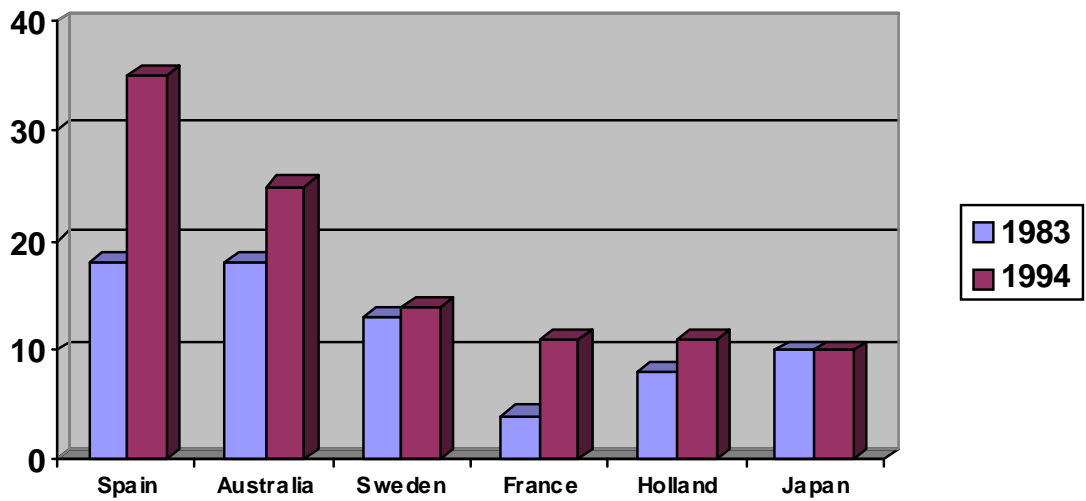
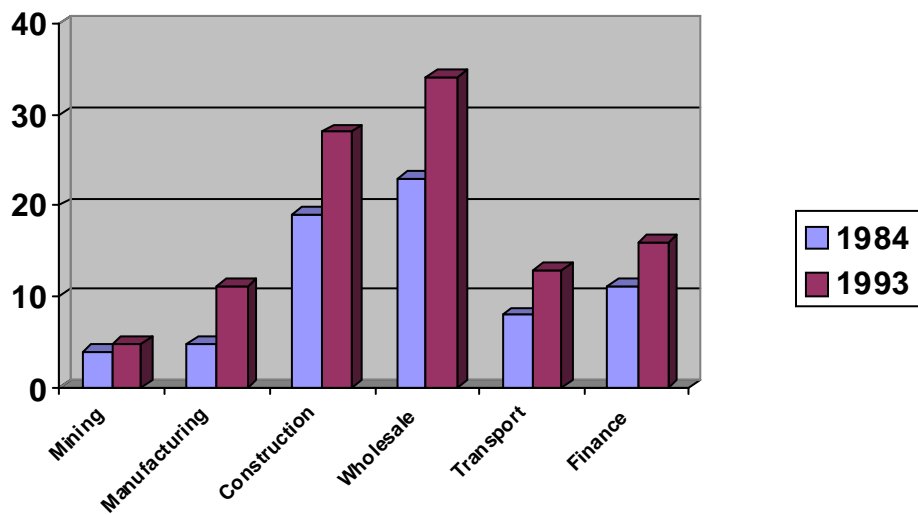


Fig. 1 Incidence of temporary employment, 1983 and 1994: percentage of the labour force who are temporary workers.



*Fig. 2 Casual density by industry divisions 1984 and 1993: Casuals as a percentage of total employees in each industry.*⁹

The two decades between 1973 and 1993 show a steady decline in full-time jobs and a rise in part-time employment from 16.6% to 18.8% of the general workforce in the United States.

According to the US Bureau of Labour Statistics (BLS), for 1997 there were 5.6 million workers with contingent jobs (employment not expected to last for more than one additional year), most of whom were young, female, predominantly concentrated in low-wage temporary employment, and 53% of whom would have preferred a job that was permanent.¹⁰

The disappearance of the full-time long term work is not limited to the low waged unskilled workforce. It covers every area from academic and professional to skilled workers, from construction to industry, from car and steel production to energy, from researchers to scientists to university lecturers. Andrew Ross believes that the occupational hazard is much greater for the academic labour force than for industrial workers. “In 1970, the proportion of part-time faculty stood at 22%. By 1987 part-timers held 38% of faculty appointments, and ten years later, the proportion had risen to 42.5%.”¹¹

During 2002 a factory run by General Electric (GE), a US company and the world’s biggest maker of electricity generators, made 244 gas turbines, which was nearly the same as its 2001 production. “In the past year, however, GE has cut the plant’s workforce by 1200, a reduction of more than a third and is expecting to make just 125 turbines this year, a number that could reduce to only 25 for the next year.”¹²

According to Peter Marsh, several factors explain such a reduction: competition and the production of ever more sophisticated machines, gradual introduction of more environmentally friendly technologies, and the use of alternative sources of power such as wind, waves, biomass, solar and hydropower.

The story of coal and steel production in England and Wales in the second half of the 20th century can truly be called the slow death of these industries. The last round of pit closures was imposed upon the British coalfields in 1992 and the last deep mine was ultimately closed by British Coal on 23 April 1992. As closures and redundancies hit valley factories in the 1980s the importance of saving the pits of the locality became doubly urgent. However, the miners' buyout of Tower Colliery proved that workers could run their own affairs and that the coal industry's lack of profitability was a lie perpetuated by employers. By keeping the last pit in their own hands, the miners have kept the pit open for over a decade. They managed to find local and international markets for their production, improved their working conditions, and employed more miners during a time when a Conservative government contributed to the increase in unemployment.¹³

The sad closure of the coal mines, car plants, and the ship building industry in Britain is just as dramatic as the story of steel production. The reduction of the workforce by the steel and aluminium company Corus, which is Europe's second largest steel producer with annual revenues of over £11 billion and a crude steel production of about 20 million tons is one of many examples. On 30 April 2003, the *Independent* reported:

In the 1950s, Britain's iron and steel industry employed more than half a million workers and symbolised the manufacturing might of a superpower. By the time the industry was nationalised in 1967, the number employed had dropped to 270000. Thatcher's re-privatisation in 1988 resulted in the workforce's further decline to 51000. Yesterday's announcement by the Directors of CORUS will take the workforce below 24000.¹⁴

Therefore it is not wrong to say that full-time employment is a dream that belongs to the past. Everyday newspapers announce the closure of plants, job losses, cost cuts, and redundancies. For instance, *The Financial Times* on 1 May 2003 reported: "Goodyear seeks \$1bn in cost cuts. Goodyear Tyre & Rubber

plans to import 10m tyres from its operations abroad for this year, up from 4m last year. Analysts said that the increased use of imported tyres almost certainly meant that plant closures were imminent.”¹⁵ A few days later it reported, “The jobless rate rose to 6 per cent last month, from 5.8 per cent in March, returning to December’s eight – year high, the department said. The one month increase matched April 2002’s as the biggest since September 11. Manufacturing remained a weak spot thanks to rapid productivity gains, soft domestic demand and heavy imports from China, Mexico and India. Factory payrolls were down by 95000 in April and have fallen more than 12 per cent since July 2000.”¹⁶ All this happens under the watchful eyes of the confederation of British Industry (CBI) the UK’s leading independent employers’ organisation. “The manufacturing industry will continue to cut jobs as confidence and order books remain depressed, the CBI warns today.”¹⁷

Mass unemployment

Unemployment as the reserved army of labour is not a recent phenomenon of the capitalist system. Marx and Marxists such as Lenin, recognised its effect on the working class’s life and struggles. In the first volume of *Capital* in chapter 15, Marx clearly predicts the effect of machinery on the workers and the loss of their jobs. His understanding of unemployment, as well as women and child labour can be seen in the following sentences of *Capital*:

We have already alluded to the physical deterioration of the children and young persons, as well as the women, whom machinery subjects to the exploitation of capital, first directly in the factories that sprout forth on the basis of machinery, and then indirectly in all the remaining branches of industry.¹⁸

Marx believed that the labour of women and children was the first result of the capitalist application of machinery. As a result of using the labour of women and children previously unavailable to the capital a surplus working population or as

Marx puts it a reserved army of labour appears.

The capitalist application of machinery on the one hand supplies new and powerful incentives for an unbounded prolongation of the working-day, and produces such a revolution in the mode of labour, as well as the character of the social working organism that it is able to break all resistance to this tendency. But on the other hand, partly by placing at the capitalists' disposal new strata of the working class previously inaccessible to him, partly by setting free the workers it supplants, machinery produces a surplus working population, which is compelled to submit to the dictates of capital.¹⁹

Here Marx explains the relationship between unemployment, profit, and technology in the context of the class struggle. These three factors are in fact the main basis for what contemporary Marxists call the structural crisis of capital. In reality, it is the dramatic rise in unemployment in advanced capitalist countries reappearing after the post-war expansion with the onset of the structural crisis of the capitalist system as a whole that explains the more than 40 million unemployed in the advanced capitalist countries. Marxist analysts believe that globalisation, the shift to finance capital, computerisation, and the rapid increase in women and child labour are the main causes of the present mass unemployment.

Employers use unemployment, redundancy, the lack of job security, and the replacement of full-time employment with part-time as a weapon against the working class. For Marxists, this process stems from the structural crisis of capitalism. That is to say, to prevent a fall in the rate of profit, employers cut labour. However, there is a limit to the amount of labour employers can cut. Employers are only able to appropriate profit from fully automated industry if there are people working the machines. The fact that there are jobs for some machines' experts cannot be a solution to the problem of unemployment in itself. Capitalism, as Ticktin rightly put it, delays its terminal crisis by using various methods such as war, fascism, job loss, and where profit is not considered high

enough, it uses cheap labour and creates new markets, etc. Therefore, capital's tendency to reduce the number of workers (variable capital) is in contradiction with its tendency to maximize surplus value, which can be appropriated from living labour. In other words this does not mean that the structural crisis is equal to the terminal crisis or the end of capitalism as a system. The real question is how, despite its structural crisis, is it possible for capital to continue to exploit labour and yet still increase its profits?

There are several approaches to the question of mass unemployment. The Marxist approach emphasises the structural crisis of capital. For Marxists productive power of capital increases automation and equally decreases the need for the living labour. "Automation of most of the branches of industries has an indirect relation with the use of living labour."²⁰ The change in the organic composition of capital according to Marxists can be interpreted as the change in the relation of variable capital (V) to the constant capital (C). That is to say, if capital consists of (200V and 800C) the organic composition of capital (OCC) will be $\frac{1}{4}$. According to Nikitin, "in the US Montage industry the OCC was $\frac{1}{4.5}$ for 1889; $\frac{1}{6}$ for 1939; and $\frac{1}{8}$ for 1955."²¹ This change in the OCC means that the relative reduction of variable capital also means reduction of the living labour and therefore more unemployment.

For employers the biggest part of production cost comes from living labour. So in order to compete in a highly competitive world their operation has to be cost effective. The most successful industry therefore, by definition, will be the one that is able to carry out the process of automation and reduce the cost of living labour.

In steel production the transition from the Thomas process to the acid process has lowered the share of labour cost in the total costs of production from 25% to 17%, while the share of fixed capital costs rose from 16% to 25%. In oil refineries, the proportion of fixed capital costs rose, for four successive cracking

procedures between 1913 and 1955, from 0.21 to 10; while the number of living labour hours needed for producing 10,000 tons of gasoline dropped from 56 to 0.4 in 1955.²²

The replacement of universal production machines by fully automated transfer machines, and more so, the computerisation of industries in the 1980s and 1990s has altered the relation between labour cost and equipment costs even further.

In the French Renault case the relation between labour costs and equipment costs per vehicle altered from 640/131 to 53/200. In the West German plastics industry, gross fixed investment per wage and salary-earner rose by 85% between 1960 and 1966, while wage salaries per employee increased only 68.5% (wage alone, 65.8%) in the same period. Such examples could be multiplied indefinitely. Virtually no commodity can be found for which living labour costs represent a growing share of total production costs, in the strict sense of the word.²³

Automation, however, as Ticktin, Mészáros and Mandel quite rightly emphasise, by definition, must be limited. “The amount of living labour needed to operate dead labour declines and hence the value of dead labour itself declines, ultimately to zero. Clearly under these circumstances profit will tend to zero, since there is no one to exploit.”²⁴ Here lays the basis of capitalist crisis and limitation. “The logic of the development of machinery is the total replacement of manpower by machinery. At that point no value is produced.”²⁵ Kruse, Kunz and Uhlmann established that beyond a certain point it is uneconomic to raise the degree of automation. “It became evident that by its very nature capital puts up growing resistance to automation beyond that point. The forms of this resistance include the use of cheap labour in the semi-automated branches of industry such as, female and apprentice labour in the textile industry and the food and drink industries.”²⁶

Other approaches emphasise the power relations between employers and employees. “The central issues about explaining unemployment concern

assumptions made about power relations between employers and employees and the roles accorded to distributive conflict, politics, and unions for unemployment.”²⁷ This idea is based on the neoclassical economic theory that the perfect market defines away differences in power.

The firm has no power, no authority, and no disciplinary action any different in the slightest form from an ordinary market contracting between any two people. The presumed power to manage and assign workers to various tasks is exactly the same as one little consumer’s power to manage and assign his grocer to various tasks.²⁸

This idea shows itself in the comment made by an Australian minister after returning from a trade mission in China in 1997. “Asian nations are not dominated by militant union officials as is the case in Australia. The ugly face of unionism is responsible for exporting the jobs for our people.”²⁹ In addition, in 1943, *The Times* (the leading conservative newspaper in Britain) made the claim:

Unemployment is not a mere accidental blemish in a private enterprise economy. On the contrary, it is part of the essential mechanism of the system, and has a definite function to fulfil. The first function of unemployment is that it maintains the authority of master over man. The master has normally been in a position to say: “if you do not want the job, there are plenty of others who do.” When the man can say: “if you do not want to employ me, there are plenty of others who will,” the situation is radically altered.³⁰

The anatomy of the different schools of thought is not the concern of this study. However one can argue that the problem with neoclassical economic theory is that it does not explain to what extent the existence of mass unemployment is man made. It considers unemployment as a natural given and does not account for its causation. It cannot answer why strikes and conflicts exist if relations between workers and their employers are the relations of two equal parties in the market place. Power conflicts are one way of describing the destructive effect that unemployment has on the life and struggle of the working class. Alan

Thornett, in his personal and political account of organising car workers, outlines this effect.

The return of Labour to office in 1974 saw the economic condition of British capitalism deteriorate rapidly, while the employers' offensive against the working class was stepped up and made more effective by the new government this offensive took the form of an austerity programme, a sharp rise in unemployment, more plant closures, state intervention into industry and the wage restrained.³¹

Women, child labour, and the working class

To understand the exact character and scale of mass unemployment today and the elements and factors involved in its creation, it is necessary to look at the place of women and child labour. As Ticktin asserts, the employment of women and children in the capitalist system has the function of delaying the terminal crisis of capital. Capital, by introducing technology, makes women and children employable. Lindsey German uses the following examples to show the effect of women's employment.

In every modern recession, women have been drawn into the labour market as men have lost their jobs. New 'women's work' has replaced many of the old jobs traditionally done by men.... Unemployment rates reflect this with men having higher unemployment rates than women. So whereas in 1993, 12.4 percent of men over 16 were unemployed only 7.5 percent of women were.³²

Juliet Mitchell offers interesting insight to this situation. According to Mitchell, "Most women in England work as un-skilled or semi-skilled industrial labour, mainly in food, clothing, textiles, electrical engineering, or as clerical assistants, within the professional and scientific services and distributive trades."³³ David Turner supports this argument in his analysis of the following statistical data from the first quarter of 2003. "The Office for National Statistics (ONS) said the number of Britons in work rose to 29,559,000 in the first quarter of this year--an increase of 283,000 in a year. Recent ONS figures suggest that the public sector,

retailers, hotels, and restaurants are responsible for the bulk of this increase.”³⁴ The cheap labour of women and children account for the increase in capital’s profit. The Equal Pay Act was passed in 1970. Despite this, “there are nine million women in the work force and only 12% of them receive equal pay.”³⁵ In employing women and children capital has one motive. That is to reduce the cost of production and therefore to increase its profit. If profit is found in the industrial sector, then capital investment is poured into industry. If industry suffers from high competition and lack of profit, then capital pulls out and goes into a more profitable area such as non-productive speculation and finance or the service sector.

The increasing displacement of the proletarian family, the growing market for pre-cooked meals and tinned foods, ready-made clothes and vacuum cleaners, and the increasing demand for all kinds of electrical household appliances, corresponds to the rapid decline of the production of immediate use-values within the family, previously cared for by the worker’s wife, mother or daughter: meals, clothes and direct services for the entire household i.e., heating, cleaning, washing, and so on. This development in turn corresponds to the growing occupational activity of women.³⁶

Though it is the cheap labour of women and children that accounts for their usage in the labour market, the actual mass employment of women has a wider impact over the working class in their struggle for socialism. Female and male workers have a different set of demands. It is true that working class unity is much more essential and more likely today than in the 1970s and 1980s. In advanced capitalist countries, the pace of women gaining professions, supervisory, and clerical work is higher than in the 1960s and even the 1980s. However, it would be wrong to suggest that gender equality has replaced discrimination in the employment process or job loss. Though the employment of women is not a new phenomenon and goes back to the beginning of industrialisation, the impact of the mass employment of women, as a result of the introduction of modern technology, has been great. The increases in women’s expectations, economic independence of women from men, and the breakdown of the traditional family

have certainly altered the forms of class solidarity. Today, unlike half a century ago, a male worker participating in the class struggle does not necessarily have the support of his family. The male members of the working class need to understand the new situation and make alliances with their female colleagues. This was and, to a great extent, still is the case for female workers too. To see male workers as members of their own class rather than members of the enemy camp has been and, still is, a great challenge for the women's movement. Today, the women's movement does not have a common position about its relationship to the working class movement.

The relocation of production from the core to the semi-peripheral and peripheral zones, which began in the US in the 1960s and in Europe in the 1970s, generated quick growth in the service and administrative sectors at the core. It also encouraged the increasing feminisation of the workforce and employment of female labour, usually on a part-time basis, in these sectors. According to the International Labour Office (ILO) report for 1984, the rise in part-time employment became such an integral part of the reorganisation of work in the post-war period that it became largely, and almost exclusively, a female phenomenon. For example, According to ILO report in Denmark and Sweden the proportion of women in the labour force was already around 40% in the early 1970s and accelerated further with the onset of the crisis. The percentage was relatively lower in the Western hemisphere, rising from 26% in 1962 to 29% in 1972 in the USA, and from 19% to 25% in Canada. At the beginning of the 1970s, in the European core (Germany, France, Netherlands, UK), 80 – 90% of all part-time workers were women; in the USA, the share was lower – 65%. That is to say during the 1960s and 1970s in the USA, Europe, and Japan both the feminisation of the labour force and the attribution of part-time work to female labour became common throughout the core zone.

This is an important structural change to the working class. To reduce the labour cost, capitalism brings women and children into the labour market on a mass

scale. But this only adds to the problems facing the working class. The influx of women, students, and children into the labour market leads to an increase in the number of unemployed. As a result, achieving class solidarity, developing militant working class organisations, as well as, mass organisations of the labour force becomes an increasingly difficult task. Part-time and seasonal workers, by definition, are limited in their ability to develop their class identity based on the short time they spend on the job. As a result a big army of students, women, and children come into the labour market, decreasing the bargaining power of the working class. However, they do not identify themselves with the working class, and therefore, do not participate in working class struggles or its affairs.

The service sector and the working class

The expansion of the service sector has an equally important impact on the structure of the working class and its economic and political struggles. Ernest Mandel in *Late Capitalism* explains why the service sector of the economy has been expanding throughout the 20th century. According to Mandel, it is no longer economically possible for the average wage earner to go to work on foot and not to use public transport, to not enroll in a health insurance scheme, or to use privately produced charcoal for heating instead of briquettes, oil, gas or electricity. These are the consequences of a genuine extension of the needs (living standards) of the wage earner, which represents a rise in his level of culture and civilization. The list of the genuine needs of the wage earner today is much longer than two or three decades ago. The entire tourist industry and the urban entertainment industry (including, radio and TV, health clubs, bars and restaurants, computer games, and DVDs, etc.) are newly created branches of the service sector that employ a large percentage of the labour force. If we add these to other services such as health, education, and housing it shows a rapid increase in service workers compared to industrial workers. According to the available statistics for OECD countries, the share of the service sector for OECD countries

increased from 3.8% of the GDP to 62% between 1960 and 1989. Mandel's argument supports Marx's thought about rich individuality in the *Grundrise*.

Capital's ceaseless striving towards the general form of wealth drives labour beyond the limits of its natural paltriness, and thus creates the material elements for the development of the rich individuality which is as all-sided in its production as in its consumption, and whose labour also therefore appears no longer as labour but as full development of activity itself, in which natural necessity in its direct form has disappeared; because a historically created need has taken the place of the natural one.

37

Until 1960 sociologists' criteria for defining the poverty line was basic human need such as a warm coat and shoes, three meals a day, access to clean water to wash, and similar basic needs. Today, their list includes a car, some household electrical appliances, a minimum of one holiday a year, children's birthday parties, personal computer, mobile phone, access to the internet, meals in restaurants, etc.

In the employment of children capital gains cheap labour, as well as, a new card to play in its struggle against the working class. This is not the case for the employment of service sector wage earners because their wage is not necessarily cheaper for capital. That is why Mandel believes that the expansion of the service sector is a genuine consequence of the extension of needs or as Marx asserted in *Grundrise*, as individuals gain higher culture and become more civilised their needs also develop. Such a civilised individual creates his or her new needs to substantiate his or her individuality, whether these needs are computer games, short outings, sport, art, etc.

According to Mandel the expansion of the service sector as a typical feature of late capitalism involves:

- The tendency towards a general extension of intermediate functions, as a result of growing socialisation and division of

labour.

- The tendency towards an enormous expansion both of selling costs (advertising, marketing, packaging) and of consumer credit.
- The possibilities for developing the cultural and civilizing needs of the working population (education, health care, recreational activity).
- The extension of commodity production such as electricity, gas, water, ready-made meals and so on.
- The result is growth in the number of unproductively employed wage-earner.³⁸

The service sector's enormous expansion in the second half of the 20th century had a deep impact on the working class' struggle for socialism. The problem is not that wage earners in the service sector cannot be organised in trade unions. In reality, National and Local Government Officers Association - NALGO and the Public Service Union- Unison in England have organised a considerable percentage of the labour force in this sector. This is the case for most Western capitalist countries. The problem is not even the fact that the labour force in the service sector is in small groups and therefore difficult to organise. Rather, the problem is the complexity of the labour force in this sector. Different sections of service sector workers differ from one another in at least two ways. Firstly, there are wage and salary gaps between lecturers, nurses, and cleaners, for example. Secondly, in spite of the issue of salary, the question of status is equally important. Doctors or university lecturers join their own clubs rather than mixed clubs regardless of the status of the members in their society. It is very difficult to bring road sweepers and fire fighters under the same banner as bank officers, lecturers, doctors, and teachers for the lengthy struggle for socialism. Moreover, in such a struggle, part of the labour force in the service sector will leave the campaign and join the opposite camp because in spite of their salary, which might be less than an industrial worker, it is questionable whether they consider

themselves as part of the working class. Furthermore, unlike earlier periods of the 20th century it is very difficult to organise the support of the different sections of the working class into one single organisation.

Finance capital and the working class

The finance capital's destructive effect on the working class struggle for socialism is the most important aspect of the socio-economic change that occurred throughout the 20th century. It can be argued that finance capital's effect on the working class is greater than any other factor looked at in this study. For a start, finance capital is, as Ticktin describes, the declining form of capital. "We put forward the view that the natural form of a declining capitalism is that of finance capitalism and that its natural tendency is to separate itself off from productive capital to constitute a free-floating abstract capital."³⁹ According to Ticktin,

Finance capital, on the one hand, reduces productive capital, industry, transport, construction, mining, etc., to shadow through the redeployment of its investment in more profitable places. On the other hand, it would cease to exist in the absence of productive labour so that finance capital is both parasitic and like any parasite dependent on its host.⁴⁰

Quoting from the *Grundrise*, Ticktin concludes that the history of capital is one of movement from competition to the concentration of capital and thence to finance capital. Claude Serfati describes the difference between the centralisation and the concentration of capital that is usually considered identical. He believes that the two leave different effects on capital accumulation in the macro economy. "It is only the concentration of capital that creates new initiatives and capacities of production and relates to capitalist accumulation, in the real meaning of the term. In contrast, centralisation is nothing but a change in the capital's possession."⁴¹ Finance capital, with the development of financial engineering, becomes ever more metaphorical and its unrestrained accumulation prevents real accumulation.

In *Critique*, Ticktin gives a useful definition of the characteristics of finance capital:

In short the characteristic of finance capital is that it is capital which attempts to raise its own rate of profit above an otherwise existing typical rate of profit by either using forms of unproductive capital or less developed capitals with lower organic compositions and higher rates of surplus value, which may or may not be in the same country. In its crudest form it amounts to an outflanking operation to the working-class.⁴²

Before looking at figures and showing the effect of finance capital over the working class, it should be noted that the rise of monetarist schools and the expansion of parasitic activities of finance capital in the 1980s and 1990s was supported by the British and US governments. At the end of the 1960s, when industrial productivity declined inflation increased and governments' budget deficits continued to exist, monetarists convinced the US and UK governments to seriously reduce the issue of money. As a result, the US government stopped unlimited financial support of the European dollar. Consequently, the interest rate reached 20%. A similar process can be seen in Britain under Thatcher. This policy, later applied by other Western governments, was based on unrestrained privatisation, a severe attack against the working class and its militant branches. In its very nature, this policy was also political. Declining capitalism could not survive unless the powerfully organised working classes could be destroyed. It is this tendency of capital that accounts for the destruction of the steel workers and miners.

The following figures will give an idea of the scale of finance capital's activity and its parasitic operations. Until 1960 speculative operation accounted for only one-tenth of foreign trade. This figure around 1990 was 110%. According to John Grahl, "In 1979 the daily foreign exchange transactions in Euro land was just above \$100bn, in 1989 it became \$600bn. In 1992 only 3 years later it increased to more than \$800bn, the figures for 1995 and 1998 were \$1,200bn and \$1,500bn

respectively.” Also, “ECB data shows that total daily payments through TARGET were 1,042bn Euros in January 1999 and 1,035bn in October 2000; within this total, cross-border payments, that is, new flows induced by integration, rose from 355bn to 429bn.”⁴³

Goran Therborn, in his article, “Into the 21st Century,” published in *New Left Review* in 2001 provides some examples of the scale of the parasitic operation of finance capital. The figures are unbelievable. “On a world scale, stock-market turnover has increased from 28% of the world product in 1990 to 81% in 1998. US stock-market capitalisation rose from about 40% of the GDP in 1980, to 55% in 1990, to 150% by early 2001 after peaking around 180%.”⁴⁴ According to the World Bank figures betting on the future, between 1986 and 1996, derivatives trading multiplied 56-fold, reaching a volume of around \$34,000billion.

With such a big scale of operation the effect of finance capital over the working class is undeniable. Ticktin predicts that a long period of massive unemployment would appear as essential for the recovery of the capitalist system. His theory is supported by the International Labour Office (ILO) data, which maintained that in 1998 unemployment increased by tens of millions and includes one-third of the labour force on the planet (around 700m).⁴⁵

Brazil suffered from foreign loans to the extent that the country was not able to repay the interest of the loans. According to Serfati the destructive cycle of loan – growth – unemployment - loan is shown in the following table.

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999 prediction
Economic	5.9	2.8	3.0	0.5	0.5	3.5
Growth						
Unemployment	5.1	4.6	5.4	5.7	7.8	-
Rate						
Foreign Loan	196.1	209.1	218.9	214.3	227.8	244.3
\$bn						

Loan service	34.6	40.02	47.5	65	67.2	69.3
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Export

Source: World Bank, No.1374

According to Serfati, privatisation is a result of and directly related to foreign loans. “Between 1995 and 1998 the privatisation programme in developing countries resulted in the sale of \$110 billion of the active productive capital, more than half of which was purchased by multinational companies. In this operation IMF was directly involved.”⁴⁶ According to Lemond, “Between 1990 and 1997 governments on a world scale have sold \$513bn of their social assets. Only in Europe was \$215bn of the nationalised assets sold to private companies.”⁴⁷ There are many aspects of finance capital still to be examined. For instance, was it industrial capital’s weakness and its lack of profitability, as Brenner argues that resulted in the rapid increase of finance capital’s operation from the 1970s onwards or was it simply capitalism’s natural development and the decline in the rate of profit that resulted in its increase? It is not the aim of this work to study these aspects. Whatever the reason, the aim is to find the effect of finance capital on the working class and its struggle for socialism. Privatisation, job losses in less profitable industries and the massive unemployment of the unskilled labour force are all direct results of the operation of capital in its latest stage of development, finance capital, which can no longer be explained by industrial productivity and industrial development.

The world’s working class has found itself in a more defensive position caused by the parasitic activities of finance capital. Profitability of less than 40% results in the closure of industry and more unemployed workers. The condition of the working class in third world countries is even worse. The severe repression of the industrial working class by dictatorial regimes under the conditions directly imposed by the world financial institutions has left the workers of those societies with very little space to manoeuvre. This point will be further discussed later in this chapter.

Computerisation and the working class

Machines, like any other phenomenon, have advantages as well as disadvantages. In different circumstances and under different conditions they can be used for different aims and purposes and in this sense they are neutral. However, there are certain aspects of machinism and computerisation that have negative effects on the working class and its struggle. As previously discussed computers have enabled capitalism to use the labour of youth and women on a mass scale and therefore has resulted in an increase in unemployment. Another aspect of the computers' negative effect on the working class and their jobs is the effect the internet has had on some areas of the production process. Storage accounts for a big part of production costs.⁴⁸ By using the internet, storage as a big department of the production process will disappear. In other words, with the introduction of "just in time production" it is possible to order parts as and when required, get rid of costly storage, and reduce the total cost of production. Obviously, this development puts the jobs of many at risk. This certainly does not mean that the process of automation and mechanization will continue to a point where robots replace living labour.

It is unlikely that capitalism will ever reach this point, although it is constantly getting nearer. The reason is partly that it prefers to use cheap labour, wherever it can find it, and partly that it prefers to transfer capital out of industry into finance capital. The ultimate reason is that the effect of robots making robots will destroy value and so price itself. If machines make machines and machines extract the raw materials, there are no longer any costs, if the raw materials are either infinite or infinitely substitutable.⁴⁹

According to Hans Morach, by 2050 robotic brains will be able to implement 100 trillion orders in a second and will compete with human brains. "In October 1995 an experimentation vehicle named Navlab V passed through the width of America (from Washington to Santiago) and did that automatically without human intervention for 95% of the distance. A movable computer with 25 million

orders in a second (MIPS) power supported the automatic direction and driving system of this vehicle. In the 1970s and 1980s robotic researchers used computers that were able to implement one million orders in a second (MIPS). In the 1990s the power of a computer suitable for an experimentation robot improved from 10 MIPS to 100m MIPS, and recently in the latest moveable model to 1000m MIPS. That means the operation that could not be implemented by the 1970s and 1980s' robots is possible today.”⁵⁰ Thus, mobilisation and computerisation directly reduces the number of the labour force by replacing them with robots and computers. Computer use on a mass scale has made it possible to use the cheap labour of women and children. As a consequence, unemployment amongst male workers has increased.

In addition, there is another important factor that enhances the negative impact of computer technology on the militancy of the working class. That is to say, computerisation in the second half of the 20th century led to increases in the wages of skilled workers and therefore has increased overall wage inequality. According to Tashiro, data on individual workers in the US shows that computer use in the workplace rose from 27% in 1984 to 60% in 2001. By any standard this is a massive increase.

The most common theory in this regard is the skill-bias technical change hypothesis (SBTC), which states that the invention and diffusion of new information technologies has increased the relative demand for skilled workers and this has resulted in an increase in the relative wages of skilled workers compared to unskilled workers.⁵¹

This theory is supported by many detailed studies of US plants, such as:

- Berman, Bound and Griliches
- Berndt, Morrison & Rosenblum
- Autor, Katz and Krueger
- Siegel

- Haskel and Heden.

It should be noted that there are theories opposed to this common theory. For instance, Card and Dinardo argue, “Much of the growth in wage inequality is due to within group changes in wages and these cannot be readily explained by shifts in technology.”⁵² In addition, according to Doms, Dunne and Troske, the relationship between skill upgrading and technology differs by the type of technology and the type of technology measures employed.⁵³ Finally, after carefully reviewing the literature Timothy Dunne concludes: First, skills and technology are clearly related at the workplace level. Plants and firms that utilise more advanced technology employ more skilled workers and pay higher wages. Second, the relationship between skill upgrading and technology adoption is much less clear.⁵⁴

The point is that computerisation although to a different degree in various industries and to a lesser degree in the production sphere compared to design and engineering, left a degree of wage inequality among the working class. This has had a negative impact, which has had important consequences for the labour movement and its struggle for higher wages, collective bargaining, and industrial action.

Another important aspect of computerisation is the use of the internet in popular protests. The last two decades of the 20th century witnessed an important shift in the globalised struggle against capitalism. Unlike decades earlier when blue collar workers were at the forefront of popular protests, students, intellectuals, graduated unemployed, activists of various fields, environmentalists and leftists have been the forces behind a popular struggle that started in Seattle and continues today. There is an undeniable relation between computers and internet access and the organisation of the contemporary popular movement. In fact, access to the internet is a condition of connection and participation in this movement. Blue collar workers who do not have access to the internet or do not

have the necessary computer skills risk being politically marginalised. In other words, only those sections of the working class who have access to a computer and the internet can keep up with the pace of political development. However, without full participation of blue collar workers, the struggle of the above mentioned social groups will not lead to socialism.

Globalisation of the economy and the working class

Many authors widely use the term globalisation for many different purposes. Many, from leaders of bourgeois political parties to union leaders to the press and media, use the term globalisation to mean that the world market and multinationals are very powerful and that the working class in every country and nation-states are completely powerless. Despite the exaggeration concealed in this statement, there is a certain degree of truth in it. It is true that multinational companies are much more powerful today and their power is rapidly increasing. GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trades) predicts that up to one-third of the world's trade is in fact nothing but the transfer of goods between multinational companies.⁵⁵ But such a definition of globalisation is too pessimistic. Marxists generally consider globalisation as the natural continuation of capitalist development. For example, Anderiu Glin and Bob Sutcliffe claim, in the first place, globalisation is the result of the expansion of capitalist relations of production. They point out that the inclusion of women in wage labour after the war is in fact the transition of a big section of labour from non-capitalist relations to capitalist relations. Other examples of this expansion include the privatisation of state owned companies and marketisation of command economies in former socialist countries. In the second place, globalisation is the increase in the interdependence of the global economy. This interdependence is not a new phenomenon. Marx more than 150 years ago predicted the present expansion and put it in an interesting way.

The need for a constantly expanding market chases the

bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere establish connections everywhere. The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of reactionists, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilized nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the productions of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations.⁵⁶

This quote from Marx clearly shows that the process of globalisation is not unknown or unexpected for Marxists. However, knowing and expecting something does not necessarily mean being prepared for confrontation. The truth of the matter is that the pace of rapid expansion in the 1980s and 1990s caught the working class by surprise, which resulted in delays and pauses in its organised resistance against capitalism. That is to say, where capital has been able to use new communication achievements for its own benefit and adapted itself to the so-called information society, a similar development cannot be seen for workers. Capital's dominance around the world is greater than ever. The labour camp; however, is not that organised on the world scale.

The interdependence of the national, regional, and global economies, at least for the time being, works against the world's working class. Advanced transport communication systems make it possible for capital to pull out where profits are not good and invest where production costs less. In a globalised economy it is better to produce where the cost is less and sell where price is high. For instance, in the 1950s one in every four Americans owned a car and in 1979 one in every

two Americans owned a car. The increase in the number of cars used by American households reveals another important aspect of globalisation. According to Bent Harrison and Berry Blustone, between 1969 and 1979 the value of US imports doubled. The figure for the import of industrial products increased from 14% in 1969 to 38% in 1979. In 1986 for every \$100 spent by American families \$45 was spent on imported commodities. Imports included shoes, clothes, textiles, cars, steel, car parts, electronic goods, computers, and high tech. products from Japan, Germany, Sweden, South Korea, and Taiwan.⁵⁷

In this globalised world where capital is able to fly wherever labour is less organised and cheaper to buy, and where freedom of movement does not exist for labour, the relationship between labour and capital is not the relation of two equals. It is a relation that favours capital over workers.

The destructive effect of the globalisation of the economy becomes clearer when one looks at its relationship with the levels of unemployment, finance capital, etc. In a globalised economy the power of finance capital, the effect of privatisation, and unemployment are greatly enhanced. It is only in a globalised economy that finance capital can move so freely around the world destroying the development process in one area in order to chase the higher rate of profit and capital return in another. In a globalised economy the shift from industry to the service sector, finance, and other unproductive areas has a double effect. Put in a different way, capitalist expansion to the four corners of the world in itself is neither positive nor negative. It is the activity of some branches of capital such as finance capital that shows its destructive impact on the working class and its struggle for socialism, which becomes more difficult in an economy that operates on a world scale. It is obvious that if the operation of capital was limited to the US and Europe, then its ability to manoeuvre would be much less and it would die out in its contradiction. Thus globalisation is another element of delaying the terminal crisis of capitalism.

The globalisation of the economy provided great opportunities for capitalism to further delay its terminal crisis and to overcome the cyclical crisis by moving location and changing industries. These opportunities; however, have a negative impact on the life and struggle of the working class. With any closure of industry, the militant sections of the working class lose their established connections and face disruptions. When capital pulls out of an industry it needs to be reinvested for its very survival. Today, capitalism has more avenues open to it compared to the beginning of the 20th century. Today, capital can be invested in the service sector, finance, banking and speculative operations, as well as, industry.

The ability of capital to manoeuvre between different areas and branches of the economy, or to pull out completely from industry and go into finance, does not mean that capital has overcome its contradictions. On the contrary, time is slowly running out for capitalism. With all new competitors in the market it is increasingly more difficult to hold on to the present degree of the rate of profit. Paul Sweezy defines globalisation in a rather interesting way. He proclaims that globalisation is an ever invasive and often inflammatory process of capitalist expansion.⁵⁸

To summarise, on the one hand, by destroying traditional ways of farming and agriculture, sending the rural poor into urban areas in search of jobs, bringing women and children into the labour market, and the expansion of the service sector, capital has truly made 80% of all societies wage labourers. On the other hand, as a result of automation and computerisation, globalisation of the economy, and the shift to finance capital, and their effects on the working class, a larger working class today does not necessarily mean that it is stronger. The world working class is bigger than ever before. However, the diversity of the working class is also bigger than before. Capitalist relations are operating on a world scale. However, with these developments capitalism also subjected the working class to great changes. Today, the working class does not only refer to the industrial sector. It includes anyone who sells his/her labour power in order to

stay alive. All wage and salary earners are members of this class as long as they do not exploit other workers and do not side with the capitalism against the working class.

Such a broad definition of the working class brings some difficulties for the labour camp. Many parts of this class consider themselves out with the framework of the working class. Police officers, parking attendants, bus ticket conductors, train inspectors, court ushers and clerks, security officers, immigration officers, etc. are all somehow instruments of control and partly border class relations. The diversity of interests of the different sections of the working class is another factor that makes economic, and in particular, political organisation around a single purpose very difficult. It is a widely accepted fact in any major workers' strike that some trade unions oppose the rest of the class, for instance, the electrical union in England. Workers on higher salaries or wages are less likely to support the lower strata's struggle for the obvious reason that they have relatively privileged jobs to lose. Capitalism's developments over the last three decades of the 20th century created workers who obtained higher skills and received higher wages for their skill. As a result of this increase in skills in the computer world, computer trained office workers hardly considered themselves as part of the working class. Reciprocally, many of the working class' activists hardly consider social groups, such as, office computer experts, bank officers, and social workers as part of their class.

Contrary to the power relation's definition of unemployment, a high rate of unemployment has a greater impact than just workers being made redundant, the disruption to organisation, or the loss of activists. Unemployment also weakens the position of workers who are still employed. The defensive position of the working class from 1980 onward is directly related to the increase of unemployment on a world scale.

The largest reserve army of labour, to use Marx's terminology, is the result of the

above mentioned development. Between one-quarter and one-half of all countries' working population are unemployed. This huge level of unemployment has multiple effects on the working class. Firstly, the unemployed population, either in their own country or in the form of migrant workers, have to give into the capital's demands in order to preserve their physical survival. By doing this, they keep pressure on the employed sections of the working class. Secondly, a chronically unemployed person tends to be more conservative when it comes to the question of the class struggle. It is not surprising that migrant workers, who are mostly engaged in manual labour and do jobs that are rarely accepted by local people, do not participate in workers' strikes. Lack of job security is greater for this part of the working class. Thirdly, the unemployed participate in collective action only until getting a job. Once that is achieved s/he has no motive to continue collective action. Hence, the unemployed's collective action is not continuous and reliable. The unemployed's reliability can change as s/he changes jobs. The case for the employed, theoretically speaking, is different. They know that united with their colleagues they can achieve their aims but individually the same goal cannot be fulfilled. The problems caused by unemployment are more than those aspects discussed.

The risk of losing their job and becoming unemployed creates a spirit of competition amongst workers. There is competition not only between the employed and unemployed, but also between the unemployed workers themselves. That is to say, unemployment's most devastating effect is the decline of the spirit of solidarity. Usually when there is a large population of unemployed in a country, militant collective action also declines. There is no doubt that other factors play important roles in the increase and decline of radical class action. However, unemployment is one of the most important factors.

Workers' participation in collective action is dependent on many factors. The economic interest of a person is only one factor. Ideology is another factor. An unemployed person because of his or her ideology might choose to take part in a

demonstration for peace or saving the planet rather than signing a petition for jobs. Another effect of unemployment, especially if it is prolonged, is losing interest in class action. Unlike an employed person who enjoys strong ties with his or her colleagues in any collective action, an unemployed person might end up participating in actions that are not particularly class actions.

In addition to the problems caused by the above factors, the organisation of unemployed women for class action is even more difficult. As mentioned earlier, the rapid increase of women in the labour market caused difficulties for the labour movement. As a result of wage discrimination and domestic inequality between male and female wage labourers, it became difficult to bring these two sections of the working class together into a unified class based action. Knowing this difficulty, the bourgeoisie made the most of it by replacing traditionally male jobs with female workers and further declining the class unity between men and women workers. Though, this problem is not as important today as it was in the 1960s and 1970s, out of the three main feminist groupings only social feminists are still committed to putting class unity before the question of women. Many lesbians are still suspicious of men. Liberal feminists, for different reasons, are less concerned about workers class action. Injustice at home and work affects and undermines the possibility of unified class action between men and women. As long as there are women who are moved by feminist ideas, unified class action cannot be based on a single ideology in a political party type of organisation.

Moreover, there is a cultural diversity amongst the working class. The development of capitalism over the last two decades of the 20th century has created a population of wage and salary earners, who maintain a different level of culture. The cultural interests of computer experts and bank officers are not the same as industrial workers. This variety of cultural interests affects their preference when it comes to the question of political organisation. It is difficult to unite various groups of workers into a monolithic political party based on a single ideology with rigid party discipline who do not consider the changes of

capitalism. Party discipline that might suit an industrial worker may not necessarily suit a worker who has at least one degree as the prerequisite of his or her job. One of the greatest socio-economic changes of the 1980s and 1990s was the replacement of the unskilled and less skilled workforce with the highly skilled workforce in the high tech industry. The variety of skills, economic interests, wages, and culture among different groups of the modern working class results in a change in the superstructure, and specifically, a change in the character of political organisation.

Just as the Trades Union Congress (TUC), General Confederation of Labour (CGT), Trade Union Confederation (DGB), and Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DISK) are umbrella economic organisations for trade unions in Britain, France, Germany, and Turkey, a similar umbrella political organisation is needed to unite various sections of the working class. At present, in most countries, different parts of such a political organisation have already appeared. The working class movement is one step away from the emergence of the political umbrella organisation. For instance, in Britain the Marxist elements of the Labour Party either split and formed the Socialist Labour Party or stayed inside the Labour Party but kept their internal bylaw and discipline in the form of the Militant. The formation of umbrella socialist organisations from the Socialist Alliance, to the Socialist Labour Party, to the Militant appears to be a matter of time and effort by activists. A similar process can be seen in other countries such as Italy.

The impact of finance capital on the working class struggle in the last two decades appears to be worse than other aspects of socio-economic changes of the 20th century. The huge scale of finance capital's operation and its parasitic character has pushed the working class into a defensive position in all countries. The fact that capital can exist and enhance its profit through parasitic operations without the direct involvement of the industrial working class, in itself, is very difficult to challenge. The threat that capitalism might run out of industry if

profitability is low gives it the upper hand in its affair with workers. This directly affects workers and their militancy. Capital, even in its finance form, cannot exist without living labour and the exploitation of workers. However, what gives capitalism the upper hand against labour is the unrestricted movement of capital from one place to the next, especially from 1980 onwards. This freedom of movement does not exist for workers. Capital can partially leave an industry but that is not the case for the workers.

Summary

The world's working class has grown numerically and is greater than ever. However, bigger does not necessarily mean stronger. On the contrary, the position of the working class is weaker today as opposed to the first half of the 20th century. Firstly, a bigger working class means a bigger number of unemployed, which weakens the position of workers in the class struggle. Secondly, the development of capitalism and the rapid growth of computer use created an identity crisis for some sections of the working class, created inequality among skilled and unskilled workers, and resulted in the further fragmentation of the working class. Thirdly, women coming into the labour market in mass numbers created disunity among workers. Finally, finance capital has weakened the position of workers even further.

Today the organisation of the working class for socialism is much more difficult. This is partly because of the diversity of the working class and complications of its demands, and partly because of the identity crisis within some sections of the working class. This problem has more than one dimension. Those sections of the working class that are not easily organised under the name and banners of working class join other organisations. Some female workers join feminist movements, some join anti-socialist parties, and some stay at home.

As a result of the diversity of the working class and the above mentioned

changes, one could say that it is no longer possible for a traditional working class socialist party to unite the demands of feminists, Greens, peace lovers, human rights campaigners, and socialist workers all under the red banner. All these demands; however, can be united and all those forces can join under a general umbrella organisation. Such an organisation would naturally reflect the demands of the working class, as well as, environmentalists, feminists, and human rights campaigners.

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Notes

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CHAPTER TWO

Marxism, the party, and class

Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels wrote in *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, “The History of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles...a fight that each time ended either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large or in the common ruin of the contending classes.”¹ What is the most determining factor for the success and failure of the working class in its strategy for the revolutionary re-constitution of the society? Is it class consciousness, economic organisation, or political organisation? More than one and a half centuries after this statement in *The Communist Manifesto* the history of class struggle since the Russian Revolution in October 1917 has provided many examples of the importance of workers’ political organisation. In other words, it is the working class and bourgeois class’ organisation and particularly their political organisations that determine the future of these contending classes in the present capitalist society. Although there are many other factors involved, political organisation is the main factor for working class success or failure. The better politically organised, the higher the chances of victory. The aim of this work is to study the viability of the different types of socialist organisations of the working class during the 21st century. However, in order to study the socialist organisations most viable for the present century, one needs to look at their predecessors, i.e. socialist organisations of the last century. It is also important to find out what was meant by a communist party in the early 20th century. That is to say, one must study both the theory and practice of past communist and socialist parties and organisations to better understand the viability of socialist organisations in the 21st century. It will be equally important to look at the changes within the capitalist system, its structure, its effects on the structure of the working class, and the consequences this had on the strategies and tactics of

communist parties, as well as the impact that these parties had on the survival and changes of capitalism as a system.

The previous chapter discussed the diversity and changes in the structure of the working class. It examined categories such as unemployment, globalisation, computerisation, as well as the entry of women and children into the labour market. It also discussed their impact on the working class' struggle. Chapter three will look at the ways in which the Stalinists' practices and social democratic parties throughout the world saved the essence of capitalism. This chapter will outline the theories of early 20th century revolutionary Marxists such as V.I. Lenin, Leon Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg, and Antonio Gramsci regarding the importance of independent communist parties in the process of the working class struggle and the relationship between the party and class as a whole. In order to understand their points of view and before looking at the way in which the most important communist thinkers describe the communist party, the next section will look at some of the basic ideas of the nature of political organisation.

What is a political organisation?

An organisation is a set of people who are combined in the virtue of activities directed to common ends. Bertrand Russell asserts, "There are two important respects in which organisations may differ: one is size, the other is what one might call density of power, by which I mean the degree of control which they exert over their members."² Russell's definition of organisation is a general definition. One may add that there is more to the characteristics of political organisations than size and density of power. For instance, the relationship of political organisation to the general public or, in other words, its accessibility to the public or the masses is as important as the actual size and the density of power – what Marxists refer to as centralisation. The purpose of this study is not to examine political organisations in general, but rather it seeks to explore a

particular type of organisation. That organisation is the revolutionary Marxist organisation of the working class for socialism.

For Georg Lukács organisation is the form of mediation between theory and practice. That is to say, it is at the level of organisation that socialist ideas are put to the test of practice. “Every theoretical tendency or clash of views must immediately develop an organisational arm if it is to rise above the level of pure theory or abstract opinion, in other words, if it really intends to point the way to its own fulfilment in practice.”³

However, there is a problem with this position. In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels state that “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of the class struggle.” Marx talks about the class struggle, not about tendencies existing within the classes. Lukács’ remark justifies sectarian tendencies within the proletarian movement. His starting point is not the action of the working class but theoretical tendencies that are brought to the working class from outside its boundaries. From such a position nearly all political splits and partitions within the working class movement are justified. If every clash of views according to the above remark resulted immediately in an organisational arm, then the working class would never become a class for itself. Moreover this remark is not able to explain Marx and Engels’ action for most of their political careers. Marx and Engels stopped their direct membership to any political party very early in their political careers but continued their theoretical activities to the end of their lives. It appears that Lukács is addressing the members and activists of communist parties. Based on Lukács’ discussion, the working class would never unite around any industrial action let alone the question of political power. Lukács does not talk about freedom of tendencies within the communist party. On the contrary, he talks about the fulfilment of the views of tendencies in practice. If every tendency tries to put its view into practice, the result would be nothing but a party that cannot unite on any issue.

Leon Trotsky has a very interesting metaphor to describe the importance of the Bolshevik party during the Russian Revolution. In the *History of the Russian Revolution*, Trotsky declares, “Without a guiding organisation, the energy of the masses would dissipate like steam not enclosed in a piston box. But nevertheless what moves things is not the piston or the box, but the steam.”⁴ Trotsky’s view on the role of the party is similar to the writings of Rosa Luxemburg. In their view it is the working class movement that is important and the parties or theories unlike what Lukács says are means for the aims of the working class. For instance, Rosa Luxemburg in *Leninism or Marxism* writes:

In Russia, however, the social democratic party must make up by its own efforts an entire historical period. It must lead the Russian proletarians from their present “atomised” condition, which prolongs the autocratic regime, to a class organisation that would help them to become aware of their historical objectives and prepare them to struggle to achieve those objectives.⁵

In Luxemburg’s view, the proletarians’ organisation and leadership to achieve their historical objectives as a class measures the party’s function and achievement. In her view the party is a means that prepares the working class for its historical achievement. Rosa Luxemburg further explains her view in *The Mass Strike*. “The task of social democracy does not consist in the technical preparation and direction of mass strikes, but first and foremost in the political leadership of the whole movement.”⁶ Rosa Luxemburg’s understanding of the relationship between the communist party and the masses of proletariat is similar to Marx’s view. In *The Mass Strike*, Rosa Luxemburg describes the social democrats as follows:

The social democrats are the most enlightened, the most class-conscious vanguard of the proletariat. They cannot and dare not wait, in a fatalistic fashion with folded arms for the advent of the “revolutionary situation.”⁷

Rosa Luxemburg sees the party as the continuation of the way in which Marx and Engels define the communist party. In *The Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels asserted:

Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working class parties. They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole. They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement.⁸

Therefore, communists are the conscious sections of the working class. They do not separate themselves from other workers and do not set up any sectarian principles without participation of the masses of workers.

Why is it that communists should not set up their own principles and put them to the masses of workers who are not party members? If Luxemburg and Marx were alive they would probably have answered: Only during the class struggle, when standing shoulder to shoulder with other members of the class and when answering the specific questions facing the class struggle, should communists put forward their own answers to those specific questions. Both Marx's and Luxemburg's political lives were associated with the struggle of a strong proletariat, which consisted of the majority of the population. The number of industrial workers in 19th century Britain and 20th century Germany were by far greater than the Russian, Italian or even the French industrial working classes. Moreover, the political weight of the British working class allowed Marx to predict the possibility of gaining political power by peaceful means such as the working class' vote. In addition, political freedom in Britain and Germany allowed openness and the existence of Marxists in factories. In Russia, Hungary, Italy, and other parts of the world political suppression, censorship, and terror imposed the highest degree of secrecy and led to the separation of communists from the rest of the working class. In Britain and Germany socialists did not have to put their lives at risk in order to get to the workers, whereas in Russia any socialist activity in factories would have resulted in exile to Siberia. Due to the

weight of the proletariat in Britain as the leading capitalist country of the time Marx maintained that only the working class, not any other class or social group, was in a position to emancipate itself, and with it the whole of humanity. That is to say, only the working class, at the bottom of capitalist society, had no interest in keeping a society that was based on its exploitation. No other social group was in such a position.

In societies where the working class was not the majority of the population and it had to form a social block with other oppressed classes, this very act imposed changes to its political strategy. The form and structure of a political organisation that was based on and supported by a strong working class was different from the one that operated in a society where the weight of other poorer social groups was as heavy as the working class. When it came to the question of theory, the effect was similar. That is to say, when it came to the relationship between the communist party as an independent entity from the working class, the less conscious, less organised, and the smaller the size of the working class resulted in a party that was not controlled by the class and its political demands. The next section will discuss the relationship between the party and class.

The party and class

There are at least three different theories that describe the relationship between the working class and the political party of the working class. These include the Blankist, the Marxist, and the social democratic. This study will concentrate on Marxist theory and the trends within this school. Among the great pre-Second World War Marxist thinkers, Lenin and Gramsci have a very similar understanding of the relationship between the party and class, whereas Rosa Luxemburg and the young Trotsky have a very different approach. The remaining sections of this chapter will look at the ways in which these Marxist thinkers have presented their theories. The reasons this work will only discuss Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg, and Gramsci are as follows: They all lived before the Second World

War; they all lead strong working class movements; they all left lasting political legacies among the working class movement around the world; and they have all discussed the relationship between the proletariat and its political party.

Lenin

Lenin insists that without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary action by the working class. That is to say, workers do not share in the formation of the ideology. According to Lenin in *What Is To Be Done?* the main function of the party is to shape and form the ideology of the working class. This activity is the party's sole right. In *What Is To Be Done?* Lenin valued the independence of the party to a degree that not only was it the most important element of the socialist revolution, but without it workers' action could only lead to trade unionist consciousness. Later, at the second congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP), he corrected his position by saying, "The economists have gone to one extreme. To straighten matters out somebody had to pull in the other direction- and that is what I have done."⁹ As early as 1903 Lenin realised that he could not defend the central claim he had put forward in *What Is To Be Done?*

In spite of his ideas in the early 20th century, in his writings after the 1905 Revolution, Lenin recognised the problems of bureaucratisation and substitutionism without getting trapped into the fatalistic view typical of social democracy. Chris Harman put forward several reasons for this viewpoint. Firstly, Lenin believed that the revolutionary period transferred the masses into new men. In other words, it was not always the case that the masses need the party's leadership in their revolutionary struggle all of the time. In a short article titled *What is happening in Russia* Lenin wrote:

In the history of revolutions there come to light contradictions that have ripened for decades and centuries. Life becomes unusually eventful. The masses, which have always stood in the shade and

therefore have often been despised by superficial observers, enter the political arena as active combatants...these masses are making heroic efforts to rise to the occasion and cope with the gigantic tasks of world significance imposed upon them by history; and however great individual defeats may be...nothing will ever compare in importance with this direct training that the masses and the classes receive in the course of the revolutionary struggle itself.¹⁰

Lenin came back to this subject in another article *The Revolutionary Army and the Revolutionary Government* to confirm the importance of revolutionary periods for people's self-education. In that article he compared the revolutionary period with the time of stagnation. He explained how during revolutionary periods the masses learned in a few days what they might not learn during years of stagnation.

We are able to appreciate the importance of the slow, steady and often imperceptible work of political education which social democrats have always conducted and always will conduct. But we must not allow what in the present circumstances would be still more dangerous- a lack of faith in the powers of the people. We must remember what a tremendous educational and organisational power the revolution has when mighty historical events force the man in the street out of his remote garret or basement corner, and make a citizen of him. Months of revolution sometimes educate citizens more quickly and fully than decades of political stagnation.¹¹

Secondly, Lenin did not oppose the ability of the working class to obtain social democratic consciousness. In spite of political restrictions in Russian society, with the exception of brief periods in 1905 and 1917, the following quotes from Lenin sound rather like Rosa Luxemburg's words. "The working class is instinctively, spontaneously social democratic."¹² Chris Harman and R. Dunayevskaya in *Marxism and Freedom* pointed out another example that showed Lenin's faith in the masses of proletariat in capitalist society.

The special condition of the proletariat in capitalistic society leads to a striving of workers for socialism; a union of them with the socialist party bursts forth with a spontaneous force in the very early stages of the movement.¹³

Thirdly, according to Harman, Lenin's strong faith in the masses did not change even in the worst months after the outbreak of war in 1914. Lenin asserted:

The objective war-created situation...is inevitably engendering revolutionary sentiments; it is tempering and enlightening all the finest and most class conscious proletarians. A sudden change in the mood of the masses is not only possible, but is becoming more and more probable.¹⁴

Finally, Harman claimed that Lenin's faith in the masses led to conflict with his own party in April and again in August and September. According to Trotsky, "Lenin said more than once that the masses are to the left of the party. He knew the party was to the left of its own upper layer of 'old Bolsheviks'." ¹⁵ In writing about the Democratic conference Lenin stated, "We must draw the masses into the discussion of this question. Class conscious workers must take the matter into their own hands, organise the discussion and exert pressure on 'those at the top'." ¹⁶

This argument is very convincing. Although Lenin defended the embryonic organisation of the party tooth and nail and emphasised the role of the communist party in the formation of working class ideology, during the 1905 Revolution Lenin sided with the workers against the party's bureaucrats.

For example, Bogdanov, an old Bolshevik, took up an anti-soviet position on the grounds that such a non-party organizational form would challenge the social democratic party. Perhaps becoming the nucleus of activity aimed against it. He thus called for the soviets to accept party authority and its programme, or face the withdrawal of party support.¹⁷

Lenin defended the independence of the soviets from the party and explained that both the party and soviets were necessary for the revolution. As a result of Lenin's firm support of the soviets Bogdanov left the party. The Bolsheviks' position inside Russia was similar to that of Bogdanov. Radin (also a Bolshevik)

had a similar position during the 1905 Revolution. Lenin's position against Radin's article *Party or Soviet* will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

It could be argued that after the 1905 Revolution, Lenin could see the possibility of building a mass workers' party in Russia and started to turn his attention to building one. Lenin never relinquished his firm belief in a centralised well-disciplined working class party as a vital means for a successful revolution. However, as Harman argued, he put his efforts into bringing more and more class conscious workers into the party and tried to transfer the leading role of the party to class conscious working class leaders. Although he never criticised his definition of the party that he put forward in *What Is To Be Done?* Lenin very quickly realised that he was leading a mass party with several tendencies. In 1903 apart from different factions there were other tendencies that were not as well known as the three main factions of the party. Earlier this work discussed the position of other Bolsheviks on the relationship between the party and the soviets during the 1905 Revolution. Despite the clandestine nature of party's activities and it being a young party, tendencies and clashes of views on many issues facing the party could only be expected. To regulate relations between these tendencies Lenin offered his formula of freedom of discussion and unity in action.

Trotsky

Unlike other great Marxist thinkers, Leon Trotsky's position on the question of organisation is contradictory and, therefore, is not clear to his readers. Whatever the reason for his apparent contradiction, there are at least two opposite explanations as to why his early writings on the subject contradict his later works. Historians, such as Isaac Deutscher and some of his followers argue that Trotsky, finally realising his errors embraced Lenin's organisational line, as laid out in *What Is To Be Done?*¹⁸ For example, Tony Cliff claimed, "Trotsky...for some 14 years refused to accept Lenin's concept of the party, which he wholeheartedly embraced only in 1917."¹⁹ Even people such as Baruch Knei-Pez attributed

“Trotsky’s joining the Bolsheviks to his coming to terms with the central importance of purely political devices in revolutionary social change and the lure of power.”²⁰ This argument was amplified by Trotsky’s own renunciation of his early writings during his years in exile when he said: “I wrote a brochure in 1904, *Our Political Tasks*, in which I developed some views on the question of organisation quite similar to those of Rosa Luxemburg, nonetheless all my later experience has shown me that in this controversy Lenin was right against Luxemburg, and against myself.”²¹

Antonio Carlo and Lenne Poole argued the view that in 1917 Lenin accepted Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution, while Trotsky in turn accepted the Bolsheviks’ theory of organisation and abandoned his youthful spontaneity in the process, was simplistic and wrong. In their respective articles they provided convincing arguments that after the 1905 Revolution Lenin’s view on organisation underwent a radical change, which brought him close to the ideas of Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg. This is a realistic view and can be supported by Lenin’s formula of “freedom of discussion and unity in action.”

Freedom of discussion and unity in action is used in a mass party. In order for freedom of discussion to have any meaning (or value), it cannot be restricted to a small secretive party consisting of a minority. That is to say, Lenin’s slogan for full discussion while at the same time maintaining unity of action could only be used in a mass party, as opposed to a small group, if the aim of such discussion was to educate the whole class.

Even though Trotsky renounced his 1904 works on organisation, and regardless of the reasons for his renunciation, *Our Political Tasks* is still Trotsky’s writing just as Marx’s early writings are his. Regardless of Trotsky’s renunciation, *Our Political Tasks* had a lasting impact on the proletarian movement. In other words, what was said in *Our Political Tasks* is a part of history and Trotsky’s

dissociation from his own work more than three decades later does not change its value.

This work will now look at the way in which Trotsky saw the relationship between the party and the working class. Trotsky's *Report of the Siberian Delegation* showed the origin of the Lenin-Trotsky disputes over the forms of organisation in the second congress of RSDLP. Trotsky pointed out the lack of understanding of some comrades regarding the relationship between particular industrial interests and general class politics during the revolutionary period leading to the 1905 Revolution as well as the stagnation period. He explained the importance of linking their consciousness with local detailed tasks, the limited demands of specific trades, and the daily immediate demands with the need to create a central fighting apparatus.

Now, at the height of "centralism" they make a complete abstraction, in their considerations and resolutions about this apparatus, of all practical complexity and concrete character of the tasks the party must carry out, tasks with which the organisational apparatus must conform, tasks which alone permit the existence of this apparatus. This is why, to go ahead a little, unilinear "centralism," that is the purely formal centralism put forward by Lenin, found its warmest supporters in certain ex-"economists." They were the one who turned out to be the hardest "Iskraists."²²

As early as 1903 Trotsky not only rejected activities of a purely economist nature, but he wanted political activity that was directly related to and based on the factory. On the one hand Trotsky still thought in the framework of Lenin's 1896 *The Tasks of Russian Social Democrat*, where he suggested their limited forces should concentrate on factories, and on the other hand he rejected Lenin's general centralism in *What Is To Be Done?* As Carlo put it, "Trotsky, makes himself the spokesman of a current within the RSDLP that was critical of both the spontaneism of economists and the abstract political agitationism of the 'politicians'."²³ Trotsky further maintained that the form of organisation was not given a priority, but was a variable, which was dependent on the politics that

caused its existence. That is to say, the party for him was a means for a greater aim. On this fundamental principle, Trotsky and Lenin held a similar view.

Trotsky's starting point emphasised the importance of class, its characteristics, and potentials, and in the RSDLP split he supported the Menshevik organisational view. However, in *Our Political Tasks*, he clearly indicated the importance of the party and its unique role:

Marxism teaches that the interests of the proletariat are determined by the objective conditions of its existence. These interests are so powerful and so inescapable that they finally oblige the proletariat to allow them into the realm of its subjective concern. Between these two factors - the objective fact of its class interest and its subjective consciousness - lies the realm inherent in life, that of clashes and blows, mistakes and disillusionment, vicissitudes and defeats. The tactical farsightedness of the party of the proletariat is located entirely between these two factors and consists of shortening and easing the road from one to another.²⁴

Once again, Trotsky attributed mistakes, defeats, and disillusionment directly to the working class and its direct action rather than to the working class party as the mediator between the theory and practice, which Lukács advocated. In agreement with Rosa Luxemburg, Trotsky insisted that the ability to acquire subjective consciousness was in the nature of the proletariat with or without a party. However, in this view the purpose of the presence and the impact of the party was to shorten the distance between capitalist slavery and the realm of freedom. According to Lynne Poole,

Trotsky argued for the mass party which consists principally of workers who themselves have the role of political actors and organisers, rather than the role of theoreticians. He thus argued against the notion of an intelligentsia-dominated party.... While Trotsky saw an important role for the intelligentsia, in terms of theoretical development of social democracy and even as actors within a socialist party itself, he did not accept the inflated role that Lenin ascribed to them.²⁵

Trotsky criticised Lenin's format of the party for two main reasons. Trotsky maintained that the theory of the party put forward in *What Is To Be Done?* invited substitutionism. According to this theory, the party would substitute itself for the working class and therefore would deny the historical role of the class prescribed by Marx. This is not to say that Trotsky had predicted the bureaucratisation of the Bolshevik party in 1903-4. According to Trotsky, the proletariat would not tolerate substitutionism. Substitutionism would result in the workers keeping away from the party and going their own way. In many countries, the working class deserted parties that considered themselves as the working class' guardians, and tutors.

The second criticism was sectarianism. According to Trotsky, the party design based on the Leninist theory in *What Is To Be Done?* was over-centralised and the members had no role in the party as they were subordinated to the central committee. This would result in a situation where the party was no longer capable of the political education of the revolutionary class, it was unable to develop the organisational link with the revolution, and therefore would be pushed aside by the working class.²⁶

Rosa Luxemburg

Rosa Luxemburg is wrongly known among Marxists for her emphasis on the spontaneous movement of the proletariat. Her true contribution to the theory and practice of Marxism is, to a great extent, obscured among Marxists. It is not the task of this work to introduce the true Rosa Luxemburg to the reader. However, it is necessary to briefly say that her revolutionary activity, as well as her theoretical legacy, leaves no doubt that if she is not the greatest Marxist revolutionary after Marx, then she certainly is among the greatest Marxists of the 20th century.

While she was still at school in Warsaw, she joined the small Proletariat Party. In 1892 she was one of the founding members of the Polish Socialist Party. In 1894 she split from the party's leadership over the question of Polish independence. Rosa Luxemburg held that supporting Polish independence would mean subordinating the working class to Polish capitalists. She co-founded the Social Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland (SDKP) with Leo Jogiches. Then it merged with another party and formed the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL). Her party became the Communist Party of Poland after the success of the October Revolution in Russia. In addition to the SDKP and SDKPiL, she also founded the Group International, the Spartacist, and the German Communist Party. This proud political history, given her radical standing throughout her political life is enough to prove that she was far from spontaneity. There is a great difference between someone who devoted her entire life to communist political organisations and tried to link these political organisations to real working class activities and another who emphasised the importance of workers' action without any concern for the political party of the class. Rosa Luxemburg's approach to the working class question in all her major works from *The Mass Strike*, *The Political Party and the Trade Unions*, to the *Accumulation of Capital*, *What is Economics, Social Reform or Revolution*, *Leninism or Marxism*, and to the *Junius Pamphlet* was of a communist leader trying to link communism as an ideology to the real movement of the proletarian masses.

From the outset, it has to be said that Luxemburg's understanding of the political party of the working class was very similar to Trotsky's writings.

- Both thinkers emphasised the need for internal party democracy;
- both put a greater emphasis on working class action as opposed to the party when it came to the relationship between the two;
- both saw the party as necessary and as an important part of the class;
- both deeply trusted the potential of the working class to acquire the necessary political and organisational skills needed for a successful

revolution and saw the main duty of the party to assist the class to organise itself.

As mentioned earlier, before his murder, Trotsky was alive long enough to dissociate himself from his early thought on the nature of the political organisation of the working class, whereas Luxemburg held her view of the party and its relationship to the the working class to the end.

Many Marxist thinkers from Mandel to Cliff to Löwy have put forward their judgments about Luxemburg's political stand. According to Mandel, "Rosa Luxemburg argued that the revolutionary party 'will be created by the revolutionary action of the masses'."²⁷ Mandel added that "the so-called theory of spontaneity can be attributed to Luxemburg only with reservations."²⁸ These reservations according to Norman Geras turned out to be very significant, particularly when, in an important work about Rosa Luxemburg's work and activities, Mandel affirmed that "she was never guilty of the very conceptions ('infantillages') attributed to her."²⁹ That is to say, Mandel did not fully support Lenin's criticism of the Spartacus League in which he termed the infantile disorder of Leftism.

In "*Left-Wing*" *Communism, an Infantile Disorder* Lenin attacked the Spartacists and rejected their ideas. After quoting from a Spartacist pamphlet Lenin wrote, "What old and familiar rubbish! What 'Left' childishness!"³⁰ It is not possible to discuss the dispute between the Spartacists and Lenin fully and it is not the aim of this work to do so. It is enough to say that the argument was about the party and class. Both sides of the argument agreed that the party and working class were not separated and certainly did not oppose each other. However, as mentioned earlier, Rosa Luxemburg put a greater emphasis on class whereas for Lenin the party came first. By saying Rosa Luxemburg was not guilty of the infantile disorder as Lenin attributed to her, Mandel made it known where he stood in that argument. Earlier this work discussed how Lenin's ideas of the relationship between the

party and working class improved after the 1905 Revolution and how Lenin learned from Rosa Luxemburg and the young Trotsky. It is simplistic to suggest that in all those years that Lenin did not change his ideas, Trotsky accepted Lenin's organisational form, and in return Lenin accepted Trotsky's idea of permanent revolution. Mandel's hesitation pointed to the strength of Rosa Luxemburg's argument against Lenin's organisational model in *What Is To Be Done?* In other words, the issue is not that Luxemburg's theory had no faults in the early 20th century, but rather the issue is that Lenin's model and theory had more flaws.

Socialism or barbarism was not a mere passing thought for Luxemburg. Rosa Luxemburg used it many times in different works and it even found its place into the proclamations and programme of the Spartacus League. Tony Cliff, according to Geras, "makes reference to Luxemburg's concept of socialism or barbarism in order to justify the assertion that Luxemburg's 'non fatalistic' perspective did not presuppose the inevitability of socialism. However, Cliff shows no awareness that certain aspects of her work might render the demonstration, rather than assertion, of this point problematic."³¹ Frölich's book "acquits Luxemburg of fatalism, objectivism, and spontanism; but at the same time he refers to her conviction of the inevitability and historical necessity of socialism, this being the only possible issue of certain capitalist collapse."³²

Michael Löwy correctly identified the concept of socialism or barbarism as Rosa Luxemburg's emphasis on the necessity of the working class' political organisation, class conscious action, and socialism as dependent on the existence of a working class party. According to Geras, Löwy was wrong to suggest that Luxemburg held the same optimistic and passive fatalism central to Karl Kautsky up until the introduction of the concept of socialism or barbarism at the outbreak of the First World War. In other words, according to Löwy, Luxemburg's vision prior to 1914 -15 was to some extent mixed with spontaneity and economism. However, the concept of socialism or barbarism was her decisive break from her

mistaken past. This conclusion denied years of bitter ideological dispute between Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Kautsky. Luxemburg wrote *Reform or Revolution* against Kautsky's centrism and Bernstein's revisionism and reformism. Years before Lenin joined the dispute. Rosa Luxemburg was the only revolutionary Marxist defending socialism and revolution against centrism and opportunism of Kautsky and the revisionism and reformism of other right wing leaders of German Social Democratic Party - SPD.

In his book, *The Legacy of Rosa Luxemburg*, Norman Geras rejected Löwy's opinion and provided several reasons for this. Firstly, before the First World War there was no shortage of concepts which played the same role as the slogan - socialism or barbarism. For instance, as early as 1899, Rosa Luxemburg declared that without the conscious political struggle of the working class the socialist transformation would never come about. Secondly, in spite of all her previous works, concepts, and slogans, Luxemburg used the new and more effective slogan of socialism or barbarism. In other words, the fact that she did not criticise her previous slogans and used the new slogan meant, as far as she was concerned, there was no difference between her previous works and her work after the slogan of socialism or barbarism. Norman Geras explained that this slogan was the natural continuation of Luxemburg's thought under new conditions where imperialistic war, the dominance of finance capital, and permanent militarism, if allowed to take their course to their ultimate consequences, would lead to the destruction of all culture, depopulation, desolation, degeneration, a period of catastrophe, and barbarism.³³

Thus, as far as Luxemburg was concerned, capitalism had two opposite potentials. One was socialism, which depended on the strength and preparation of the working class, as the grave diggers of capitalism, to form its political organisation and become a class for itself, in Marxian terms. The other was finance capital, permanent militarism, a struggle for more profits and bigger markets, and therefore, barbarism. Luxemburg maintained throughout her political life that

relation between these two aspects was dialectical. The strength and weakness of one pole was the weakness and strength of the other. Needless to say, between the two extremes of socialism or barbarism there were many states, which can be categorised in the last analogy as one form of barbarism or socialism. To put it differently, socialism is not and has never been the automatic future of capitalism. It is only one alternative among many and the most difficult to come about. Left alone on its own, capitalism will lead to barbarism and catastrophe because they are inherent within it.

Unlike what many Marxists have previously thought, Luxemburg's method is more Marxist than Lenin's method in *What Is To Be Done?* Instead of conveying a ready made "revolutionary ideology" from outside the class to the class and ignoring the policies of the "unconscious class" by forcing it to accept the programme of social democracy or the Bolshevik party, as mentioned earlier in this chapter by Radin and Bogdanov in Russia, Rosa Luxemburg believed:

The party must immerse its own truth in the spontaneous mass movement and raise it from the depths of economic necessity, where it was conceived, on to the heights of free, conscious action. In so doing it will transform itself in the moment of the outbreak of revolution from a party that makes demands to one that imposes an effective reality. This change from demand to realization becomes the lever of the truly class-oriented and truly revolutionary organisation of the proletariat.³⁴

Rosa Luxemburg never suggested abandoning the party organisation for the spontaneous movement of the proletariat. On the contrary, her theory of the revolutionary activity of the party and revolution was more faithful to Marx than any other Marxist. "She maintained that social tactics could become hidebound and mechanical unless controlled by the total membership of the party."³⁵

Rosa Luxemburg's methodology of revolution can be summarised as a strong objection against a party that rests on decrees and orders. She was the first Marxist revolutionary after Marx who emphasised the necessity for the political

contribution of every member of the working class in the party. She had a strong faith in the ability of the masses to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge of organisation and revolution. These ideas made her a true founder of the ideology of the mass movement and mass organisation. “Although she became a martyr for her contributions to radical thought, more than 40 years before the sixties movement of the New Left, Luxemburg, is – as Robert Bland suggests - the ideological founder of that movement.”³⁶ Unlike what has been understood about her, Luxemburg was never an economist or a spontaneist. “The task of social democracy and its leaders is not to let themselves be dragged along in the wake of events, but to deliberately to forge ahead of them; to foresee events, to shorten development by conscious action, and to accelerate progress.”³⁷ These are Marx’s revolutionary words in *The Manifesto of the Communist party* regarding the relationship between communists and proletarians and his description of the revolution as the pain of accouchement. Rosa Luxemburg’s major conviction, if there was one, was that she continued Marx’s trend and did not change Marxism based on the conditions of the time and place. “She questioned political dogma. She agreed that the advanced guard of the class struggle must be centrally organised with a disciplined majority carrying out policies. At the same time she regarded the continued existence of an all-powerful central committee as a danger to the development of the struggle itself.”³⁸ Geras maintained that for Luxemburg the dictatorship of the proletariat was a more direct and more extensive form of democracy than anything that had existed before. For Luxemburg “this involved a system based on the plurality of tendencies and parties, and comprehensive democratic procedure and freedoms. Such freedoms need to include: elections, freedom of the press, freedom of opinion for the one who think differently, freedom of assembly, etc.”³⁹

Antonio Gramsci

Among Western Marxists, Antonio Gramsci's political thought was the closest to Lenin, particularly when it came to the question of the workers' party. Like Lenin, he argued for an independent communist party. Like Lenin, Gramsci believed that the party, and only the party, was responsible for the formation of the proletariat's ideology. For Gramsci, the ideology of the working class could not exist without intellectuals. According to Gramsci, three elements are needed for a party to exist:

- 1- A mass element, composed of ordinary, average men, whose participation takes the form of discipline and loyalty, rather than any creative spirit or organisational ability. Without this the party would not exist, it is true, but it is also true that neither could it exist with these alone. They are a force in so far as there is somebody to centralise, organise and discipline them.
- 2- The principal cohesive element, which centralises nationally and renders effective and powerful a complex of forces which left to themselves would count for little or nothing. This element is endowed with great cohesive, centralising and disciplinary power; also with the power of innovation.... It is also true that neither could this element form the party alone; however, it could do so more than the first element considered. One speaks of generals without an army, but in reality it is easier to form an army than to form generals.
- 3- An intermediate element, which articulates the first element with the second and maintains contact between them, not only physically but also morally and intellectually. In reality, for every party there exist "fixed proportions" between these three elements, and the greatest effectiveness is achieved when these "fixed proportions" are realised.⁴⁰

In spite of the use of militaristic language, the similarity of this party model (which is based on a powerful central committee and party cadres, intermediate party members, and the mass of party) to Lenin's model is obvious. Gramsci argued, just like Lenin, without experienced party leaders and cadres there would be no party. The difference between his understanding of the party and Lenin's model in *What Is To Be Done?* was that Lenin preferred a smaller party consisting of experienced cadres, whereas Gramsci did not believe that cadres could form a party on their own. Moreover, unlike Lenin, Gramsci believed that the most

important layer of the party was the middle i.e. those members of the party who made the party's day to day relations with the masses possible.

Central to Gramsci's political thought was the concept of hegemony, the war of position, and what he termed "organic intellectuals." More than anything else, Gramsci is famous amongst Marxists for his concept of hegemony. Hegemony was at the very centre of his ideas on the political party of the proletariat, the class struggle, and political power. In the *Prison Notebook*, Gramsci explained:

A social group can, indeed must, already exercise "leadership" before winning governmental power (this is indeed one of the principal conditions for the winning of such power); it subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power, but even if it holds it firmly in its grasp, it must continue to "lead" as well.⁴¹

Here Gramsci advocated a type of rule (both in the party as well as in the state) that was based on leadership and real authority, which was based upon persuasion rather than order, coercion, and decrees. The similarity between his understanding of the proletarian revolution and Lenin's ideas is even clearer in the following passage from the *Prison Notebook*.

Critical self-consciousness means, historically and politically, the creation of an elite of intellectuals. A human mass does not "distinguish" itself, does not become independent in its own right without, in the widest sense, organising itself: and there is no organisation without intellectuals, that is without organisers and leaders.⁴²

It should be noted that for Gramsci revolutionary intellectuals should originate from within the working class rather than be imposed from outside or above the class. Gramsci insisted that intellectuals were not only writers, thinkers and/or artists, but they were also organisers and political leaders, who functioned in civil society and the state as well as in the productive apparatus. According to Gramsci, during Feudalism, as well as during capitalism, the ruling classes formed and founded their organic intellectuals in certain figures and social groups. As a

historical class, the proletariat also needed to produce its own organic intellectuals in order to build a counter-hegemony opposing the ruling class. That is to say, although labour, surplus value, and the ownership of the means of production were at the core of the class struggle, socialists needed to win the ideological struggle by enlightening and raising the majority of the population's consciousness to enable them to challenge the ruling class' right to rule. An inseparable element of this counter-hegemonic working class strategy was known as non-sectarian alliances. The proletariat's success in leading society and becoming the ruling class was directly related to its ability to create a system of class alliances; thus enabling the working class to mobilise the majority of the working men and women against capitalism.

There are obvious similarities between Gramsci's, Rosa Luxemburg's, and Trotsky's ideas, in particular, when Gramsci emphasised the need for mobilising the majority of the working class and raising the proletariat's self-consciousness as a pre-condition for a successful socialist revolution. Gramsci, like Luxemburg, saw workers' own activities as the key to socialist transformation. Gramsci spent years actively participating in the working class struggle in the North of Italy in the Turin factory council movement. He published numerous articles in *L'Ordine Nuovo*, which underlined this similarity.

For ourselves and our followers, *L'Ordine Nuovo* became the "Journal of the factory councils." The workers loved *L'Ordine Nuovo* (this we can state with inner satisfaction) and why did they love it? Because in its articles they rediscovered a part, the best part, of themselves. Because they felt its articles were pervaded by the same spirit of inner searching that they experienced: "How can we become free? How can we become ourselves? Because its articles were not cold, intellectual structures, but sprang from our discussions with the best workers; they elaborated the actual sentiments, goals and passions of the Turin working class, that we ourselves had provoked and tested."⁴³

Gramsci collected his many years of first hand experience of organising and leading the Turin workers' council movement in his later writings such as *Prison*

Notebooks. Based on his experience, Gramsci maintained that the task of a revolutionary party was to bring to the fore the class consciousness implicit in workers' struggle, to try to systematise it, and to give it coherence. However, according to Gramsci, "This is only possible in the actual process of the class struggle."⁴⁴

The war of position did not solve the question of state power, and for that reason building a political party was needed. Nevertheless, it is important to note that socialist transformation, as far as he could see, was not an event but rather a process. When the proletariats' organisation was able to change the present position of society through a strategy of class alliances and the working masses had learned to trust their own judgement, policy, and decision, then that was when the war of position had been won. In "The General Confederation of Labour," written for *L'ordine Nuovo* in 1921, Gramsci described the way in which communists should have dealt with the General Confederation of Labour.

To win a majority at a congress, the communists would have to be able to carry out a radical revision of the rules; but to change the rules, it is necessary already to have the majority.... The communist must consider the confederation in the same light as the parliamentary state, i.e. as an organism whose conquest cannot take place by constitutional means...disturbed by their condition of absolute inferiority, and lacking any constitutional education, the masses abdicated completely all sovereignty and all power through the struggle for the councils, it will be possible to win the majority of the confederation in a stable and permanent fashion.⁴⁵

Gramsci went on to say in the same article that thereafter it would also be possible to win the leading positions if not in the pre-revolutionary period, then certainly in the post-revolutionary period. Thus, with concepts such as the war of position, Gramsci emphasised the fact that revolutionary communists cannot and should not play the game set by the upper class. An important element of the proletarian revolution was the change within the proletarians themselves from an inferior class to a self-organised and self-conscious class who trusted itself and had confidence in itself. Needless to say, such a change in attitude and mentality

within the working class depended, to a great extent, on the formation of organic intellectuals produced by the working class during the class struggle. That is to say, when the proletariat had produced enough intellectuals, i.e. organisers and natural leaders within itself and these intellectuals managed to form a strong working class party; then this class would be ready to engage in the war of position and launch its counter-hegemony strategy.

A class and its representatives exercise power over subordinate groups by means of a combination of coercion and persuasion. Hegemony is a relation, not of domination by means of force, but of consent by means of political and ideological leadership and control. Thus Gramsci, according to Roger Simon, develops the need for a hegemonic strategy and its exercise as a condition for the achievement of state power. Hegemony is a relation between classes and other social forces. A hegemonic class or part of a class is one which gains the consent of others through creating and maintaining a system of alliances through political and ideological struggle.⁴⁶

One of the two main strands lead to the Gramscian idea of hegemony was a debate within the Third International concerning the strategy of the Bolshevik Revolution and the creation of a soviet socialist state. “For Gramsci, the hegemony of a dominant class bridged the conventional categories of state and civil society.”⁴⁷ In his study of the European states, Gramsci explained how landed aristocrats in England, Junkers in Prussia, and the mantle of Napoleon I in France, along with coercion made concessions to subordinate classes in return for bourgeois leadership and its hegemony in civil society. Gramsci believed however, the circumstances in Western Europe were different from those in Russia. As he put it,

In Russia, the state was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous; in the West, there was a proper relation between state and civil society, and when the state trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed.⁴⁸

The study of the concept of hegemony in all levels from the party to the state to international relations, world institutions, and world order is not the aim of this

work. However, as far as Gramsci is concerned, the law of hegemony in the national level applies to all other levels too. The idea of hegemony, the war of position and the theory of the bloc of classes are intertwined. Only a war of position can, in the long run, bring about structural changes and that involves building up the socio-political base through the creation of new historic blocs.

Thus, Gramsci like all other theorists mentioned in this chapter, was in favour of a centralised working class party that was well rooted in civil society: a party that was capable of implementing working class hegemony within society and the working class' historical allies. This leads the discussion to a general conclusion about the theories of the four above mentioned Marxists.

It can be said that all four of the pre-Second World War political theorists named in this study believed in the proletarian mass party, except Lenin prior to the 1905 Revolution. Moreover, all advocated a revolutionary strategy for socialism and all were in favour of the centralisation of the proletarian organisation. However, whereas Lenin and Gramsci emphasised the independence of the party from the rest of the working class, Luxemburg and the young Trotsky had a deeper faith in the ability of the proletariat to obtain socialist consciousness and saw every member of the class as potential members of the party. Although Gramsci maintained the need for the proletarian party's independence, due to Italy's socio-economic conditions with its industrialised North and peasant South, he suggested a strategy of class alliance between the Northern proletariat and the poorer peasants of the South. That strategy was his reaction to Italy's socio-economic and political conditions, which were threatened by Fascism.

Today the world is facing a very different socio-economic system. Important changes in the structure of capitalism in advanced capitalist countries created diversity and changes in the structure of the proletariat in the West, as well as the rest of the world. This new situation needs even greater courage and radicalism than what was seen by the past proletarian revolutionary leaders in order to face

the challenges ahead, while at the same time maintaining and continuing Marx's method. It is important to remember that Karl Marx did not hesitate to create the First International with Anarchists and Lassalleans. Lenin was always keen to make alliances with the Mensheviks. The same applied to Trotsky's group from 1904 to 1916. Luxemburg stayed in the German Social Democratic Party next to Kautsky and Bernstein and criticised their policies for many years. Gramsci suggested an alliance of classes and put forward his theory for it. Moreover, he stayed next to Togliatti and others in a party that were going in the direction of Stalinism until his death. Marxists today tend to forget that Marxism is about uniting the bottom 80% of society. Marx used the word proletariat because in his view the working class constituted 80% of society in 19th century Britain. That 80%, in his view, included workers' wives or women, their children or the new generation of workers, the unemployed or reserve army of labour, and those who could be led by the proletariat e.g. the poor peasants and the poorer sections of the petit bourgeoisie. Lenin was ready to sit next to the Socialist Revolutionaries (SR) knowing that they were not even a proletarian party. He did not intend to sit with them in the constitutional assembly as an enemy, but as a friend. If he had considered them as enemies of the working class, he would not have used their policies on land reform in Russia. One of the main criteria for the distinction between Marxist and non-Marxist, if there is one, must be the dedication, effort, and relevant policies for the unity of the bottom 80% of the population in all countries. The absence of those qualities is anything but Marxist.

The second half of the 20th century witnessed great changes in the structure of the capitalist system in which masses of women and children entered the labour market. Rapid urbanisation took place in many third world countries. But those who entered shanty towns around big urban centres never found the jobs they were chasing. The industrial sector of the economy declined in advanced Western European countries. Instead, the service sector of the economy surpassed the industrial sector to the point where today services account for 75% of the

economy in countries such as the UK. Another important aspect of the change in the nature of capitalism was the rise of finance capital. The rise of the parasitic activity of this section of capital, and its destructive impact on the structure and struggle of the working class created a totally different situation in terms of the working class struggle, its tactics, and strategies.

Other aspects of change in the capitalist system include the privatisation of already nationalised economies; the closure of non-profitable industries as well as militant sectors under Thatcher and Reagan; and militarism and militarisation of the world economy. Obviously finance capital and its destructive activities, militarism and its effect on the national and international economy, and capitalism's structural changes after the Second World War have all had a major impact on the class struggle. Today, unlike the early 20th century, financial institutions have such powerful levers in their hands that they are able to rule in most poor countries by economic means. Foreign debt is suffocating many poorer economies. The impact of workers' strikes in different societies has a lesser effect on socio-economic systems. All these factors and their impact on the national and international strategies of the proletariat account for the necessity of a wider Marxist approach. 21st century Marxists need a modern approach that is not limited to the boundaries of traditional communist parties and contemporary working class trade unions. The bottom 85% of the population today need a radical socialist approach that understands the problems of the 21st century.

The second half of the 20th century also witnessed another important change. Stalinists and social democratic parties, respectively, contributed to the weakened position of the working class and strengthened the position of the bourgeoisie. The anatomy of the betrayal of the two camps is not the aim of this chapter. However, it is important to mention both these camps, in spite of the guidance of revolutionary thinkers such as Gramsci, participated in or protected the bourgeois state. Stalinists and social democratic parties had one thing in common: capturing state power was their first priority and they would do almost anything for that

aim. Neither the Stalinists nor social democratic parties acted in accordance with the requirements of a counter-hegemony strategy before or after capturing state power, nor did they fulfil the requirements for a revolutionary transformation of society. As a result they ended up either using anti-democratic repressive measures against so-called counter-revolutionaries (as in the case of Stalinists) or they gradually became the defenders of the present capitalist system (as in the case of social democracy).

In 1919, the SPD set an example of the shameless betrayal of the working class by positioning itself against the revolutionary masses and saving the monarchical regime in Germany. In Spain, in the 1920s, the Socialist party rejected joining the Third International.

While Rivera's gunmen were hunting down the National Confederation of Labour (CNT), the pro-Anarchist working class organisation, organisers, The General Workers' Union (UGT)'s general secretary, Largo Caballero, joined the government as the Minister of Labour to enforce compulsory arbitration procedures, which had been agreed with the dictatorship. In exchange, his union was legalised and the Socialist Party was tolerated.⁴⁹

The betrayal of social democracy has continued to the present day. Social democracy today is deeply involved in imperialist wars, anti-workers and anti-union legislation procedures, and most of the other dirty business of the present capitalist system.

Stalinist parties also betrayed the revolutionary masses by joining dictatorial regimes, supporting the worst methods of getting state power such as military coups and oppressing working class revolutions in many countries. In Afghanistan in the 1980s and early 1990s, Stalinist parties did nothing more than capture state power through a military coup and then invited the Russian army to defend their rule. The 20th century is full of examples of Stalinist party leaders

joining the worst dictatorial governments, condemning the independent activities of workers and the revolutionary masses.

Most Marxist activists reject having anything to do with Stalinists and social democrats. However, tendencies among them suggest that the right approach for Marxist parties is to engage in dialog, and where necessary, alliances with Stalinists and the radical sections of the social democrats. The policy of isolationism leaves the proletariat without any protection from Stalinists and social democrats. Sectarianism and isolationism are poison for the progress of the working class struggle. The dozens of Stalinist, Maoist, and Castroist parties do not intend to dissolve themselves; therefore adding a so-called independent working class party would not help the working class, but rather adds to its confusion, frustration, fragmentation, and despair.

Other movements

Since the 1960s the increasingly strengthened women's, students', and peasants' movements challenged the authority of Stalinist, social democratic and all other traditional parties in Europe, Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East. The appearance and strengthening of these movements, as well as peace and environmentalist movements independent of all traditional parties, was the end of an era and the beginning of a new one. That is to say, the reasons for utilising a multi-tendency mass organisation of workers and semi-workers are above and beyond the changes in the structure of capitalism, the diversity of the working class, the weaknesses of previous political working class organisations, or their unsuccessful strategies and dogmatic usage of the organisational principles of the Leninist party. More importantly because of their contradictions and anachronism traditional parties have lost their grasp of movements that compose a significant part of the population.

According to Gramsci, it was the ideological struggle that had to be won if the people's consciousness was to be enlightened in order for them to seriously question their political and economic rulers' right to rule. Parties that acted in the name of the proletariat, during most of the 20th century, lost this ideological battle on the questions of the women's movement and environmentalism.

Marxists have only started to focus on these important questions in the last 20 years. The common approach of so-called communist organisations, before the 1980s, was one of hostility and rivalry against feminism and environmentalism. However, in the last 25 years, Stalinism, which was a mechanical and dogmatic interpretation of Marxist ideology that solely emphasised economic development in their competition with Western capitalism has been defeated in Russia and Eastern Europe. This has made communists rethink their approach to environmentalist movements. Marxism is on the offensive, leaving capitalism with no defence against ecological criticisms.

This realisation led Marxists to develop eco-socialist politics. Various combinations of Red-Green strategies are being put forward. The Red-Green strategy is the result of both Marxists and environmentalists understanding the need for united struggle against exploitation and capital's destruction of nature at the same time. This is a positive move. Unlike the predictions of people like Francis Fukuyama, today Marxism is very much alive and relevant to the daily protests of various social movements. Marxist ecologists believe that the ecological crisis is rooted in the capitalist accumulation process and the only solution to the crisis is the abolition of the capitalist system. Though there was far too little of this Red-Green synthesis throughout most of the 20th century, today at the beginning of the 21st century, it is becoming stronger.

Care for the future of mankind is the overruling duty of collective human action in the age of a technical civilization that has become "almighty" in its destructive potential. We live under the threat of a universal catastrophe if we let things take their present course.... The

danger derives from the excessive dimensions of the scientific-technological- industrial civilization, not so much from any shortcomings of its performance as from the magnitude of its economic and biological success.⁵⁰

This is a powerful argument about the crisis inherent in the nature of the present capitalist system. On the one hand, the expanded reproduction of capital, or what experts in the field “call grow or die” (GOD), is vital for the continued viability of a capitalist economy, or as Barry O’Connor and Schwartzman put it, its sustainability. On the other hand, “Many eco-Marxists who supported the GOD position argue that capitalism and nature are inherently incompatible since capital must grow without limits and the biosphere has limits, i.e., GOD = GAD (grow and die).”⁵¹ Basically, the eco-Marxists’ argument is a valuable effort to compensate for the years that Marxists have neglected environmental issues. The truth of the matter is that the Marxists’ contribution to the environment is, if not better, then it certainly is not worse than any other school of thought. An incorrect approach would be to try and put together arguments that in the absence of Marxists other environmentalists have used in the past. Along with these efforts, the right approach is to unite the two movements provided that the common principles of the two camps allow such a unity.

This principle also applies to the relationship between Marxists and feminists, as long as the movement of both camps stems from the same social base and follows similar aims i.e. equality in all aspects of life. Unfortunately, many in the Marxist school do not support this basic principle.

In order to bring about the socialist revolution, it is necessary to unite the working class and its organisations, cutting across all lines of language, nationality, race, religion and sex. This implies, on the one hand, that the working class must take upon itself the task of fighting against all form of oppression and exploitation, and place itself at the head of all the oppressed layers of society, and on the other, must decisively reject all attempts to divide it - even when these attempts are made by sections of the oppressed themselves.⁵²

The above quote is an example of a traditional sectarian view among Marxists. Alan Wood talks about the movement of the oppressed, not of petit bourgeois feminists. He assumes that either these oppressed women accept the leading role of the proletariat (i.e. its political organisation) or their attempts must be rejected. This type of view caused Marxists to lose their grasp of women's movements for most of the 20th century. The problem with this approach to women's movements is the fact that it starts from ideology rather than from the real movement. Marxists are not allowed to reject any movements of the poor for equality and freedom. The power of the working class movement is two-fold: first, its unity, and second its leadership ability. That is to say, its power comes from its ability of leading the movement of the poor, or in Gramscian terms, its counter-hegemony strategy. Instead of setting up a social block with those movements, Wood and people like him are quick to reject the movements of other sections of the poor in the name of the proletariat.

In addition to cultural, educational, ideological diversity and the existence of other social movements another reason for the viability of a multi-tendency organisation is the effect of computers and the internet on the working class movement. As a consequence of computerisation, the local workforce of economically developed societies is being increasingly subjected to competition with those in low-wage developing countries. This leads to a rise in unemployment as a direct consequence of this process. But the impact of computerisation on the work force is much more than the reduction of the number of industrial workers. In fact, reduction in number is not considerable and should not change the strategy of the working class. A more important impact is the gap that computerisation has created between skilled and non-skilled workers. That is to say, computerisation has led to increases in the wages of skilled workers and has increased overall wage inequality.

The most common theory in this regard is the skill-bias technical change hypothesis (SBTC), which states that the invention and diffusion of new information technologies has increased the relative

demand for skilled workers and this has resulted in an increase in the relative wages of skilled workers as compared to unskilled workers.⁵³

The impact of computerisation has become a big threat to the unity of the working class movement. Traditionally Marxist groups recruited their new members from the more conscious members of the working class. This more conscious part of the class can be influenced by a higher wage. Moreover, it may lose its influence over the non-skilled sections of the working class because of this wage inequality. As a consequence, their utility in the working class movement can be considerably undermined.

As a result of all these processes it is becoming increasingly difficult for a traditional Leninist type communist party to lead all sections of the working class', women's, peace and environmental movements under a single banner. This does not mean that communists should not try to organise and lead social movements by means of a centralised party. Instead, in societies where the movements of poorer sections of the population refuse to march under the unified red banner of the communists, those parties should provide space for compatible ideologies within it. The latter should be prepared to create a multi-tendency organisation.

To summarise, the monolithic and bureaucratic structure of traditional parties cannot represent the interests and policies of the much more diverse proletariat in the early 21st century. Moreover, such traditional party's after the 1968 movement in Europe and America lost their grasp of non-working class social movements. Furthermore Marx and Engels made an effort to organise the working class struggle. For that aim they went as far as organising the First International with anarchists and Lassallians. The four pre-Second World War Marxists discussed in this chapter all supported mass parties of proletariat and recognised the right of tendencies and platforms within such parties. Today, the proletariat is more diverse than ever before. The women's, peace, environmental and students'

movements are stronger than ever. The viable policy to unite the workers' movement with other social movements is the one that recognises the independence of each and tries to find the common language and common principles of their unity. Sectarianism and dogmatism are poisons for the movement of the bottom 85% of all societies.

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CHAPTER THREE

Political parties and the need for an umbrella organisation

In the latter half of the 20th century two different types of political parties laid claim to the interests of the working class. They were the social democratic parties of Western Europe and the Stalinist (so-called communist parties) throughout the world. Both these parties were unsuccessful in their attempts to justify their claims. They failed to make the working class a hegemonic class; they failed to replace the capitalist mode of production with socialism; and they failed to reorganise society on the principle of the participatory democracy. Chapter five will discuss the idea of participatory socialism or participatory democracy and its relevance to this study.

This chapter will examine social democratic and Stalinist parties and the reasons for their failures. This chapter looks, in particular, at their policies, and their organisational life. While the failure of their policies rather than organisation explains the defeat of social democracy, three elements are responsible for the disastrous defeat of Stalinist parties. These elements consist of organisational shortcomings, wrong policies, and what one might call communist fundamentalism. This chapter will argue that the weakness of the radical left has had a direct link to social democracy's metamorphosis to the right, which enhances the need for an umbrella organisation of the left.

A serious study of a viable socialist organisation for the 21st century has to take into account political parties from the last century (or at least the last four decades) that acted in the name of the working class. Moreover, any suggestion of the qualities and or characteristics of a viable socialist organisation cannot be complete without a discussion of those socialist parties and organisations that politically represented the working class in the second half of the 20th century.

Social democracy: past and present

Social democratic parties are far more responsible for the failure and victories of the working class in Western Europe than Stalinist parties. It is undeniably true that the condition of the working class in Europe is better in comparison to any other part of the world. They enjoy better pay, economic organisation, and collective bargaining, whereas in other parts of the world, workers dream of these achievements. It would be wrong, however, to associate all the achievements of the working class in Europe with social democracy, for it could be argued that had it not been for social democracy, the revolutionary socialists could have helped the working class reorganise the society on the basis of a socialist principle. Moreover, it is said that the achievements of the working class in Europe e.g. “the welfare state” were the side effect of the revolutionary processes in Russia and Eastern Europe. This study will look at the differences between “classical” and “modern” social democracy as well as the way in which the policies of social democracy changed shape. It examines the changes in three areas: the changes of the political principles or domestic politics; the changes in foreign policies; and the changes in organisational structure.

Social democracy originally claimed to be a socialist party and waved the banner of the working class. However, it agreed to, and in many cases was responsible for policies, which were incompatible and antagonistic to their claims. The German Social Democratic Party (SPD), as one of the most influential parties in the world, supported and voted for the war. Lenin analysed the revisionism of

Karl Kautsky, this epoch making policy, and its destructive impact on world revolution. As a result of this policy the socialist movement split into two sections: the right wing social democrats, which were no longer interested in revolutionary methods and devoted their efforts to reforms and the revolutionary section led by the Russian Social Democratic Party. Needless to say, this split in the movement of the working class had a direct link to the defeat of socialist revolution in the 1920s in many European countries.

After their post-war victory, the Labour government's foreign policies are another example of the social democracy's right wing policy change.

The Labour government had begun its military intervention on behalf of the French in what was soon to be called Vietnam; at the same time it was sending troops to support the Dutch in Indonesia. A party that further provided troops for the American war in Korea and supported German rearmament and did not officially oppose imperialist repression in Malaya, Kenya and Cyprus was not a politically comfortable home for those who tried to be principled; and by the middle nineteen fifties Labour-Socialism was a wholly tainted practice.¹

Socialists such as John Saville expected the British Labour Party to oppose imperialist repression around the world in the mid-1950s, yet today (at the beginning of the 21st century) the Labour Party is at the heart of imperialist repression in Afghanistan and Iraq. Labour's right wing thinking in its policies, from education to health care, to asylum, to foreign intervention, has turned the party into an instrument of the capitalist class. The Labour Party today is in the midst of bourgeois parties and can be categorised to the left of such parties.

Another example of policy change is the case of Spanish social democracy. Vicente Navarro examined the policies of the Spanish Socialist Party (*Partido Socialista Obrero Espanola*– PSOE). The PSOE were in power for more than 14 years, a long enough period for a radical party in Spain to manifest its policies and bring about reforms by means of cultural and socio-economic change. Classical social democracy stipulated that reform was the key to socialism, however, the

PSOE, the Spanish equivalent of the social democracy, not only abandoned all reform processes necessary for the transition, it also ignored any onslaught on the roots of the capitalist state. On the contrary, it attacked radical trade unions and radical political organisations. Under the PSOE, unemployment reached an all-time high of 23% among men, although the percentage of women in employment remained relatively unchanged. In spite of such high unemployment, the public sector of the economy, even by a Keynesian standard, remained passive. According to Navarro, “It was this passivity of the public sector per se in the face of the serious social - problem of unemployment that characterized the employment policies of all four Spanish Socialist governments.”² The examples are not only confined to Spain and the UK, they can be found in every single European country.

Until the 1930s and 1940s social democracy was directly involved in organising and radicalising workers. For example, the general strikes in Britain in 1926 and other European countries stemmed from this organisation and radicalisation of the working class by social democracy. However, it must not be forgotten that even in that period, “The social democrats had been reluctant to enter the struggle and had rapidly entered into negotiations, and the reforms secured by these methods did not constitute a step toward the abolition of capitalism.”³ In other words, the aim of social democrats in organising workers as a class was not to recognise the workers needs. On the contrary their aim was perfidious, in that they used workers as voting machinery in their thirst for power. According to Liebman, social democracy betrayed the aims of classic reformism in two ways:

It owed its successes (organising the working class and strengthening it) to methods which were much more brutal than those implied by its moderate philosophy and its legalism; and, valuable as they may have been, its successes did not open up the road to socialism. On the contrary, the fact that it had occupied a certain territory within the state apparatus meant that social democracy was rapidly integrated into that apparatus. As a result, it assumed that it no longer needed to rely upon the powerful but compromising weapon of mass action.⁴

Until 1914, classical social democracy saw the assault upon the state as a necessary evil, but after 1914 social democracy saw the assault on the state as an absolute evil. To get a full picture one needs to look at the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). As the oldest and most famous social democratic party in Western Europe, its origins date back to the leading revisionists of the 19th century such as Bernstein. Without getting embroiled in the history, it must be pointed out that “the modern history of the party really begins with the creation of the Socialist Workers’ Party of Germany. However, this was formed at Gotha in 1875 by the fusion of the German General Workers’ Association founded by Ferdinand Lassalle, with the Social Democratic Workers Party, led by August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht.”⁵ The Gotha and Erfurt programmes and Marx’s and Engels’ positions on them are well known. Going into further detail of these debates would take away the focus from the aim of this chapter. It is enough to say that as a result of Marx’s *Critique of the Gotha Programme* the Erfurt programme was ratified in 1891 and this programme was a synthesis of revolutionary and reformist tendencies. The tension and conflict between revolutionaries and revisionists resulted in first, the split, and then later in the death of the revolutionary leaders, which paved the way for further dominance of the reformists in the party. “Although the SPD officially remained an anti-system party, in practice it became ever more involved in the system. By 1913 there were nearly 11,000 social democrats on municipal and district council.”⁶ The domination of the reformists in the party resulted in a series of changes in the party organisation. The basic unit of the SPD changed from being the local association to being the constituency association because winning elections became the only aim of the social democrats. The informal system turned into a more formalised hierarchical structure. The old voluntary system was replaced by paid party officials. The participation of individual members was reduced and party members could no longer control the SPD’s *Reichstagsfraktion*. As a result, in 1914 the SPD’s parliamentary fraction voted for the war. This was an epoch making betrayal despite its Marxist doctrine. The SPD supported the German bourgeois fatherland and with their chauvinist actions determined the nature of

our epoch. The SPD's support for war was not a tactical policy like other policies. In voting for war credits, the SPD leadership chose to side with the bourgeoisie against the working class. Social democracy supported, and to a great extent, made the First World War possible. Such a policy opposed the international solidarity of the working class. The departure of the SPD's articulate left to the United Socialist Party (USPD) and the German Communist Party (KPD) allowed the reformists to bureaucratise the party even more. The bureaucratisation and liberalisation of the SPD continued more rapidly than ever.

By 1952, the SPD was well on the way to becoming an electoral party in that its orientation was almost exclusively towards electoral success. Membership had fallen steeply since 1948 and the parliamentary party was becoming the most influential organ of party decision. The party executive retained some importance but the control commission and party conference were if anything weaker than they had been in the Weimar.⁷

Efforts to modify the party accelerated after the second electoral defeat of 1953, particularly after the banning of the communist party in 1956, which removed all competition on the left. According to Paterson, at the 1959 party conference in Bad Godesberg a programme was adopted. "This programme totally ignored Marx and accepted the principle of private ownership in so far as it did not hinder the creation of a just order. Economic and social change, it was argued, had outstripped the old party doctrines. The SPD would now concentrate on improving and reforming rather than abolishing the system of free competition."⁸ At the same time, in a famous speech at the Bundestag on 30 June 1960, Herbert Wehner, on behalf of the SPD indicated his willingness to join with other German groups in defence of the Federal Republic against the communist threat by fully accepting NATO and its foreign policy postulates. Following this period, even the colour of party membership books changed from red to blue and addressing each other as "comrade" was replaced by "party friend." Since then, the federal republic flag had accompanied the red flag of the SPD at the party's headquarters.

The formation of the Labour Party in Britain is another example of the change in the nature of social democracy. British Marxists such as Keir Hardie at the end of the 19th century “attempted to argue that the Social Democrats, the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and the anarchists shared common objectives, and differed only about methods.”⁹ Hardie’s argument that social democracy was changing from an anti-systemic political force to a defender of capitalism, which was anarchistic and did not believe in any sort of state was simplistic and premature. Moreover, Keir Hardie’s objective in the ILP was a non-bureaucratic, non-centralised socialist commonwealth, whereas social democracy’s objective was changing toward reformism and preserving capitalism. Therefore, either his premature belief resulted from changes in the nature of social democracy still unknown to him or maybe his simplistic radical view was not so radical.

To better understand such changes, this chapter will first look at the characteristics of classical and modern social democracy. This section will consider social democracy’s programmes and aims at the beginning and end of the 20th century, as well as the social groupings that formed social democracy in the two respective periods. It will also discuss the dilemmas for both periods. The next section will examine policy changes i.e. the changes that took place within social democracy in foreign and domestic policies. This chapter will discuss the relationship between social democrats and the working class movement, international communists, and their relationship with the electorates.

The following section will examine the structural and organisational changes within social democracy. That is to say, to understand the background of the policy changes in all Western social democratic parties one needs to look at the changes these parties went through in terms of their organisation and internal life. For this purpose, this chapter will examine the relationship between the party fractions, and in particular, the parliamentary fraction to other leadership organs of the party; the existence of tendencies and the relationship between those tendencies; and finally the role and authority of the party conference, the national

executive committees, and the position of internal democracy in Western social democracy. This study will also examine the bureaucratisation of social democracy, the reduction of voluntary activity, grassroots politics, and the uncontrollability of the leaders by the party.

Finally, it is important to understand the way in which the radical left has treated social democracy. Needless to say, the impact of fascism on the communist movement was different from country to country. In Germany, the communist movement was totally destroyed, while in countries such as Italy and France the movement had a better chance of survival. This difference certainly has to be considered when looking at the relationship between communists and social democrats. Similarly, the position of the radical left, its strengths and weaknesses, has had a direct impact on its relationship with social democracy and therefore on West European social democracy.

Definition

In defining social democracy, the most important factor to take into account is the differences that exist between classical and contemporary social democracy. There are contrasting definitions of social democracy by different contemporary authors. For example, William E. Paterson and Alastair H. Thomas perceive social democracy to be “a belief that social and economic reform designed to benefit the less privileged should be pursued within a framework of democracy, liberty and the parliamentary process.”¹⁰ Crosland has a different view and suggests that social democracy is political liberalism, the mixed economy, the welfare state, Keynesian economics and a belief in equality. For others, however, social democracy simply means democratic socialism and would include all parties of the non-communist left.¹¹ The problem with these definitions is that they ignore significant historical changes that took place within social democracy. It is enough to say that social democracy existed before Keynes, Keynesian

economics, and the mixed economy. Moreover, defining contemporary social democracy in terms of democratic socialism is to give social democracy a degree of credit to that it does not deserve. Socialism is a system where the producers and consumers decide collectively what is to be produced, how it should be produced, why and how much should be produced, and how the products should be consumed. Social democracies today from the Labour Party in Britain and the Social Democratic Party of Germany, to the French and Italian socialist parties are at odds with socialism. In fact, all socialist ideas and all socialist practices have been wiped from their political agendas and even from their language. At the beginning of the 21st century, it is hardly possible to separate the policies of the British Labour Party from those of the Conservative party.

Labour's presentation of the 'national interest' is not qualitatively different from that of the Conservative's. Its commitment to a world role within the US alliance is as great as theirs. Its identification with the whole paraphernalia of the modern capitalist state and its dominant symbols such as monarchy and parliament is just the same as the pro-capitalist parties."¹²

However, this form of social democracy is different from the social democracy that existed at the beginning of the 20th century. Whether under pressure from radical Marxist organisations and the demands of the working class or simply as a result of the genuine will of their members, classical social democracy in Germany was a party for socialism and freedom. There was a desire to bring about profound social change and even to abolish capitalism by gradual, legal, and peaceful means. Moreover, we must remember that leaders such as "Kautsky and Bebel did sometimes state that it might be necessary to resort to more radical means to overcome the resistance of the bourgeoisie."¹³ Even so, statements of this kind were used more and more infrequently. The contradictions in social democracy originated from Marx's and Engels' remark claiming that it was possible to get state power through votes and peaceful means in countries such as Britain where the working class constituted the majority of voters. Although Marx stated that such a possibility was an exception, social democracy based its entire

strategy on parliamentary means. In other words, right from the beginning social democracy's division between reformism and the need for a truly revolutionary action was not clear. Moreover, this contradiction and uncertainty was solved very soon in favour of reformist tendencies. Day by day reformism became more prominent.

Until the First World War, this choice could be justified in terms of the growing strength of the working class. The working class appeared to be strong enough to use its organisations to take over the state.¹⁴

Therefore, before 1920, putting emphasis on peaceful means of action such as the vote was not considered a dangerous strategy. Patriotic collaboration, however, caused the social democrats to change. On the one hand, in spite of their working class origins, the social democrats wanted to extend their base by taking in the middle class, while on the other hand the presence of socialist ministers in bourgeois governments helped them to address the problem of the state in new terms. This was clearly against the principles of orthodox Marxism. Until 1914, social democracy saw the assault on the state as a necessary evil. After the First World War, as a responsible member of the bourgeois government, social democracy considered the assault on the state as an absolute evil. All relations with the Communist International were cut off. During the 1920s and 1930s no reformist social democratic party in Europe encouraged any offensive action against the state; on the contrary they forbade such action.

Another aspect of defining social democracy is membership composition in the past and present. The Labour Party was a synthesis of the Fabian Society, the Independent Labour Party and the Social Democratic Federation, as well as forty-one trade unions. In 1918, it adopted a new constitution with a specific commitment to the common ownership of the means of production and adopted a programme, "Labour and the New Social Order," which, according to Minkin and Seyd was clearly socialist and distinctly anti-capitalist.¹⁵ This was a party born out of the unions, with an affiliated membership, which consisted mainly of manual

worker trade unionists and with an electoral support mainly from manual workers. At the beginning of the 21st century, more than one hundred years since the birth of the Labour Party, some trade unions such as the miners and rail workers and other sections of the Labour movement have broken their link with the party. Chapter one accounted for the changes within the structure of the working class during the second half of the 20th century, the diversity of the working class, and the reduction of the industrial sector and increase in the service sector, etc. In spite of all those changes, it is wrong to suggest that the changes in the structure of the working class caused reformism and the right turn in social democratic parties. In reality, social democracy's changes in policy began decades earlier while the industrial working class was still very powerful in Germany, Great Britain, and many other European countries. However, major reductions in the industrial sector of the economy and increases in the finance and service sectors created a new balance of forces in the major European economies. This new situation accelerated social democracy's march to the right.

The early working class composition of social democracy was transformed to accommodate the upper strata of the working class and a middle class status. At the beginning of the 21st century, social democratic parties across Europe were accustomed to all sorts of professionals, the new middle class strata, and some factions of the business circle. In contrast, as mentioned above, in the UK trade unions and the various sections of the working class to whom the Labour Party owes its existence have broken their link with the party.

Therefore, contemporary social democracy is radically different from the social democracy that was founded at the end of the 19th century in Europe. While classical social democracy was the political party of the working class, its political programme represented the interest of the workers and was founded by trade unions and working class movements. It went through a series of important changes and as a result its composition, programme, and its electoral base are now at odds with what they were before. Modern social democracy has nothing to do

with socialism and the working class; it only uses the name of the working class for its political gains.

From the break-up of the Independent Labour Party in Britain and the Spartacists in Germany in the early 20th century to the split of the Socialist Labour Party in Britain at the end of the 20th century, there were a series of breaks of the more radical socialists within social democracy, which resulted in greater power being yielded to the reformists and right wing. After each break social democracy moved even further to the right alongside bourgeois elements – opportunistic and power hungry – and liberal democrats exerted greater influence.

The organisational structure of social democracy

Today the suppressed voices of the rank and file cannot be heard outside the social democratic party walls. The party leader is more than ever uncontrollable. The working masses and the rank and file have lost their grasp of the party leader who is protected by a shield. The social democracy's organisation has not always been a bureaucratic, parliamentary, and a hierarchical type of organisation. Prior to the First World War, the social democracy's organisation was open, democratic, and based upon the voluntary efforts of activists. However, its bureaucratisation started very early. As early as 1905 in the German Social Democratic Party, the precondition for party bureaucracy was created.

These reforms presupposed the replacement of the old voluntary system by the paid party officials. These developments tended to reduce the need for active commitment and participation by the individual member and to replace it with permanent and formal organisation, better adapted to the exigencies of election.¹⁶

The individual member's direct participation and voluntary activity was made less of a priority. This was directly linked to parliamentary involvement and social democracy's bureaucratisation. As the party became more bureaucratised

individual members became less involved in voluntary activities and direct participation. Each leftist's split from the party served as a catalyst for a further reduction in voluntary activities and direct participation. Given the social democratic parties' policy changes, the reduction in voluntary activities suggested that the social democratic party had never seriously believed in direct action, particularly when that form of action was considered radical.

The connection between the parliamentary party committee and the party's leading organs, such as the Executive Committee or the party conference, also changed. The following two examples from the SPD and the British Labour Party are worth looking at.

Membership had fallen steeply since 1948 and the parliamentary party was becoming the most influential organ of party decision. The party Executive retained some importance but the Control Commission and party conference were if anything weaker than they had been in Weimar.¹⁷

In the case of the Labour Party "by the end of 1968 the Labour conference appeared an impotent ceremonial assembly, intra-party democracy an empty procedure, and the authority of the party conference superseded by the permanent authority of the parliamentary leadership."¹⁸ These changes signalled the beginning of the end for democracy within the party. As one Constituent Labour Party (CLP) delegate argued: "How can we go to the pressure groups and say, 'if you join us perhaps we can say to you that your policies will be accepted and implemented'. We cannot. Unless the participation that had been strangled in the party was renewed...."¹⁹ Minkin and Seyd's article provided useful incite into the changes that took place in intra-party democracy. According to Minkin and Seyd, within the Labour Party "in principle there was free and open discussion but in practice there was a list of proscribed organisations, a close observance over groups which might form 'parties within the party', a ban on parliamentary factions, and considerable pressure upon parliamentary dissidents."²⁰ As a result of partial centralism between the competing factions, a new role was given to the annual conference: "In principle the agenda was decided by the freely elected

committee of conference delegates but in practice party officials played an important part in the links between the parliamentary leaders and the Conference Arrangements Committee which established an agenda....”²¹

Therefore, soon after the Second World War, as social democracy became increasingly bureaucratised internal democracy was limited, the party’s leading organs became nothing more than discussion clubs, and the party’s only real centre of power was concentrated in the hands of the parliamentary party committee. Individual members’ voluntary activity and participation in the decision making process became almost nonexistent. All these changes could not have taken place had it not been for social democracy’s right wing playing such a prominent role. In other words, there is a direct link between social democracy’s right wing having a dominant role from the beginning and the process of growing bureaucratisation and reformism in social democratic parties. That is to say,

The SPD had a left wing as well as a right, but all along the right remained in invulnerable and virtually unchallenged control of its affairs... the left-leaning tendencies were themselves in a state of permanent subordination to those by whom the identity of social democracy was to be defined; namely the ‘labour lieutenants of capital’ whose commitment was absolute to both the structures of the existing state and the political culture whose norms were founded by the traditional establishment.”²²

In short, social democracy throughout the 20th century changed its structure in a way that minimised party members’ voluntary activities. The parliamentary party committee became the most influential organ of social democratic parties and the party organisation became bureaucratised. The left became weaker and the right reformists became stronger than ever.

Domestic and foreign policies

In his article “Edward Thomson, the Communist Party, and 1956”, John Saville, argued that right from the beginning Labour had a strong vehement to military

intervention, occupation, arousing hostility between the workers of the West and the rest of the world. There is a contrasting similarity with the SPD. As soon as it became a government party, it shifted away from its policy of close relations with the international communist movement. As Liebman described,

Its most obvious characteristic was the phenomenon of integration into the state apparatus. At the same time there was a complete break with the international communist movement, which emerged at precisely the time when social democracy was becoming integrated into the state.²³

The disappearance of communist leaders such as Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht was only the beginning of this shift in policy. Although at times party leaders such as Willy Brandt had a softer policy towards the left, as far as the SPD's dominant policy makers were concerned, "His loose style in dealing with the challenge from the left was undoubtedly an electoral handicap."²⁴ Therefore, the conclusion that the SPD's history is one of banning communists and isolating the left within the party and society as a whole, is not far from the truth.

Although in different countries there were unique patterns of development and political evolution, the extended political history of social democracy shows that these patterns of evolution were in fact quite similar. For example, in the 1930s in France, the relationship between the French Communist Party (FCP) and the French Socialist Party (FSP) was a close and hospitable one, whereas in the 1980s it was hostile and averse. Liebman outlined this change:

In 1936, the union of the left was the expression at the electoral level of a vast popular mobilisation which forced political leaders-and especially those of the Communist and Socialist parties- to put an end to their old quarrels. Hundreds of parliamentary candidates were backed up by millions of workers inspired by the call for unity. In 1981, the socialist-communist left, which had rallied together between 1974 and 1977, was more disunited than ever. The socialists did all they could to weaken the communists.²⁵

Studying the relationship between social democracy and communists in the majority of countries reveals that it went from bad to worse. The relationship

between social democracy and the radical left in the second half of the 20th century was one of hostility. Social democracy today cannot be categorised as a leftist organisation because of their policies over the last five decades. Throughout the last century the world's social democratic parties strived to distance themselves from the radical left, and in doing so stained their hands with the blood of communists from around the globe. Brazil, Iran, Kurdistan, and Germany are only a few examples of such hostility.²⁶

Despite this reality, one needs to remember that a significant part of the left still finds their political home in the social democratic party. From the 1920s onwards, the majority of leftists in Britain and other European countries joined social democratic parties. For half a century this participation in social democratic parties was a major obstacle for the unity of the left. In other words, the left's concurrence depends to a great extent on the definition of the left within social democracy. As long as there is not a common understanding of social democracy by the leftists and leftists' groups offer their skills and energies to social democratic parties instead of developing and improving the independent socialist parties of the working class, the unity of the left and the creation of a mass political organisation of the working class remains an open question.

Social democracy today does not belong to the great family of the left. More and more socialist activists inside and outside social democratic parties need to understand this reality. Several reasons account for the metamorphosis of classical social democracy of the early 20th century into the present social democratic parties of Western Europe. Firstly, without any doubt, the revisionism of theoreticians such as Edward Bernstein is the most important reason. The SPD leadership's farewell to revolutionary Marxism and their journey to reformism and pragmatism was characterised by slogans such as Kautsky's "The movement is everything; the goal is nothing!" This allowed leaders such as Ebert and Scheidemann to do all they could to keep the monarchy intact and to side with the ruling bourgeois class against the working class. During the height of the German

revolution the head of government Prince Max Von Baden asked Ebert: "If I should succeed in persuading the Kaiser, do I have you on my side in the battle against the social revolution? Ebert replied: If the Kaiser does not abdicate the social revolution is inevitable. I do not want it. In fact I hate it like sin."²⁷ He truly hated revolution and was a loyal servant to the monarchy. He and his colleagues did everything they could to defeat the revolution and return state power to the ruling class. The betrayal of the SPD's leaders was an epoch making act and for that reason it can be categorised as the most important factor for the metamorphosis of social democracy.

Secondly, and equally important, is the position of the communist left in the early 1920s in Germany and on the international level, in the form of the Comintern's policies. For example, the Spartacists (who were a tiny minority of the German working class) took an ultra-left attitude towards the convening of a national assembly. That policy was harmful to their cause and justified the reformism of the SPD's leaders. The Comintern under Stalin categorised the SPD as social fascist. That policy was also harmful. In fact, further divisions between communists and social democrats helped the fascists to consolidate their position.

Thirdly, it has to be remembered that the SPD after the war was a completely different entity. During Nazi rule all communists and leftist were eliminated. That tiny minority who had fled the country were helped by the Labour Party and the Labour government to re-establish the SPD in Germany. But this SPD was radically different from the pre-war SPD.

As the war drew towards its close and the likely features of post-war European politics started to take shape, the possibility of using a revived SPD to act as a counterweight to the expansion of communist influence in Germany and elsewhere, began to preoccupy the British Foreign Office."²⁸

In addition, one should not forget the influence of US policies during the Cold War. In Germany, Austria, Spain, and Italy social democracy was completely

destroyed during WW2. There was a connection between the restructuring of social democratic parties from above by the US and British governments in these European countries (in the form of the Marshall Plan and US aid for the economic reconstruction of Europe) and the careful design of the CIA to prevent further expansion of the USSR.

The threat of a PCI-PSI coalition coming to power in Italy by electoral means was regarded as so alarming that the US had trained a secret underground armed right-wing force to commence operations in such eventuality. The danger was abated by the use of CIA funding to encourage the defection in 1947 of a part of the PSI to form a safely anti-communist social democratic party.²⁹

In spite of all these historical realities, a great majority of the working class in Germany, for example, circled around their traditional party. “Despite the treacherous role of the SPD leaders, who opposed the revolution, the masses saw their traditional organisation as the embodiment of the party that had awakened them to political life.”³⁰

Thus the history of European social democracy in the second half of the 20th century is on one hand the history of further bureaucratisation, more hostility for the communist left and working class activists. On the other hand, this is a history of increasing compatibility with capitalism. This is a history of social democrat leaders as grateful servants of the capitalist state. This is the history of a party that is not anti-system any more but an important part of the capitalist system; a party that was born by the working class but is not worthy of its name.

In spite of this reality, an important part of the left stayed within social democratic parties in Western Europe. Until this part of the left leaves social democracy and participates in building an independent revolutionary socialist organisation with the rest of the radical left the question of left unity remains open. Until social democracy’s left take such historical steps social democracy in Europe will play

the working class card and as a result the working class and socialist left will continue to be divided.

The Stalinism and communist parties

In order to understand the organisation of the working class it is just as important to understand and analyse Stalinist parties, as it is to understand and dissect social democratic parties. The main difference between the two types of parties is social democracy has a more open organisation and a more liberal approach in policy making, whereas Stalinist communist parties are secretive, more hierarchical, and more radical in their policies. In order to fully comprehend the political and organisational development of Stalinist communist parties, one must comprehend that after the Second World War Stalinism was a unifying feature in all of the major communist parties in both the West and East. This is despite Stalinist parties shifting towards social democracy, as will be seen in the case of Iran; Western communist parties developing a more open model of organisation in comparison to East European communist parties; and the growing gap between the increasingly Western pluralistic policy and the policies of the USSR. For this reason, this section will examine the main features of Stalinism as the ideology of all pro-USSR communist parties.

Stalinism and Stalinist regimes were a tendency that originated from within the socialist camp. This tendency represented bureaucratic interests and the radicalism of the vanguard of the working class, irrespective of whether they originated from the working class or middle class. The vanguard of the working class in this sense means something different from what Gramsci called the organic intellectuals of the working class. The vanguard of a Stalinist communist party did not necessarily originate from the working class. They might have been members of other social groups and joined the party for various reasons. Some joined for bureaucratic ambitions, some by pure chance and following their common sense, and some for the right reasons and their genuine desire for

progress towards socialism. An individual activist was not necessarily trapped in only one tendency. S/he may have had more than one reason to join a party.

The absence of a strong working class movement and its tradition of fighting for democracy and socialism gave rise to the emergence of a Stalinist party. The chance for the emergence of a Stalinist organisation significantly increased wherever the working class were defeated in its mass open struggle. Good examples for this situation were 1871 in France and the constitutional assembly in Russia after the October Revolution. Furthermore, countries with weak democratic traditions (such as China, Vietnam and Cuba) where the working class did not have enough weight, the possibility for the formation of secretive Stalinist organisations increased. The point is that the existence of Stalinist parties did not depend on the existence of the working class. Stalin tried to build socialism in one country without considering any major preconditions for such an ambition. There are less adverse consequences in building a working class political party when the working class hardly exists. To put it differently, the building of a communist party under the orders of the USSR, regardless of the degree of working class expansion gave rise to all sorts of problems within the party. Stalinist parties were not working class parties just as Stalin's socialism in one country was not socialism.

The major characteristics of Stalinist organisations can briefly be summed up as follows: Firstly, they lacked internal democracy. Usually Stalinist party emphasised security issues to justify its desire for bureaucratisation and over-centralism. This tendency was directly anti-communist and bureaucratic. In this view any degree of internal democracy would have allowed alternative factions to present their case and develop their policies within the party. That in turn would have led, according to Stalinists, to undermining the party's unity. This is why, according to the history of Stalinist parties, the gap between the parties' congresses was sometimes more than a decade.

Secondly, the structural dimension of a bureaucratised Stalinist party was a central committee that held all the power; a non-replaceable powerful leader who was worshiped by the party's rank and file, almost like a religious cult; a top-down relationship within the organisation of the party; and a suffocating atmosphere for the party's minority. In such a system the entire party structure was not engaged in policy making and usually the lower organs of the party resigned from policy making. Their job simply became the preparation of reports for their superior organs. As a result, the engagement in daily policy making became the sole activity of the party's leading committee.

Thirdly, the weakness in policies was another major characteristic of a Stalinist party. With the party's Stalinisation came the disintegration of politics. A central committee receiving reports, mostly about the party's daily routine, was not fed with quality papers about the various aspects of political, social and economic activities and changes, and surely lacked the basic information needed to make policies. Such a leading committee, no matter how genuine, was unable to influence national or international politics. This was one of the main reasons for the weakening of Stalinist communist parties in many countries.

The bureaucratisation of Stalinist parties was a disease that affected every aspect of social life. Victor Serge pointed this out in the case of Stalinist Russia:

Everyone lies and lies and lies! From top to bottom they all lie, it's diabolical...nauseating.... I live on the summit of an edifice of lies - do you know that? The statistics lie, of course. They are the sum total of the stupidities of the little officials at the base, the intrigues of the middle stratum of administrators, the imaginings, the servility, the sabotage, the immense stupidity of our leading cadres.... The plans lie, because nine times out of ten they are based on false data; the plan executives lie because they haven't the courage to say what they can do and what they can't do; the most expert economists lie because they live in the moon, they are lunatics, I tell you.... Old Russia is a swamp - the further you go, the more the ground gives...and the human rubbish! To remake the hopeless human animal will take centuries. I haven't got centuries to work with, not I....³¹

Obviously, in power, the shortcomings of Stalinism affected the society on a much greater scale than being in opposition, where the problems had a lesser effect and were confined to the party.

Fourthly, another characteristic of the pro-Russian Stalinist parties was that they identified themselves with the working class. This does not mean that they were a true workers' party or even that they considered the working class as an integral part of their organisation. On the contrary, in most cases, they were parties of classes other than the working class and their activists were descendants of middle class families. The Iranian Tudeh Party formally announced in its programme that it was the party of workers, farmers, state officials, business people, and intellectuals. This new definition cannot be explained by what Marxists call proletarianisation or the disappearance of the middle strata. On the contrary, the Tudeh party and its associate organisations imagined themselves to represent the entire population of the country. Wherever Stalinist parties had the support of the working class, it was the result of the needs and demands of the workers in their efforts to create their own political party.

The Stalinist Tudeh Party's most prominent characteristic was its subordination to the USSR's foreign policies. Under the influence and pressure of the USSR the Stalinist party in Iran supported the dirtiest policies of the Shah and Khomeini in order to maintain the so-called unity of the people against American imperialism. The origins of this problem dates back to the Comintern era, when the principle of democratic centralism was used to impose the Comintern's general policies on all its parties. Examining how communism, as a concept and as a movement, was weakened by this practice takes us away from our main purpose. The long dispute between the Comintern's leadership and the French and Italian parties' leaderships in the 1930s and 1940s are two well known examples that prove how organisational structure can cause disunity and despair. It was, in fact, Communist International's centralisation that allowed Stalin to impose the USSR's policies on

other communist parties after he managed to get rid of prominent communist leaders and replaced them with his own followers. The majority of communist parties, from the Iraqi Communist Party and the Iranian Tudeh Party, to the French Communist Party, under pressure or so-called supervision of the Russian Communist Party and for the protection of the only socialist country, had to join bourgeois blocks or in many cases bourgeois governments. In Iran, for example, the Tudeh Party joined the government of Qhavam and provided three ministers to his cabinet. This allowed Qhavam to keep hold of power during the most critical period of Iranian political history and enabled him to suppress the republican national liberation movements in the Azerbaijan and Kurdistan provinces when the Russian troops had to leave the country. Later on the Tudeh Party was subject to such suppression. In Iraq, the ICP had to join a coalition led by Arab nationalists of the Ba'th party only to be suppressed by them. The list of communists joining in bourgeois coalitions and their suppression by their previous bourgeois partners lasted throughout the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s around the world. The case of Spain is very interesting:

Far behind the anarchist and socialist currents, in terms of membership and influence, came the Communist Party. According to a statement made later by one of its leaders, Dolores Ibarruri, the CP had only 800 members in 1931. Its relative weakness had less to do with Primo de Rivera's repression than with Stalin's policies. The expulsion of Trotsky's supporters, following the victory of Stalin in the USSR, had deprived the CP of a number of key activists, such as some trade-union figures in the Asturias, Catalonia and the Basque country. Subsequently, not being a large organisation like its French counterpart for instance, every one of the Third International's u-turns initiated by Stalin had resulted in significant sections of its membership choosing to resign from the organisation rather than keeping their heads down.³²

Under the leadership of Breschnev, the policy of joining bourgeois fronts was justified by what was known as a non-capitalist development strategy. According to this strategy, the hegemony of the world proletariat, which meant the hegemony of Russia, would replace the proletariat leadership in each country, and based on the formation of a national block through the spontaneous deepening of

the composition of social forces, it would undergo a socialist transformation. It must be said that this strategy was doomed to failure and did not succeed anywhere. The Russian foreign policy's domination of the national policies of the communist parties in question forced them to support the most dictatorial regimes such as the Shah and the Ayatollahs in Iran.

What happened in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Iran, and other Middle Eastern countries, Africa, Latin America, and some parts of Europe, during and after the Second World War, was directly related to the failure of the usually powerful communist parties. These parties were related to world socialist organisations that were Stalinist in nature. Therefore, their failure also meant the failure of Stalinism as an ideology. This conclusion does not mean in any way that if instead of the pro-Russian communist parties there were social democratic parties the result would be different. There is an important similarity between Stalinist organisations and social democratic organisations as the example of Iran proves.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the pro-Russian communist parties experienced many splits and partitions. This is true of most cases in the 1990s. In Iran, there is hardly anything left of the traditional Tudeh Party. In Italy, the Communist Party experienced major splits. In the UK, the fate of the Communist Party was not very promising. In Iraq, a major split took place and the Kurdish section of the Communist Party formed the Kurdistan Communist Party. The majority of these splits resulted in, more or less, the bigger factions of the party ending up with social democratic ideals. Although the circumstances of the 1990s and the dramatic collapse of the USSR and Eastern bloc is of vital importance in explaining all the sudden internal changes that took place within those parties, one must still address the important question of why these splits resulted in an increase of social democracy around the world. This can be explained by the fact that there is a deeper ideological connection between Russian communism and social democracy.

Stalinism and social democracy: the case of Iran

After the collapse of the USSR there was a social democratic transformation of the Tudeh Party in Iran. From the mighty Tudeh Party of the 1940s, there was hardly anyone left to defend its history. The majority of its prominent members, either as individuals or collectively (in the form of the Iranian Democratic People's Party and other smaller organisations) officially announced their social democratic principles. A minority of the members joined radical Marxist parties. Only a small section decided to carry on under the banner of the traditional Tudeh Party. A close analysis of Eastern European political parties supports the proposition that there was a transformation of Stalinist communist parties into social democratic parties and organisations.

Why did the majority of the Tudeh Party in Iran and the majority of the Stalinist parties in Eastern Europe transform into social democracy? More importantly, what made Gorbachev shift from Stalinism towards social democracy? The transformation could be possible for two different reasons. Either the Stalinist parties shared the same basic principles as social democratic parties or the transformation took place by force. How was it that in all but one country in Eastern Europe the transition from the Stalinist system to the social democratic system took place without bloodshed? The answer is because Stalinism and social democracy shared many basic principles. A brief look into the case of Iran explains this process.

Both Stalinism and social democracy believed in nationalisation rather than socialisation; both rejected the era of transition from capitalism to socialism and denied the necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat; and both shared the same historic economism. Stalinist parties and certainly the Tudeh Party in Iran based their reformist arguments on Kautsky's theses that the contradictions of capitalism spontaneously led to socialism. For over three decades, the Tudeh

Party supported the policies of both the Shah and Khomeini in the hope that the leadership of the USSR, which was considered by the party as the hegemony of proletariat on the world scale, would bring socialism to Iran. According to the Tudeh Party, it would then be enough for the Iranian regime to get closer and to increase its trade relations with the USSR. They put all their efforts into convincing both regimes to get closer to the USSR. The Tudeh Party considered the smallest economic deals between the USSR and the bourgeois regimes in Iran as an important part of the transition from bourgeois regimes to socialism.

In the hands of social democracy, the natural outcome of Kautsky's theses is the separation of socialism from the idea of a proletarian social revolution and the separation of the idea of a social revolution from the realms of politics. Likewise, the Tudeh Party, as the representative of Stalinism in Iran, for more than half a century based its policies on the mercy of bourgeois regimes instead of concentrating on the organisation of the working class. According to this party, there was no need for the leadership of the proletariat in Iran as long as there was the leadership of the USSR.

In terms of economic policies, just like social democracy, the Tudeh Party had a strategy of economic reforms and acted in accordance with the primacy of economics to politics in the social struggle. As was mentioned earlier, the Tudeh Party considered any economic deal that the Iranian bourgeois regime made with the USSR as a step towards socialism. Just like social democracy, the Tudeh Party rejected revolutionary actions; they compromised with the bourgeois power structure and justified this by arguing that reform and democratisation allowed the working masses to impose their will; and they agreed on a national block with non-monopolist capital because just like social democracy the Stalinist party believed that only finance capital and monopolies were oppressive. After the revolution, the Tudeh Party stood next to and supported the Islamic regime against the working class and leftist organisations. In their support of this

detrimental policy, they argued that the Islamic Republic could pursue the party's non-capitalist development strategy only if it could get closer to the USSR.

In spite of their formal differences, which stemmed mainly from their geographical differences, organisational interests, and their struggle for power, Stalinist parties shared many important principles with social democratic parties. In some cases such as the French Communist Party, the similarity of their principles resulted in power sharing coalitions with the French Socialist Party before and after the death of Stalin, regardless of how USSR perceived this line of action. In other cases, where Stalinist parties were less effective, the social democratic transformation only took place after the collapse of the USSR. In both cases, the outcome was the separation of the party from the working class and giving superiority to the party in relation to the class. This similarity resulted from a similar understanding of a political party. What Stalin claimed to be Leninist teachings on the political party were actually the teaching of Kautsky. Wherever the interest of the party was opposed to the interest of the class, both the social democrats and Stalinists supported the party against the class. To prove the case against social democracy, one can look for examples in any epoch of its history throughout the 20th century. The bloody defeat of the workers' resistance in the early 1920s by German Social Democracy is only one example. In the early 21st century, the governing Social Democratic parties in Britain, Germany, Spain, and France were equally ignorant to the demands of the workers and were equally prepared to do all in their power to prevent the radicalisation of the workers' movements. In the second half of the 20th century, the history of Stalinist parties was as equally dreadful as the history of social democratic parties.

In Iran and Iraq, in the 1950s, the pro-Russian parties joined bourgeois nationalist regimes instead of organising and supporting workers' movements and the urban poor, who were very active and present in the scene. That policy was directly linked with the party's leadership in the USSR and caused destruction and despair, not just in Middle Eastern societies, but also in many other countries.

Though the Stalinist and social democratic parties were different in their tactical policies and methods of organisation, as mentioned earlier, they share vital principles. What makes these two parties share the above mentioned principles? One plausible answer is that the leftist movement, both social democratic and Stalinist, in the second half of the 20th century, was the movement of young intellectuals. These intellectuals originated from the petit bourgeoisie, not only in Western European countries, but also in other parts of the world. They were hiding behind a socialist mask for one obvious reason. The victory of Russia over fascist Germany had made socialism fashionable. However, under that mask they were in fact after some degree of democracy and justice, which they referred to as socialism. It would take a few decades for them to realise their true identity. Social democracy's move to the right and the social democratic transformation of Stalinist parties were the result of these intellectuals finding their identity. It is obvious that the process was different in different societies. In some cases it was more rapid than in others. The impact on the working class movement varied according to the party's popularity among the workers and according to the party's organisational successes.

Though not the direct concern of this study, the question of why social democracy and Stalinism betrayed the working class has to be briefly addressed. Why did social democracy and Stalinism betray the working class and its movements? Was the reason the change in their underlying material reality or was it their ideas and programmes? According to Marxism both factors should be taken into account. Throughout the 20th century, many theorists supported Lenin's analysis that imperialism had altered the nature of capitalism and its social structure, which resulted in changes in social democracy. Lenin's analysis was based on Marxist theory. Both factors were involved in Stalinism. According to Trotsky, the Russian working class in the mid-1920s was tired of another revolutionary assault. The majority of the proletariat was passive. A tired and passive proletariat supported Stalin's programme of building socialism in Russia and resting rather

than the Left Opposition's programme for a world revolution. Consequently, Stalin won and the Left Opposition became isolated. As a result without serious opposition the new Stalinist bureaucracy put its ideas and programme to practice. In spite of the argument of those political theorists who preferred to explain the Stalinist phenomenon as a coup in the USSR, Trotsky's analysis in *The Revolution Betrayed* was based on the Marxist theory.

In summary, in the second half of the 20th century, the two main types of parties involved in the organisation of the working class were Western social democratic parties and pro-Russian Stalinist parties. Despite their important differences in methods of organisation and tactics, these two types of parties shared some important principles. It was those similarities that accounted for the social democratic transformation of Stalinist parties after the collapse of the USSR. Though both social democracy and Stalinist parties acted in the name of the working class, the historical reality clearly shows that neither of the two really represented the interests of the working class. The workers still needed to form their own party, and for that reason, many other political parties formed during the second half of the 20th century. However, to this day not a single party has been able to solve the political and organisational problems of the working class movement. Creating a real independent party of the working class does not necessarily mean that social democracy and Stalinism must pull out of the working class movement. This is where the necessity of an umbrella organisation comes into question.

In the second half of the 20th century, many parties were formed to protect working class from the detriments of social democracy and Stalinist parties. Trotskyists, Maoists, Marxist parties, and armed Marxist guerrilla groups all claimed to be against social democracy and bureaucratic Stalinist parties, regardless of how true they were to their claims. However, they were not successful in their attempts to organise the working class around their programmes. In most of the cases, they remained marginalised, and after a while,

disintegrated. In spite of their big numbers, none of these radical groups and parties managed to obtain state power. There is more than one reason for their failure. Firstly, these radical groups shared many principles with social democracy and Stalinist parties with respect to organisational methods and political programmes. Secondly, nearly all of them suffered greatly as a result of their sectarian policies. Thirdly, unlike Stalinist and social democratic parties, they lacked the support of the USSR and European powers. Fourthly, they were subjected to a great degree of political control and suppression by oppressive bourgeois regimes. However, this was never the case for social democratic parties. Finally, structurally speaking, they were equally bureaucratic and unrepresentative of the working class. Throughout their long history, instead of focusing their time and energies on organising the working class, the majority of radical leftist groups were pre-occupied with their internal domestic ideological wars.

Internal relations and political parties

This section will look at the question of the internal relations of political parties to show how the principle of democratic centralism was used for the bureaucratic purposes of political leaders in social democratic, Stalinist, independent socialist parties, and groups who associated themselves with the working class. It is not an exaggeration to say that all these political groupings, throughout the last century, practiced bureaucratic centralism in the name of democratic centralism. One has to ask why nearly all communist parties practiced bureaucratic centralism rather than democratic centralism. They were all aware of the Leninist view of democratic centralism; they knew about his view after *What Is To Be Done?* and the 1905 revolution; and they had read about the rich history of the Russian Revolution. Why, in spite of all their knowledge, did they choose the wrong path? It is too simplistic to put all the blame on the evil nature of the communist leaders throughout the 20th century. One could argue that the problem lies in its

foundations. Shortly after capturing power, the traditional party faced a mountain of problems – unknown new tasks, the undemocratic threat of international capital, etc. – and did not have much choice but to utilise undemocratic measures. The reason is that a single party, no matter how big, cannot politically represent the entire population of the working class and the bottom eighty percent of the population who are exposed to the cultural influence of outside capital.

Despite Lenin's democratic view, the majority of the parties that associated themselves with his name never continued his tradition and never allowed decent discussions of any important issue concerning their campaigns, let alone the campaign of the proletariat. In most cases any serious discussion resulted in further splits and disunity. One possible explanation for the poor record of Stalinist communist parties, from the Chinese Communist Party to the Iranian Tudeh Party, is that under the banner of these parties, activists and political leaders of various social groups joined forces, yet each had a different interpretation of the line the party was taking based on their own interests and desires. However, only one interpretation was put into practice. The rest were alienated, suppressed, and perished.

The point here is that even if those Stalinist parties deprived of state power were to gain power and become the dominant political force in their respective countries, they would not be able to create something different from what their counter-parts formed in Eastern Europe and Russia. A bureaucratic party cannot create a real democratic society and therefore their future would be doomed to failure.

The main question that this study puts forward is how the working class and with it the whole of humanity get emancipated? The answer lies in a famous remark by Marx. The emancipation of the proletariat is possible only by the working class itself.³¹ Marx did not suggest that the proletariat did not need a political party or organisation for its emancipation. On the contrary, he believed that the proletariat

could emancipate itself when it was able to organise itself politically. This is exactly why Marx had a particular understanding of the party, which was not bureaucratic, dogmatic, or sectarian. This is why neither he nor Engels remained members of a party that had bureaucratic tendencies. Marx clearly saw that the working class was organised into different parties and associations. The only way to organise this class politically was to create an organisation that comprised all these factions, tendencies, and interests. This was why Marx was in the centre of an effort to organise the First International.

Several things have enhanced and increased the necessity for a different type of working class political organisation. Firstly, as explained in earlier chapters, the working class itself was the subject of great changes during the 20th century. As early as 1900, Kautsky wrote about the literate working class. Although his emphasis on the change in the working class' structure served certain political aims, his outline of the new changes in the class structure, in particular his terminology of literate workers was nevertheless plausible. Now in the 21st century, it can be said that in most parts of the world many sections of the working class have to be literate in order to be employed. In addition to books and newspapers, they have access to computers, the internet, and participate in pal talk on a regular basis or other computer meetings from their home.

Today with the introduction of computers and the internet less emphasis is placed on a political party becoming the school of the working class. Moreover, as a result of socio-economic changes in the last three decades, no political leader has the answer to every question. The anti-capitalist movement of the 1990s proved that the radical movements of workers and poor could be organised without the leadership and direct involvement of any political party on a national level.

Furthermore, now in the 21st century unlike the early 20th century, many more groups of workers are capable of learning the complicated tasks of their own class. The working class rely to a lesser extent on a leader or political party to

come forward and solve their problems. Marxist doctrine teaches that the relationship is usually the other way round. The working class enters the class struggle and during the process forms a political party or parties. The most recent example to support this teaching is the creation of the Brazilian Workers' Party (PT) by working class leaders such as Lula. Though many opportunities have been missed by the traditional organisations in the past, the need for a worker's umbrella organisation is greater today than ever before.

This brings the discussion to another aspect of the working class' political organisation. In addition to social democratic and Stalinist parties, many other parties and political groups have claimed to represent the working class. They have been critical of both Stalinism and social democracy. Many parties and groups were formed as reactions against Stalinist bureaucratisation and the liberalism of social democracy. These included the Trotskyist parties of the Fourth International, leftist guerrilla organisations, and various revolutionary independent Marxist parties and groups. A common flaw that these parties and groups shared was their zealous hatred of social democracy and Stalinism. Their hatred was so intense that they abandoned their duty to organise the working class and became preoccupied with discussing the flaws and deficiencies of Stalinism and social democracy.

Moreover, these groups have always been busy fighting one another and accusing each other of being either Stalinist or social democrats. For half a century they forgot to unite on the basis of their common socialist principles. This is the starting point of the working class' political project for the 21st century. In other words, in the 21st century left-wing radical parties and groups that are critical of past mistakes and believe in the working class' self-rule and self emancipation have to be at the centre of any socialist unity. Only when this objective is achieved can the inclusion of Stalinists and the left wing of social democracy be considered.

The earlier chapters of this study looked at the ideas of Marxist revolutionaries such as Rosa Luxemburg. Chapter two discussed her emphasis on the centrality of the working class in the relationship between the party and class. A majority of Marxist parties and political organisations ignored her political ideas for many decades. At the end of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st century, the working class is left with a history of political parties suffering from sectarianism, bureaucratic centralism, liberalism, and many other “isms” all alien to the working class’ demands and interests. They suffer from political parties whose formation and organisation had nothing to do with the activity of the working masses and the daily needs of the class struggle and parties who put their own interest before the interest of the working class. As a result they are trapped in an endless ideological conflict with rival parties.

To conclude, after the Second World War the policies of both social democratic parties in European countries and Stalinist pro-Russian parties in many parts of the world had nothing to do with the working class. Both claimed to represent the interests of the working class, yet both participated in anti-working class governments and implemented anti-union policies. Today social democracy does not belong to the family of the left because of five decades of right-wing policies including support for imperialist wars. However, social democratic parties’ leftist tendencies are a part of the left and their come back to the great family of the left will complete the process of socialist unity.

The unity of socialist –multi-tendency organisations requires the unity of Trotskyist and other radical independent Marxist parties and organisations in the first place. After that sections of Stalinist parties and organisations that criticise their dogmatic, sectarian, and bureaucratic past can join the unity. The participation of women, students, peace and environment, and working class activists in such a unity creates a mass organisation that influences the political culture of the entire country and encourages social democracy’s leftist sections to

abandon their party and join the socialist unity. The common principles between these various parties and groups will be discussed in chapter five.

Notes

- 1 John Saville, "Edward Thompson, the Communist Party, and 1956," *Socialist Register* (1994): 25-26.
- 2 Vicente Navarro, "The Decline of Spanish Social Democracy 1982-1996," *Socialist Register* (1997): 209.
- 3 Marcel Liebman, "Reformism Yesterday and Social Democracy Today," the *Socialist Register* (1986): 9-10.
- 4 Ibid, P. 10.
- 5 William E. Paterson, "The German Social Democratic Party," *Social Democratic Parties in Western Europe*, Edited by William E. Paterson and Alastair H. Thomas (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1977), 177.
- 6 Ibid, P. 177.
- 7 Ibid, P. 185.
- 8 Ibid, P. 185.
- 9 Kenneth O. Morgan, *Keir Hardie Radical and Socialist* (London: Phoenix, 1997), 88.
- 10 William E. Paterson & Alastair H. Thomas, "Introduction," in *Social Democratic Parties in Western Europe*, Edited by William E. Paterson and Alastair H. Thomas (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1977), 11.

- 11 Ibid.
- 12 David Coates, "The Labour Party and the Future of the Left," *Socialist Register* (1983): 99.
- 13 Marcel Liebman, "Reformism Yesterday and Social Democracy Today," *Socialist Register* (1986): 3.
- 14 Ibid
- 15 Lewis Minkin and Patrik Seyd, "The British Labour Party," *Social Democratic Parties in Western Europe*, Edited by William E. Paterson and Alastair H. Thomas, (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1977), 107.
- 16 William E. Paterson, "The German Social Democratic Party," *Social Democratic Parties in Western Europe*, Edited by William E. Paterson and Alastair H. Thomas, (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1977), 178.
- 17 Ibid, P. 185.
- 18 Lewis Minkin and Patrik Seyd, "The British Labour Party," *Social Democratic Parties in Western Europe*, Edited by William E. Paterson and Alastair H. Thomas, (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1977), 119-120.
- 19 Leo Panitch, "Socialist Renewal and the Labour Party," *Socialist Register* (1988): 343.
- 20 Lewis Minkin and Patrik Seyd, "The British Labour Party," *Social Democratic Parties in Western Europe*, Edited by William E. Paterson and Alastair H. Thomas, (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1977), 118.

- 21 Ibid, P. 118.
- 22 Willie Thompson, *The Left in History Revolution and Reform in Twentieth-Century Politics*, (London: Pluto Press, 1997), 127, 131.
- 23 Marcel Liebman, "Reformism Yesterday and Social Democracy Today," *Socialist Register* (1986): 4.
- 24 William E. Paterson, "The German Social Democratic Party," *Social Democratic Parties in Western Europe*, edited by William E. Paterson and Alastair H. Thomas, (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1977), 191.
- 25 Marcel Liebman, "Reformism Yesterday and Social Democracy Today," *Socialist Register* (1986): 6.
- 26 Just before the end of the last millennium, Farhad Faraj (a member of a small communist group and a radical leader of the workers' movement) was assassinated in Iraqi Kurdistan by the Kurdish equivalent of social democracy, before the eyes of his three years old daughter. Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran, another member of International Socialist i.e. the world social democracy killed tens of Iranian Communist Party (ICP) members in 1980s, and some members of other leftist groups.
- 27 Rob Sewell, *Germany from Revolution to Counter-Revolution*, (London: Fortress Books, 1988),18.
- 28 Willie Thompson, *The Left in History Revolution and Reform in Twentieth-Century Politics*, (London: Pluto Press, 1997),137.
- 29 Ibid, P.140.

- 30 Rob Sewell, *Germany From Revolution to Counter-Revolution*, (London: Fortress Books, 1988),18.
- 31 Susan Weissman, “On Stalinism,” *The Ideas of Victor Serge*, Edited by Susan Weissman, *Critique* 28/29(1997): 201-202.
- 32 “Sixty Years Ago, the Spanish Revolution When the Proletariat Rose to Change the World,” *International Communist Forum* – 27 (London: Workers’ Fight, 27 April 1996), 5.

CHAPTER FOUR

Democratic centralism

Introduction

Some analysts look at governmental political parties' policy changes from the point of view of the dominant faction's interests. This method of analysis is known as elite theory. According to this theory, Mao started the Cultural Revolution in China because his authority amongst the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party was undermined. Starting the Cultural Revolution and using inexperienced fiery youth against the party's high ranking members was his way of fighting back against his rival factions. The validity of this theory is not the concern of this study. However, it is important to understand the mechanism that helped Mao carry out policies such as the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution without any major obstacles within the party for nearly twenty years. Moreover, immediately after Mao's death Deng Xiao Ping changed the party's strategy and started market reforms. Apart from a few individuals including Mao's widow, the bureaucratised party did not question the new strategy. Another and certainly a better example to illustrate the importance of the party's internal regime is Stalin's brutal purge policy. What party mechanism allowed Stalin to blame and execute someone who posed an obstacle, which his closest allies saw as a conspiracy? If it had not been for the bureaucratic system and military type discipline in the party, he would have not been able to get rid of every member of the political bureau, who had been members since Lenin's time, without any protest, question, or reaction from the party. Obviously neither Mao nor Stalin would agree that their internal party regimes were bureaucratic. They considered themselves Leninists and their internal party regimes as systems based on democratic centralism, a term used by Lenin. Regardless of their leaders' rhetoric,

the history of the Eastern bloc is the history of bureaucratic centralism under the name of democratic centralism.

The betrayal of Stalinist leaders replacing democratic centralism with bureaucratic centralism is as important as social democrats betrayal of socialism as their aim. All Stalinist, Maoist, Castroist, and most of the other independent Marxist parties after the 1917 Russian Revolution misused the principle of democratic centralism. Each party arbitrarily decided what degree of centralism and how much internal democracy was allowed. Some parties completely denied democracy from their rank and file.

By hiding behind the principles of democratic centralism Stalinism and social democracy managed to carry out their treacherous bureaucratic policies and not face serious reactions from their party members. In this study, the importance of understanding the true meaning of democratic centralism as a concept is not limited to the history of 20th century socialist parties. On the contrary, a viable 21st century socialist organisation cannot base its structure on the bureaucratic system of 20th century socialist parties. That is why it is crucial to learn what democratic centralism is and how an organisation prevents bureaucratisation. This chapter will look at the origin of the term democratic centralism and its transition to bureaucratic centralism, mainly in Stalinist parties. It will also look at the theory and practice of democratic centralism in Maoist and Trotskyist parties and organisations. Needless to say, this work studies Maoism as an independent ideology from the official ideology of Maoist China. Until recently in Nepal the Maoist movement followed a strategy opposite to the official ideology in China. In many countries Maoist organisations existed as independent parties and organisations critical of both the USSR and China. In some Trotskyist organisations democratic centralism was distorted sometimes in favour of over-centralism, while at times in favour of endless discussions. The next section will briefly look at the background and meaning of the concept.

Democratic centralism

What is democratic centralism? What did it originally mean and how did its meaning change when it became the official method of organisation in the USSR? Was there any difference between Lenin's understanding of the term and its use by Stalinist parties and organisations? Was there any connection between the term democratic centralism and the bureaucratic centralism practiced in most socialist parties? What problems were related to the theory and practice of democratic centralism? This chapter will look at these questions and other aspects of the theory and practice of democratic centralism.

In the socialist world during the first half of the 20th century the formation of the party's organisation and structure was heavily affected by a principle known as democratic centralism. The impact of this functional method was so extensive that all Leninist, Stalinist, Trotskyist, Maoist, and social democratic parties based their structure according to this principle. It can be said that the purpose of democratic centralism as the socialist party's practical method is similar to the function of Marxism in the ideology of the communist party or the purpose of socialism in its political strategy. No other structural principle in the socialist party has such an extensive effect. In fact, one might compare it to the roles of prayer and other practices of devoted religious believers.

The concept of democratic centralism is the name given to the principles of the internal organisation used by Leninist political parties. As Lenin described it, democratic centralism meant freedom of discussion, criticism, and unity in action all at the same time. However, once democratic centralism was transformed into the official doctrine of the USSR, the Comintern, the Fourth International, and the Chinese Communist Party, its meaning became associated with the organisational methods of Stalinism, Maoism, and Trotskyism.

The social democratic parties of Western Europe claimed that their internal party relations were based on democracy and rejected the Leninist concept of democratic centralism. This study does not intend to test the validity and the credibility of this claim. It is enough to mention that all major Western social democratic parties, just like Stalinist parties, routinely dealt with day-to-day issues such as the leader's inner circle, the central committee or party's national executive, parliamentary party, party cell, area party headquarters, etc. In fairness, it must be said that the social democratic party maintained a much looser structure when it came to membership conditions. For a Stalinist party, in addition to adhering to the party's programme and paying membership donations, the most important condition of membership was individual participation in party activities under the direct supervision of a party branch. This condition either did not exist or was not taken as seriously in social democratic parties. Moreover, in a social democratic party such as the UK Labour Party, the right-wing New Labour faction and Old Labour did not have a lot in common. In this party, Marxist tendencies led by Arthur Scarggil, Tony Benn and others lived with right-wing tendencies led by Callahan, Kinak, Smith, etc. Today, the Labour Party is a front for various sections of the liberal left, trade unionists, and some sections of bourgeoisie. This structure has nothing in common with a Leninist type party based on democratic centralism. But in the early 20th century, as discussed in the previous chapter, the structure of social democratic parties was different. Before its metamorphosis, social democracy had a similar organisational principle to that of the Communist Party of Soviet Union.

The origins of the concept

According to Paul LeBlanc, the origin of the concept of democratic centralism pre-dated Lenin by many years. J.B. Schweitzer, a Lassallean, first used the term in 1865. Moreover, In Russia, the Mensheviks first used the term democratic centralism at their 1905 November conference. In the resolution, "On the

Organisation of the Party,” they agreed, “The RSDLP must be organised according to the principle of democratic centralism.”¹ One month later the Bolsheviks embraced the term at their own conference. Their resolution, “On Party Organisation” stated:

Recognising as indisputable the principle of democratic centralism, the conference considers the broad implementation of the elective principle necessary; and, while granting elected centres full powers in matters of ideological and practical leadership, they are at the same time subject to recall, their actions are given broad publicity, and they are to be strictly accountable for these activities.²

Thus, there was no difference between the Mensheviks’ and Bolsheviks’ need for democratic centralism and its meaning. Both the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks accepted and agreed on the need for the centralisation of the movement. Any claims that the two factions differed on this organisational breakthrough are simply mistaken. One does not need to look into every party resolution between 1903 and 1907 to prove this. It is enough to mention that both factions were trying to reunite. They organised several united conferences and in all those meetings their discussions were focussed on issues other than the concept of democratic centralism. The obvious reason for this is that both factions were in agreement about this concept. Following the 1905 Revolution (under pressure from the Tsarist regime on one hand and the negative effects of the split on the other) both factions of the RSDLP took steps toward some sort of reunification. The Menshevik leader Paul Axelrod stated, “On the whole, the Menshevik’s tactics have hardly differed from the Bolsheviks. I am not even sure that they differed from them at all.” Lenin concurred: “The tactics adopted in the period of the ‘whirlwind’ did not further estrange the two wings of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, but brought them closer together...the upsurge of the revolutionary tide pushed aside disagreements, compelling the social democrats to adopt militant tactics.”³

Lenin's argument for a centralised party of professional revolutionaries (who advanced and improved the proletariats' struggle in a despotic regime and under severe police repression) is often misinterpreted. Many analysts associated the Bolsheviks with centralism and the Mensheviks with party democracy. In reaction, C. Silahtar explained the dangers of such a formalistic view of the relationship between centralism and democracy.

There is an important point which must be made on the subject of democratic centralism: that it is the formalistic, and solely formalistic, interpretation which rejects the essence of this principle and robs it of its content. This danger is especially pertinent for parties with young and inexperienced cadres and which are passing through a process of re-establishment. The formalistic understanding imposes "bureaucratic centralism" in the name of centralism.⁴

There is a dialectical relation between socialism as the aim and democratic centralism as a practical method of organisation. This is the essence of democratic centralism. As mentioned earlier the origin of democratic centralism as a concept goes back to the 1860s but it is associated to Lenin more than any other name. Lenin based the structure of the Bolshevik party on democratic centralism. That party succeeded in leading the revolution. Marxists interpreted the success of the Bolshevik led October Revolution as the success of democratic centralism. This is why the concept of democratic centralism has been associated with Lenin more than anyone else. Lenin founded the dialectical relation between socialism as the party's aim and its practical method of organisation.

The success of the October Revolution and by association the concept of democratic centralism should not have led to worshiping this concept. Democratic centralism is not and should not be taken as an inseparable part of the working class' political organisation or its foundation. For Marxists democratic centralism is a means, just like the party or any other form of organisation. The aim is freedom. To achieve this aim in a particular society a means might or might not be used.

The concept of democratic centralism is made up of two elements. The element of centralisation is a reaction to a highly centralised capitalist state. The working class require a degree of centralism in its class struggle against the centralisation of the bourgeois state. In other words, the capitalism's centralisation imposes a degree of centralism on the working class and its struggle. This element is not what the working class want to carry forever. It is a shield used only in war zones. This armour loses its usefulness as soon as the battle is over. As Lenin stated, military wars are the continuation of politics in another form. Once the political stage of revolution has ended and the economic reconstruction of society becomes the main focus, centralisation becomes an excessive load that slows down the pace of progress.

The democratic element is the antithesis of centralism. The function of this element, unlike centralism, which is rooted in the past and imposed by capitalism, is to put conditions and limitations on centralism. The democratic element is the power of the party members to pull the party policy line toward freedom and equality. It is a counter balance against international and national bourgeois policy to put pressure on the party and its leadership. The democratic element protects the party from compromises and concessions to capitalism. A capitalist army is based on pure centralism without a democratic element. Such an army is needed for the protection of capitalism. The proletarian party fights for freedom and socialism. A party based on following a leader cannot fight for equality and its aim cannot be freedom and socialism. The democratic element of democratic centralism is the last circle of the chain that connects the centralised party of proletariat to socialism as its political aim.

Lenin and democratic centralism

More than a century after the publication of *What Is To Be Done?* neither social democracy nor communist parties have put forward an alternative to Lenin's theory of party organisation. There are at least two reasons for this. The first is

that Lenin's theory of the party, in some respects, was similar to that of Karl Kautsky, who was the leading Marxist theorist of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). Lenin's theory was the adaptation of Kautsky's pre-1908 theory, when he was the most important theorist of the SPD and the Second International's leading Marxist theorist. In fact, Lenin's call for all revolutionary circles to centralise and form a party at the 1903 Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) congress included members that belonged to the branch agreeing to the program, and all branches that used the same party newspaper as an organisational tool. Lenin's form of centralisation was very much along the lines of European parties, and in particular the SPD. Lenin's party operated under the conditions of illegality. Unlike European parties that accepted members despite their low levels of participation in the party cell and branches, Lenin insisted on a small party of professional revolutionaries who were directly involved in building the party. The second reason is more important. For Stalinist parties around the world including China, Mongolia, Vietnam, Cuba, East Germany, Poland, and Hungary it was easier to practice bureaucratic centralism under the banner of Lenin's democratic centralism rather than refer to it by its real name.

This study does not disagree with the relevance of democratic centralism, especially in the third world where countries are ruled by brutal regimes and the police regularly suppress progressive movements and anti-government activities. However, this study suggests that the very nature of the principle of democratic centralism opposes the internal relations necessary for the development of a viable socialist organisation in the 21st century. That is to say, wherever there is a need for a socialist revolution, the only vehicle capable of successfully leading such a revolution would be a Leninist party that operates under the principle of democratic centralism as prescribed by Lenin. Therefore, it is not the intention of this study to deny the relevance of Leninist parties in countries where any type of opposition is suppressed. However, a growing number of countries in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East are introducing Western types of parliamentary

political systems and some degree of openness. In such situations, socialists need different tools if they are to become the voice of the people. They need a mass organisation that is less secretive, broadly based, and represents the bottom 80% of society. There is no doubt that the principle of democratic centralism cannot be the sole organisational guide for a mass organisation consisting of many parties and groups. In a multi-tendency political organisation, where there is less central power and more cooperation and coordination between local centres, the consequence is more democracy and less centralism.

Political parties of the proletariat exist under different conditions and face various degrees of suppression, which affects their internal relations. Consequently, the internal party organisation reflects, to a great extent, external conditions and changes accordingly. That is to say, the proletariat's political party policies and internal system changes to suite the time period and conditions of the struggle because it is not a fixed entity. In a short article written to the editors of *Socialist Appeal*, titled "On Democratic Centralism & the Regime" prior to the formation of the American SWP, Trotsky evaluated the possible violation of democracy by a tiny minority and came up with an important point about democratic centralism:

Neither do I think that I can give such a formula on democratic centralism that "once and for all" would eliminate misunderstandings and false interpretations. A party is an active organism. It develops in the struggle with outside obstacles and inner contradictions.... One cannot overcome the difficulties ahead of a party with a magic formula. The regime of a party does not fall ready made from the sky but is formed gradually in struggle.⁵

This is exactly the reason why there is not a universal definition of democratic centralism. This also explains why Lenin repeated time and time again that political developments in Russia, inside and outside the party, were a Russian phenomenon and should not have been copied uncritically in other countries. A good example is his policy concerning the Constitutional Assembly. His emphasis on the Tsarist police's censorship and repression and its impact on party policy and centralism was something that was particular to Russian society. It is more

important to understand this point rather than reading Lenin's work out of context then applying his policies to problems that the party faces. It is not Lenin's attitude that needs to be applied but rather his method.

The Russian Social Democratic Labour Party adopted its rules in 1898. Article 19 of the CPSU's rules stated:

Democratic centralism comprises of the election of all leading party organs from top to bottom; periodic accounting by party organs to their own party organisation as well as to the higher party organs; strict party discipline and subordination of the minority to the majority; and finally the unconditionally binding force on lower organs of the decisions of higher organs.⁶

These rules were revised many times in the communist party's congresses, including the 1961 and 1966 congresses. The Communist International put a more general definition of democratic centralism forward:

The communist party must be built up on the basis of democratic centralism. The chief principle of democratic centralism is the election of higher party cells by the lower, the unconditional and indispensable binding authority of all the instructions of the higher bodies for the lower, and the existence of a strong party centre whose authority is generally recognised for all the leading party comrades in the period from one party conference to another.⁷

The relationship between democracy and centralism in the communist party is said to be a dialectical one. For Marxists, the party is not a "basket" with separate compartments for democracy and centralism. On the contrary, the two terms are inter-connected and democracy gives the party the strength and courage to centralise. In other words, a communist party that internalises democracy in its system, by definition is better suited for times of crises than a party that bases its existence mainly on orders and decrees.

Democratic centralism is a fundamental organisational principle, which comprises the dialectical unity of democracy and centralism.

Centralism is required to form an organisation which strikes simultaneously as one fist; democracy is required to ensure that the blows are struck on correct principles. Democratic centralism is a vital mechanism which enables the majority to adopt correct positions, ensures unity of will on the correct principles and subsequently impose unity in action through the submission of the minority to the majority.⁸

Lenin did not recognise unity of action without freedom to discuss and criticise. According to Lenin,

There can be no mass party, no party of a class, without full clarity of essential shadings, without an open struggle between various tendencies, without informing the masses as to which leaders and which organisations of the party are pursuing this or that line. Without this, a party worthy of the name cannot be built.⁹

This democratic view of party organisation was not limited to the boundaries of the party. In society as a whole, Lenin also defended true democracy. His uncompromising emphasis on giving power to the soviets proved this.

From the start of the Russian Revolution, democratic tendencies became the rage. Everywhere there were meetings, discussions, voting. In the soviets there was voting on all the vital issues of the day, on programmes set up by leaders of rival parties fighting for power.¹⁰

This is not to say that participation of the workers and poor in the decision making processes during the revolutionary period in Russia resulted from Lenin's democratic idea. On the contrary, his ideas resulted from the revolutionary reality of Russian society. However, his ideas in *The State and Revolution* firmly supported radical democracy. As the most prominent revolutionary leader in Russia in 1917, Lenin's radical view of society as well as the party was undoubtedly the most important reason for the success of the October Revolution. Lenin's emphasis on the overthrow of the old state machine, bureaucracy, the transfer of power to the soviets, and his understanding of the term dictatorship of proletariat were interconnected with his theory of democratic centralism. In his

system of thought, it was not possible to successfully lead the revolution and replace the old state machine with workers' and peasants' councils without a centralised party of experienced revolutionary cadres. If instead he had suggested replacing the old regime with his party, then Stalinism would have been the legitimate successor of Leninism. Lenin's compromise and acceptance of Bolshevik rule after the Constitutional Assembly election was due to Russia's extremely exceptional conditions. He hoped that a revolution in Europe would change the balance of power, which would result in the reduction of pressure on the young soviet state and special measures introduced by the workers' state would be replaced by a situation that allowed the workers and poor to become the real rulers of the new society.

The Leninist view of the internal relations of a communist party was certainly different from that of Stalin. The Leninist view was democratic and favoured full discussion before all major decisions. This democratic view had helped hundreds of party cadres to develop the necessary skills in order to test party's perspectives in the working class movement and if necessary challenge the leadership when they made mistakes. "Without a membership that is loyal to the party but not deferential to its leadership no revolutionary organisation can develop strategy and tactics, maintain a healthy internal regime, and recruit militants."¹¹ In October 1917 the Bolsheviks' power was a direct consequence of Lenin's view of the party's internal relations and the true application of the principle of democratic centralism. What else could explain the ability of party propagandists and agitators to convince thousands of people all over Russia? In other words, the explosive expansion of the Bolshevik party in a relatively short period of time was directly related to the readiness of the existing party cadres to recruit new members and expand the level of activity to every corner of the country. Only if the party's internal organisation is democratic, will party members have a chance to participate in the party's decision making, which will increase and improve their revolutionary skills. From the beginning of his campaign, Lenin's

democratic view of the party's internal relations was clearly seen in the following passage:

The St Petersburg Worker Social Democrats know that the whole party organisation is now built on a democratic basis. This means that all the party members take part in the election of officials, committee members and so forth, that all the party members discuss and decide questions concerning the political campaigns of the proletariat, and that all the party members determine the line of tactics of party organisations.¹²

Lenin's starting point in his theory of internal party relations in *What Is To Be Done?* is the oppression of revolutionary social democracy by the Tsarist regime, which prevented any degree of openness, elections of party officials, and development of internal democracy in the party. His alternative, which he considered superior to any degree of democracy under such conditions, was full comradely trust between the revolutionaries. Unfortunately, Lenin's methods of comparing democracy and trust between revolutionaries were unclear and could be misleading. In spite of the fact that after the 1905 Revolution, as discussed in the second chapter of this study, Lenin's idea about the party went through a radical change, which did not justify his attitude toward party democracy in *What Is To Be Done?*. In 1902 Lenin clearly preferred comradely trust to democratization. According to his 1902 method, democracy and openness would have allowed the party to be dominated by the police and therefore would have led to the party's destruction by the oppressive tsarist regime. As mentioned earlier, Lenin's time and condition would certainly have allowed him to postpone full implementation of democracy but his preference of so-called trust between activists to democracy inside the party is not something to defend.

There is a connection between this tendency and the dominant tendency at the 10th party congress in 1921. At the 10th party congress Lenin ordered the Workers' Opposition and Democratic Centralism Opposition to be dissolved. This Bolshevik congress resolution and its decision to expel any party member who

tried to form a faction was clearly an anti-democratic, and at the same time, a bureaucratic tendency. There is a difference between a situation where revolutionary members under siege trust their leaders and implement leadership directives without question and a theory that favours comradely trust to democracy and grimaces at democracy. Lenin's attitude during the 10th party congress proved that he was willing to sacrifice democracy during difficult periods. Before 1905, under the pressure of Tsarist police and after the October Revolution during the civil war and War Communism under the pressure of the vast peasantry and foreign threat, Lenin advocated restrictions on democracy. In both periods the amounts of restrictions were extreme.

The problem with Lenin's early understanding of the party was that it left little or no room for dissent. He argued that individual members' obedience of party orders was similar to factory discipline. His idea of order through party members' blind obedience negates the difference between his understanding of democratic centralism and the bureaucratic tendencies within the party. It was Lenin's preference of trust to democracy and his extreme emphasis on the discipline in the party system that allowed Stalin to bureaucratise the party and state in Lenin's name and under his authority. However, Lenin's concept of the party was heavily affected by the Bolsheviks' underground conditions. Real democracy cannot be achieved in an underground party. Such a situation imposes strict discipline as a pre-condition of survival, which sometimes prevents using any degree of internal democracy. That is to say, in spite of Tsarist police oppression, internal party democracy should have been an important Bolshevik objective. In other words, internal democracy should have been considered as an aim that police oppression wouldn't allow.

Stalinism and democratic centralism

It is important to know that Lenin's democratic view of the party did not continue after his death. Under Stalin's leadership most of the avenues of internal party democracy were very quickly shut. As early as 1923, the soviets' power was considerably reduced. Stalin made it clear that the party was superior to the soviets and held the centre of power. A few years after Lenin's death, the soviets simply turned into powerless organs to implement party policies. It is true that at the 1921 congress, Lenin did not support freedom of the democratic opposition and actually led a campaign to ban factionalism but that measure, as far as he was concerned, was temporary and reversible. Moreover, the record of his long campaign for true democracy and freedom is clear and cannot be denigrated by the difficult years immediately following the post-revolutionary period. The conditions of civil war, foreign imperialists' intervention, and the vast peasantry who supported the right, pushed the minority Bolsheviks into a corner and left Lenin no other option but to compromise democracy for the sake of their survival. Lenin's choices were not indicative of his true intentions but rather they are explained by the limitations of his life and the specific problems he faced.

It is important to point out that throughout the 20th century what has existed under the name of the Leninist democratic centralism in Stalinist parties was in fact bureaucratic centralism. This section will look at some examples from Stalinist and other traditional parties around the world. The problem with these parties is their lack of understanding of the conditions of their struggle. What may have been appropriate for an illegal underground opposition party, such as the Bolshevik Party, was lethal in a parliamentary party or a party in power. The particulars of the conditions of the struggle in Russia and under the pressure from War Communism and the civil war did not allow the opening of a political society. The Bolsheviks had to stay rigid and ready for the troubled times that lay ahead. In fact, as far as they were concerned, conditions before and after the revolution had not changed. In a sea of peasants and under foreign threat opening

up could have meant political suicide. The most experienced members of the party were in the military and bureaucratic administration rather than the political leadership and education.

Under conditions of civil war, facing extermination, *secret-police methods*, absolutely inconsistent with the principles of democratic centralism, were introduced as a matter of survival, but with fatal political consequences.... The Bolshevik party itself was transformed into a self-serving bureaucracy.”¹³

From 1922 onward, Lenin’s illness forced him further and further to the sidelines, which allowed Stalin, as the head of the party organisation, to consolidate his power inside the party. Coming out as the winner from his first major ideological battle after Lenin’s death, he determined, more or less, all policies. He managed to get Zinoviev’s, Kamenev’s, and Bucharin’s support in his battle against the mighty Trotsky, only to later turn against them one by one. Stalin, “the great leader,” determined policy, and everyone else down the hierarchy fell into line. Holding discussions before making decisions was limited to the party leadership. After Stalin’s death the situation became even worse. Within all pro-Russian Stalinist parties democratic centralism became associated with intolerance of the opposition and further restrictions on internal debate.

In practice Stalinist parties from China to Cuba altered democratic centralism to mean the mysterious killing of the main political opponents. Camilo Cienfuegos in Cuba and Liu Shaoqi in China are only two examples. Opponent factions were subjected to extreme pressure to conform. The Cultural Revolution in China from 1966 to 1976, with its theatrical shows against mature party members by the party’s youths, is the best example. The cult of worshiping the party leaders became the norm. Unanimous decisions became the party’s political culture, which meant absolute intolerance of dissent. To a great extent, Mao’s *Red Book* was looked at like a religious book. In fact, democratic centralism had turned into

plain centralism where countries were run by the decrees of their so-called great party leaders.

Under the guidance of early party leaders Horloyn Choybalsan and Yumjagiyn Tsedenbal, the principle of democratic centralism was weighted heavily toward its centralizing features, just as it was being applied in the Soviet Union under J. Stalin. Purges, reprisals, and political violence in Mongolia mirrored the arbitrary behaviour of Stalin.¹⁴

Democratic centralism was the principle governing the organisation and activity of communist parties in Vietnam, Cambodia, North Korea, the GDR, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia prior to the 1990s. In all those societies the worst type of bureaucratic centralism was practiced under the banner of democratic centralism. Obviously, amongst these countries, Vietnam, from many points of view, is the most respected for its recent past. Unlike Eastern European countries Vietnam gained its independence and freedom after a long anti-imperialist campaign. The Vietnam War against France and later US aggression gained massive public support in the world. A victory after such a long and difficult campaign lived in the hearts of millions for many years. In spite of this Vietnam accepted USSR's dominance too. As the Soviet Union gained ground in many parts of the world against the west in the 1970s, its interpretation of democratic centralism was accepted without suspicion. However, their interpretation of the principle of democratic centralism was nothing more than Stalinist bureaucratic centralism. It was only after the collapse of the USSR that people started to question things they had previously taken for granted.

Hanoi, Dec 9- A senior Vietnamese communist cadre has denounced the absence of democracy and concentration of power in the hands of the CPV. According to General Tran Do's 22 page appeal the principle of democratic centralism...has killed all creative initiatives.¹⁵

Amnesty International estimated that there are between 30 and 35 political prisoners in Vietnam, many of whom were jailed for calling for a multi-party democracy. Do, has never called for multiple parties in Vietnam.¹⁶

The particular conditions that the Bolsheviks faced did not justify the bureaucratization of either the USSR or the communist party. It can be argued that the problems communist parties in China and Vietnam faced after the revolution were just as serious as those the Bolsheviks faced, and they had to centralise for the same reasons. Post revolutionary difficulties might be a good reason in these three countries and maybe in other countries too. But it is certainly not a defence. Unlike these three countries, communist parties in Eastern Europe were offered political power by the Red Army without any serious effort from their side. They enjoyed full support of the USSR and never faced the question of life and death, civil war, or foreign intervention. Nothing can justify bureaucratic centralism in those countries. That is to say, bureaucratic centralism in Stalinist parties has nothing to do with political circumstances. Bureaucratization is in the essence of Stalinism as an ideology.

Trotskyism and democratic centralism

The problem of democratic centralism in the Trotskyist movement, unlike Stalinism, cannot be characterised by a single concept. Generally speaking, in this movement, the balance between democracy and centralism moved one way or the other in different groups.

Within the Trotskyist movement, democratic centralism came to be associated in particular with the obligation upon members of a party to present only the party line outside the ranks of the party. The degree of internal discussion and openness varied considerably.¹⁷

The emphasis on discipline in Trotskyist parties is just as great as it was in Stalinist parties; their only advantage over Stalinist parties was that they were

untested. In their programmatic principles adopted at the founding conference of the International Trotskyist Committee on 24 July 1984 they asserted:

Trotskyism sees democratic centralism as the structural basis of revolutionary political organisation. Democratic-centralist principles imply the right to free internal debate as well as the duty of external discipline, with the subordination of the minority to majority. Democratic centralism includes the right to build both tendencies and factions within the revolutionary organization.¹⁸

The fact that they recognised the right to build factions and tendencies was an important difference between Trotskyism and Stalinism. However, recognition of these rights could not solve the problem of internal democracy in this movement. In reality, the activists and members of some parties in this movement were well aware of the difficulties these tendencies and factions were facing.

Up to the recent period there did not appear to be any serious political disagreements. In fact, there have been disagreements on all kinds of political and organizational matters, but these were never allowed to reach even the level of the CC (Central Committee) or IEC (International Executive Committee). Nothing was permitted to indicate the slightest disagreement in the leadership...there was uniformity, which at times came dangerously close to conformism.... The tendency became unused to genuine discussion and debate. To be frank, many comrades (including leading comrades) simply stopped thinking. It was sufficient just to accept the line of the leadership....¹⁹

While there were a few who maintained a degree of independence and were still able to put their thoughts together in the form of resolutions at party conferences, their resolutions were usually blocked or did not get the necessary votes.

All resolutions at party conferences would either come from the leadership or be completely supportive of its position. If branches or members submitted resolutions which were insufficiently enthusiastic about the general line, the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) leaders exerted enormous pressure for them to be withdrawn. They invariably were.²⁰

In fact, for those who were active in these intellectual groupings of the left it was quite clear that bureaucratic centralism had created the ridiculous condition where without the agreement of the general secretary, people did not dare drink a cup of tea or open a window in a meeting. This meant they lacked any degree of independence. Instead of teaching the values of unity among the radical left, all the leadership's efforts in the CWI and indeed the majority of Trotskyist and Stalinist organisations, were concentrated in creating hatred for other leftist groups. The use of centralism in this case was not for working class unity and bringing about a new generation of working class political leaders, but rather it was a waste of their very limited energy. The following example from the CWI is useful to look at.

We were taught to absolutely hate every other political organisation that there was.... But other Trotskyist groupings were the worst. We just laughed at them in internal meetings. We called them "the sects" and took the view that they were incapable of any development at all.... If we ever had taken power God knows what we would have done to them.²¹

The problem with one particular Trotskyist party or group should not be generalised to Trotskyism. The problem with Trotskyist organisations was not their restriction of internal discussions. On the contrary, the main problem of Trotskyist groups was that they had endless discussions to the point that any disagreement during their internal meetings could have led to dissension or a split. As a result, they became almost inoperative. It is this characteristic that explains why Trotskyism was not able to lead a single revolutionary movement to victory. This endless discussion in meetings, which is the other side of the coin in suffocating internal party atmosphere, crippled Trotskyism as a political trend. Endless discussions as a weakness is different from Stalinist bureaucratic centralism. In fact, it is its opposite in that in Stalinist parties' decisions are taken without discussion whereas in Trotskyist parties there were discussions without decisions.

Maintaining the right balance between centralism and democracy was a difficult task for any Marxist party. Discussions about various trends and the way they understood and practiced democratic centralism does not mean that all traditional parties of the past got it all wrong and the parties and organisations of future would be free from those mistakes and shortcomings. After all it is almost impossible to have a democratic party in an undemocratic society. Both Leninist and Trotskyist models of organisation intended to get the balance right. As discussed above sometimes they have failed.

In his justification for the necessity of centralism, Harman referred to Lenin's idea of democratic centralism. According to Harman, centralism for Lenin was far from being the opposite of developing the initiative and independence of party members; it was the precondition of this. A comparison can be made between Harman's description and a letter Lenin wrote in 1902 to a comrade discussing organisational tasks.

We must centralise the leadership of the movement. We must also...as far as possible decentralise responsibility to the party on the part of its individual members, of every participant in its work, and of every circle belonging to or associated with the party. This decentralization is an essential prerequisite of revolutionary centralism and an essential corrective to it.²²

Lenin wrote these words at the height of his polemics against the economists and for a centralised vanguard party. As mentioned elsewhere, it is quite clear that for Lenin centralism was the means to organise the disunited movement of the proletariat. If there were any other methods more effective than a centralised party of revolutionaries, he would not have hesitated to use them. Under the Tsarist autocracy, Lenin had to compromise the party's elective principles but he had no doubt that "under conditions of political freedom the party will be built entirely on the elective principle." Thus, Harman was right. Lenin did not want to take away the independence and development of party members when he was

suggesting the centralisation of the movement. But he was wrong to conclude that centralism was the precondition for party democracy and the development of younger generations into working class leaders. Taking Lenin out of context creates many problems. In many parts of the world there are decentralised organisations that are able to produce the greatest number of political leaders from within the movements of workers, women, and peasants, as in the case of the Zapatistas in Mexico.

Trotskyism in Europe did not understand the difference between Europe at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century and the despotic conditions of Tsarist Russia in the early 20th century. Centralism in Europe secured leadership's position and prevented challenges from the rank and file. Some leaders in the Trotskyist movement were born leaders and died as leaders. This situation could only be explained by bureaucratic centralism. Harman did not fundamentally alter what Lenin suggested in the early 20th century. Lenin postponed the free development of each individual member for the higher purpose of creating an organised proletarian movement around a revolutionary leadership. Harman focused on the centralised party at the end of the 20th century in Europe when the working class was already organised by other forces.

Thus, as previously mentioned, despite Lenin's democratic view, the great majority of political parties that associate themselves with his name never continued the Leninist tradition of free and full discussions, while at the same time practicing unity in action. Neither Stalinist nor Trotskyist parties allowed or managed to have successful decent discussions without putting pressure on their factions, consequential splits, or creating further disunity within their own movement, let alone the movement of the proletariat. In most cases, any serious discussion would have resulted in a split of the faction involved and further disunity, particularly in Trotskyist movements. In the case of the Stalinist parties, discussion was simply not allowed and any attempt would have resulted in expulsion, if not disappearance.

One possible explanation for Stalinist parties' poor record, from the Chinese Communist Party to the Iranian Tudeh Party on the one hand, and Trotskyist organisations on the other hand, is that under the banners of these parties and organisations, activists and political leaders of various social groups joined forces against a common enemy, but each one had a different interpretation of their unity and its policies according to their desires and interests. However, according to the principle of democratic centralism, only one interpretation was put into practice. The rest were alienated, suppressed, and perished.

If those Stalinist and Trotskyist parties who were deprived of state power during the second half of the 20th century had gained power and become the dominant political force in their respective countries, then they would not have been able to create something radically different from what their Russian and Eastern European counterparts had formed. A bureaucratic party that is scared of openness and democracy cannot create a real democratic society. They were lucky that they remained in opposition, and therefore, as untested parties found a chance to change and amend their fundamental problems.

Maoism and democratic centralism

In its origins the theory of democratic centralism was not a pure and faultless theory. Its use today however, creates even greater theoretical problems. Party organisation, by definition, is organised distrust. That is to say, a modern party cannot only be based on trust. It also requires a clear constitution or articles of association and internal discipline. At the same time, no serious political party can survive any serious political hurdle without a great degree of trust between the rank and file and leadership. This contradiction is more clearly seen in Maoist parties. Needless to say, Maoism is not the same as the official ideology of China. Until a few years ago in Nepal, the Maoist party was fighting according to the

teachings of Mao. Only recently they joined the government's political process. In many countries around the world Maoist parties and organisations are the main opposition or part of the opposition of the bourgeois state. As an independent political force Maoism is critical of both the USSR and China. Therefore, Maoism means a movement wider than China. In these Maoist parties the members have to fully trust their leaders and should not question their judgement. However, as far as the leadership is concerned, the same party members who should not question party leadership are threatened by bourgeois ideology. As a result, the main usage for democratic centralism, from the point of view of the leadership, is to correct them from all sorts of deviations.

Of course, party members are not immune from the pressures the dominant capitalist ideology and culture exert on everyone's analysis and behaviour. Even without state agents consciously trying to subvert the party, cadres are susceptible to spontaneous actions and incorrect ideas. Democratic centralism protects the party from being discredited by individual cadres following their spontaneous whims which cannot help but be influenced by bourgeois forces and ideology.²³

These semi-religious words, so hostile to the whims of individual members, are rooted in the teachings of Mao. His famous *Little Red Book* was full of rhetoric against the dangers of ultra-democracy that might damage or even completely wreck party organisation and weakens or undermines the party's fighting capacity.

Education in democracy must be carried on within the party so that members can understand the meaning of democratic life, the meaning of the relationship between democracy and centralism, and the way in which democratic centralism should be put into practice. Only in this way can we really extend democracy within the party and at the same time avoid ultra-democracy and the laissez-faire which destroys discipline.²⁴

Mao did not stop here. He ensured democracy was kept under centralised guidance and described how it should be done:

- 1- The leading bodies must give a correct line of guidance and find solutions when problems arise, in order to establish themselves as centres of leadership;
- 2- The higher bodies must be familiar with the situation in the lower bodies and with the life of the masses so as to have an objective basis for correct guidance;
- 3- All decisions of any importance made by the party's higher bodies must be promptly transmitted to the lower bodies and the party rank and file;
- 4- The lower bodies of the party and the rank and file must discuss the higher bodies' directives in detail in order to understand their meaning thoroughly and decide on the methods of carrying them out.²⁵

Mao's version of democratic centralism had nothing in common with Lenin's understanding. Lenin made it clear that pressure from a despotic regime and the immanent danger of Tsarist police attacks pushed the party to centralise. He did not worship this condition and counted the moments until restrictions on full democracy would come to an end, whereas Mao hated democracy and hid his hatred behind the term ultra-democracy. For Lenin, the theory of democratic centralism was not a universal theory useful for all times, whereas for Mao, democratic centralism was universal regardless of the time or place.

What was practiced as democratic centralism by all communist parties in the Stalinist camp during the 20th century was not Lenin's understanding but rather what Mao formulated in 1929, as quoted above. Mao's formulation had nothing to do with what Harman understood as the relationship between centralism and democracy i.e. centralism was the precondition for the independence of party members. Mao's theory of democratic centralism was, in fact, preparation for totalitarian rule. In his understanding of the term democratic centralism, the lower organs and the party members had no say in discussions about party policies. All they could do was discuss the details of the directives of higher organs to make sure they understood them and were able to implement those policies to the satisfaction of their leaders. This bureaucratic view had nothing in common with Marxism and Leninism.

Needless to say, the understanding and interpretation of the concept of democratic centralism was not the same in Leninist, Stalinist, Trotskyist, or Maoist camps. It should also be mentioned that Maoism is nothing but a variant of Stalinism. However, in countries such as Nepal, Iran, Turkey, and Afghanistan, the Maoist movements were critical of the USSR and China. Maoism cannot be taken as the ruling ideology of China and continues to grow as an independent movement outside of China. As a result, one has to look at it as a different ideology.

The problem and misuse of the theory and practice of democratic centralism is better understood when one takes into consideration that sometimes the gap between two party congresses is ten years. For ten years, party activists had to obey the rules of the party and implement policies that were not their own in order to protect the party and its discipline. In many cases, after several years, the best course of action for party members was to quietly resign from party activities. This has been the sad story for thousands of communists in the second half of the 20th century, which was too great a price to pay for the bureaucratic practice of the party's internal relations. That is to say, the bureaucratic internal relations of the traditional parties caused thousands of political activists to leave the party. In Iran, during the early 1980s, some leftist organisations called for a cease-fire against the Islamic Republic during the Iran-Iraq war, which they considered to be patriotic. The Trotskyist groups in Europe had no clear understanding of the dictatorial regimes in Iran, Iraq, or Libya in the 1980s and 1990s, and in some cases they supported those so-called anti-imperialist regimes. These harmful policies were criticised by their rank and file internally, but the leaders continued their existence in their secure entrenchment, behind the principle of democratic centralism.

Moreover, today in most countries, both socialists and communists are experiencing a pre-party era. They are usually organised in small groups and organisations. In almost all these small groups the leaders have not even held one

congress. The unelected leadership carries on from the beginning of the formation to the end of their respective organisation's existence without any worries, while at the same time they expect members to respect the organisation's internal discipline. If it were not for the theory of democratic centralism, this abuse and double standard would not take place.

The underling thread in all traditional Stalinist, Maoist, Trotskyist, and Leninist parties is the conflict between the need for democracy on the one hand and the absence or limitation of democracy in existing parties and groups on the other. Limited democracy in those parties weakened their structure to the point that they were not capable of facing any serious crisis. As mentioned earlier, the place of democracy was different in the ideology and structure of each camp. While Luxemburg understood its importance and criticised Lenin on the issue, Lenin and the Bolsheviks' conditions and existence as an underground party did not allow them to practice real democracy even if their understanding was faultless. Maoists' and Stalinists' parties looked at democracy in a negative way regardless of their condition of struggle. They usually attacked ultra-democracy, for as far as they were concerned, it would weaken party discipline. Trotskyists however, differed from Trotsky's clear emphasis on the need for a mass proletarian party and suffered, more than anything else, from the absence of a mass party. In their typically small groups, depending on the conditions of their struggle, they practiced democracy in their internal relations to the extent that it sometimes caused further splits in the group.

Summary

The problems of theory and practice of democratic centralism in all traditional parties were the result of various causes. The limitations and absence of democracy in different parties were caused by different factors. The Bolshevik party in the 1920s put conditions and limitations on democracy mainly as a result

of foreign threat. One might claim that foreign imperialist attacks and imminent danger never allowed the Bolshevik party to introduce democracy to the party and country as a whole. Lenin's compromise in the 10th party congress and his campaign against factionalism mainly was due to the conditions of the post-revolutionary period. A revolutionary state in a sea of domestic and foreign enemies was hardly able to allow full democracy and hold on to power at the same time. However, in Lenin's theory of democratic centralism freedom to criticise was subject to the unity of a defined action. Criticism in this view is allowed so long as it does not disrupt the unity of a defined action. Any criticism that disrupted or made unity of action difficult that the party decided upon would be ruled out. Lenin's theory of the party in 1902 accepted centralism and was based on trust. In that model there was little room for dissent. Democracy in that model was compromised for survival. His view after the 1905 Revolution went through a radical change. In 1917 the Bolshevik Party was a mass party with tendencies and platforms. During a difficult period and under foreign and domestic threat once again, Lenin compromised democracy for survival at the 10th party congress.

This view, which was defended by Lenin, allowed Stalin to build up his bureaucratic view of the party and destroy any degree of democracy in the Bolshevik party within a few years between 1922 and 1927. The theory and practice of Stalinist and Maoist parties were essentially bureaucratic and had nothing to do with Leninist democratic centralism. In these parties the leaders are not elected and could not be removed. Democracy and freedom of criticism were absent in their internal party relations. Democracy represented bourgeois ideology in the party. The leaderships of these parties made sure party members were not contaminated by ultra-democracy as a bourgeois ideology.

Trotskyist parties and groups, in spite of Trotsky's clear guidance were usually small. Though in these groups discussions are allowed, they hardly had any effect on the workers' struggle. The main problem with Trotskyist groups was that they

were not based on the working class struggle. Therefore, their endless discussions had hardly anything to do with the struggle of the workers and poor. The contradiction between self-made leaders and principles of democratic centralism caused mistrust and reduced unity in action in these groups.

Democratic centralism is not a suitable method of organization for multi-tendency political organisations of the bottom 85% of the population in the 21st century. However, in most African, Latin American and Middle Eastern countries the principle of democratic centralism is the most viable practical method of organisation for parties who face censorship and repression from dictatorial regimes.

Notes

- 1 “Democratic Centralism”, www.marxmail.org, October 30, 2003.
- 2 Ibid
- 3 Ibid
- 4 Quoted by Jack Conrad, *Problems of Communist Organisation*, first edition (London: November Publications Ltd, 1993), 49.
For further reading see Cemil Silahtar, “Party Discipline,” (1979), p.15. Jack Conrad gives this book’s details.
- 5 Leon Trotsky, “On Democratic-Centralism and the Regime,” *Socialist Appeal USA* (1937). This is from a U.S. Internal Bulletin in December 1937, prior to the SWP’s formation in the US,
<http://www.marxists.org/trotsky/works/1937/1937-dc.htm>
- 6 Leonard Schapiro, *The Government and Policies of the Soviet Union*, edited by Professor W. A. Robson, fourth edition (London: Hutchinson & Co., Ltd., 1970), 60.
- 7 Point 14, “Theses on the Role of the Communist Party in the Proletarian Revolution,” *The Second congress of the Communist International*, Vol. 1, Pioneer Publishers 1977), 97. Quoted by Jack Conrad, *Problems of Communist Organisation*, first edition, (London: November Publications Ltd, 1993), 49.
- 8 Quoted by Jack Conrad, *Problems of Communist Organisation*, First edition, (London: November Publications Ltd, 1993), 49.

- 9 "Bureaucratic Centralism or Democratic Centralism," (September 1994),1.
www.etext.org/politics/International.Socialists-UK/swp.txt. This piece is unsigned but was written by a group of ex-SWP comrades.
- 10 Albert Weisbord, "Bolshevism, Fraudulent Practice of Democratic Centralism," *La Parola del Popolo* Nov/Dec. 1976.
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- 11 "Bureaucratic Centralism or Democratic Centralism," (September 1994), 2.
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- 13 "Index of the Letter D," *Encyclopedia of Marxism: Glossary of Terms: De*, P.8
<http://www.marxists.org/glossary/terms/d/e.htm>
- 14 "Democratic Centralism," *Country Study - Mongolia*, 29 (Oct 2005), p.1.
<http://reference.allrefer.com/country-guide-study/Mongolia/138.html>
- 15 "Vietnam and Democratic Centralism," pp.1- 2
<http://www.fva.org/1298/story08.htm>
- 16 Ibid
- 17 *Encyclopaedia of Marxism: Glossary of Terms*, P10
- 18 Founding Conference of the International Trotskyist Committee,
"Programmatic Principles Adopted 24 July 1984," *International Trotskyist Review*, (viewed 27 December 2005), 16.

- 19 Dennis Tourish, "Ideological Intransigence, Democratic Centralism and Cultism: A Case Study From the Political Left," viewed on (29 October 2005), 7.
<http://www.rickross.com/reference/general/general11434.html>
- 20 Ibid, p.8.
- 21 Ibid, p.7.
- 22 "Bureaucratic centralism or democratic centralism," (September 1994), 7.
<http://www.etext.org/politics/International.Socialists-UK/swp.txt>
- 23 MC17&MC11, "Democratic Centralism," *Maoist Internationalist Movement*, (1991), 2. <http://www.etext.org>
- 24 Mao Tse-Tung, *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), 162-3.
- 25 Ibid, pp.116-7.

CHAPTER FIVE

Viable socialist organisations for the 21st century

As discussed in the previous chapters, in addition to globalisation, structural and economic changes, the IT revolution of the last three decades of the 20th century, social democracy's defeat, Stalinism and pro-Russian communist parties as well as Maoism and guerrilla movements in Latin America and the Middle East all account for the rise of the New Left. This chapter will briefly outline the contradictions of the traditional left and guerrilla movements. This chapter will then concentrate on the nature and characteristics of multi-tendency socialist organisations in the 21st Century.

Until 1960 dominant organisations that were recognised and supported by socialists throughout the world were Stalinist communist parties. Although Trotskyist and council communist organisations sporadically existed, they were very weak compared to the powerful Stalinist communist parties. After the Second World War and Stalinism's domination of the communist movement, almost all communist parties went through a process of restructuring in accordance to the directions of Stalinist Russia. Even those traditional parties who claimed to be Leninist were nothing but Stalinist bureaucratic parties. Therefore, when this work refers to traditional parties it is referring to Stalinist parties. Among other things, these parties suffered from two main weaknesses: the lack of internal democracy and the belief in a method of politics that was passive in nature. If bourgeois parties in Western democracies wanted people to cast their votes at least every four to five years, then Stalinist parties wanted people's trust forever. They did not believe in any kind of democracy, be it direct or indirect, internal or external.

Traditional communist parties did not hide their thirst for power. On the contrary, they sought the worst methods of gaining power such as participating in bourgeois governments, coup d'états and sometimes the aid of foreign armies. However, they did not commit themselves to organising the working class and the masses of urban poor. As a result these attempts were miscalculated and led to further disaster, defeat, and on many occasions the massacre of party members by so-called democratic leaders. Throughout the 20th century traditional communist parties supported bourgeois dictatorships in Asia, America, and Europe in the hope that their respective governments would choose a non-capitalist development strategy and abandon capitalism. This ineffective approach stemmed from Stalinism, which reduced the class struggle to relations between states and replaced the socialist revolution with democratic revolution. Nasser in Egypt, Qhasim in Iraq as well as many other so-called democratic leaders were all products of the shift toward Stalinism by the Iraqi and Egyptian communist parties. "The juxtaposition of the democratic revolution to the socialist revolution and the preference for the first is not the property of the Social Democratic leaders alone, but became the guiding line of Stalinist leaderships throughout the world."¹

After the collapse of the USSR most pro-Russian so-called communist parties split into smaller groups. In cases such as the Asian republics of the former USSR many different political interests resulted from the dismantled so-called unified communist party. The fact that hardly any communist parties survived after 1990 shows that these parties were not unified and homogenous. Even the communist parties in Western societies did not maintain their unity and split.

By the late 1980s, a mixture of fairly coherent ideologies coexisted with a variety of far more diffuse sensibilities. The ensemble was lively, but highly fragmented. It was primarily held together by the common tradition that was about to be eliminated. Even after the departure of nostalgic old-style communists and the most socially radical elements for *Rifondazione*, the left that remains within the Democratic Socialist Party (PDS) remains a mixed bag.²

Shortly after the collapse of the USSR, the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) also split. Its radical elements reorganised themselves as Leninists and later joined the Socialist Alliance.³ The coexistence of various tendencies and interests within a so-called homogenous party was not necessarily a weak point. It only became a disastrous feature because there was no internal democracy within the party. In all pro-Russian traditional communist parties, during their long existence, there was not a decent ideological discussion let alone the formation and existence of factions and tendencies within the party. Under the bipolar system that existed during the Cold War, if the possibility of gaining power, even by a relatively unpopular pro-Russian party, prevented the split of discontented elements from the party, then after the collapse of the USSR nothing could prevent it. For example, in the Iranian Stalinist Tudeh party, social democrats as well as radicals split from the party. From the massive Tudeh party of the 1950s only a small group remained to carry its long history into the 21st century. The Iraqi communist party was also the victim of a major split in which Kurdish elements created the Kurdistan communist party, in the hope of gaining a share of state power in the semi-autonomous state of Iraqi Kurdistan. The list is endless.

Two factors account for the rather unfortunate fate of these communist parties. Firstly, there existed different elements and at times contradictory interests within the party without existence of an appropriate communication mechanism in their internal relations. These parties did not have a policy that was independent from the Soviet Union. The needs of the USSR's foreign policy forced them to limit their policies within certain stereotypes which were not acceptable to the younger members of these parties who had not witnessed the USSR's post-war achievements. As a result their policy was a mixture of reformism, anti-Americanism, and the need for the USSR's foreign policy of the day regarding their respective governments. Close economic relations between the USSR and their respective governments resulted in a shift in their national policy and a considerable reduction of criticism of the central government, regardless of its

repressive measures against the working class struggle for equality and freedom. Secondly, wherever the party was not committed to organising the working class and was not engaged in such an activity the risk of elimination and split was more serious. This is the experience that younger generations of socialists must not forget. That is to say, the closer the party's policy was to the USSR, the less independent it was from the Soviet Union, which meant that the party made less effort to organise the working class. As a result, this made the party weaker.

Three decades of structural adjustment programmes brought impoverishment to the workers, further destruction to the agricultural sector and therefore more social unrest against the IMF, World Bank programmes in Latin America and other areas of the world such as the Middle East. The traditional left did not have the courage to organise these social frustrations and anger. As a result, some elements of workers, students, intellectuals and the urban poor in Latin America and the Middle East filled this empty space by organising guerrilla warfare. Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionary (MIR) in Chile, the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, and Fedaie in Iran during the 1970s and 1980s are only a few examples. In spite of some success, these movements shared a serious weakness with the traditional left. As far as people and their independent organisations were concerned the guerrilla movements were just as ignorant as the traditional left. With different intentions both movements did not get involved in organising the working class for socialism. The bureaucratic pro-Russian Stalinist parties considered the leadership of USSR as the proletarian leadership on a world scale and did not feel the need for proletarian leadership in each country. What they wanted from the proletariat was not active participation in the party affairs but rather passive support for the party. The guerrilla movement was not against workers' participation in the political arena. However, as far as the leadership was concerned, between needs of the guerrilla movement came before those of the workers' movement. The secrecy of guerrilla warfare was not going to be jeopardised by openly sending activists into the labour movement. As long as the dictatorial regimes of the third world routinely used oppression and censorship the

worker's movement had to wait for guerrilla movements to destroy the wall of censorship and repression. Only then would it be possible for workers to enter into the political arena without fear of reprisal by the repressive apparatus. Apart from Cuba and Nicaragua, where guerrilla movements obtained state power and expanded their activities to other areas of people's daily struggle, in no other countries did these movements gain similar success. Although (unlike the traditional left) guerrilla movements were very radical and very active, their activities and radicalism were not connected to the daily life and struggles of workers and the poor. Consequently, in its isolation guerrilla movements came under severe attack from dictatorial regimes. The internal contradictions of guerrilla warfare, their inability to organise mass movements of the poor, and military pressure from bourgeois regimes brought the movements to an end. In many countries, guerrilla movements split into many branches with hardly any one section supporting or continuing armed struggle today. For example, the MIR in Chile and Fedaie in Iran were totally eliminated. In many countries the surviving members of armed struggle joined or are joining the new organisations of the left. The failure of the traditional pro-Russian parties, the weaknesses of Trotskyists and other radical communist organisations, and the contradictions and deadlock of guerrilla warfare as a method of struggle became clear to many socialist activists by the end of the 1980s. An alternative organisation capable of organising the working class for socialism while not suffering from the shortcomings of its predecessor organisations was what the majority of radical socialist activists wanted.

During the 1980s and throughout the 1990s a new type of political working class organisation started to appear. In Latin America massive multi-tendency parties and organisations grew rapidly and became the main stream of leftist politics. The Zapatista movement in south eastern Mexico introduced a completely new model of politics in which state power did not have a central role. They did not limit themselves within any ideology. Their aim was the direct participation of all community members in all decisions, and their internationalism was based on real

effort to increase solidarity among all movements of working class and poor in all countries. The new Mexican Zapatista movement that came to the attention of the outside world after their famous January 1994 operation has continued as the most important political organisation in the region since. The Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) in many ways promotes participatory democracy and a development strategy that is based upon the real improvement of people's consciousness, culture, independent education as opposed to central government's imposed education, and a non-bureaucratic system of governance. For more than a decade the EZLN in Mexico put into practice what other revolutionary non-Stalinist, non-social democratic leftists such as Mandel theorised as an alternative to present-day capitalism and the bureaucratic command economies of Eastern Europe. Mandel called his suggested system a democratic planned economy from below, which was based on the participation of every worker and poor member of society as consumers and producers in the conferences of producers and consumers. The Zapatistas in Mexico managed to do just that for nearly one decade. In contrast to this radical movement in Mexico, powerful centre left parties such as the PT in Brazil, Broad Front in Uruguay, and similar movements in Argentina and most other countries of the region appeared one after another.

In Venezuela despite various US plans a similar process not only kept Chávez in power but also led to the creation of the Party of Revolution and Socialism and a bigger alliance of 24 organisations from Bolivarian Circles to the Revolutionary Marxist Current. In Brazil after gaining power the Workers Party's moved to the right. Many in the party did not accept such a move. As a result, the campaign for Socialism and Freedom Party (P-SOL) collected more than 438,000 signatures and became Brazil's 29th officially recognized political party and the first to do so by this method. Those signatures were not based on the party's ideology because it was not an established party when those signatures were collected and therefore there was no ideology. However, as the following events suggested all those who signed the petition supported the party of freedom and socialism. Seven million voted for the party's candidate who was a former hospital worker suggesting that

in the early 21st century the working class is more aware of its political interests. The rapid growth of the P-SOL also indicated a level of frustration among the Brazilian working class with the right-wing policies of the Workers Party (PT). With their vote they rejected the leadership of the PT who had betrayed their socialist ideals.

While the revival of the left, including the radical socialist multi-tendency organisation has been relatively successful in Latin America, Europe and the Middle East for very different reasons the formation of a multi-tendency organisation of the left has not been so successful. While in the Middle East the main reason against the formation and growth of a multi-tendency socialist organisation is oppression and censorship, in Europe the main reasons are the continuity of social democracy and misapprehension of a major part of the left with social democracy. No large multi-tendency socialist organisations will form to change the balance of forces in Western Europe without social democratic parties' left inside learning to trust the rest of the radical socialist left, their disillusionment and participation in the formation of a socialist organisation. For example, Arthur Scargil's Socialist Labour Party and the UK's Socialist Alliance were not able to find a common language. As a result, both organisations remained marginal. If instead these two organisations had fused on the basis of a common set of socialist principles they might have attracted many more leftists from the Labour Party. In spite of setbacks and problems the process of forming a socialist multi-tendency organisation is not a closed chapter in European politics.

The previous chapters discussed the worsening of the working class' work and living conditions in many parts of the world, high unemployment, and the political oppression of dictatorial regimes. The traditional left, and in particular the Stalinist pro-Russian parties, betrayed the working class' ideals and did not lead the working class struggle for socialism and freedom throughout the second half of the 20th century. But the rise of the multi-tendency socialist organisation

has to do with much more than the defeat and betrayal of Stalinism and social democracy discussed in chapter three.

Four processes account for the rise of viable socialist organisations in the 21st century. Firstly, the crisis of capitalism and inability of its alternatives in the third world; secondly, the defeat of right wing populism and its corporatist policies; thirdly, the defeat of the traditional left; and finally, the defeat and deadlock of armed struggle. The following section will discuss these factors.

The World Bank and IMF's programmes of the last thirty years resulted in more destruction of rural life, unemployment, foreign debts, and a bigger gap between rich and poor in most African, Latin American and Middle Eastern countries. Their political alternatives in the form of military dictatorships failed one after the other in Latin America. In many countries such as Egypt and Argentina economic performances were so poor that they were not able to pay off the interest from their foreign loans. As a result, the countries are either like Egypt, in imminent risk of Islamic fundamentalism or like Argentina on the verge of revolution. The present situation of Argentina can be explained by the defeat of the programmes imposed on it by the world economic institutions.

Corporatism and corporatist policies were another way of dealing with social crises facing capitalism in earlier decades. The history of corporatism as a policy in Europe, Latin America and countries such as Iran after the Islamic Revolution shows that the function of corporate organisations was to blunt the class war. Corporatism did not work when capital's exploitation of the labour force sharpened the class struggle. The defeat of the regime's policies in Argentina under Peron and thereafter lay in the fact that private capital's high exploitation of the working class was not compatible with Peron's corporatist policies. In Iran, the Islamic Republic did not allow the formation of independent economic organisations and tried instead to organise "Khaneh kargar" (worker's houses) to

control labour movements. Now after thirty years this policy is facing serious challenges from workers, as well as the capitalist class.

As mentioned in the earlier chapters, the traditional left worshiped Eastern Europe's state capitalism. Its emphasis on the role of the state in running the economy was extreme. Building a school or bridge, and making a road had to go through central planning bodies and had to wait (sometimes for more than a year) in the long bureaucratic channel for a decision while local people had to walk through mud and water and their children suffered walking long distances to get to school. Stalinist parties had forgotten to a great extent the role of people as producers and consumers and their independent associations and organisations. The collapse of the USSR, East Europe, and the expansion of Western democracy to Eastern Europe was a major blow to this traditional left.

Armed struggle and guerrilla movements had also faced a deadlock. Their inability to organise people and help them organise themselves independently was their Achilles heel. The idea of leading the struggle for socialism by some devoted intellectuals without the direct participation of the oppressed classes resulted in them losing their appeal by the end of the 1980s. By that time, mass social movements had passed their primary stage of development. They demanded the democratisation of social, political and economic life. At the start of the 21st century it simply was not possible to unite the movements of workers, women, minorities, trade unions, environmentalists, and the urban poor under one banner or represent their activities by a single tactic or a closed conspiratorial organisation. This factor applies to guerrilla warfare as a single tactic, as well as to traditional Stalinist parties. In order to understand the socio-political background of the socialist left's rise during the 21st century, this factor must be added to the reasons for the defeat of social democracy discussed in earlier chapters.

The new left did not question the armed struggle in principle. Daniel Ortega, the Sandinista leader said: 'We could not repeat the mistakes of the 1970s considering those who did not have a gun in their pocket as not a revolutionary. We could not say today that to be revolutionary we must forget the armed struggle and commit ourselves totally to the bourgeois democratic system'.³

Eleuterio Fernández Huidobro (a prominent leading member of National Liberation Movement (MLN) in Uruguay), in an interview with *International Viewpoint* magazine criticised the shortcomings of the armed struggle, bourgeois parliamentarism, Stalinism, and emphasised the need for social equality, democracy and international cooperation amongst socialists against the dominant capitalism. The guerrilla movement and its method of struggle was criticised by its previous leaders during the 1980s and 1990s. The Iranian Revolutionary Workers Organisation was formed after the Islamic Revolution in 1980 on three premises: an analytical rejection of armed struggle as a tactic and strategy from a Marxist point of view; a particular understanding of concepts such as capitalism and Imperialism that was fundamentally different from the traditional left as well as the populist left; and a rejection of the USSR as a socialist society. The new left's critique of armed struggle emphasised the populist nature of the movement, its lack of internal democracy, its lack of clear aims and vision, its ignorance of economic and grassroots organisations, and its unilateral emphasis on armed struggle as the only recognised revolutionary tactic and strategy.

In short, In its traditional format the left could not lead the various social groups' struggles in an increasingly complicated society and therefore could not survive because of its ideological dependency on Stalinist Russia and the other serious problems discussed above. The guerrilla movement was not a solution and became part of the problem itself. The left needed to find a new viable socialist organisation for the 21st century. The established organisations of the new left in Europe, Latin America and the Middle East were the outcomes of mistakes, weaknesses, and defeats as well as the strengths and victories of previous leftist

organisations. They were the efforts of activists to find a solution to the problems of socialists' organisations in the 21st century.

The multi-tendency organisations that have formed so far in various parts of the world are organisations in a transitional period. This is a very important point to remember. Their programmes and constitutions have altered since their formation and are subject to further changes. All the parties and organisations that formed these alliances have not remained within the umbrella organisation – some have left, while others have joined. Internal relations between tendencies and groups coexisting within the umbrella organisation also changed and are subject to further changes. Some became lost within the umbrella organisation, whereas others became stronger within it. One important challenge for socialist multi-tendency organisations is whether they are capable of establishing a stable relationship between stronger and weaker tendencies. If it were possible, then on what principle would it be formed? Would it be based on the coexistence of smaller organisations within the big umbrella organisation or would it be based on the dissolution of all organisations within the big umbrella organisation and the familiar system of political parties, where the minority has to obey the majority.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the above mentioned questions based on the experience of several existing alliances. This chapter will then examine their political programmes to determine how socialist they are and whether their socialism is different from the traditional left. There will be an analysis based on a randomly selected questionnaire from two organisations engaged in the formation of left unity in Iran in order to determine which social classes the vanguards come from that form the new organisation. The result of that study can be seen in appendix 1.

Structure and constitution

The main differences between the newly formed organisations and the traditional left as well as guerrilla groups lie in their constitution and structure. As discussed in the earlier chapters the new left, unlike traditional parties, do not have a rigid structure or a well defined constitution. Moreover, multi-tendency socialist organisations have to use the process of trial and error because they are relatively new and there have not been similar organisations in the recent past that they could base previous experiences on. From this point of view, they are organisations in transition. On theoretical and practical levels the structure of these organisations are changing. Although the range of arguments on structure and constitution are very wide, one can say two ideas stand within all alliances formed so far. One argument is in favour of a rather disciplined organisation, which is similar to a political party. The opposite argument emphasises a rather open loose organisation where internal relations are similar to fronts. These arguments differ in form according to various political climates. The following section will look at two examples, one from Brazil and the other from the UK. In the UK, the Socialist Worker Party (SWP) emphasises the need for a national disciplined organisation with a hierarchy and clear constitution that defines the position and relations between the leadership and the organisation's base. The following is a brief account of what the SWP suggested for the SA's constitution:

We need a constitution, which will ensure that the Socialist Alliance (SA) becomes more democratic and inclusive and at the same time is able to provide effective and coherent national direction. We believe that democracy and inclusiveness in the SA requires the principle of every member being able to participate in determining the decisions and policies of the SA. In particular we believe the principle of one member one vote should in general apply to the election of officers and other representatives within the alliance. It will be better for the executive to be proposed as a slate to produce the most balanced and inclusive and at the same time most effective combination for the collective leadership of SA. The annual conference will then choose what the majority regards as the best combination to meet the objectives of democracy, balance, inclusiveness and effectiveness.

Perhaps in future the number of delegates for at least the ground level affiliates might be brought into proportion to each affiliated body. We support the retention of an intermediate body, a national council, between the all-members conference and the national executive, based upon representation for each of the locally or regionally affiliated SA.⁵

It is clear from this passage that the SWP saw the SA as a kind of political party or at least possessing the internal coherence of one. When they talked about the method of elections for future delegates, it is clear that the SWP preferred a more disciplined SA. The Socialist Party (SP) put forward the opposite argument to the SWP. The SP was in favour of a federal system.

If we are to maximise the number of campaigns and organisations that are prepared to join the SA, it is crucial that we have a federal approach. This means that we unite the participating forces on the basis of a common socialist platform, while allowing organisations, groups and individuals, to uphold their own political positions. The idea put forward by the SWP and others that we can only grow on the basis of centralisation, is utterly untrue. The constitution we are proposing makes the local alliances the key unit of SA where campaigning and electoral decisions will be taken.⁶

As far as the SP was concerned their proposed constitution and ideas about a federal structure were not a temporary solution for the SA's problems during 2001. They saw the federal system as a principle that underlay the structure of the SA or any similar coalition, regardless of its size and effectiveness in the UK's politics.

In Brazil, which has the weakest democratic tradition compared to the rest of Latin America, this problem appeared in a different format. Here the question is whether or not to allow factionalism within the Workers Party. Before outlining the Brazilian method and in order to understand why they chose such a method for the coexistence of various tendencies, one must first look at some factors that account for the rise of the Workers Party in Brazil.

The pro-Russian (Stalinist) communist party in Brazil, in line with other Stalinist Parties “supported the bourgeois governments of Brazil between 1950-54, 1955-60, and 1961-64 hoping that they might push the country’s development strategy toward socialism and carry out land reform.”⁷ But the 1964 coup that received total support from all the bourgeoisie’s factions discredited the communist party’s strategy of supporting the so-called progressive bourgeoisie. After 1964 under Marigla’s leadership the party started an armed struggle, which ended with his death and the death of all the other radical leaders. In 1973 following the oppression of another armed movement led by a Maoist tendency, which led to the party’s split and complete destruction of this movement, the military regime, pressed by international capital to democratise, allowed the formation of an opposition party which later became the vehicle of people’s discontent against the military regime.

The military regime had opened the door for foreign capital to exploit cheap labour in Brazil. As a result, Brazil became a safe haven for exploitation, and accompanied by rapid economic growth and industrialisation, which is known as Brazil’s miracle. This rapid industrialisation however, deepened social inequality, and as a result, the radical trade union movement of the 1970s appeared. This was the end of a decade of exploitation by all the major car companies including Ford, Krupp, Fiat, Volkswagen, Mercedes Benz, etc.

From 1977 onwards many Brazilian leftist forces, who did not trust the traditional left (pro-Russian, pro-China, and populist) started a process of meetings where they discussed the need for a radical socialist organisation. In 1979 the worker’s party officially announced its socialist principle. At the beginning 60% of the activists belonged to trade unions and the rest were politicians, journalists and representatives of ultra leftist groups. These groups were mainly Trotskyists and activists from the 1970s guerrilla movement. Later when the PT became more serious politically factions from the communist party, Maoists, student based groups, the Fourth International, Castro supporters, feminist groups, human

rights' activists, supporters of political prisoners, local activists and some radical leftist catholic groups joined the party. By the beginning of the 1980s the party's social base had expanded to the rest of the working class such as white collar workers, teachers and bank officers.

The motivation of some of these leftist groups was to use the party's semi-public and open activities for their secret political activities and to expand their influence. Lula opposed the dual membership of faction members and tactical use of some groups within the party, as that would undermine the party authority, cause disagreement, problems, and division between party activists. However, he believed that time would solve the problem. Some of the groups, who had earlier joined the PT, later dissolved themselves into the Workers Party. After 1983 the secret agreement between different fractions was replaced by a system of proportional representation in the election for the national leadership. By this time the main fraction of the party had managed to organise the majority of party activists, about 70%, and therefore maintained the consistency and the unity of the party. "In spite of this those groups and organisations that still had kept their own grouping stayed in the party."⁸ In April 1986 faction members that were dependent on the Revolutionary Communist Party of Brazil participated in an armed operation to confiscate a bank's assets in order to help the revolutionaries in Nicaragua. During the operation they were captured. The Workers' Party's leadership expelled them immediately for their undisciplined action. Two months later during the party's fourth national conference control over the party's fractions became tighter and this process went on until the beginning of 1987. In January the fifth national conference passed a resolution and agreed on even stronger control over the factions and fractions within the party. The conference resolution announced:

The Workers' Party would not tolerate the following organisations within its ranks: Those who follow particular policies and put their policies before the party's general policies; those with particular leadership against party leadership; those who have distinguished

particular presence in the general meetings; those who have particular discipline that inevitably leads to dual membership; those with parallel and close structures against party structure; those with institutionalised organic finance system; and those with the regular news and general particular paper.⁹

However, the resolution became a point of disagreement between the party's centre and the fractions until the first congress held in 1991. While the centre argued for centralism, the fractions emphasised the need for openness and expansion on the range of their operations. In 1991 the following principles were accepted.

All tendencies must be allowed to have enough space for propaganda around their opinions within the party, but organising meetings with non-party members was forbidden and it was suggested that they hold their meetings in the party offices where other party members could also attend. The tendencies could have bulletins for their discussions within the party and make suggestions about present political situations or social movements, but distribution of any publication outside the party was forbidden. They might have some mechanism for donations and financial resources if this practice did not undermine the party financial mechanism. International relations would be exclusively under the jurisdiction of the national executive of the party. The party leadership would continue all channels of relations created by the tendencies. The tendencies should not impose centralism on their activists. The position of a tendency should not oppose or contradict with the implementation of the party's decisions.¹⁰

Clearly this system was different from a political front where the decisions stemmed from the front's group members. In this structure, although the tendencies existed and had a certain degree of freedom of operation within the constitution of the umbrella organisation, the structure was more like a political party and was based on certain principles that made it different from Stalinist bureaucratic centralist parties. This unique structure had the strengths of a political party, while reducing its weaknesses to a minimal level. In fact, the internal democracy practiced by the new left organisations represents the radical democracy that they suggested for the society as a whole.

The differences between the arguments of these two alliances in the UK and Brazil appeared for two reasons. Firstly, the political situation and atmosphere of these alliances were different. In the UK, bourgeois democracy was well established. Consequently, the need for an organised well-disciplined party was much less obvious than in Brazil, which had the lowest tradition of democracy in Latin America. Secondly, the Brazilian Workers' Party in the 1990s was an organisation with several years of experience. This organisation was well established and had become a successful alternative to state power. The SA in the UK had only just been formed and despite its achievements, was still a novice. It appeared that the destiny of the SA (if it had survived) would have been an alliance with certain degree of discipline very similar to what the SWP suggested. Needless to say that it is wrong to generalise this conclusion because each case had its particularities and stemmed from different experiences.

Aim and objectives

There was a clear difference between the aims and objectives of the traditional left and the alliances of the left created after 1980. The difference was not just about what they wrote in their programmes, but more importantly it was about their meaning. For example, the new left's understanding of terms such as socialism or democracy and the relationship between these terms was fundamentally different from that of the traditional left.

There is no need to repeat what has been said about the traditional left in earlier chapters. It is enough to mention that the traditional left suffered from ideological dependency on the USSR, China, and even Albania. The parties of the traditional left did not have independent policies. Any change in the USSR's or China's policies reflected immediately on their national or domestic policies. Their programmes had nothing to do with their daily policies. After the Second World War, they rarely mentioned socialism in their programmes and instead used another formula. The aim became the national democratic revolution, which was

more right wing than popular democracies. Socialism for traditional left-wing Stalinist parties depended on help from the USSR in the form of non-capitalist development strategy. Without the USSR's foreign aid there could be no talk about socialism. In other words, their socialism (if there was one) would be brought in from above. In fact, their understanding of socialism was mechanistic. Socialism for them meant the number of tractors, the size of steel production, etc. These parties talked about industrialisation more than they talked about socialism in their programmes. They quoted Lenin's report to Communist International in 1921 where he mentioned USSR's achievements in various fields out of context and concluded that socialism meant electrification and soviets. They had forgotten the fact that once in power Lenin had to provide electricity, water, and basic needs to the population, which had nothing to do with them as opposition parties. In Russia under Stalin the bureaucratised party was so busy with its five years plans that it had forgotten the working class as the implementer of those plans. The effect of five years plans had mesmerised the traditional Stalinist parties around the world. The issue was not whether they were aware of the conditions of the working class in Russia, their alienation, disappointment, and frustration, which were reflected in the alcoholism of many sections of the Russian working class. These bureaucratic parties had removed socialism from their programmes. If they did mention socialism, they meant something similar to the USSR or worse. The working class and their role were absent in such a meaning. An elitist bureaucratic party could not fight for the supremacy of the working class.

The new left's alliances such as WLU in Iran, an alliance of leftist groups with a democratic party in Turkey, Campaign for a Marxist party, the SA in the UK, the Party of Socialism and Freedom (P-SOL) – previously a leftist section of PT in Brazil, the Party of Communist Refoundation in Italy, Workers' Party in Russia, the United Left founded in 1980 in Peru, the Workers Party for the Socialist Revolution (PTRS) in Venezuela, the Zapatistas in Mexico, the leftist section of the Movement for Socialism in Bolivia, and the leftist tendencies of Socialist Party – Broad Front in Ecuador as well as many other newly formed multi-

tendency socialist organisations in other countries all have similar programmes. The foundations of these programmes, unlike the traditional left and Stalinist parties, are not state socialism. Political freedoms, democracy, and the agency of the revolution are equally important. In most cases, it is believed that the realisation of the programmes depends on the degree of working class organisation. That is to say, without an organised working class actively involved in the building of the system on every level there will be no socialism. This makes multi-tendency organisation's socialism a participatory workers' socialism. In other words, the three principles of workers' socialism by the organised working class and the poorest sections of society based on the widest possible understanding of freedom and democracy are interconnected. They borderline policies that lead the working class to victory and change their position from being ruled to becoming the ruling class.

The programme

These alliances are different from the traditional left not just in what they have put in their programmes, but more importantly by what they mean. At the turn of the millennium, the Iranian Revolutionary Workers Organisation (IRWO) otherwise known as Rahe Kargar, a component of the Iranian Worker's Left Unity (WLU) defined their understanding of democracy and socialism as follows:

Democracy, meaning the government by the majority, can only be implemented if all citizens, equally and without exception, enjoy complete political freedom. Workers, the destitute, the dispossessed, and the poor, who constitute the vast majority of the population, should be able to overthrow the official and actual privileges of the capitalist landowning classes and high ranking officials and truly take control of the running of every aspect of the country.¹¹

Moreover it is equally important to see how Rahe Kargar considers the relationship between this radical version of democracy and socialism. In the same

document Rahe Kargar also makes clear how they perceive the relationship between socialism and democracy:

Socialism can be constructed upon this true democracy, i.e. self-government of the people and the rule of the exploited majority over the exploiting minority. This complete democracy is inseparable from the definition of socialism and its goals; without such democracy the social and economic goals of socialism are unobtainable.¹²

And finally IRWO's definition of socialism is quite different from the socialism understood by the traditional pro-Russian Tudeh party in Iran. In the introduction to its programme, Rahe Kargar defines socialism and the way they understand it.

Mankind will only be liberated from the slavery of capital through socialism. Socialism is when the majority of the population truly rule over society, in their life and destiny; when private ownership of the means of production and exchange is transferred to social property the rational programming of production and consumption; and the transformation of capitalist society - with its classes and class enmity - to a society where the free development of each individual, is the precondition for the free development of all. The acquisition of political sovereignty by the working class is the initial condition for the establishment of socialism.¹³

The programme of the Workers' Party in Brazil defined socialism in the same format. Its socialism like the ORWI was a democratic socialism. According to Markarian, political freedom was an inseparable part of their socialism. The party's critique of Eastern bloc socialism emphasised the lack of freedom, monopoly of power by a single party, ultra-centralised and ineffective economic organisation, and elite rule instead of working class rule. The Workers' Party emphasised socialisation instead of state ownership of the means of production as the essential condition of economic democracy. It also stressed the need for direct participation of the majority of the population in the process of economic programming. At its fifth conference the party emphasised the following:

The capture of political power as a pre-condition for the building of socialism, making the working class a hegemonic class in society to enable this class for implementation of these objectives, political organisation of the workers in their daily struggle as the main activity of the party instead of using them as a voting machine, maintaining socialist aims, rejection of reformism and gradualism, and support of democracy as an inseparable part of socialism, freedom of parties and formation, and the support of women and blacks in their struggle, etc.¹⁴

This understanding of socialism, democracy and the relationship between democracy and socialism coincides with Marx's understanding of these terms. When Marx and Engels stressed that "we should have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all,"¹⁵ they were emphasising the relationship between democracy and socialism. Moreover, they wrote, "The first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of the ruling class, to win the battle of democracy."¹⁶ What did they mean when they said to "win the battle of democracy?" Clearly Marx opposed the indirect and bureaucratic democracy of Western Europe. Therefore, parliamentary democracy was not the answer to this question. An Iranian political thinker explained what they meant.

No doubt they did not mean to gain power in a free election and then keep it forever by cancelling all free elections thereafter. One should remember that the possibility of gaining power in a free election was much less probable 140 years ago. Therefore by winning the battle of democracy they meant victory in a political revolution for democratisation of state structure and preparation for worker's rule.¹⁷

It must be noted that Marx's understanding of democracy was completely different from James Mill, John Stuart Mill, Jeremy Bentham, Joseph Schumpeter and other liberal philosophers. For Marx, democracy was not only a means it was an aim in itself. In a democratic system the working class would gather for discussions related to programming and decision making, which could help them to improve their culture, knowledge, and understanding of the political process. For Marx, unlike liberal thinkers, the effect of working class participation in the

programming of society was more important than the technical role of each worker as a voter. It was this participation that would make the workers a class for themselves. In those meetings the working class could learn much more than each worker could ever learn individually. Marxists preferred direct democracy as opposed to indirect parliamentary bourgeois democracy because of the possibilities soviet democracy provided the working class to improve their culture. While direct democracy educated the working class, parliamentary democracy (as an elitist form of governance) alienated it and kept the working class in darkness.

The success and improvement of participatory democracy was related to political formations and organisation in society. That is to say, in order to enable workers and poor councils to confront various political, social, and economic problems and help them overcome many hurdles and obstacles on their way, the proletariats' political organisations, socialist media, press, along with other centres of public expression will have an important role to play. "The administration of society, which replaces the market, must be conducted with the maximum degree of participation. This clearly requires that there be a multi-party system, or at least a multi-tendency system with different views, platforms and open voting when necessary."¹⁸ Other revolutionary Marxists continued Marx's understanding of democracy.

Rosa Luxemburg was a Marxist thinker who expressed special emphasis on the relationship between socialism and democracy. In her article concerning the Russian Revolution, Luxemburg criticised Bolshevik leaders such as Lenin and Trotsky for their lack of understanding of the importance of democracy. For Luxemburg, the dictatorship of the proletariat was nothing but a socialist democracy.

Socialist democracy begins simultaneously with the beginnings of the destruction of class rule and of the construction of socialism. It begins at the very moment of the seizure of power by the socialist

party. It is the same thing as the dictatorship of the proletariat. Yes, dictatorship! But this dictatorship consists in the manner of applying democracy, not in its elimination.... But this dictatorship must be the work of the class and not of a little leading minority in the name of the class - that is, it must proceed step by step out of the active participation of the masses, it must be under their direct influence, subjected to the control of complete public activity; it must arise out of the growing political training of the mass of the people.¹⁹

For Luxemburg the main teaching of Lenin and Trotsky's theory, like Karl Kautsky, did not see harmony between democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat. For them, the relationship between the two was either dictatorship or democracy. According to Luxemburg, Kautsky supported democracy in the bourgeois meaning of the term and the Bolsheviks supported dictatorship and rejected democracy. This might not have been a fair judgment as far as Lenin was concerned. Lenin ignored democratic rights during the constitutional assembly after the October revolution. Moreover, he led a campaign in the party to ban factionalism. However, those undemocratic actions could not be understood without the consideration of foreign threat and the condition of civil war in Russia. But for the other Bolshevik leaders such as Stalin, Luxemburg's criticism was very fair and based on Marxist theory. Moreover, it was not difficult to understand that Pol Pot's regime had no place for democracy in any meaning of the term.

It was only in a system of participatory socialist democracy that a socialist economy could be built. It was only in such a system that Marx's famous phrase, "The emancipation of the working class must be won by the working class itself,"²⁰ had its full meaning. Among Marxists, Rosa Luxemburg was one of the most prominent thinkers whose understanding of the working class's socialist revolution was identical to that of Marx. For her, like Marx, the creation of socialism could not be legislated from above or brought to the working class by a party or a government, it had to come from the masses and be built by the masses.

As she pointed out, the participation of every proletarian and every member of the proletariat as a class was necessary to build a healthy socialist democracy.

This rebuilding and this transformation cannot be decreed by some authority, commission or parliament; they can only be undertaken and carried out by the mass itself...socialism will not be and cannot be inaugurated by decrees; it cannot be established by any government however admirably socialistic. Socialism must be created by the masses, must be made by every proletarian.²¹

Therefore multi-tendency socialist alliances were opposed traditional Stalinist parties; firstly, in the way they looked at democracy and its relationship with socialism. For the alliances in Europe, Latin America and the Middle East, socialism could not be built without the widest possible freedom and democracy. Secondly, unlike traditional parties the structure of multi-tendency socialist organisations as discussed above was not a top down relation but rather horizontal. Thirdly, unlike traditional parties they emphasised the importance of the agent of socialism. Without an organised working class capable of defending its right and with it the emancipation of the whole of humanity there could be no talk of socialism. The previous chapters discussed how the traditional parties neglected the working class grassroots organisations, how Stalinism had reduced the class struggle to the relation between states, and how Stalinist communist parties sometimes condemned the workers' strike to satisfy the USSR and its foreign policy requirements. However, there was one more element that separated multi-tendency organisations from the traditional left. The next section will discuss the third element in more detail.

The Achilles Heel of the alliances

Before moving to the third element of the alliances' programme, it is necessary to mention that (in the cases of the Brazilian Workers' Party and Iranian Worker's Left Unity - WLU) unlike clear understandings of the relationship between socialism and democracy, when it came to the political economy of socialism these alliances were not that clear. In analysing the causes for the collapse of the

USSR many commentators including Mohammad Reza Shalgoni of Rahe Kargar in Iran put blame on the extremism of Stalinism and the complete elimination of market relations. As serious political organisations, to avoid being characterised as semi-Stalinist, both of the above mentioned alliances searched to find a plausible argument for the necessity of the market in their political economy of socialism. For example, Paul Singer the main economist of the Workers' Party in Brazil preferred to support the suggested pattern of Alec Nove in which a market mechanism existed to some degree. After 1990 the leadership of the Iranian Revolutionary Workers Organisation (ORWI) also known as Rahe Kargar also accepted that some degree of market relations could exist in their socialism. The literature of these alliances on this matter was different compared to the ideas of Marx and Marxist thinkers. For a radical Marxist, "The commodity fetishism and therefore the abstract labour must be abolished to establish socialism and it necessarily involves the complete destruction of exchange value and so the market."²² The implementation of this task could be the most important step and perhaps the most difficult task in the transition of capitalism to socialism. Feudalism and capitalism have many important common characteristics. However, it took more than one hundred years for capitalism to sweep away feudalist traditions. Capitalism and socialism have nothing in common and it will be unusual to expect an easy transition from the first to the latter.

It must be added that the literature of the above mentioned alliances did not use words such as abolition of wage labour, withering away of the market, etc. In fact, the literature of the ORWI over the past two decades has avoided using such language. Instead, they preferred to use phrases such as controlled markets, which became fashionable after the collapse of the USSR. A controlled market could be different from the gradual disappearance of the market, which was much closer to Marx's view put forward in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*. After the October Revolution, unable to find a solution to the difficult task of replacing the market, Stalinism imposed another form of control on the Russian working class. In spite of several attempts to replace money, the market and exchange value

continued to exist. Stalinism as a bureaucratic tendency was not capable of implementing participatory socialism. However, between 1917 and 1922, under Lenin the Bolshevik party was not able to implement such a task either. Five years after the October Revolution Lenin's acceptance of NEP is the best argument for the difficulties of the destruction of market, money, and exchange value. Encircled in a sea of capitalism socialism could not be built in one country. Money, the market, and exchange value could not disappear in a single country as long as that country needed economic relations with other market economies. Lenin and Trotsky had held on to power waiting for the revolution to happen in major European countries.

The necessary abolition of abstract labour creates a series of problems, which if not solved can lead to a different form of control over the worker, leaving the worker alienated in a new form, as under Stalinism...the solution is that of direct control over management of all institutions in the society.²³

The question of management is a socialist economic problem for which the answer has yet to be found. In other words, "The exact form of the transition period is the most controversial and possibly the most interesting question of the post-revolutionary situation."²⁴ In addition to the difficulties of economic transition from capitalism to socialism discussed above, it must be remembered that these alliances are in the process of being. They have changed in the last two decades and there is no doubt that they will change further in the future. Thus, perhaps it is too soon to generalise the ideas of one economist or even one of the component organisations of an alliance. The experiences of the last two decades do not automatically lead to the conclusion that these alliances are not socialist because they believe in market socialism. However, the facts from these years are undeniable. Many of the coalitions formed have mainly been in Latin America. In almost all of them the right wing populists or social democrats are dominant and radical Marxists have the lower hand. There is no guarantee that the right will stay in a coalition if the left had been dominant. In countries such as Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Nicaragua the coalitions of left and centre left managed

to come to power. Despite their electoral success everywhere the market, wage labouring, and commodity relations are intact. In spite of some reforms, the state and class structure are not directly attacked in any of those countries. Though the globalized economy, finance capital and balance of forces in the international political system is not in favour of these leftist regimes, the leadership of the right wing factions in those coalitions also have an important role in their lack of will power to attack the essence of capitalist relations in their countries.

Class based politics

In addition to differences in the terms of their aim and structure with the traditional left, the third major element of the WLU principles states that only a working class that is organised independently can be the agency of socialism. Working class self-organisation is a pre-condition for the victory of any socialist revolution. This phenomenon also separates this alliance from the traditional left's organisations and parties. It was mentioned earlier that from the mid-20th century until the 1980s, neither pro-Russian communist parties nor guerrilla movements paid much attention to the working class and its daily struggle. Three decades of political involvement (while at the same time neglecting working class affairs) left a historical gap between the older generation of experienced shop stewards and revolutionary workers and the younger generations of the working class. No doubt there are specific accounts of various cases in different countries. This section will examine two examples of discontinuity to make the point clearer, one from the UK and the other from Iran. Alan Thornett, in his personal and political account of organising car workers in Britain, explained how the communist party lost its interest in the working class after the Second World War.

In earlier years there had been a pressed steel branch of the CP but this was finished by the time I joined. There were then two branches, a city branch and a university branch which had little contact with each other. There were not many CP members in Morris Motors. In the city branch we met the radical middle-class core of the Oxford

CP. Organisation in the car plants did not feature in the work of the city branch. CP candidates in the local elections were a major focus. We saw them as genuine people but having little to do with us. They were attracted to the Soviet Union and they were involved in the movement against the US bases which was strong in Oxford at that time, but they were steeped in the particular class collaboration of CP wartime politics and they supported the parliamentary road to socialism.²⁵

The example of Iran is a better example. It shows the effect the Tudeh Party's policy changes had on the organisation of the working class. According to Ali Ashtyani, without taking the role of this party into consideration, it was impossible to study the working class movement in Iran from 1941 onwards. The policies and change in party programmes had a deep impact on the working class movement. In the early 1940s, 14 of the 18 United Council of Trade Unions' members were also Tudeh party members. The policy change of a party with such a wide range of working class support had a huge impact on the working class' movement.

The policies of popular front against Fascism (the Stalin, Dimitrov thesis) were copied in Iran by the Tudeh party. The policies of the party based on popular front thesis put an end to the trade union activities in the southern oil areas of Iran, which was an area under British rule at the time. Moreover, this party even condemned workers' strike of 1946 at the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company as the sabotage of fascist supporters to protect British interests, which had an alliance with the USSR at the time.²⁶

The Tudeh Party continued its anti-working class policies to the extent that it even participated in the bourgeois government and prepared the Labour Law, which made the factory council a tool of the government. According to this law:

The factory council consisted of a worker's representative, who had to be nominated by a union in which the majority of the workers were members, if there was not a union the worker's representative would be elected by the workers under the supervision of the labour ministry. Also in that council there was a representative of the employer and a representative of the labour ministry. This was the

suggestion of a party who claimed to be the party of the working class. It is no wonder the Shah's regime kept this law.²⁷

The traditional left's starting point was ideology, whereas the alliances' starting point was class politics. That is to say, for a traditional party in the 1970s and 1980s, regardless of social activity, one's acceptance of party ideology (Stalinism or Maoism) was enough to make one a member of the traditional party. This was not the case with the new alliances. Firstly, in most of these alliances there existed more than one ideology, even though one might be pre-dominant. Secondly, it consisted of activists from various social groups and therefore various fractions with particular emphasis and sometimes even different politics. Although, as mentioned earlier in cases such as the Workers' Party of Brazil, the alliance had managed to take on the form and organisational patterns of a political party, in the other cases the organisational pattern was something between a political party and a political front. To illustrate this point, one need only to look at the components of the original UK Socialist Alliance to see why the alliance could not be based upon a single ideology. The SA was supported by different organisations. These organisations were: Alliance for Workers' Liberty, Communist Party of Great Britain, Democratic Labour Party, International Socialist Group, International Socialist League, Leeds Left Alliance, Lewisham Independent Socialists, Red Action, Revolutionary Democratic Group, Socialist Party of England and Wales, Socialist Perspectives, Socialist Solidarity Network, Socialist Workers Party, Workers International, and Workers Power. Many journalists, lawyers, hundreds of long standing Labour activists, and hundreds of shop stewards and trade unionists must be added to this list. In 2003 the SWP led the SA into an alliance with George Galloway and other figures involved in the Stop the War Coalition to form the RESPECT Coalition. In late 2004 some SA member organisations, which remained outside of RESPECT joined with the Socialist Party and the Alliance for Green Socialism to establish the Socialist Green Unity Coalition. Finally, what was re-launched in 2005 as the SA did not grow and eventually entered into mutual affiliation with its largest supporting organisation – the Alliance for Green Socialism. In spite of all these ups and downs, a brief look at

the original SA list suggests that ideologies such as Marxism, Leninism, Stalinism, Trotskyism, anarchism and even Liberalism existed within the rank and file of the SA. When this is the case, the most reasonable policy to keep the alliance's unity is to avoid any step toward one interpretation of ideology. That is to say, to base the alliance on common political principles not only makes the alliance more effective, but it also helps to hold it together. This does not mean that the alliance must not have political principles. Freedom, real democracy, and socialism are those common principles that all existing members of the alliance's support. What they cannot support is a particular understanding of these principles by any single group. There is nothing wrong with having various understandings of a principle as long as unity in action and policy-making is preserved. As Mao put it in page 302 of his *Little Red Book*, "Let a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend."

The point is not to argue that having an ideology is a bad thing. The point is that ideology as a personal and philosophical system of beliefs can be good and necessary if its role is not mixed with politics. It is harmful however when it takes the role of politics. The Islamic Republic of Iran is an example of religious ideology replacing politics. The church's rule during Middle Ages in Europe is another. Stalinism as an ideology is a third and there are many more examples to support the idea when ideology takes over the role of politics the result is disastrous. Ideology is a tool used to understand and interpret the world around us. Such a tool is very necessary and useful. However, it is not designed to determine the tactics of the party. The role of politics is to take specific steps. Ideology cannot answer what should be produced, how it should be produced, or how products should be consumed. Just because Marx said religion is the opium of the masses, alliances in Latin America should not necessarily announce war on religion. Marxism as an ideology was not compatible with liberation theology in a workers' party. However, it could be a potential ally. It was obvious that each Marxist group within Socialist Alliance in the UK interpreted and understood British capitalism differently to the other groups. All these interpretations could

remain within the alliance, as long as all the groups united behind the common policies and decisions resulting from their common understanding. To put it in a different way, it did not harm any group if the alliance had several interpretations as long as they could come up with a single united policy. There was nothing wrong with having predomination of one interpretation as long as other interpretations had the freedom to exist, to be active, and to defend their ideas in discussions.

About 50% of the activists in the Workers' Party in Brazil and around 20% of the original British SA's activist came from the working class and its trade unions.²⁸ This in itself meant that they were seriously involved in working class affairs. In spite of this achievement, emphasis on the working class orientation of these alliances was not only due to the quantity of worker activists as members of the alliance. Based on the quantity of the workers in its ranks the Labour Party is a workers party. But the Labour party is not the historical representative of the working class in Britain. Solidarity in Poland was a similar example. Having the workers as members on its own does not make an organisation the historical representative of the working class. When it is said that unlike the traditional left's parties the new alliances are working class oriented, it means that their emphasis is similar to that of Rosa Luxemburg. It means that the organisation is struggling for the supremacy of the working class. It means fighting for independent workers' organisations from the state and from the political parties. No doubt having 75% of the alliance's members coming from the working class is better than 20% or even 50% but this pre-condition does not necessarily lead to real internal democracy, unless the alliance involves its lower ranks in its decision making. If referendums are used regularly as their policy-making method, officials and leading committees are regularly changed and being checked regularly, and leadership opportunities are really open to every member, then a workers' alliance may become the historical representative of the working class. However, without these qualities having 20%, 50%, or 75% of workers as members does not make much difference. In other words, the higher quantity of

workers in the ranks plus the higher practice of direct democracy within a political organisation are among the most important conditions of understanding and practicing socialist democracy by that organisation. The working classes are seeking an alternative that is not hierarchical, exploitative, and alienating. This explains the formation of alliances in so many countries after the collapse of the USSR. The workers joined these alliances hoping that this time they would have the experience of the past to keep control of their organisations in their hands. The fulfilment of this dream may take sometime.

When considered externally and on the scale of society as a whole, the importance of the third element of the new alliance's programme is greater. Workers' socialism or workers' state is a political system of participatory democracy. It is real democracy where the workers who consist of more than 80% of the society participate in many ways in the decision making process. Such a system is also called participatory socialist democracy. The members of a socialist workers' coalition in a capitalist society are still alienated as long as class society continues to exist. Only a system of participatory socialism could put an end to the alienation of the working class.

The above mentioned alliances all have similar alternatives to the present capitalist system. These alternatives whether they are called a workers' state, participatory socialism, socialist democracy, participatory democracy, etc all have similar emphasises. They emphasise real democracy and the right to participate in the process of decision making for every producer and consumer as the major way to end capitalism's alienation. In many cases they have a radical understanding of democracy and place emphasis on the need for workers' self management. Unlike Stalinist parties they believe in the expansion of bourgeois democracy and individual freedoms, and a mixture of direct and indirect democracy with particular emphasis on the role of direct democracy as the basis of their alternative at the local and regional level. Furthermore, they emphasise the

socialisation of the means of production, reorganisation of economic and labour organisations with less space for the market, introduction of democratic planned economy from below, and some of them emphasise the end of exploitation and wage slavery. As mentioned earlier this last point is the Achilles heel of many alliances. It appears that a great majority of the alliances' understanding of socialism is not the understanding of Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Mandel, Claudine, and Razdolsky, as they never talked about abstract labour, the abolition of wage labour as the essence of socialism, etc. The emergence of a campaign for a new Marxist party in the UK and similar campaigns in Latin America that emphasise this point and put forward a radical definition of socialism are responses and reactions to this weakness.

In their publications these alliances say very little about the nature of their socialism. Clearly they need to explain what they mean by socialism. How do they intend to reach it? Is their socialism compatible with wage labour? Would the market exist under such a system, and if so, then at what stage and how? In short, as far as the economy of socialism is concerned, these alliances have very little to say. In the long run, the economy will be the main factor to measure how far they are socialist. These alliances have produced very little literature on the economy of socialism. As a result, the only way to find out about their position is to look at the literature of the components of the alliance.

Earlier this chapter looked at the ORWI's definition, which is a part of Iranian Worker's Left Unity (IWLU). Their definition of socialism does not mention what will happen to the market and wage labour. All those organisations involved in the formation of both alliances in Iran have a similar understanding of socialism, which is to abolish private property and replace it with the common ownership of the means of production and planning. This is not different from the definition of socialism under a Stalinist programme.

A proletarian social revolution would replace private property with the common ownership of the means of production and exchange and reorganise planned social production to put an end to social inequality, the exploitation of man by man, division of society into classes, and therefore emancipate the whole of humanity.²⁹

In his article, “Labour’s Long March to the Right,” Mike Marqusee gave some direction for the future of socialist alliances in the UK. He believed that it should avoid Labour’s paternalism, authoritarianism, and national chauvinism. According to Marqusee the SA should not have been a simple re-grouping of the existing socialist organisations.

It is not a question of a fudge or a halfway house between “reformists” and “revolutionaries” but of embracing a wide (and complex) spectrum of opinions and activities. This must include disenfranchised Labour Party members, trade union and community activists, unaffiliated socialists of many stripes, anti-corporate activists and outright revolutionary Marxists.³⁰

There is no need to look at the socialism of disenfranchised Labour Party members. It is too obvious that such socialism is not a radical version of socialism. The Labour Party has removed socialism from its programme and is involved in privatisation of the British economy. This involvement applies to trade unionists that came from the Labour Party tradition. However, the unity of the proletariat and alliance of socialist forces cannot alienate those sections of the left who have been liberalised by the Labour Party tradition. Revolutionary Marxists cannot and should not fall for the idea of leaving any section of the left outside the alliance. If they do, they themselves might become the first victims and find themselves left out by others. Emphasising a radical understanding of socialism by the alliance is one thing but allowing ideological and organisational walls between various sections of the socialist left is another. Emphasis on the domination of radical socialists in the alliance is different from keeping away from less radical sections in the name of purity and radicalism. The art of being a revolutionary Marxist is not to stay in isolation and separate from the rest of the left. The art is to maximise socialists’ forces and organisations while emphasising

the radical alternative to the present capitalism. Marx did not compromise his radical views but at the same time organised the First International with anarchists and Lassalleans.

The Organisations of the new left and their social base

Appendix 1 explains in depth the social, educational, and ethnic background of two major organisations of the Iranian Left. Moreover it analyses how activists of Kurdistan Organisation of the Iranian Communist Party (ICP Komala) and the activists of the Komala Party that had just split from the ICP perceived the question of multi-tendency socialist organisations in 2001. As the survey revealed it was the pressure of the activists from below that resulted in the creation of two socialist unities in Iran. Both Komalas are currently based in the Kurdish region and are directly involved in the Kurdish national liberation movement. The study of these two organisations cannot be generalised and applied to the rest of the Iranian Left for several reasons. Firstly, as indicated in the survey, the majority of activists in both organisations came from the Kurdish region. Secondly, the age group of the activists showed that about 70% of them were below 30; and finally only 22% of the respondents were women. This survey is an important section of this study. One major differences of multi-tendency organisations with traditional parties is the way in which these different organisations are formed. While the traditional parties are formed from top down and start with a programme of a few intellectual leaders, multi-tendency organisations starts from bottom up and stem from the agreement of its activists. In a traditional party before 1990 it did not really matter what the members of the party or its rank and file thought about party policies since they did not determine the party's policies. From the very beginning, the opinions and preferences of activists in a multi-tendency organisation were important and determined the policies of the organisation.

The survey was carried out two months after the split of the Komala Party from ICP and its Kurdistan Organisation. This means that the timing of the survey may have affected its results. Moreover, it has to be remembered that the ICP suffered a major split several years earlier in which the great majority of its members left the party and joined the newly formed Workers Communist Party of Iran (IWCP). The IWCP left the Kurdish area and went to Europe. That major split has to be considered because hundreds of old activists over the age of 30 left the party. Those activists had many years of political experience, were mostly educated and intellectuals, and had an upper and middle class social background compared to the present younger generation of activists. That is to say, if the survey had been carried out 10 years earlier the results for most of the questions would have been different. Therefore, to get an accurate picture more surveys will be needed in the future.

The fact that over 65% of the activists surveyed had less than 5 years of direct political involvement in a leftist organisation; over 70% of them were under 30 years old; over 85% had lower and middle class backgrounds; and more than 60% were workers, unemployed, or pupils before joining the party tells several important things. Firstly, unlike other parts of the country during the last decade, leftist Kurdish organisations were able to recruit. Secondly, when the worker's activists were in danger of arrest by the political police in Kurdistan's cities, they joined Komala. Whereas in the rest of Iran, most of the time, their involvement in independent trade unions and direct class activities resulted in their arrest and long term imprisonment. In the last two decades, the working class movement in non-Kurdish areas was controlled by the regime led *khaneh-e-kargar* (workers' house) and this is still the case to a great extent. Thirdly, this point applies to students' associations too. In Kurdistan either people were with the regime or against it. In the capital or other big urban centres student movements in the last two decades were led by the supporters of the Imam and the Islamic Republic but gradually have separated themselves from it. In spite of these particularities there are good reasons why the survey was carried out using ICP Komala's and Komala

Party's activists. The condition of censorship and clandestine activity did not allow a survey of this nature of left-wing political organisations whose members lived in various areas inside Iran ruled by Islamic Republic (IR). The activists of other socialist organisations were not accessible and unlike the above mentioned two Komalas, their activists were not concentrated in one base. Moreover, in the last three decades there has been a close relationship between Kurdish and non-Kurdish socialist activists in Iran. Given the reasons for and against using activists of these two organisations they were the best possible targets available.

So far this study has claimed that the relatively newly formed socialist alliances in Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East have important similarities in their aims, structures, and political strategies. However, before suggesting any conclusion about these aspects there are a few other points that need to be discussed. No doubt all these alliances have difficulties with their method of gaining power and need to be studied. In addition, in the early 20th century there had been some attempts to form a united front. The comparison of those experiences with contemporary attempts has many important lessons for this study. Finally, the comparison of the experiences of the SA in the UK with alliances in Latin America also has important lessons. The following section looks at these aspects and at the end a summary of the aims and strategies of the alliances will be considered.

The problems facing alliances

At this stage it is not possible to look at all the problems facing these new formations because of the simple reason that some problems will come up in the future. Therefore, at this point only two sets of problems are discussed: The aim and political programme and the structure. Though organisation members of most of these alliances are socialist and have clear socialist programmes, the alliance cannot announce its programme as pure socialism. The simple reason for this is

that Marxist groups alone have not established these alliances. Though Marxist socialists are dominant forces for most of them, this does not deny the fact that sometimes there are also non-Marxist socialist groups and individuals, women's groups, environmentalists, semi-nationalist leftist groups, and in some cases even religious groups in these alliances. It has been made perfectly clear by many alliances that they do not consider themselves as mere ensembles of their affiliated groups. They must represent the great majority of the population, which includes much more than the working class. Therefore, even if they say that socialism is their aim, such an aim would be different from Marx's socialism, which means nothing but the abolition of abstract labour and the disappearance of market relations and money.

The structural problems of alliances are two fold. In the first place a multi-tendency alliance could not lead a revolutionary socialist movement unless it changes its structure and prepares for such a task. For this reason, even if these alliances wished to have a secretive centralised organisation, they could not because a secretive disciplined and centralised structure can be organised only upon an ideology, which they do not have or at least not at the present. Perhaps in the future when one of the fractions has gained the trust of the majority of activists, centralisation may take place around the leadership of such a fraction but until then all decisions have to be based on the agreement of at least all major fractions. This means that at the present these alliances cannot act like a revolutionary party and their actions are bound to be limited within the framework of the present political regime. Only a revolutionary party has the structure and capacity to take the decisive actions necessary for a revolution. Taking such action necessarily depends upon the greatest degree of solidarity, trust, and belief in the success of the action. These qualities do not exist in these alliances or do not exist at present. Many socialist activists have refused to join the unity for this reason.

Here arises the second dilemma. Given the present reality of the alliances, is it fair to say that the structure of these alliances is designed for democratic aims and objectives. In other words, is it fair to conclude that the organisations of these multi-tendency alliances are too open to be able to fight for socialism? Fighting for socialism is necessarily fighting against the secret police, the capitalist class, the government, and all departments of the state as well as bureaucracy. This means a war on all fronts. In such a war there are certain rules to be followed for the success of any side. The disclosure of any plan to the opposite army can lead to total defeat. The previous chapters discussed how Lenin and Gramsci saw a revolutionary party and why therefore Lenin emphasised a party that rests upon a smaller number of cadres who were able to fight against the police. The dilemma for the alliances in third world countries is in this question. Either they put the idea of inclusiveness first and therefore bring the majority of their members into the process of decision making which means the risk of the discovery of the alliance's plans by the police; or they take the question of the police seriously and therefore forget about the inclusiveness of their members as an iron rule. There is no doubt that if these alliances survive the many hurdles ahead they will find an answer to this dilemma as well. However, believing truly in the principles of revolution, inclusiveness, working class hegemony, and socialism requires putting them into practice not postponing any of them for the future.

The main purpose of organising these alliances, wherever they have formed, is to change the position of the left from the margin of politics and bring them into the centre. It means that the use of the alliances is for the chances they provide to the fragmented marginalized left to gain political power. Power can be gained by two different strategies. One strategy is to form the widest parliamentary coalition and gain power through parliamentary means as in the cases of the Chilean Socialist Party and to some extent the Brazilian Workers' Party. The other strategy is to form a revolutionary entity and follow the rules of making revolution such as secret organisations, active propaganda and campaigning, work in the army, learning and teaching the party activists how to fight the political police, etc. The

problem with this strategy is not just that in the past 50 years the revolutionary parties have not been able to gain power in any country. More importantly, no single party, however massive, can represent the great majority of the population. It is argued that not even a true workers' party can equally satisfy the demands of the women's movement, environmentalists, human rights campaigners, etc. Moreover, as discussed in earlier chapters the working class is not a unified force. The members and groups of this class are divided economically, culturally, and by their degrees of consciousness. The communist party by definition represents the most conscious sections of workers who are aware of their class interests. Even when a revolutionary party has the chance to gain power there is always the risk that such a party might alienate some section of the working class as well as other historical partners of this class. Therefore, the question of organising a single revolutionary party to lead the working class and poor is becoming the concern of a smaller number of socialists. As the reality of almost all countries reveals, these two processes go hand in hand. That is to say, on the one hand as long as there are some socialists who believe in the centrality of a political party there will always be a party. On the other hand, the diversity of the working class, the complexity of demands in the present capitalism, and the inability of a communist party to represent all sections of the working class and poorer sections of society for reasons discussed in this work promote the idea of a multi-tendency organisation. This leads the discussion to the relationship between the two organisations.

Alliances and the Comintern

Perhaps the closest experience to the present alliances can be found with the Comintern and its united front policy in the early 1920s. The Comintern's united front policy was similar to the present alliances except for the fact that the Comintern did not organise the united front to undermine the leadership of the communist party. On the contrary, the united front was a means for the success

and superiority of the party. Trotsky gave a clear account of the Comintern's policy:

The task of the communist party is to lead the proletarian revolution. In order to summon the proletariat for the direct conquest of power and to achieve it, the communist party must base itself on the overwhelming majority of the working class. So long as it does not hold this majority, the party must fight to win it. The Party can achieve this only by remaining an absolutely independent organisation with a clear program and strict internal discipline. Any members of the communist party who bemoan the split with the centrists in the name of "Unity of Forces" or again "Unity of front," thereby demonstrate that they do not understand the ABC of Communism. After assuring itself of the complete independence and ideological homogeneity of its ranks, the Communist Party fights for influence over the majority of the working class.³¹

For Trotsky and his colleagues in the Comintern the leadership of the communist party in the proletarian revolution was an aim as important as the revolution itself and everything else served to reach that aim. Trotsky's outline of the situation where the communist party ought to organise a united front supported this conclusion.

Working masses sense the need of unity in action, of unity in resisting the onslaught of capitalism or unity in taking offensive against it. Any party which mechanically counter-poses itself to this need of the working class for unity in action will unfailingly be condemned in the minds of the workers.³²

He went on to explain that the question of a united front was neither in the point of origin nor substance, a question of the reciprocal relations between the communist parliamentary fraction and socialists, or between the central committees of the two parties. The problem of a united front, despite the fact that a split between the various political organisations basing themselves on the working class was inevitable, grew out of the urgent need to secure the possibility

of a united front for the working class in the struggle against capitalism. Trotsky explained the right time for the party to confront the question of united front:

Wherever the communist party already constitutes a big, organized, political force, but not the decisive magnitude; wherever the party embraces organizationally, let us say, one-fourth, one-third, or even a larger proportion of the organized proletarian vanguard, it is confronted with the question of united front in all its acuteness³³

According to Trotsky, only in this way would the party draw closer to those two-thirds who did not yet follow the party's leadership and would be able to win them over.

If the communist party did not seek for organizational avenues to the end that at every given moment joint, coordinated action between the Communist and the non-Communist (including the Social-Democratic) working masses were made possible, it would have thereby laid bare its own incapacity to win over—on the basis of mass action—the majority of the working class. It would degenerate into a Communist propaganda society but never develop into a party for the conquest of power.³⁴

Trotsky's idea of united front was very clear. Firstly, the united front according to Trotsky, was not supposed to replace the party. Secondly, when the party was weak, it should not attempt to organise a united front. The party should only confront the question of a united front when it was a powerful political force and its organisation would enable it to win over non-communist workers. In other words, the united front was a tool in the hands of the party to win over the working class. Thirdly, the united front was mainly related to the working class and their struggle against capitalism.

There are important similarities between the experience of united front and the idea behind socialists' multi-tendency organisations. The motive for both movements is the working class and its need for unity. Both cases also support

unity in action from below as opposed to agreements from above by the leadership or parliamentarians.

The main differences between the two experiences are the question of the communist party's hegemony. Whereas the united front was a tactic to increase the party's chances of capturing political power, a multi-tendency organisation is not a tactic serving the leadership of any party or a tendency within it.

Socialist alliance in the UK and alliances in third world countries

The difference between Western socialist alliances and third world socialist alliances is similar to the difference between Western socialist parties and third world socialist parties. In fact, the differences results from the different socio-political realities they face. That is to say, they differ mainly in their political programmes, tactics, and strategies. For the Socialist Alliance in the UK, parliamentary activity is a much more open avenue than the IWLU, the Turkish socialist alliance, or any other alliance in Latin America. It must be noted though, the political reality of the third world is changing. The expansion of Western democracy to the third world makes open activity a more viable type of activity for the left and allows political socialist organisations to use those public channels. However, this is far from an established democracy where socialists have the chance to participate in parliaments. Therefore, the strategy of left alliances in third world countries cannot be based on parliamentary activity, but rather more direct working class organisations and actions. It is because of this reality that the process of the alliances' formation in the third world is so slow and painful. In the UK the main problems facing socialists are the differences and various preferences of leftist groups to overcome the problems of how to radicalize the liberalized working class movement. In the third world there are different obstacles. Dictatorial regimes and their oppression even after democratisation by the Western powers (as in the case of Afghanistan) lack of any

independent working class organisations; and consequently a very low level of class and political consciousness add to the list of problems.

To sum up, it is necessary to consider a list of the common characteristics of the new multi-tendency organisations in the UK, Brazil, Venezuela, Iran, Turkey, etc. It has to be noted that the existence of these organisations varies in many respects. Some of them are established and have become a mass political organisation of the left such as the Brazilian Socialism and Freedom Party (P-SOL), which was the leftist tendency of the Brazilian Workers' Party. Others such as the left umbrella organisation in Iran and Turkey are just about to begin. In spite of these differences all these organisations share many characteristics. In spite of the fact that the Workers' Party in Brazil has moved to the right, the UK's original SA no longer exists, and the two Iranian alliances are facing serious problems these setbacks do not change anything in this theoretical summing up. When the Brazilian Workers' Party moved to the right the leftist tendencies left that party and organised another alliance. So the setback did not go as far as abandoning the idea of a multi-tendency organisation as P-SOL is a socialist alliance. In the UK the setback of the SA resulted in RESPECT and another coalition of socialists and Greens. Throughout this work it has been clear that there would be many hurdles, defeats, setbacks, and triumphs before the finalisation of this model. Until the working class and social movements come up with a better model than multi-tendency organisations, this will be the best alternative available to humanity struggling for a better future. That is to say, the era of traditional parties representing or neglecting the demands of a diverse working class and social groups in a highly complicated society is over. The multi-tendency socialist organisation is the only organisation capable of such a task despite its problems.

Below is a short list of common characteristics of multi-tendency socialist organisations. This list identifies their common features and can be a point of reference in comparative politics in order to compare a multi-tendency socialist organisation with traditional parties, a front, or a social movement. This list can

also be used as a short definition. Just as any organisation has a short set of principles and values, this is a short set of general common principles of multi-tendency socialist organisations.

1- The new organisations should avoid imposing any sort of ideology or heavy programme on the working class. This is mainly based upon the famous Marxian idea that the emancipation of the working class is realised by the working class itself. The advocates of multi-tendency organisations in Iran argued that they consciously left many questions unanswered. Though it is clear these organisations had an anti-capitalist stand and their daily policies and tactics were clearly leftist, they did not put their definition of terms such as socialism, workers' state, etc into their basic programme. Michael Löwy wrote a great deal about the Brazilian Workers' Party. He believed "the reason is that the new party in Brazil prefers a situation where all activists obtain some degree of political experience before working on a particular ideology."³⁵ One can say it mainly arose from the fact that the new organisations were collections of many ideologies. The only realistic way of maintaining unity was not to heavily emphasise ideology.

2 - These umbrella organisations were initiated from working class activists as a result of their political experiences, in particular of the defeat of social democracy and Stalinism. Wherever radical independent trade union leaders took the initiative of forming a left-wing political organisation, they gathered the support of most of the radical non-Stalinist socialist groups and united around the common policies of the umbrella organisation. Two good examples are the Brazilian PT and British SA.

3 - Unlike the bureaucratic methods of party organisation that generated its power from the centre, the multi-tendency socialist organisation's power rested upon its base units. In fact, the new organisation was based (to a great extent) on Luxemburg's idea that the working class' action leads it to socialism. No iron

wall separated these new organisations from the working masses, as was usually the case with Stalinist parties. It was not a coincidence that Stalinist parties became more and more isolated from the political movements of workers, women, youth, environmentalists, human rights campaigners, permanently unemployed, etc.

4 - Within all these organisations there were two main tendencies. The first believed that the political formation of the working class had to take the form of an umbrella organisation. According to this view, a multi-tendency organisation would arise from the reality of the working class and its struggle. Only this form would answer the needs of a movement with such diversity. The other main tendency refuted this argument and emphasised the need to build a working class party within the umbrella organisation. According to this view, only a well-disciplined organised communist party within a bigger socialist organisation could implement the tasks of a socialist revolution under a present capitalist system.

5 - Unlike social democratic and Stalinist parties, multi-tendency organisations, while maintaining their radical anti-capitalist approach, were trying to remain as open and modern as possible. They understood that secrecy and political censorship were not in their favour. In other words, they understood the shortcomings of Stalinist organisational methods and tried to employ open and legal avenues available to them. On the other hand, by maintaining their socialist approach they tried to prevent dissolving into liberal democracy and bourgeois parliamentarism, as was the case with social democracy.

6 - Though these new organisations criticised most of the well known political deviations such as liberalism, parliamentarism, bureaucratism, and dogmatism in their routine activities, there were some dangers that threatened them. These threats mainly came from within the organisation and their contradictions that

were routed in the reality of the working class movement and its diversity. This explains the right turns of Lula in Brazil and Ortega in Nicaragua.

7 - The formation of these new umbrella organisations is not limited to one country. The working class and socialist activists in more and more countries have found this new experience suitable for their model of development. In all those countries their formation was based on a common strategy rather than a common ideology. Whereas openness and democracy had a direct relationship to the rapid expansion of the new multi-tendency organisation, censorship and oppression had an indirect relationship to such expansion. In other words, the more censorship that existed the less the working masses participated in the organisation.

The fact that these organisations did not emphasise their socialist ideology does not suggest that they lacked any idea about socialism. As mentioned above and as appearing in the interview in appendix 2 with an activist of IWLU, they believed in socialism but their socialism was radically different from the existing so-called socialism of the USSR in the 20th century.

Summary

During the second half of the 20th century the inability of the traditional party and guerrilla warfare as two methods of organisations to help working class and other poor social groups organise themselves resulted in the social movement looking for a different method of political organisation. Guerrilla movements in Latin America and the Middle East were a radical reaction of revolutionary youth and students to the revisionism of the Stalinist parties and betrayal of Stalinism and social democracy. However that reaction carried some important weaknesses of traditional parties. It did not solve the problem of the historical gap between the traditional party and working class movement. It became part of the problem.

As early as 1980 the Brazilian Workers' Party, as an important example of a socialist multi-tendency organisation, offered a new model of political organisation. This model soon expanded to other countries in Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East. Unlike previous models the multi-tendency socialist organisation, while struggling for socialism and a worker's state, based its socialism on the widest possible democracy and the rule of workers and poor organised in their independent organisations. The three elements of socialism, democracy, and the self rule of workers' organisations were three common principles of all socialist multi-tendency organisations.

There was a major difference between multi-tendency organisations and all kinds of traditional parties and guerrilla organisations. The starting point of a multi-tendency organisation was not ideology which resulted in a heavy programme. This was not a top down hierarchical organisation. The internal relations in this organisation were horizontal and power did not originate from its centre at the top. In this organisation there was potential for exercising socialist pluralism. All local units, affiliated organisations, personalities, and activists had their say in its process of decision making. The horizontal relation between the multi-tendency organisation's members prevented extreme centralisation and bureaucratisation.

The greatest problem facing these new organisations was not their inability to organise the working class in dictatorial regimes. Those parties that had their secret organisations and were at the same time members of the multi-tendency organisation could have done that task in such societies. The greatest problem demonstrated in Brazil and other countries in Latin America was the organisations' inability to hold on to their radical anti-capitalist policies after capturing political power. Whether this is a temporary problem and can be stopped when they manage to rule in several countries in the region and the world remains to be seen.

In spite of a few setbacks in Europe as discussed in this work the multi-tendency socialist organisation is the only political model that the working class and poor social groups can trust for their emancipation. This is the most important political organisation for the hopeful future of the working class. In the last thirty years the idea and theory of multi-tendency socialist organisation has been polished and furbished to a great extent. This process has progressed a great deal but has not been finalised. The 16 principles of the Campaign for a Marxist Party in the UK, the registration of the P-SOL as an independent party in Brazil, and the creation of Socialism and Revolution Party in Venezuela are examples of this progress.

Notes

- 1 Tony Cliff, “Democratic Revolution or Socialist Revolution,” *Marxism At the Millennium*, (London: Bookmarks Publications Ltd, 2000), 73.
- 2 Stephen Hellman, “The Left and the Decomposition of the Party System in Italy,” *Socialist Register* (1993): 195-197.
In 1990 the Italian Communist Party changed its name to the Democratic Socialist Party (PDS), which resulted in a major split in the party.
- 3 The UK Socialist Alliance was a coalition formed in 2001. This coalition was supported by fifteen socialist groups and organisations including: Socialist Workers Party (SWP), Communist Party of Great Britain, Workers Power, Socialist Party of England and Wales, Red Action, Workers International, Alliance for Workers’ Liberty, etc. A disagreement between various organisations over the structure of the alliance resulted in split. The alliance eventually disband after 2003.
- 4 William I. Robinson, “Is There a New Latin American Left,” *Monthly Review*, December 1992. Farsi translation in *Reorganisation of the Left*, P.45
- 5 “The Future of Socialist Alliance,” The Contribution of the Socialist Workers Party to the Debate on Structure (2001): 4. SA Pre Conference Bulletin.
- 6 “Socialist Party’s Contribution to the Debate on the Structure of Socialist Alliance (SA),” *SA Pre-Conference Bulletin* (2001). As far as this study is concerned, the fact that shortly after this debate the SP left the SA, the SA did not survive as predicted in this study, the SWP supported RESPCT coalition after the failure of the SA, the SP joined a different coalition, and the CPGB eventually joined the Campaign for a New Marxist Party in late 2006 does not

undermine the main argument put forward in this work. Out of all these changes the real coalition of the radical left will emerge.

- 7 Robin Markarian, "Brazilin Workers' Party a Historical Introduction," *The Reorganisation of the Left* (n.d.) 90. This is a collection of articles either written in Farsi or translated from English into Farsi.
- 8 Ibid, P. 108.
- 9 Ibid, P.108.
- 10 Ibid, P. 109.
- 11 "ORWI Programme for Freedom, Democracy and Socialism in Iran," *International Rahe Kargar* (May-June 1992): 1. The Organisation of Revolutionary Workers of Iran (ORWI) is also known as Rahe Kargar.
- 12 Ibid
- 13 "A report from the First Congress of ORWI," *International Rahe Kargar* 54 (November 1991): 2.
- 14 Robin Markarian, "Brazilin Workers' Party a Historical Introduction," *Reorganisation of the Left* (n. d.), 113.
- 15 Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1972), 59.
- 16 Ibid, P.57.
- 17 Mohammad Reza Shalgoni, *Which Socialism Do We Want*, Farsi Edition,

Minority Fedaie publisher, p.35.

- 18 Hillel Ticktin, "What Will a Socialist Society Be Like," *Critique* 25 (1993): 159.

- 19 Rosa Luxemburg, *Russian Revolution and Leninism or Marxism*, (publishing city: University of Michigan Press, 1961), 77-8.

- 20 Karl Marx, "Inaugural Address of the Working Men's International Association," *Selected Works*, Vol.1 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1951), 348.

- 21 Quoted by Norman Geras, "Democracy and the End of Marxism," *New Left Review* 203 (Jan/Feb 1994): 95.

- 22 Hillel Ticktin, "What Will A Socialist Society Be Like," *Critique* 25 (1993): 150.

- 23 Ibid, P. 154.

On 4th November 2006 a Campaign for a New Marxist Party was launched in a conference that was supported by some editors of *Critique*, the CPGB (Weekly Worker), the Democratic Socialist Alliance (DSA), New Interventions, and the Republican Democratic Group (RDG) in the UK. The campaign's emphasis against the market in their definition of socialism is a great step forward compared to the previous alliances; however, how long this campaign and indeed its radical understanding of socialism will survive remains to be seen.

- 24 Ibid, P. 157

At the end of 2007 the idea and practice of multi-tendency organisations has moved on as was expected. The Workers' Party in Brazil, in power for

its second term, has to a great extent moved to the right. The leadership of this party has compromised with the IMF and implemented neo-liberal policies. Many radical elements disappointed by this practice have left the party and are involved in the formation of the Party of Socialism and Freedom. In Iran a tendency within the WLU has moved on and argues for a Marxist party. In the UK the Socialist Alliance experienced a major set back. While the SWP and many others support the formation of the Unity Coalition of RESPECT in 2004, in 2005 the Socialist Party and other smaller groups re-launched the new Socialist Alliance and chose to join a Green Socialist project. The Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGP) is involved in the Campaign for a New Marxist Party. The coalitions and splits of the last decade proves that almost all multi-tendency organisations are at the beginning of their long campaign and nothing is finalised.

- 25 Alan Thornett, *From Militancy to Marxism*, (Oxford: DOT Press, 1987), 31-33. Alan Thornett is a member of RESPECT in the UK.
- 26 Ali Ashtyani, *The Formation of Working Class in Iran*, Farsi edition, (Hannover: Iranian Refugee Workers' Association, 1994), 14.
- 27 Ibid, P.15
- 28 When the SA was formed 401 trade unionists joined the alliance. Compare this to the alliance's national members of around 1,300 before the first national conference. It is more than 25% of the registered members at the national level.
- 29 "Point 8, Minority Fedaie Programme," *What Do We Want* (September 1992), 2. This document is available in Farsi.

- 30 Mike Marqusee, "Labour's Long March To The Right," *International Socialism* 91 (Summer 2001): 35.
- 31 Leon Trotsky, "On the United Front," *The First 5 Years of the Comintern*, Vol. 2 (New York: Pioneer Publishers), 91- 93.
- 32 Ibid
- 33 Ibid
- 34 Ibid
- 35 Michael Löwy, "The New Party," *Bidar* (1995): 19.

CONCLUSION

Political parties, like any other entity, influence society, and at the same time, are influenced by society. In the long run any changes in society can alter the qualities and characteristics of a political party. To put it differently, the relationship between political parties and civil society is similar to the relationship between the state and civil society; the difference being civil society exerts greater influence on political parties than it does on the state. As discussed in earlier chapters, the structure of capitalist societies changed considerably during the 20th century. In particular, during the last three decades of the 20th century capitalism changed to such an extent, the likes of which had never been seen before. Influenced by these changes, the nature, effectiveness, ability, and the function of the working class' political parties altered considerably during the second half of the 20th century. During the 20th century, the most influential political parties in the working class movement were the pro-Russian so-called communist parties and European social democratic parties. As expected these parties changed from liberators to oppressors (as in the case of Stalinist parties) and from opposing the system to becoming the saviour of the dominant capitalist system (as in the case of social democracy.)

At the beginning of the 20th century, Lenin preferred a smaller political party made up of experienced cadres who were capable of fighting Tsarist police. *Iskra* wrote: "In despotically ruled countries, socialist groups must adopt the principle of rigid and secret conspiratorial organisation and remain confined to a small number of members."¹ The Russian Bolsheviks as a relatively small but very effective party were able to lead the Russian working class as early as April 1917, and successfully destroy the old state machine in the October revolution. This proved that Lenin's idea of the party worked at least in countries similar to Russia in the first half of the 20th century. But two points need to be mentioned. Firstly, Lenin's idea of the party could not be generalised and applied to all societies even at the beginning of the 20th century. In fact, as early as the 1905 Revolution,

Trotsky and later Luxemburg criticised his idea of a centralised party of cadres. As a result of the criticism he received, Lenin's idea of the party improved. That is to say, he developed his model of a mass centralised working class party that contained the most important revolutionary tendencies within workers' activists. Secondly, unlike the repressive Russian state, where revolutionaries became the majority among the Russian social democrats, revolutionaries were a relatively small fraction of social democrats in almost all other European countries.

The question of majority and minority in the working class movement was not about quantity rather it is a qualitative measure. Essentially it was a question of which strategy the proletariat should follow, revolutionary or reformist. The fact that in the entire Western hemisphere revolutionaries composed a small fraction of all major social democratic parties leads to two theoretical conclusions. The first is that social democracy ceased to be the real representative of the proletariat. The third chapter discussed how social democracy in Western Europe did not use the revolutionary tide to lead the anti-capitalist revolution and in fact, defended capitalism, its war, and exploitation during the crisis of 1915-1923. The second conclusion, which is equally important, is that the European proletariat could not be represented by revolutionary ideas. The changes in the working class' structure discussed in chapter one accounted for this. In Russia, at the beginning of the 20th century, industrial working men and women comprised the majority of the population in the main centres, such as Moscow and St. Petersburg. Influenced by the radicalism of the Bolshevik party, they became the agents of radical changes in the social order. Although in many European countries the size of the industrial working population was much bigger than their Russian counterpart, a radical revolutionary party did not lead the European working population in any of those countries. Today during the first decade of the 21st century the industrial working class represents a relatively small minority of the working class in all countries. The revolutionary political party of the working class has also shrunk into small groups. Therefore, the objective and subjective conditions for a Russian October type of revolution hardly exist in any country.

Lenin devoted his efforts to establishing a party capable of leading the Russian proletariat. He correctly believed that “unless the masses of workers are organized, they are nothing. Organized – the proletariat is everything.”² He valued the embryonic organisation of the party in 1905 and defended it tooth and nail to overcome amateurism, localism, and the disunity of the Russian working class movement.

The principal feature of our movement...is its state of disunity and its amateur character, if one may so express it. Local circles spring up, and function in almost complete isolation from circles in other districts and even from circles that have functioned and now function simultaneously in the same districts.³

To understand why Lenin was so passionate about party organisation, it is enough to say, “between 1895 and 1902, the social democratic groups in Moscow survived, on average, no more than three months.”⁴ The arrest of these groups by the tsarist police resulted in a lack of continuity in the working class’ movements. This condition explains why Lenin emphasised the necessity for a paper that was not only for propaganda and agitation purposes, but also and more importantly, it was a means of uniting the activities of all social democratic circles. Trotsky, Martov and Plekhanov published *Iskra* when Lenin returned from Siberia in exile. He tried to turn *Iskra* into such a tool. Lenin defended the mass party of the working class and suggested the formula of freedom in discussion and unity in action during the 1905 Revolution, which was a huge step forward in his understanding of the centralised working class party. It was the intense pressure of the political police, mass arrest of activists, and discontinuity in the improvement of the working class struggle that resulted in his method put forward in *What Is To Be Done?* as his defensive organisational strategy.

Russian Revolution

Until April 1917, the major differences between the fractions of the Russian social democrats had nothing to do with the nature of the coming revolution as both fractions agreed that it was a bourgeois democratic revolution. The main disagreement between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks concerned tactics and methods of organisation. In explaining the nature of the coming revolution, Lenin emphasised the dictatorship of proletariat and peasantry, which was different from the proletariat and poor peasantry. The Mensheviks changed their viewpoint after 1905 and argued for the leadership of the Liberal bourgeoisie, while Trotsky argued that the revolution might begin in a bourgeois form but that it had to become socialist in order to succeed. One can argue that Lenin accepted Trotsky's ideas about the coming revolution in his April Thesis although he did not use the theory of permanent revolution. That is to say, on the threshold of the October Revolution, though the Bolsheviks emphasised the leadership of the working class, they widely believed that they should implement the unfinished tasks of the bourgeois revolution. In a relatively short period from May to September 1917, the Bolsheviks who were trusted by the urban working class more than the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs) while preparing themselves to capture the state power were also discussing among themselves the socialist nature of their revolution based on Lenin's thesis in April. That was a very unique situation that might not be repeated anywhere else. The consequence of certain conditions in the Russian Revolution was the domination of revolutionary ideas over the working class movement. This uniqueness is shown by the following questions.

It is not clear that if the Bolsheviks had a socialist programme from 1903 onward that they would have become a popular party. If Lenin was not able to convince the party to change its programme, then the relationship between the Bolsheviks and other parties could have been different. In other words, if the Bolsheviks were able to attract the cooperation of the Mensheviks and SRs, and if a socialist

alliance were created, then such an alliance could have carried out the post-revolutionary tasks. "The Bolshevik Party in 1914 had 4,000 members. After the February 1917 revolution they had 23,000 members. In August 1917 they had a quarter of a million."⁵ If the Bolsheviks had used direct socialist slogans between 1914 and 1917 instead of the slogans for peace and land, they would not have grown as fast as they had in such a short period. If Lenin was not able to change the bourgeois democratic nature of the Bolshevik party programme, there would not have been any talk of a socialist revolution. The Bolshevik party managed to improve its programme from dictatorship of proletariat and peasantry to the dictatorship of proletariat and poor peasants. But the cost of this improvement was to lose the possible partnership of the Mensheviks and SRs. This was a contradiction, which was revealed by the Constitution Assembly election. Lenin could have put his April Thesis before the soviets rather than the party for a public debate. The entire country including all the major parties could have participated in that debate. Though he threatened the party to do so, party leaders gave up and accepted the thesis. One reason the Bolshevik party leaders did not challenge Lenin's ideas any longer was that for them the party could lose its place as the most important revolutionary organisation for leading the revolution and the soviets. If Lenin had put his April Thesis before the soviets instead of the party, the Bolshevik party might still have led the revolution, taken power, and used it to help the world revolution. It is important to remember that for Lenin and Trotsky that was the sole purpose of the October Revolution. It was not to build socialism in one country.

The Bolshevik party, as the leader of the revolution and a minority in the assembly, had lost the option of a coalition government. The Bolshevik party's decision to rule in spite of the popular vote showed the essence of its policy's contradiction. The party decision to rule directly and implement socialism appeared to be in opposition to Russian society's democratic vote. These are some examples of the many questions that point to the unique circumstances that surrounded the Russian Revolution. A revolution that carried with it an important

contradiction! During the six months prior to the revolution, the Bolshevik party gained popularity because of their policies concerning land and peace, as well as their radicalism. However, the sudden change in the party's programme affected its strategic relations with other leftist parties. The party's socialist programme harmed the economy, the party, and the country as a whole. The programme could not be put into practice and by 1922 it had officially been undermined by NEP. A programme initiated by the party and imposed on society from above could not have had any other ending. If the workers', soldiers' and peasant's councils had initiated a socialist programme from below instead, then all the major parties would have had to have gone ahead with it. Real democracy could have flourished instead of Stalinist political oppression.

The Bolshevik party considered itself above the soviet state, which contradicted its slogan of "all power to the soviets." Lenin defined the soviets as the essence of the new revolutionary state whereas the party, regardless of its radicalism and revolutionary outlook, belonged to the realm of bourgeois society. Placing the party above the soviets after the capture and transfer of power was much more than just a contradiction. It was the essence of all the problems which transpired later in the soviet system.

From the point of view of general socio-politics just like the capitalist class, which is divided into various industrial, financial, trade and commerce sectors (each part being more or less represented by a political party) the working class is also divided into various sections. Working conditions, political awareness, and class unity (among the industrial, service, and agricultural sections of the working class) are not equal. As a result, just like the capitalist class, which creates various political parties, these parties co-exist in a pluralistic bourgeois democracy. Different parties represent the working class and these parties co-exist in a pluralistic socialist democracy. Such pluralism did not develop in socialist Russia in the early 20th century because of the sectarian nature and factionalism of political parties involved in the workers' movement from 1917 onwards. The

Social Democrats' disunity clearly demonstrated the degree of sectarianism in Russia from 1903 up until 1912 and 1916. However, to understand how sectarianism was rooted in the Russian social democracy one example from the leadership of the Bolshevik party helps. After Trotsky reunited with the Bolsheviks, Lenin described him as their best asset. How was it possible for someone to be the best Bolshevik when he opposed the Bolsheviks for more than ten years? Either Lenin did not mean what he said or Trotsky had always been the best Bolshevik in spite of the fact that he was not in the party. Why didn't Lenin consider Martov or any of the other political leaders who believed in freedom and socialism as the best of the Bolsheviks? The answer (more than anything else) was the sectarianism of political parties including the Bolshevik party. In 1917 Lenin was asked what kept him apart from Trotsky for so long and he replied, ambition, ambition, ambition. The personal ambition of political leaders usually goes hand in hand with their political sectarianism. The cause of such levels of sectarianism cannot be fully investigated in this work. However, the next section looks briefly at the relationship between the party and soviets as one consequence of sectarianism.

The Party and soviets

A brief look into the relationship between workers' councils and the Bolsheviks explains the sectarianism of the Bolshevik party in Russia. The idea of the soviet, like any other great idea, sprang from the masses. In this case, it came from the factories and workshops of St. Petersburg. These soviets belonged to and consisted of all workers including, socialist and non-socialist, party members and non-party members, religious and non-religious, etc. They led most of the workers' strikes in 1905. Menshevik theorists, such as Martov, Dan, and Axelrod explained their approach and the way they saw the soviets. The Mensheviks opposed Lenin's idea of the party and its main thesis of the professional revolutionary. In the spring of 1905, Axelrod explained his idea of an all Russian

workers' congress as opposed to a working class party. With the formation of the first workers' soviet, the Mensheviks called it the organ of workers' self rule. Martov (the main Menshevik theorist) said these organs were the means of pressure from below against an autocracy that had no intention of calling a Constitutional Assembly. According to R. Farahani in *Soviets in Russian Revolution*, in September 1905 Dan wrote in the Menshevik's *Iskra*: when this tactic succeeds, a network of these revolutionary self-ruling organs would cover the whole country. Dan added that the confederation of soviets provided a political tribune for the whole country and it should not be ignored. Thus, for the Mensheviks, the soviets were a means of pressure from below. They considered them a revolutionary parliament of workers and they favoured the soviets over the party. However, the Mensheviks failed to recognise the relationship between the soviets and the revolutionary situation in 1905. The main Menshevik theorists did not mention any relationship between the soviets and the temporary nature of revolutionary state.

In Russia, the Bolsheviks, who were totally devoted to the idea of the party and its independence, did not welcome the leading role of the St. Petersburg's soviet in the general strike. Radin (the Bolshevik representative in the St. Petersburg's soviet) in his article, "The Party or Soviets" in *Novaia zhizn*, suggested that the soviets should accept the RSDLP's programme and obey its leadership. The Bolsheviks in St. Petersburg followed Radin's line of argument. Even the federative party committee in which the Bolsheviks had the majority accepted this line. But the Mensheviks and SR's did not accept it and talked against it everywhere.

In Stockholm, at the beginning of November, two weeks after the formation of the St Petersburg soviet, while returning to Russia Lenin looked at this phenomenon in his article, "The Soviet of Workers' Representatives and Our Tasks." In this article Lenin rejected Radin's view and wrote something that became the basis for his fully elaborated idea of the soviets in the years after the 1905 Revolution.

According to Lenin, the soviets consisted of all of the workers involved in the struggle and not just the vanguard of social democratic workers. Lenin insisted that it was irrational to ask the soviets to accept a party programme or to join the party. In his view, the party and soviets were equal in the political leadership of the revolution. Lenin added that with the information available to him, politically, the workers' represented soviet needed to be considered as the essence of a temporary revolutionary state. The characterisation of the soviets as the essence of the future revolutionary state was the basis for Lenin's thesis on the soviet system in 1917. In *Anarchism and Socialism* Lenin opposed the Menshevik idea of the soviet as the organ of workers' self rule. As a point of opposition, Lenin explained that the self rule organism and the election of a representative by the people was not a pre-condition but the last episode of an uprising.

In spite of the fact that Lenin's idea was the most radical available to the Russian proletariat, the proletariat did not necessarily welcome the behaviour and ideas of other Bolshevik leaders. The St. Petersburg's party committee in which the Bolsheviks were the majority, treated the soviets in an unquestionably bureaucratic and sectarian way. This sectarianism, despite Lenin's effort and influence, did not completely disappear. This sectarianism also helps explain how after 1923 Stalin managed to reduce the power of the soviets and eventually eliminate their power. His understanding of the relation between the party and soviets more or less followed Radin's 1905 line. For Stalin, the proletariat without the socialist ideal meant nothing and this ideal according to Lenin's earlier teachings could only emerge from outside the working class in the party. However, this factor is not the only explanation for Stalin's elimination of soviet rule in 1923.

One can explain the absence of democracy in Russia under Lenin by at least three factors. Firstly, the peasants constituted the vast majority of the population. Their rejection of the Bolsheviks left no option for Lenin except undemocratic direct party rule. The fact that the SR obtained a great majority of the seats in the

Constitutional Assembly proves that the Bolshevik rulers were rejected by the peasantry in spite of their achievement among the urban working class. Secondly, it is equally important to note that from 1917 to 1921 the country faced the threat of foreign invasion and a bloody civil war that sapped all the energy from the Bolshevik workers. Thirdly, the Bolshevik's perception of democracy was also responsible for the absence of democracy in Russia under Lenin. Earlier this chapter discussed the way in which the Bolsheviks viewed the relationship between their party and the soviets.

The Bolsheviks fought for the supremacy of the workers' and soldiers' councils. However, they could not solve the serious problem created by the decision of the council movement. The decision favoured the SRs and rejected the Bolshevik party. Firstly, this movement had not developed everywhere. It was limited to certain areas such as the main political centres. Secondly, even in areas where civil society had developed in Russia, due to its backwardness, the councils did not choose the radical policies of the Bolsheviks. On the one hand, the Bolsheviks emphasised socialist slogans such as all power to the soviets, while on the other hand, when the soviets did not choose the Bolsheviks for the Constitutional Assembly, the Bolsheviks vetoed their decisions. This dilemma can only be explained by the Bolshevik's sectarian policies after they gained power in 1917.

Other revolutions

In almost all other countries the pattern of party development was different from that of Russia. For example, in China the peasants were the agents of the revolution. The party slogans were completely different and the international arena was more favourable to the party's success. Mao's idea of let one hundred flowers blossom, let a hundred schools of thought contend (as the policy for promoting progress in arts and sciences and a flourishing socialist culture in China) allowed the greatest alliance between socialists. Furthermore, the communist party alliance with Kuomintang turned out to favour the further

growth of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Therefore, in China the growth and development of the communist party was to a great extent based on the party's strategy against imperialism, warlords, the tax regime, exploitation of the peasants, and for the unification of the country as a whole. These were all democratic slogans. In China, unlike Russia, socialists were united in one party and were in a coalition with the nationalist Kuomintang for nearly a decade. There is a similarity between this coalition policy and Gramsci's strategy of the block of classes discussed in chapter two. During those years the poorer peasant supporters of the Kuomintang realised their interests, were better represented by the CCP, and joined it.

In Vietnam the aim and slogans of the revolution were also democratic in nature. Independence, unity of the country, and land reform were all bourgeois democratic slogans. In addition, the Communist Party of Vietnam was the leading force in a larger alliance of democratic forces. In both Vietnam and Cuba, it was only after the revolution that the communist party announced its communist nature. This is a very interesting point. After the political success in both countries and under the influence of Stalinist Russia instead of expanding their political base, sharing power with the masses of poor peasants, workers, etc the leading political parties called themselves communist parties and concentrated power in the communist party. While the Bolshevik party was pushed to rule directly under very exceptional circumstances, these parties found direct party rule a virtue.

The Bolsheviks declared their direct socialist slogan of "all power to the soviets" before the October revolution. A successful revolution did not take place in any country that used socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat as their main slogans, with the exception of Russia. This is a very important lesson for all socialists. Wherever communists managed to capture political power they were acting as part of the democratic forces. In fact wherever communists captured political power, their success directly resulted from the strategy of greater

alliances with democratic forces. Apart from a handful of successful examples, wherever communists tried to organise the working class for socialism, even in cooperation with other democratic forces, they faced massacre, severe oppression, and terror. In Iraq, Iran, Indonesia, Algeria, Egypt, etc. the repression used against the communists was extreme. Capitalism could not afford another urban revolution similar to the Russian Revolution. For this reason, the harshest measures were used to defeat communist revolutionaries. As a result of the brutal measures taken against revolutionaries, the communists in Latin America chose to raise arms as their revolutionary method. They had realised that an anti-capitalist socialist urban revolution based on general strikes was no longer a viable method. Capitalist states were prepared to prevent a revolution from happening again at any price. Thus, after the experience of Russia neither the bourgeois class and its ever more complicated state using more sophisticated methods of suppression, nor the diversity of the proletariat in bourgeois society would have allowed any political communist party to organise the great majority of the population, gain political power, and reorganise socio-economic relations based on the direct socialist principle.

Another aspect of the Leninist party can be seen by analysing the situation in early 20th century Russia. The SR obtained the majority in the Constitutional Assembly. However, after the Bolshevik party's decision to dissolve the assembly the Mensheviks and the SR became alienated. In spite of the uniqueness of the Russian Revolution the alienation of those parties from political power was one of the main reasons for later Stalinist oppression. What can be done to prevent the alienation of various sections of socialists? The correct answer to this question determined the success or failure of any radical socialist. On the one hand, Lenin had no choice but to dissolve the assembly in order to continue the revolution. On the other hand, the Mensheviks's and SR's alienation damaged the unity of progressive forces in the long term and prepared the way for Stalinist tyranny. One has to understand that the development of the Russian Revolution and its consequences, to a great extent, related to the fact that one of the socialist

parties had the leading role and the rest of the political parties were alienated. This reality, regardless of the party's intentions and good faith, and regardless of the ruling party's policies was bound to end in disaster. In Russia the disaster appeared in the form of Stalinist oppression.

If the Leninist party was able to single handily capture state power at the beginning of the 20th century in Russia, the same would not be possible a century later. At the beginning of the 21st century, the survival of the Leninist party, let alone capturing state power, faces a big question mark in many countries not only because of severe suppression but more importantly as a result of the socio-economic changes in the capitalist world and its effect on the working class. Previous chapters discussed the effect of unemployment, computerisation, globalisation, the structural changes of capital, and their impact on workers' militancy. The political impact of all those socio-economic changes put a question mark on the success and survival of the disciplined Leninist party.

In the 21st century, civil society is stronger than it was during the 20th century. People are more aware of socio-political processes and their demands are clearer. As a result, a Leninist party in the 21st century appears anachronistic. That is to say, it has the potential of being out of touch with the already unionised working class, as well as being sectarian, and bureaucratic. It was based on this potential that Stalin managed to turn the revolutionary Bolshevik party into a monstrous bureaucratic party that suffocated all revolutionary initiatives in Russian society. The point is that even without these problems it is not possible for a traditional party to entirely represent a relatively complicated and diverse society regardless of its standpoint unless the party relies totally on repression to prolong its rule as in the case of the Ba'ath party in the Arab republics, or the parties of dictatorial regimes in some African countries.

Finance capital and the proletariat's traditional political party

The Russian Revolution happened after an important change in the structure of capital. Economists such as Rudolf Hilferding (one of the leaders and theoreticians of German social democracy and the Second International) and Lenin described how by 1914 banking and industrial capital joined and formed finance capital. The formation of finance capital gave extraordinary power to capital as a whole. It is widely accepted that the misery of millions of people in two world wars was deeply connected to the formation of finance capital, the changes in the structure of capital, and between the powerful rivals in the capitalist world. If this theory is correct, then one needs to understand that finance capital, its formation and operation is directly related to war, misery, oppression, dictatorship, censorship, unemployment, and all other major illnesses of late capitalism as a system such as racism, drugs, and crime. It does not require exceptional intelligence to work out why hundreds of millions of dollars is spent on football clubs, footballers, tennis players, golf stars, singers, boxers, supermodels, clubs, night clubs, actors, TV showmen, poor quality programmes, porn stars, casinos, bookmakers, etc. After 1973 more than 50% of the GDP of all major industrialised countries started to shift from the productive sector toward these unproductive activities as a result of capitalists' greed and thirst for more profits that could be found easier in these areas compared to the industrial sector.

The decline in the rate of profit in the production sector after the post-war boom had three main consequences. The first was the search for ways to reduce the costs of production such as the shift of operations from the core to semi-peripheral and peripheral zones in the expectation of reducing the cost of labour. The second was a considerable shift of investment from productive activities to the financial sphere in the search for profit. The third was the turn to increased military expenditure.

The shift from productive activity to financial sphere led to the well-documented series of financial takeovers of major corporations and the flourishing of junk bonds made all the more possible by the weakened profit position of major corporations. Of course, these financial manipulations also had the consequence of precipitating additional difficulties in the now heavily debt-laden private sector, with collapses that were quite costly in the long term, as in the case of the US savings-and-loan bankruptcies.⁶

After the Second World War finance capital, already the dominant part of capital became a dreadful power whose destructive force was incomparable to earlier epochs. The counter revolutionary reforms of the ruling class from above, during 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, in many third world countries, prepared the way for finance capital's activities. The depreciation of the national currencies in those countries with acceptance of all conditions imposed by the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of the World Bank and IMF, removed all obstacles and cleared the way for the accession of foreign capital. Western capital poured into those countries in the form of foreign loans, conditional aid, and unproductive activities such as the stock market. In less than two decades the foreign debt of countries such as Egypt and Brazil increased to the extent that they were not even able to repay the interest on loans and their economies stooped. Even the munificence of the World Bank and IMF could not save them. The result could not have been anything but a series of military coups in Brazil during the 1970s and the rise of political Islam in Egypt to the point that they were able to assassinate President Sadat after his recognition and visit to Israel in 1973. Going into the details of the problems caused by the activity of the parasitic nature of finance capital in different countries is not the main purpose of this study. The aim of this study is to understand the effect of such activities on the working class struggle on a national and world scale.

The activities of the World Bank, IMF, and other private financial centres created important changes in the conditions of the class struggle between the world proletariat and bourgeoisie. These changes and their deep impact are more visible in developing countries. Finance capital enters the target country with some

conditions, regardless of the form of its entrance. The security and return of the capital interest are the two determining factors that put a shadow over any meeting, agreement, and contract between the donors and receivers of the loan. It is these factors that determine the terms of the loan. The preparation of the best possible conditions to procure and acquire foreign capital is the responsibility of the country that receives the loan. Repressive dictatorial regimes make sure such conditions are met.

The preparation of the necessary conditions requires both political and economic measures. There is always heavy political pressure on socialists to keep them out of power, and to make sure that they do not reach the working class in Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. A profit of less than 40% in the industrial sector results in the closure of non-profitable industries and capital's shift into the more profitable finance sector. This will result in increasing the already large numbers of unemployed, which increases the pressure on the working class movement. If the needs of finance capital require it, agriculture subsidies will also be cut. This again results in greater misery for poor peasant families resulting in more people searching for jobs under the worst conditions. On top of all these socio-political measures the dictatorial regimes in the third world have the pleasure of organising human massacres of those who might endanger their neo-liberal project. In Iran in the summer of 1988 thousands of political prisoners were secretly executed when the Islamic Republic tried to restart the unfinished Structural Adjustment Programme disturbed by the Iranian revolution of 1979. In many third world countries in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East dictatorial regimes prepared the way for pro-Western parliamentary democracies and ensured that the socialists had no voice in the newly imposed parliamentary system. In Iraq in 1958 the Iraq Communist Party (ICP) was the largest political party; however in the 2005 elections every effort was used to make sure the communists were unrepresented in the new parliament. In Afghanistan the leftist parties had power for over a decade. Today they have no say in the country's affairs : it is as if they do not exist.

Many of the key events of the 21st century are connected to finance capital, which is a declining form of capital. These events include:

- The failed military coup in Equatorial Guinea organised by a former British Prime minister's son who was a key figure in big arms deals and finance capital;
- In the early 1970s, many successful military coups in Chile and Brazil;
- Years of the worst repression of the labour movement's activists by military dictatorships such as Pinochet;
- The CIA's unfinished attempts at regime change in Venezuela;
- The direct military attacks of American and British imperialism on Iraq and Afghanistan;
- The CIA's military and financial support of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in the 1990s.

Finance capital's activity has a direct impact on the workers' and women's movements for equality, freedom and real democracy. A careful look at the poor status of the women's movements in Middle Eastern countries supports this point.

The traditional class struggle between the working class and the bourgeoisie, given the manoeuvring power of finance capital, has turned in favour of capital and against the working class. The smallest proletarian class action alerts capital to leave a country or industry and go somewhere that investments will be safe. There is only one way left for the working class to deal with finance capital and that is to obtain state power and impose anti-finance capital rules and regulations. The question is: How does the working class obtain state power if they are barely able to defend their jobs? The answer can be found in its numbers. Finance capital as the declining form of capital is able to overcome the resistance of the industrial workers; however this is not to suggest that it can defeat the resistance of wage and salary earners, who make up more than 80% of the population. It is true that

the industrial working class can no longer capture state power on its own. But it is quite possible for the industrial working class along with other sections of the class to get power and impose anti-finance capital measures.

Structural change and the new organisation

As early as the 1960s workers in the service sector in most advanced capitalist countries surpassed the industrial working class. This change added to the complication of the organisation of the working class. Firstly, service sector employees were more reluctant to join traditional working class organisations. They were more interested in professional clubs than unions. Secondly, unlike workers in the industrial sector, their work was organised in smaller groups and their internal class communications was subject to extra effort and meetings. That is to say, unlike the industrial sector where the factory was a natural basis of trade union organisation and representation (i.e. socialist political activists got a maximum effect for minimum effort), in the service sector smaller numbers of workers worked in any single unit. That is to say, the service workers' work place might not have necessarily been the best place for economic and political organisation. Thirdly, their relatively better working condition reduced their militancy.

Moreover, their different social status led to an identity crisis within some layers of service sector workers. Bank officers, computer programmers, medical scientists, etc were among those groups of the service sector workers who did not identify themselves with the working class and were rarely organised in trade unions. The most recent phenomenon is the appearance of employment agencies in most areas of the service sector. Those who obtain employment through these agencies are poorly organised. They do not have job security, pensions, or rights.

The temporary nature of their employment prevents them from gaining any sense of class solidarity and class action.

The fact that some layers of service sector workers are reluctant to participate in anything that is related to the class war does not suggest that they are not involved or do not get involved in various types of collective action. Some might be active in progressive art, sport, music, or literature. Others might be peace activists, environmentalists, or feminists. It might be difficult to politically organise some social groups in a traditional Leninist party, but it does not necessarily mean that it is impossible to organise them at all.

The new comers

Bringing women into the labour market on the mass scale after the Second World War, although from the standpoint of the women's movement was a major step forward, was another blow to the traditional movement of the working class by the capital. The monopoly of the labour market by male workers and the unconditional support of their female relatives and associates such as wives and family, in their class action before the Second World War is gone forever. The support of the women's movement for the workers' movement is not unconditional. After the May 1968 movement, women discovered their own identity and demanded the workers' and socialist's movements to recognise it. This brings further complications to the working class struggle on every level. At the beginning of the 21st century the women's movement is well aware of its socio-economic needs and is able to interpret those needs into political demands. On many occasions those demands are not identical to the traditional demands of the working class. Moreover, sometimes women's demands are different and even oppose the demands of the working class.

The working class movement for equality and socialism cannot afford to ignore such an important potential ally. But unity of the two ideologies in a single party is impossible. Both movements are aware that united they can gain everything and alone they might lose everything. Such a dilemma can only be solved by an umbrella organisation that consists of women's as well as workers' organisations.

Feminism: A different approach

In a traditional working class party politics and ideology are interchangeable. It is hard to separate the two. Most of the time, the party is engaged in ideological conflict rather than politics. Even in European communist parties where political traditions are very strong, ideology greatly impacts party politics.

In reality, the feminist ideology of the women's movements has cost the working class movement a great deal. There cannot be more than one party ideology in a traditional working class party. Marxism, Leninism, Stalinism, and Maoism, as the official ideologies of traditional parties have not tolerated feminism as the second ideology of their party. The split of the women's movement from the traditional working class movement in the last three decades of the 20th century is directly related to the negative impact of the official ideologies of the communist party. During the second half of the 20th century there was hardly any party acting in the name of the working class that accepted feminism as the second ideology of the party.

In reality both the women's and workers' movements are deeply connected. Firstly, around 50% of the world's labour force is female. Secondly, the freedom of workers is directly the freedom of women, and vice versa. In other words, they have a common future. The great majorities of women are working and therefore have a direct interest in the gains of the working class. However, at the same time women are fighting on several fronts, against employers, the patriarchal society, religious fundamentalism, and the old anti-women conservative tradition. The

working class will never gain its freedom while 50% of the society is still in chains.

The correct political strategy for both movements is to join forces in an organisation that recognises and respects their different ideologies. Such an organisation would be different from the parties that acted in the name of the working class during the 20th century.

Marx, Marxism, and a 21st century party

Marx's remarks about the proletariat's political party are limited but at the same time clear. In a letter to Bolte dated 23 November 1871, Marx wrote:

The International was founded in order to replace the socialist or semi-socialist sects by a real organization of the working class for struggle.... The development of socialist sectarianism and that of the real working class movement always stand in inverse ratio to each other. Sects are justified (historically) so long as the working class is not yet ripe for an independent historical movement. As soon as it has attained this maturity all sects are essentially reactionary.⁷

His idea of a communist party in *The Communist Manifesto* supported the way in which he looked upon the First International. "The communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working-class parties.... They always and everywhere represent the interest of the movement as a whole."⁸ These lines are clear. Marx was against sectarianism, bureaucratism, and any other tendency in the working class party that might put the unity of the movement at risk.

At the beginning of the 21st century, in most capitalist countries, the majority of movements include women, students, poor peasants, and what Marxists used to call the petty bourgeoisie. Those social layers, according to Marx, would lose their assets and join the proletariat in great numbers everyday. Marx's prediction

turned out to be false and modern capitalism has created new layers of modern middle classes and white-collar workers. The continuity of the existence of these layers has added to the problem of organising all these social groups in a traditional political party of the working class. The success of uniting all these social groups in the African National Congress (ANC) and the Brazilian Workers Party, regardless of their ideologies and policies, proved that only an international type of organisation is capable of representing all these social groups. An international type of organisation refers to an organisation in which all major ideologies of the great 85% majority of the population can coexist. Any attempt to organise all of them in a monolithic party and under a single ideology would result in the alienation of many social groups and therefore another defeat for the entire movement.

The problems of social democracy

In the early 20th century social democracy could have become the political party of the populous class if it had not slid into reformism and bureaucratization. As discussed in chapter three, bureaucratization gradually transformed the characteristics of the social democratic party from a party of the working class into a political party that belonged to the working class only in name. The bureaucratization of social democracy resulted in changes in policy and the outlook of the party as well as changes in the structure of the social democratic organisation.

At the organisational level the main difference between pre-war and post-war social democracy was that classical social democracy was based on the voluntary activities of party activists as opposed to party waged officers. Moreover, the relationship between the party's leadership organs and members was one of solidarity and comradeship, and there was not a particular status for any member or any organ. However, after the war the parliamentary party committee became

the most powerful part of the party organism. The party executive committee and in particular the party leaders were out of touch as far as the party members were concerned. The parliamentary fraction became another centre of power in the party that was no longer checked by the party executive. It only answered to the party congress and that did not last long. There came a time when the parliamentary party committee could no longer be checked by the congress let alone by the party executive. Today Tony Blair (the leader of the Labour Party) took the party into an imperialist war without even consulting his cabinet let alone the party executive committee. Needless to say, social democracy's bureaucratisation started as early as the end of the 19th century and certainly by the early 20th century as discussed in chapter three. The German Social Democratic Party (SPD) for instance had paid functionaries in the early 1900s.

The parallel existence of leadership organs such as the party executive, the control commission, and the parliamentary party committee could have had a positive role in enhancing a healthy internal democracy if social democracy was not a reformist organisation seeking political power. In a healthy relationship these parallel committees could have helped party members enhance their political knowledge and information, and could have enabled them to keep the leadership organs under control. However, their existence in parties that had nothing to do with socialism added to the problem of the bureaucratization of these parties.

The process of the social democracy's bureaucratization will be better understood when it is looked at in relation to the growing reformism of these parties. There was a connection between SPD support for war, its leadership's anti-revolutionary sentiment, and the bureaucratisation of the party's structure.

On 3 November the revolution had begun with the naval mutiny at Kiel. Forty thousand sailors and dockers surged through the streets and a workers' and sailors' council took control of the town. On 4 November the revolution spread: red flags flew over every ship. On 6 November, sailors', soldiers' and workers' councils were now in power in Hamburg, Bremen and Luebeck. On 7 and 8 November Dresden,

Leipzig, Chemnitz, Magdeburg, Brunswick, Frankfurt, Cologne, Stuttgart, Nuremburg and Munich all followed suit. On 9 November Berlin joined and established its workers' and soldiers' council.⁹

This was a full scale revolution by any standard. During this revolutionary moment Scheidemann urgently warned the Emperor's palace: "We have done all within our power to keep the masses in check,"¹⁰ and urged the Kaiser to abdicate in order to quell the workers' anger. This was nothing but an act of treason by a social democratic leader. A huge party bureaucracy was needed to cool down and keep the revolutionary fire under control. Only in a bureaucratic party could the leaders do what they wanted without considering the feelings and opinions of party members. The history of social democracy after the war and the first social democratic government is the history of capitalism and colonialism. Therefore, more than a century after its formation social democracy is no longer left-wing. Social democracy cannot provide a stable base for the formation of an umbrella socialist organisation in Europe, and like any other bourgeois party, it opposes the unity and empowerment of the socialist left.

A viable socialist organisation for the 21st century

At the early 21st century, the movement of the workers, the poor, women, and all those social groups who belong to the great majority of the exploited population in the capitalist society (in order to be victorious in their struggle for freedom and equality) need a type of political organisation that includes all sections of the movement of the bottom 85% of the population in its revolutionary strategy. That is an organisation that represents their interest in its programme. Such an organisation, by definition, is not a political party in the traditional meaning of the term. The major difference between the two is that the party represents one class whereas an umbrella organisation (as suggested above) represents more than one class. However, this is not to suggest in any way that multi-tendency organisations oppose disciplined parties. On the contrary the two organisations

complete each other and without active participation of revolutionary working class parties, the formation of an umbrella organisation would be meaningless and could be steps toward social democracy.

The second major characteristic of the new organisation is that it would be a revolutionary organisation rather than a reformist one. That is to say, it would believe in the fundamental change in the present socio-economic system and would rely on revolutionary methods rather than reforms to bring about such changes. Whereas in the early 20th century revolutionaries relied on conspiratorial methods, in the 21st century the new socialist organisation would rely on the united action of the majority and their harmonious movement. In other words, the political success of this organisation would be based on the harmony of the political action of the majority – the more harmonious the movement, the greater the chance of the final victory.

The next major principle of the suggested organisation is socialism. This would be a socialist organisation. The belief in socialism would be the determining factor of its political existence. For a 21st century organisation socialism is not just a word in its programme for the satisfaction of leftist parties; it is an important factor without which the organisation could not function. Socialism means the participation of the majority in the decision making process in the political organisation, in society, and at the economic level. It is fundamentally different from a system that called itself socialist only to give all the decision making power to the bureaucrats in the party-state. This would be a participatory democratic socialism. This would be a system in which the majority of the population finds itself in the ruling position for the first time. This would be a system in which the majority of producers and consumers directly decide every important policy related to the production, consumption, health, education, housing, retirement, defence and policing, crime and punishment, public transport, leisure and tourism, etc. This would be a system of planned economy. It would not be planned by a few bureaucrats from above, but rather by the majority

from below. This would be a system that would reject the problems of a representative Western democracy while taking on its effectiveness; at the same time it would be a system whose greatest principle is socialism and equality and would reduce bureaucracy to the lowest level.

Real socialism for Marx and Marxists from Mandel to Ticktin to Mészáros is participatory socialism. It is a system based on the democratic regulation of the economy from below by conferences of producers and consumers. Given the bitter experiences of the past, how can the great majority of workers and poor become interested in the running of the economy? Wherever they have joined the revolutionary movement, real power eventually slipped out of their hands and became concentrated in the hands of the top elite and bureaucrats. Russia and Germany provide good examples of this process. In many countries this bitter experience has left this generation of workers so disappointed that they hardly join the political movement for freedom and socialism. What can be done to prevent recurrence of this bitter experience?

The answer to the above question is the degree of awareness of the masses, as well as the level of their direct participation in bringing about these changes. The participation of the masses in all revolutionary processes is in inverse relationship to the concentration of power in the hands of party elites and bureaucrats. In spite of all the previous defeats of the working class, there must be no doubt that it joins and leads the revolutionary movement in the coming years again and again. This is the dialectic of their life and struggle. Hence, in order to distance themselves from the mistakes of the past, the mass participation of workers and poor needs to make sure that there will be no power over their power and no decision over their conscious decisions in the future. They must ensure that they stay put in the revolutionary field and do not pass the power lead to any charismatic elite figure. The continuation of the anti-capitalist movement based on horizontal relationships for more than one decade proves the ability of activists to take the lead.

Another major characteristic of a socialist umbrella organisation would be its unique structure and political programme. Unlike the traditional parties of the Left it would not have a heavy programme, which contains many pages of details. Moreover, they would not have a rigid top down hierarchical structure. Instead they would enjoy a system that sprang from the very heart of every movement for freedom, equality, democracy, peace, safer environment, and human rights. It would spring from the harmony of the greatest numbers of organisations and parties as well as individual members deeply involved in those activities and movements. In this organisation power would not be concentrated at the top. There would be limits to the leadership's power and jurisdiction both collectively and individually. Policies would be based upon unanimity or at least a two-thirds majority rather than absolute majority. All strategic policies would be taken after the widest discussion and public debate in the country with media and press coverage. Within these general policies the general executive of the country would run the daily affairs and would be subject to a recall. In short in this system there would be little space for the elite in either the political organisation or society as a whole. For the first time in history the majority of people would be allowed and able to rule their own affairs.

These organisations are still in the process of forming and where they have formed the process is by no means complete. In developing a programme these organisations should not suffocate themselves with extra rules and regulations provided they are able to agree on the basic requirements. This purpose is served by principals such as participatory democratic socialism (as opposed to the indirect democracy used in parliamentary systems), a revolutionary strategy (as opposed to reformism), and unity of the greatest parts of the left with the working class and other popular movements (as opposed to sectarianism and bureaucracies). Anything more than that would be unnecessary and unfruitful.

The relationship between the rigid party and the umbrella organisation

This section will discuss the relationship between a centralised Leninist type of party and an umbrella organisation. The obvious favourable qualities of the latter particularly in Western Europe, does not mean the former will subside and join the rest of the left. On the contrary, in almost every country there are political parties who have so far rejected the idea of a united movement under one umbrella organisation. In Iran the Worker's Communist Party never joined the WLU or the parallel Socialist Unity. In Britain the Socialist Labour Party had a similar position against the Socialist Alliance. It would be unrealistic to expect otherwise. It takes time for former social democrats, Stalinists, and Maoists to learn to think wider than the close boundaries of their particular party. Moreover, it takes longer for ordinary members of these parties and movements to understand the damage caused by three decades of the Cold War and the degeneration of the USSR, than it takes their leaders. It is important for the ordinary members of these political groupings to understand this history if it is their duty to create a new type of organisation for the 21st century. That is to say, the movement for the unity of socialists has to spring from below. This unity cannot be the result of agreements between the leadership of separate movements. The history of the 20th century proved that those leaders were not able to think beyond their particular party or group.

In any given country, there is more to the relationship between an umbrella socialist organisation and a revolutionary Leninist type of party. In particular, one needs to mention that successful revolutions in developing countries have been the work of highly disciplined revolutionary parties. Mészáros explained in *Beyond Capital* that the political dimension of social control is far greater today than during the classical period of capitalist development. In other words, in the 21st century reliance on the police, army, prisons, and other forms of repressive apparatuses is much greater than compared to the 19th and the first half of the 20th

centuries. It goes without saying that the use of repression, censorship, torture, human rights abuses, execution, political imprisonment, etc. is more common in the third world than to Western Europe. Under conditions of severe oppression and daily persecution, both relatively small well-disciplined and larger more open organisations come under attack. The impact of such attacks on the functioning of those organisations depends on another factor – the existence of strong popular movements of workers, women, etc. Those organisations will maintain their continuity if they have close regular contact with social movements and if they are able to recruit activists who are being brought into politics everyday by those movements. However, without strong movements political organisations of any kind would be unprotected and any loss of activists would be detrimental and they would be difficult to replace. To put it differently, the reason for the survival of the various RSDLP factions between 1900 and 1916 was not entirely due to the ability of these political factions to fight the Tsarist police. Rather it was due to the existence of strong working class movements, women's movement in the cities, and peasant movements in the countryside. Although the police arrested a high number of people from these factions, new recruits to the party took their places.

While an umbrella socialist organisation might be less bureaucratic, less centralised and less sectarian than Stalinist and Maoist parties, emphasising the advantages of an umbrella socialist organisation does not suggest that the times of these parties, regardless of the socio-political conditions of their struggle, are over. On the contrary, in many African, Middle Eastern, Asian, and Latin American countries the need for a revolutionary, well-disciplined party is as great as ever. The recent success of the Maoist party in Nepal is a good example. That is why defining the relationship between the disciplined centralised party and the umbrella socialist organisation is the most important task facing political theory in the 21st century.

No doubt the coming years and decades will provide many examples of the coexistence and cooperation of the two organisations. So long as socialist activists are routinely oppressed by dictatorial regimes, their most common reaction will be more discipline and further centralisation. However, the same activists will also realise that a centralised well-disciplined party cannot represent various social movements. They will realise that unity with other organisations and movements will have two advantages. Through the strategy of unity in a multi-tendency organisation, they will gain strength as well as security for their particular activities. As a result of understanding these advantages the activists of traditional parties will welcome such unity. For this reason it can be said that the relationship between well-disciplined Leninist parties and umbrella organisations cannot be but one of cooperation and support if they do not want to miss future opportunities. The dialectic of the revolutionary process is such that in order for a revolution to be successful the existence of a well-disciplined revolutionary socialist party is vital. However, after the revolution has taken place, the dictatorial regime has been overthrown, and the problems of the economy have become the immediate task of the revolutionaries, it is at this point that the disciplined party must give way to a socialist umbrella organisation (an organisation that is connected with many strings to popular societal movements.)

In certain societies a multi-tendency organisation and a well-disciplined party might operate at the same time. For example, in parts of a country where, for various reasons, the central military or dictatorial regime cannot use the same degree of oppression as in the rest of the country, an umbrella organisation might exist. Some parts of the country might have a strong national movement with a heavy presence of international human rights groups, UN peace keeping force, and heavy media presence which reduces the repressive ability of the central regime in those parts. Environmental and human rights campaigners are more tolerable to many dictatorial regimes. The above situation prevents the central regime from using heavy oppression in those parts of the country. In situations like this secret activities decrease and give way to the open and wider activities of

socialists in the area. The formation of an umbrella organisation of all socialist groups and parties becomes a real possibility. At the same time in other parts of the country where the highest degree of torture, censorship, and persecution is the daily routine of the central government, a popular movement of any kind faces strong police attack, the natural reaction of socialist revolutionaries would be to create the most rigid, highly disciplined party to cope with the pressure of the political police. The two political organisations do not oppose each other. On the contrary they would support each other against the bourgeois regime.

Therefore, this study does not suggest that the time of rigid organisations and well-disciplined Leninist type parties is completely over. However, it suggests that when there is less pressure from the political police, as in Western Europe or as a result of a political revolution there is a degree of democratic freedom and no police brutality and oppression, there is less of a need for a secretive Leninist type of party than compared to conditions of censorship and oppression. Furthermore, if a disciplined party continues to exist while having political power, there is a higher risk of the party's bureaucratization. Hence, to prevent such a disease, the party needs to open up and expand its social base. One of the most successful ways for this expansion is to create coalitions and alliances with its closest allies. Trotsky's method for building a workers' front provides the best guide and methodology. As opposed to Trotsky's purpose, the aim behind a socialist multi-tendency organisation is not to secure the supremacy of the communist party but rather to secure the supremacy of the working class and the bottom 85% of society.

Therefore, in some societies for the political stage of revolution to bring about such a political revolution, a well-disciplined Leninist type party is the most important political need. However, after the revolutionary period and the overthrow of the old state machine the way forward for the party would be to transfer power to the already organised masses of workers and poor. This would be done through the creation of the widest coalition of socialists, if one does not

already exist. This is one of the advantages and disadvantages of a traditional party versus the umbrella organisation of the socialists. Firstly, a participatory socialism and real freedom can rest on the alliance between the workers' movements and parties, women's groups, environmentalists, the peace movement, young people's organisations, the permanently unemployed and student movements all in a united organisation that operates in the common interests of all these movements. That would be an organisation that belonged to both civil society as well as political society. If there is a major alliance parallel to the traditional party's organisation, the latter should not impose its method of organisation. Joining forces with the existing alliance would enhance a greater alliance with stronger grassroots among the masses. Secondly, a traditional type of political party, which by definition rests on ideology, cannot represent, and more importantly, comprise activists from all the above mentioned social groups.

Unacceptable policies of alliances and their socialist tendencies

In Brazil, since its first electoral success, the PT's policies moved to the right. For example its policies deal with international capital as a partner, it lacks support for the radical actions of landless peasant movement (MST), it is reluctant to tackle corruption and drug problems as it had promised, and it puts restrictions on the activities of leftist tendencies. As a consequence of the PT's right wing turn leftist activists left the party in the last few years and some elements of these leftist groups and individuals formed a new radical socialist party in 2004. This new organisation is called the Party of Socialism and Liberty (P-SOL). The main components of this party are four different Trotskyist parties and groups known as the Block of Four. In addition, many more individuals and groups joined the P-SOL in the last three years. P-SOL grew fast and in the last presidential election their candidate secured about 7% of the vote, which is very impressive compared to the PT's share of the vote the first time it participated in a national election.

In the UK the original Socialist Alliance (SA) as well as the Scottish Socialist Party's setbacks, internal fighting and lack of success, along with the split of the Socialist Worker Party (SWP) and Socialist Party of England and Wales (SP), as discussed in the previous chapters, also created different reactions amongst the socialist activists. At the end of 2006, the CPGB, some editorial members and supporters of *Critique*, and other socialist groups and individuals launched the Campaign For a New Marxist Party. According to the founding principles of this campaign, it recognises the rights of tendencies and platforms, its socialism is Marxian, and its suggested structure is based on the participation of all activists.

As mentioned many times throughout this work, it is not possible to put forward a complete judgment on these newly formed organisations simply because they are still in the process of forming and establishing their principles and structures. That is to say, it is not clear whether they will survive, and if they do, only time will tell which direction they will choose to follow i.e. sectarianism or inclusiveness. It is not clear if they will keep their radical understanding of socialism or smooth it down as they approach future elections. Furthermore, only the future can tell whether they will allow Stalinists and social democratic leftist tendencies to eventually join them or if they will prefer to divide the working class' movement into two camps.

However, even at this early stage of their development some points are clear. Firstly, the formation of the above mentioned radical organisations do not undermine the main hypothesis of this work. In fact, their formations prove its hypothesis. In both P-SOL in Brazil and the UK campaign, there is more than one group or party. Both organisations support the idea of socialism from below, inclusiveness, as well as tendencies and platforms in their internal systems. Secondly, the bitter experiences of the 20th century do not allow them to go back to the failed methods of traditional parties. Though the UK example chose the name Campaign for a Marxist Party, which included sixteen principles, this does not mean that it is a movement from above by the leadership and the programme

is not its starting point. In other words, this is not a unity based solely on those sixteen principles. On the contrary, they are quite clear that it has to be an organisation built by activists from below in order to defend the working class's movement against reformism, bureaucratism, Stalinism, sectarianism, and for the independent council movement of the working class. The coming years will witness to what extent this radical reaction affects the entire leftist movement and helps its unity. Finally, the formation of these organisations as well as similar organisations in Latin America suggests that working class multi-tendency organisations are in the process of growth. Their changes and development are as fast as the changes of the present-day capitalist system and therefore analysis of various aspects of their development require real concentration on political theory in the coming years.

Notes

1 – Marcel Liebman, *Leninism Under Lenin*, translated by Brian Pearce (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1975), 29.

2 - Ibid, P. 26.

3 – Ibid, P. 26.

4 – Ibid, P. 26.

5 – Tony Cliff, “Why Do We Need A Revolutionary Party?” *Marxism at the Millennium*, (London: Bookmarks Publication Ltd, 2000), .16.

6 – Immanuel Wallerstein, “The Global Picture, 1945-90,” *The Age of Transition*, edited by Terence K. Hopkins, Immanuel Wallerstein, et al, (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1996), 213.

7 - Karl Marx, “Marx to Bolte 23 Nov. 1871” *Selected Writing*, Edited by David McClellan, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 587.

8 - Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1972), 47.

9 - Rob Sewell, *Germany From Revolution To Counter-Revolution*, (London: Fortress Books, 1988), 17.

10 – Ibid, P.17.

Appendix 1

The new left and their social base

The aim of this work has been to prove that multi-tendency political organisations of the proletariat and poor, which constitute more than 80% of all countries' populations are strengthened by the changes in capitalist society i.e. changes in the structure of capitalism, which has led to diversity within the working class. This idea is not new to Marxist political theory. It has been supported by most Marxist theorists from Marx to Mandel, from Lenin and Trotsky to Mao and Gramsci. However, a multi-tendency organisation would not be possible without the support of activists and ordinary members of various political groups and their active participation in building the organisation. In the 1930s, Antonio Gramsci developed the idea that ordinary members were the most important element in making a political party. For more than half a century, traditional Stalinist parties have forgotten this idea. This survey asks the activists and members of two leftist organisations their opinions, feelings, and preferences towards building future organisations and the viability of socialist organisations in the coming years.

In early 2001 the Communist Party of Iran (ICP) split for the second time. As a result, those who split from the party established a new organisation by the name of Revolutionary Organisation of Toilers of Kurdistan (Komala, which means organisation). Komala's members were dedicated to re-establishing the organisation according to its original principles prior to joining the ICP in the early 1980s. After the 2001 split there were two organisations operating under the name of Komala. The first was the Kurdistan Organisation of the ICP (Komala) and the second was the newly formed Revolutionary Organisation of Toilers of Kurdistan (Komala) that did not want to be associated with the ICP at all. For clarity this study refers to the Communist Party of Iran's Komala as ICP Komala

and the new Komala as Komala Party. This is a name that the organisations use for their English publications.

During the summer of 2001, a random sample of more than 100 individuals were asked to complete a questionnaire. The subjects were activists from the two respective Komala organisations in Iraqi Kurdistan. This study was conducted shortly after their split. At the time of the survey both organisations were involved in the process of forming a socialist unity outside the Iranian Worker's Left Unity (IWLU). Their participation in building a socialist unity demonstrated their commitment towards building a multi-tendency organisation. For this reason, they were chosen to participate in this study.

Six years after the survey the newly formed Komala Party has moved towards nationalism and is involved in a bourgeois coalition of federalist forces in Iran. In its recent congress, Komala Party officially announced that it has applied for membership to the International Socialist and will organise a tour to visit European social democratic parties. This shift was not unexpected, though perhaps not in such a speedy fashion. Komala Party always had a nationalist tendency. Given the historical possibilities of Kurdish movements and creation of a self-ruled Iraqi Kurdistan after the first gulf war, this tendency found a new strategy sooner rather than later. In other words, leftist nationalism would only carry the banner of communism as long as there was not a viable nationalist organisation to take its place.

However, what happened to Komala Party in 2007 cannot undermine the survey's 2001 findings. In spite of Komala Party's new strategy the findings of this survey are still useful and reliable. Though the survey information is six years old the question of left unity in Iran is still relevant and has not yet been answered. Moreover, since the 2001 split ICP Komala has become stronger. Hundreds of old experienced cadres have rejoined the organisation. It is not the aim of this study to predict what will happen to Komala Party as a result of its strategic change. It is

enough to say that in Iranian Kurdistan the Iranian Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDPI) has been a social democratic organisation and a recognised member of world social democracy. Given the awareness of activists of this fact, the impact that this hasty change will leave on Komala Party's activists remains to be seen. During 2007 Komala Party had its first split and is now experiencing a serious political crisis. In addition, the survey aim was not to find out what would happen to Komala Party or even ICP Komala but to find out about the activists of these two organisations.

Why a Kurdish organisation and not an Iranian organisation?

Leftist organisations in the Kurdish area were chosen for this study because it was not and is still not possible to conduct a study other than by direct observation in other areas of Iran ruled by the oppressive Islamic Republic. The activists in Iran should not put their existence at risk for a survey. Direct observation was not suitable in this case because of the lack of accessibility. Moreover, given the activists of ICP Komala and Komala Party's are concentrated at two bases (or camping places) it was possible to carry out sampling and reduce the risk of error to a minimum. Furthermore, it was not possible to distribute and collect the results of such a questionnaire in a short period of time in other parts of Iran given the clandestine nature of activity in Iran. The identity of the activists and therefore their safety could have been compromised. Furthermore, no political organisation would reveal the details of their activists inside Iran. The participation of activists and their answers to any questions about socialist organisations could have put their lives in danger.

It has to be noted that the activists of both Komalas mainly came from the Kurdish region. Before the two ICP splits Komala as its Kurdistan organisation was the only left-wing organisation with popular appeal in the Kurdish region. There has been a national movement in the Iranian Kurdistan since the Iranian revolution and Komala represented a radical solution by tying nationalism to

socialism. The particularities of the political situation in Kurdistan and their effects on Komala did not allow this organisation to fully represent the entire left in Iran. For example, over the past few decades the level of regional investment in Kurdistan was the second lowest in Iran after Balouchestan. The industrial sector was amongst the weakest and the central government did not pay much attention to the economic development of the region. This abnormal situation affected public opinion in Kurdistan, political organisations, and their activists.

Despite the above mentioned factors Kurdistan is part of Iran. Its struggles are part of the Iranian struggle. Over the past two decades Komala was affiliated with the Communist Party of Iran. In addition their involvement in the formation of an alliance with the Iranian left demonstrated that these organisations could represent other parts of the left as far as the survey questions were concerned. In addition, the rest of the left was based in areas under the authority of the Islamic Republic that would have made such a method of research impossible.

Thus, in short Komala could not fully represent the entire Iranian left. However given the oppression in the rest of Iran, and the history of Komala as an important part of the Iranian left after the revolution, Komala activists were a good target in which one could study how activists perceived the idea of multi-tendency organisations. If in the future multi-tendency socialist organisations become the voice of the majority of socialists in Iran, then the ICP Komala's activists and some sections of Komala Party's activist will be part of such an organisation.

It must be emphasised that the survey was carried out two months after the split and both organisations were involved in the process of a socialist unity. Needless to say both factors may have affected the answers of some respondents.

The survey method

Several questions were prepared before travelling to Iraqi Kurdistan. The questions were designed to find out the social background, philosophical standpoint, and political opinions of activists of both Komala organisations. Activists were asked questions regarding their age, gender, the history of their activity in Komala, occupational background before joining Komala, level of education, and family income and background. In addition, activists were asked to discuss their views regarding the political needs of the Kurdish movement, the relationship between the two Komala organisations after the split, which classes they believed to be their allies, how they defined or saw themselves, the organisational priority of Komala, the place of armed struggle as a revolutionary method of struggle, and the importance of social groups and classes.

For each question there were several answers and the respondents were asked to tick only one answer. In two cases respondents had ticked more than one answer. For example, they ticked that they were unemployed and self-employed. In both cases the tick for unemployed were disregarded. If the number of answers for different questions were not equal i.e. for some questions there were 105 responses whereas in another case only 101, then the calculation was made according to the available data. In such situation the difference is the margin of error.

To prevent and reduce the risk of error and to make sure the questionnaire was handed to the right candidate according to random selection the best method for distributing the questionnaire was to hand it to a randomly selected activist standing at the lunch queue and ask him or her to fill in the form after they finished their lunches. In the cases where the respondents were illiterate, they were allowed to get help from one of their comrades under the condition that the answers were their own. In those cases the author observed while the respondents and his or her colleague were filling in the form. It was explained to the

respondents before the distribution of the questionnaire that the survey had nothing to do with their organisation and it was purely for the purpose of scientific research. The activists were also told that participation in the survey was not mandatory and they were given the opportunity to refuse participation.

Once the forms had been completed, participants were given the opportunity to make their own suggestions for improving the questionnaire. More than 90% of the respondents did what they were asked and individually returned the form. However, all activists did not attend the lunch queue and it was not possible to get to those respondents who were not present in person. Only members of those organisation were allowed to know about the location of those activists at that particular time. In those cases, I had to trust party officials and send the number of questionnaires they had requested. There were two cases in the ICP Komala and five in the Komala Party. In addition there were families or members of some organs in each camp who would not queue for lunch. In these cases I handed the questionnaire in the order I saw them. For example, if the sequence was one in ten the individual number 1, 11, 21, 31, 41, 51, etc would get the questionnaire. One reason for distributing the questionnaire to randomly selected activists was the fact that giving the form to all activists was not practical and it could have put the security of those organisations at risk.

Prior to handing out the questionnaire the research method was not disclosed to any party members in either case. They did not know who in the lunch queue would get the questionnaire or which members of those organs or families who were not present in the queue. When the two questionnaires were sent to the guards in their fortifications it was explained to the messenger what to do and what the sequences were. The same explanation was given to Komala Party. Therefore the margin of error can be estimated to be a maximum of 6% to 7%. This estimation is based on those seven cases and the difference between the numbers of respondents for different questions.

Once all the responses were collected from both Komala activists the data showed that there were no significant differences between the two sets of responses. Only question ten regarding the relationship between the two organisations post-split did the activists of ICP Komala place more emphasise on no relation (3%) - slightly more than the respondents of Komala Party. The reasons for combining the results were as follow: There was not any significant difference between the responses of ICP Komala activists and the responses given by activists of Komala Party. As far as the majority of the questions were concerned the political affiliation of respondents did not make a difference. The survey was not about the history of Komala or the Kurdish movement. One report for each set of the respondents would be redundant.

The survey's findings

ICP Komala and Komala Party - age group

Age Group	Actual Numbers	No %
16 – 20	15	14.4
20 – 25	40	38.4
25 – 30	20	19.2
30 – 35	16	15.3
35 – 40	4	3.8
<u>Over 40</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>8.6</u>
Total	104	99.7

Table 1 represents the percentage of the age groups for activists of ICP Komala and Komala Party during the summer of 2001.

As it can be seen from the above table, all age groups existed among Komala activists - teenagers, young, middle, and old. The table shows that the number of young activists was greater than the over 40 age range. This meant that the population of both Komala Party and the ICP Komala were compatible with the

population of the country as a whole. What is more interesting is that more than 50% of both organisations' population were under 25 and over 70% were under 30. This fact reveals a rather important factor about the Iranian left. In spite of all the political pressure and severe oppression of the Islamic Republic at least one part of the left based in Kurdistan was able to recruit. It was not getting old and its age demographic was still young.

History of activity with Komala

Category	Actual Numbers	No %
Under one year	28	26.78
1 – 2 years	13	12.50
2 – 3 years	07	6.78
3 – 4 years	10	9.64
4 – 5 years	07	6.76
5 & over	<u>39</u>	<u>37.26</u>
Total	105	99.72

Table 2 represents the background of activists with Komala

The table shows that after the Iranian Worker's Communist Party split from the Iranian Communist Party (ICP), which left the latter with a few activists, the ICP managed to hold itself together and started to grow again. The fact that around 50% of activists joined Komala in the last two years proved that as a movement Komala was deeply embedded within the population in Kurdistan. Even after the serious damage it experienced after the split, Komala once again began to flourish. This table illustrate the recruitment capacity of Komala after the first ICP split. It is not clear from this table if such capacity continued after the second split in 2001.

Occupational background before joining Komala

Background	Actual Numbers	No %
Pupil (School age student)	30	28.87
Student (university)	10	9.82
Worker	29	27.91
Peasant	01	0.98
Self-employed	13	12.68
Unemployed	11	10.77
Other	<u>09</u>	<u>08.87</u>
Total	105	99.90

Table 3

Table 3 shows that more than 27% of the activists came from the working class, 10.7% were unemployed, and more than 28% were pupils before joining the organisation. If this is taken into consideration, it becomes clear that well over 65% of Komala's activists came from working class and poor backgrounds. It should be noted that the category of "other" in this table represents occupations such as housewives. In one case the respondent ticked both self-employed and unemployed. In another case the respondent ticked both student and unemployed. In all these cases no number was added to the unemployed category to prevent the occurrence of bias in the survey. In Iran today many graduates are unemployed, which is one of the social problems of the country. The fact that someone had ticked both unemployed and self-employed also can mean that self-employment in Iran and Kurdistan refers to a low income part of the population who cannot find regular job and have to sell cigarette, cold water, etc. It usually refers to peddlers.

The level of education

Category	Actual Numbers	No %
None	3	2.88
Primary	11	10.57
Secondary	28	26.92
High school	50	48.07
University	<u>12</u>	<u>11.53</u>
Total	104	99.97

Table 4

According to the data collected more than 88% of the activists had a high school education or less and only about 11.5% obtained university educations. This fact illustrates the social background of these two organisations. Here again the effect of the first ICP split in the early 1990s is shown. A great number of those who supported the Iranian Worker's Communist Party were highly educated, intellectuals, and academics.

Place of living before joining Komala

Category	Actual Numbers	No %
Big city	55	53.2
Town	26	25.2
Village	21	19.4
Non-Kurdish areas	<u>2</u>	<u>1.8</u>
Total	104	99.6

Table 5

Of the participants surveyed 53.2% said they came from big cities, 25.2% from small cities, 19.4% from villages and the rest came from non-Kurdish areas. This data reveals some important political factors. Firstly, it reveals that Komala was an urban movement. Secondly, the popularity of these organisations was deeply connected to the national question in Kurdistan. About 20% came from villages. Peasant unrest in Iranian Kurdistan was connected to political movements in the last decade. The literature of Sharifzadeh Movement from 1965 onward and the involvement of Komala in defending the poor peasants against big land owners and feudal lords are only two examples. That is to say, the national and peasant questions in Kurdistan are related to a great extent. Of those village activists who joined Komala and leftist organisations after the Iranian Revolution the great majority were poor and came from landless peasant families.

Of the 101 respondents 78.2% were male and 22% were female. If taken into consideration, the fact that a big number of women left these two organisations during the IWCP split in the mid-1990s it becomes clear that the participation of women of all ages in leftist groups was much greater than in the Iranian Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDPI). This level of women's participation, in spite of economic barriers, can be explained by the Iran's present system's treatment of women. It also reveals a much more important factor. The question of women and their struggle for equality, justice, and freedom in the current Iranian socio-political regime is one of the most important social bases of for any political organisation fighting for socialism and freedom. Arriving at Komala's area was a huge step for a woman to take. It meant accepting the risk of arrest on the way and living in a completely alien environment.

Family income

Category	Actual Numbers	No %
Poor	21	20.16
Lower middle	32	30.76
Middle	36	34.61
Upper middle	12	11.59
Rich	<u>3</u>	<u>2.88</u>
Total	104	100.00

Table 6

The data in this table support the data presented in the previous tables. Only 14% of activists came from upper middle and rich families, while more than 85% belonged to middle class and poor families. Thus, the data presented in Tables 1-6 leaves no doubt that Kurdistan's workers and poor supported Komala as a political organisation. It has to be noted here that middle income families in Kurdistan includes teachers, nurses, office workers, etc. These social groups did not consider themselves as part of the working class, although they did not earn much more than workers. Some respondents preferred to categorize themselves as middle class in spite of their low-income. The survey could not ask respondents to specify family income as some respondents might have found this offensive and refused to partake in the study. Therefore there is a risk of inaccuracy in options available to the respondents. For example for the reason stated above the survey could not specify the range of salary for low, middle and high income families. Therefore it has relied on the understanding of respondents of those terms.

Political need of the Kurdish movement

Category	Actual number	No %
Unity of the left	24	23.52
International pressure	1	0.98
Revolution in Iran	39	38.23
Self consciousness of the masses	22	21.56
Most of those above	15	14.70
Other	<u>1</u>	<u>0.98</u>
Total	102	99.97

Table 6 illustrates the political preference of Komala activists in relation to the Kurdish cause.

The analysis of this table suggests at least two important points. While more than 23% of the respondents ticked the Kurdish movement needed the unity of the left, 14% said one of the needs was the unity of the left. Historically Komala and the Communist Party of Iran, which considered the USSR a state-capitalist country until its collapse never considered any sort of cooperation with the pro-USSR left, let alone unity with them. The fact that around 40% of activists emphasised unity of the left demonstrates a very important change in the mentality of the left compared to the period before 1990. In addition, the data from this survey indicates that more than 50% of respondents believed the Iranian revolution had an important role. This data suggests that at least the activists of the most powerful organisations of the Iranian left were revolutionary. However, it has to be noted that the survey did not specify what it meant by revolution in Iran. Thus it was not clear whether the activists took revolution in its true meaning or simply as regime change.

Open and mass organisation or closed disciplined organisation

Stalinist types of organisations were recognised by their hierarchical centralised organisation and very little space for the rank and file to breath. Though Komala and the ICP were not pro-USSR in the past two decades their method of organisation had great similarities with other Stalinist groups. The survey asked the respondents whether they preferred an open mass organisation or a closed well-disciplined organisation. The data verified that 60% were in favour of a well-disciplined organisation, 35% favoured a mass open organisation, and 5% ticked both. If the activists questioned recognised a well-disciplined party and a mass open organisation as the only possibilities for the formation of a political organisation then this explains why the ICP did not join the WLU's formation process in the early 1990s. One must note that it was after two major splits that more than 35% of activists had realised that the political party they knew was not the only recognised organisation of the left. The fact that 5% said they preferred both suggests either they did not understand the question or they believed that open mass organisation could still be well-disciplined.

Relationship between the two organisations post-split

Category	Actual Number	No%
No relation	45	45%
Unite again	9	9%
Unite in a front	6	6%
Political cooperation	15	15%
Alliance with other leftist groups	<u>25</u>	<u>25%</u>
Total	100	100%

Table 7

Out of the 100 people who responded to this question 45% wanted their Komala to be totally separated from the other Komala and believed the best policy was to have no relationship between the two. It is evident that two months after the split many people had not come to terms with the political reality. This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that 9% of the respondents said they should reunite. Though Komala was not a single united organisation anymore and its parts were closer to each other compared to other left-wing political groupings in 2001. But more importantly, 46% of activists wanted their organisation to join an alliance either with the other Komala or form political cooperation with the other Komala and the other leftist groups.

Class alliances

Category	Actual numbers	No%
Only workers	0	0
Workers and poor	33	31.73
All classes but capitalists	29	27.88
All classes	37	35.57
Mainly workers and poor	<u>5</u>	<u>4.80</u>
Total	104	99.98

Table 8

It is important to note that 0% of the activists believed that only workers were the force of change and revolution. That was the result of two things. Firstly, in their own experiences these activists had seen that apart from workers other social groups also had an interest in socialism. Secondly, these organisations were deeply rooted in the struggles of workers, women, students, teachers, poor peasants, youths, etc. During the 1990s they had participated considerably in the improvement of socialist theory. Along with the rest of the left their position

improved with the progress of international socialist movements. More than 35 % of the respondents said Komala should ally with all classes, which clearly indicates a political tendency within the rank and file of these organisations. The rest of the respondents preferred Komala to ally with workers and the poor. No doubt nationalism as a political tendency existed within these organisations but that should not explain the fact that 65% of the respondent emphasised the organisation of workers and poor as the social basis of any radical change.

How do you define yourself?

Category	Actual Number	No %
Religious	1	0.98%
Liberal	15	14.70%
Democrat	0	0%
Socialist	17	16.66%
Communist	<u>69</u>	<u>67.64%</u>
Total	102	99.98%

Table 9 shows the political philosophy of activists.

Around 15% stated they were liberals and the rest were communists and socialists. This data shows that Komala, as a political organisation, did not follow the organisational pattern of the traditional left, which was based upon an ideology, namely Stalinism or Maoism. Though the dominant ideology was communism, as they understood it, other ideologies (socialism and liberalism) were tolerated. Whether this tolerance was characteristic of the 1990s after the collapse of Stalinist Russia and the Eastern European political system or a pattern to be followed in the future by socialist organisations is a question that only time can answer. The liberal nationalist tendency could be identified from Komala Party organisation's conference resolutions. Two points need clarification

regarding the data about liberals and democrats in the above table. The equivalent of the word liberal in Farsi is *azadikhah*, which does not contain a negative tone and certainly does not convey an anti-socialist sense. On the contrary, the activist's concept of a democrat was associated with the KDPI, which was at war with Komala for two years and killed hundreds of leftist activists.

The workers', peasants', women's and youth movements have been important in Iran over the past two decades. The responses from these activists show that they were aware of the reality of the politics of contemporary Iran.

Organisation Priority

Category	Actual Number	No %
Workers, peasants, women, youth	25	24.50%
Workers, youth, women, peasants	12	11.76%
Workers, women, youth, peasants	41	40.19%
Youth, women, workers, peasants	18	17.64%
Other	2	1.96%
No answer	4	3.92%
Total	102	99.97%

Table 10 the priority of popular organisation from the point of view of respondents

Table 10 represents the views of Komala's activists on the role of classes and social groups in the struggle for socialism. The data obtained from this question was limited due to the fact that around 5% either did not tick any category or said they preferred other options. For example, it was not clear if the option women, workers, youth, and peasants was popular. In spite of this problem, the fact that in the question before the previous no respondents chose the "only workers" option

and the majority of respondents believed workers and poor were the social classes that Komala should help to organise was supported by the data in Table 10. According to Table 10 95% of activists believed that Komala should base its organisation on workers, women, youth, and peasants. In other words, according to activists these social classes and groups constituted the social basis for socialism and revolution, as they understood it. In fact, all the new alliances tried to organise these social groups and classes. The table also indicates that the option “workers, women, youth, and peasants” was the most popular among activists (more than 40% chose this option).

Chapter five argued that the leaders of new social movements in Latin America and former guerrilla activists in the Middle East criticised armed struggle as a method and illustrated the example of Iran. The respondents’ answers support the critiques of armed struggle as the only recognised revolutionary tactic.

The place of armed struggle

Category	Actual number	No %
Increase popular unrest	20	19.41
Decrease popular unrest	1	0.97
Necessary in spite of its negative impact	0	0.00
To keep pressure on the regime	4	3.88
Be used along with popular political struggle	70	67.96
None of the above	7	6.79
No answer	1	0.97
Total	103	99.98

Table 11

Komala was a leading organisation in the Iranian Kurdish movement and its presence could be seen in every aspect of this popular movement. During the

1980s disbelief in armed resistance was not tolerated. People who did not believe in the effectiveness of armed struggle or considered it a bourgeois method did not openly express their opinions. If they did, it could have resulted in criticism or expulsion. In the mid-1980s Komala became involved in the creation of the ICP. The ICP emphasised the workers' movements although armed struggle was never criticised. At present armed resistance as a method is kept at a very low level. Based on the party's background it was not surprising that 68% of the respondents considered armed resistance as a method that could be used alongside the popular political struggle of workers and poor. Nor was it surprising that another 20% believed it could help popular unrest. However, this 68% stated that it should be used as a secondary tactic and only alongside the popular struggle of workers and poor. Table 10 also demonstrates that some respondents held a negative view of armed resistance as a method. About 12% of respondents did not answer, had something else in mind, or claimed that although it was necessary, it had some negative effects. One must remember that this question was asked of leftists who lived and struggled in an area where public opinion favoured armed resistance as it was the most popular method used by most national movements.

Summary

The data collected from this survey supported the overall argument of this thesis. The majority of leftist organisations supported the idea of a multi-tendency revolutionary socialist organisation. The ICP Komala and Komala Party, who participated in a socialist coalition with other revolutionary socialist organisations both, supported the idea of multi-tendency organisation. According to the available data, their activists supported this idea. The presence of workers, women, youth, and students among the activists demonstrated that these organisations were a part of the new left. Unlike traditional parties, they were based on social groups that constituted more than 85% of the society of all countries. These organisations belonged to workers and poor and were supported by these classes. The existence of youth in their rank and file proved that they

were able to increase their numbers. The relatively high number of women participating in these organisations separated them from traditional leftist parties. Their activists had direct grassroots, as well as intellectual backgrounds. The data suggested that the majority of the activists in both organisations supported the unity of the entire left. However, this did not suggest that the leadership in both organisations listened to their activists. In spite of the fact that the ICP had been critical of the USSR for two decades, their organisational structure had a lot in common with Stalinist parties.

The history of Komala before joining the ICP and during the ICP's existence has been a history of sectarianism and suspicion of Iranian leftist groups. This suspicion was justified by the treacherous political behaviour of the Tudeh party and Fedaie Majority who supported the Islamic Republic against Komala and other radical Marxist and semi-Maoist groups. For more than ten years, Komala was part of the ICP. However during all those years it held onto a kind of autonomy inside the party. Between 1980 to 1990 Komala and ICP never led the way for a greater alliance of the left in Iran and turned down suggestions by smaller groups. The ICP organisational policies demonstrated a contradiction. On the one hand it had accepted Komala's autonomy, which was more than a right of a platform and tendency. On the other hand this party rejected any unity beyond ideological unity i.e. it accepted one interpretation as the basis for political unity.

The majority of Komala's activists in both organisations favoured unity of the left under the heavy impact of the first split and immediately after the second split as the data suggested. However, in spite of the views of its activists, the ICP and Komala refused to participate in the unity process of the left for so many years. Therefore, it can be said the activists in 2001 demonstrated their support for any leadership's effort towards the unity of the left.

The example of Komala and its radicalism in the Kurdish movement in Kurdistan during the last two decades supported the idea of the relationship between

national and peasant movements and their importance in the unity of the left put forward in the introduction. The traditional left neglected these movements for many decades. There are many similarities between the Komala movement as a popular radical socialist organisation and similar movements in Mexico, Brazil, Bolivia, and other Latin American countries. The fact that activists recognised the importance of popular social movements, as the data demonstrated, is a positive move away from sectarianism similar to the Zapatistas efforts after 2006.

This survey is relatively old. Since 2001 the ICP Komala has improved its policies by actively supporting all social movements and by putting them under its daily media coverage. But the improvement of ICP Komala in all policy and organisational aspects has been a positive move and strengthened the argument of this work. The sectarian policy of the past was replaced by a more positive policy of cooperation with other leftist organisations. That is to say the last six years has not undermined the survey's finding as far as the ICP Komala is concerned. Komala Party followed a social democratic policy, went deeper into nationalism, and faced a political crisis, which resulted in its first split in 2007. The crisis of that organisation has not come to a close.

Section two

Two interviews

Introduction

Two interviews were selected for this section. The first is with Mani Azad (a member of IRWO) and the second with Jafar Resa (a former member of ICP). These two interviews represent opposing views of the formation of multi-tendency socialist organisations amongst leftist activists. Azad supports this idea while Resa is against it. Though Resa's interview is not as detailed as Azad's, its line of opposition is quite clear.

The contents of these two interviews reveal the disagreement or lack of consensus amongst activists regarding the place and function of multi-tendency organisations. The disagreement between leftist activists with different political background is not unusual. The idea of left-wing multi-tendency organisations is relatively new. Organisations that based themselves on this idea are still in embryonic form. It will take some time before the multitude of activists line up behind the idea and those organisations.

These two interviews not only represent the support and opposition of two political activists, they also reveal the reasons and arguments for their support or opposition. In order for the socialist movement to move forward, all the different factions must unite around one form of organisation or another. Though the Brazilian Worker's Party (PT) and similar multi-tendency organisations did not have a good start after capturing state power and as a result failed, their alternative could not have been a traditional party. These two interviews indicate that the idea of multi-tendency socialist organisations have captured the imaginations of political activists and they are trying to find the best possible

organisational model capable of leading the struggle of the great majority during the present century. These efforts can be seen everywhere. In the UK the Campaign for a Marxist Party is the latest example. In Brazil the P-SOL is trying to fill the gap created by the right turn of the PT. The Zapatista movement in Mexico offers a different model. This model puts emphasis on radical grassroots politics rather than state power. The interaction between all these ideas, efforts, and organisational models will culminate into a fully matured alternative to the failed traditional parties of the 20th century.

The interview with Resa was conducted in English. Permission to reproduce this interview has been granted by Dr J. Resa. However, the author translated Azad's interview from Farsi into English. The author will take responsibility for errors created during the translation process. Finally these two interviews, as most of the work, bare the mark and impression of the Iranian political history. In a way, this is the strength of this work. The knowledge, familiarity and background of Iranian politics are being used to analyse the question of future socialist organisations common to all countries.

Appendix two

Interview with Dr Mani Azad

1- The 1990s witnessed further splits in the communist parties. Although the organisational and political illnesses are partly to blame for those splits, it is believed that regardless of the structural and political shortcomings, the traditional communist party, capable of organising all sections of society, cannot survive anymore and that is the main cause of the partition within the communist parties. What is your view?

That is right, but I think if we look at the experience of the last one hundred years from the point of view of the socialist and communist struggle, these parties – the traditional communist parties – were unsuccessful before the 1990s too. Moreover, they did not have the necessary capacity for the leadership of such a struggle. Although these parties, particularly after the October Revolution, had an important role in pushing and leading reforms to better the lives of the working class, labour force, and oppressed people around the world. In recent decades these parties could not hold themselves together and faded away. The monolithic communist party proved itself incapable of organising all sections of society, which was largely due to an important change in the structure of the workforce and working class as the agent of the socialist struggle. That is to say, the working class has become bigger in number and more diverse. This enormous force, which is exploited because of the commodity relations of capitalist production becomes alienated. In the present era in particular, the working class can clearly see the pressure of neo-liberalism on itself and the environment. It experiences instability and insecurity with every moment and gets into conflict with the main causation of all these miseries – capitalism. From this point of view an underlying thread connects the entire working class together. However, the same expansion and diversity creates different degrees of life experiences and culture. Sections of the working class (on the basis of such differences) join the struggle. A traditional

communist party with traditional definitions and structure contradicts the reality of the force of communism.

Traditional communist parties were formed in the 20th century during a historical period of growth in the fabrics and manufacturing industries and the development of Fordist organisation. It was a time when the metal industry employed most of the labour force and was the most effective section of the whole economy. Traditional communist parties based their activities on this labour force and got along with its ups and downs. In the first half of the 20th century, the labour movement was particularly strong in these sections. These parties also felt strengthened. After the Second World War, in particular the 1960s, in order to maintain the rate of profit, profitability, and control the labour movement, capitalism changed its organisation and structure of the work force. As a result of the movement of capital into different departments, the service industry increased and the number of people working in this sector multiplied. New industries producing semi-conductors started to appear, which unlike classical industries, did not employ large numbers of people but had an important role in the whole economy. The neo-liberal programme with a flexible working programme and a reduction of permanent employment (particularly from the 1980s onwards), allowed a part-time and unofficial work force to increase. In addition, short-term contracts without any support (such as pensions, etc) explosively increased. These sectors of the economy cannot use classical methods of organisation, i.e. traditional unions, which traditional communist parties used as their main model. In the unemployed section of society, housewives are exploited by any measure whom without wages or salaries carry on an important part of domestic work (similar to hotel services) and provide education and health care in their homes and for the capitalist economy.

That is to say, in some countries the sum total of services provided by domestic workers (housewives) is about 1/3 of the whole GDP for the country. Equally, if we take into account all of the young students who have to work part-time to be

able to live and study, we can see that the expansion and diversity of potential social forces of the communist struggle is much bigger than a force that can be led by the monolith structure of a traditional party. Traditional communist parties did not understand these changes. Their definition of the working class was the same as in the early years of the 20th century. By the worker and working class, they meant factory workers and only those who worked manually. The culture and methods of organisation in these parties were frozen in the traditions and political conditions of the early 20th century. When changes imposed themselves, their understanding was still limited. At best, some sections of the service industry came into consideration. To date, all of the service sectors are not included. This is where education, personal service, and service to producers becomes important sections of the capitalist economy and take a more important role. This lack of consideration has to do with their anachronism and the incompatibility of parties' traditional structures with the organisation of such a diverse mass of potential force in the struggle for communism. Moreover, these traditional parties have made rules or principles out of their metaphysical method of thinking. If the experiences of the last one hundred years have not made it clear to all that this method and structure of the communist struggle was not effective (rather their internal relations and method of organisation having failed) then nothing else will. To the deniers of such experiences we can only say good-bye and good luck.

2- In the 1990s the left gave birth to a new form of political organisation in the different countries of Asia, Europe and Latin America. These newly formed organisations embodied, in addition to the working class, other social groups. For example, organisations such as RESPECT, consist of women's groups, trade unions, environmentalists and even religious groups (e.g. the British Muslim Association), and peace movements. How do you define these newly formed organisations?

To define these types of organisations, I think we have to take into consideration what they decided as their aims. We also need to look at their social composition, areas of their struggle, as well as their methods of organisation and internal relations with regard to the social struggle. The more general pattern to your example would be social forums and other umbrella organisations that are active these days. What is clear is that these types of organisations have been able to lead a mass movement against neo-liberalism and put a stop to its advance. Most of these organisations consider themselves to be anti-capitalist. Many forces with socialist and communist aims can be seen among them. They have the capacity to make such a horizon even clearer. The areas and basis of struggle for these movements are wider than the traditional parties and cover various aspects of life under capitalist pressure and oppression. This method of organisation, instead of centralised structures led by the top, allows initiatives from below and has appropriate structures to engage with social “movements” rather than bureaucratic hierarchical structures with “army type” commanding systems.

The new political organisations have the capacity to create harmony amongst the various sections of the labour force and social movements around a common issue. They organise diversity to enable united action. They are essentially based on the existing active movements in society and provide space for their work and action. Through them the struggle’s structure, relations, and aims find an appropriate base for the harmonisation of the struggle on a global scale and transcends the struggle beyond the boundaries of one country.

- 3- In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx defines communists as the most conscious section of the working class. How would Marxism perceive an organisation that seeks to go beyond its main purpose of organising the working class for socialism?**

Karl Marx correctly said in the *Communist Manifesto* that communists are the conscious section of the working class. He added that communists are not a party against other workers' parties and emphasise the united anti-capitalist struggle. They do not have a separate principle with which to mould and form the working class movement. He also said that the communists' theoretical conclusions are not based on the opinions or principles discovered or made by this or that world peace maker – they are the general voice of the real relations stemming from the class struggle. In my view, Marx's brilliant words refer to the real problems of the existing class struggle rather than the problems facing schools of thought...etc. With this introduction, I will answer the main question posed. We need to note that all of these types of organisations do not want to overthrow capitalism and do not pursue communism and the abolition of private property in their struggle. Hence, their importance is not their ideology but the vastness of their struggle and popularity. The main point to this question is the organisation that seeks to go beyond their main aim, which is the organisation of the working class for socialism, and whether such a thing is acceptable. The whole point here is this word, which is the point of question for the working class (i.e. its structure) as well as the areas and aspects of its struggle. In my view, if we take into account what I said in my introductory answer to this question and what Marx refers to as the problems of the existing and present class struggle, then the structural diversity of these organisations' forces and vastness of the areas in which they struggle is not negative. On the contrary, it means that they are taking into account the present class struggle and its problems that put forward new questions every moment. Regarding the diversity of the social forces of these organisations, two points have to be taken into account:

- 1- Consideration of the new structure of the working class and social forces of communism answers the first question. I talked about these and pointed out the changes in the composition of social forces. I think we need a different approach to look at the potential social forces of the struggle for socialism.

- 2- Diversity of ideologies, thoughts, and beliefs of these forces, for instance the existence of forces that maintain their religious beliefs with the criteria of a traditional organisation based on ideological unity as above is not compatible and faces many questions since the communism and class struggle of traditional parties was one and the same as Marxism. This is contrary to the ideas of Marx himself.

Communists' theoretical conclusions were limited to the ideas of one world philosopher. Ideology born out of metaphysics becomes dogmatic and aesthetic. Revolutionary and communist ideas, on the contrary, are dialectical and renewing themselves all the time. Ideology and metaphysics place emphasis on identity and being. Revolutionary communist ideas emphasise and are based upon becoming. It does not accept or tolerate any aesthetic or fixed identity and is always in the process of change. Capitalist relations are based on capital and its accumulation. It turns everything into a commodity to reach its aim. It turns human labour into a commodity and alienates it from humanity. For this aim, it has to remove human beings and their labour (which in its essence is a social force) from its social character. Under capitalist relations, mankind becomes a tool or machine - each one separate from each other and each one engaged in some kind of activity. Only capital has self-determination. Each individual worker is a captive of the secret rule of capitalist accumulation and works for this god. He is not himself anymore and has left his living social relations behind and has instead found an illusory identity. Capitalism distributes all these disasters to be accepted as a collection of ideological values and criteria. The leftists who became aware of this secret (because of the great efforts of people such as Marx) and understood the need to oppose this ideology unfortunately chose the same logic put forward by "scientific ideology" (the so-called teachings of Marx). In fact, it was the same capitalist logic that turned man from being a subject into an object. Using the same logic, leftists after Marx wanted to help the masses (primarily the working class) with their ideological machine to enable it in its struggle. Moreover, one needs to ask whether it is possible for ideology to unite the working class

movement. Apart from many other factors that make such a project impossible, a simple question is: if our understanding of unity is based on an ideology such as Marxism, then which Marxism? Now some 160 years after the Manifesto was first published there are as many as 160 Marxist tendencies and each one considers itself to be the true one. Who is to judge? We were told that the working class would decide for itself which one. The last one hundred years has shown that the masses of the working class have not chosen one of these tendencies and we have not reached a final unity through this method. Worse than that, everything with this capitalist logic is being torn into pieces under the false flags of the illusory identities of groups and factions.

With such a long discussion, we now need to ask whether we should still look at the ideological diversity within the new organisations as a negative point. Another distinctive feature about these organisations is their wide range of actions. Are these areas and aspects of struggle compatible with the communist struggle to overthrow capitalism? The truth is that traditional parties can concentrate their struggle in the production sphere with the aforementioned short-sightedness. They believe that since production is an organiser and an essential part of capitalism, which in itself is not wrong. Furthermore, they believe that if labourers were to conquer this essential department and the party captured political power under the party's leadership, then capitalism would be defeated. Under this strategy there are various aspects of everyday life that are under the domination of the class and capitalism which are not taken into consideration. As a result, the capture of power by the party with the claim of class representation then becomes the central issue of struggle. The experiences of the last century show that this strategy, which was used after the October Revolution in different countries, resulted in nothing more than a few reforms in the lives of hardworking people. The overthrow of capitalism did not take place and the conditions for socialism were never met. After a short period of time and the early victories, capitalist relations were reproduced and strengthened and class society continued. Capitalism, unlike its predecessor's methods of domination, does not only rule by state oppressive

apparatus, although political power and the state are its most important and central parts of domination. Capitalism as a social relation starts from an economical and production sphere and covers all aspects of life. Just like labour, it is separated from the producer and is concentrated in the form of capital. Capitalism takes power from people and in the form of domination concentrates it in the state, and creates this domination of power over relations between people. The dominative role of capitalism has penetrated into every corner of social life, between men and women, parents and children, friends and colleagues, teachers and pupils, and between man and nature, etc. Thus, the struggle to overthrow capitalism is an all encompassing war. Tearing apart and destroying this entire network cannot be stopped even temporarily. Priority must be given to state power, which is one of the main links of the network. New organisations' concentration on the struggle of everyday life is the real basis on which capitalism can be overthrown and its reproduction prevented. In short, I think new organisations, by encouraging initiatives from below; keeping away from authority and centralism, which gives space to the united actions of real social movements and challenges capitalism in all corners of life; and accepting their members diversity and efforts to organise united action, have the capacity to create a viable organism for the communist struggle through the clarification of their principles.

4- In your view are these organisations capable of leading the working class and the great majority of the population toward democracy and socialism?

To answer this question, I think we need to look at concepts such as leadership, democracy and socialism. Different understandings of these concepts will lead to different answers to the question. In my view, freedom from the clamp of capitalism and building a different (communist) world is possible with emancipation. Over the past several thousand years, what divided the logic of the

struggle for freedom into two periods - before and after Marx - is the concept of "emancipation." All types of struggle that did not aim for emancipation reproduced upper class domination despite their degrees of reform and freedom. In capitalist relations where social domination is an organic essence of the system, there is a greater emphasis on the principle of emancipation. Emancipation means the ability to "stand on one's feet," "to think with one's brain," and "to get with one's hand." That is to say, to create and form the real life and social identity of man.

Traditional parties' understanding of leadership refers to an organisation of conscious elements preparing a programme and then attracting the support of the masses (the majority of the population) to follow it either by revolutionary authority or through democratic voting. Hence, the masses are pulled behind so that the implementation of the party programme will enable victory to be achieved. The leading group is formed separately and creates clear boundaries with the working class and has set aside the role of leadership for itself. Such a model viewed from any angle has differences with the masses of the class and in the process of the struggle plays the role of the subject turning the members of the class into the object. The same logic of organisation exists in capitalism between capital and the labour force. The method of organisation in a class society is based on elitism and hierarchy. These two aspects of organisation are found in every aspect of life during the past ten thousand years of class society and can be seen in capitalist relations. The traditional party not only uses this method in relation to the masses but also its own internal relations are based on the same manner. The most prominent, i.e. the highest elite are at the centre. From within the centre, the most prominent and distinguished usually becomes the determining leader. It is not accidental that all the parties have had one prominent leader who held a central role. In other words, party members become objects to a certain degree and because this cycle is institutional it prepares the way for reproducing the old class society and domination of the new generation.

Are leadership and this type of organisation compatible with the communist struggle for emancipation for all people? I think new organisations do not yet have a compatible structure to pursue emancipation, although they show the potential to facilitate such a pursuit. Emancipation can only be brought into reality by the ability of each potential combatant or challenger participating in the advancement of the great forces of socialism to fully participate in the struggle. The communist organisation must completely reject the method of organisation of capitalist relations. You cannot challenge capitalism by using its methods because this method makes its executives reproduce its relations. One cannot justify it by saying that we live in a capitalist society and cannot get away from its means. As the Farsi saying goes: potential justification would be worse than the offence. This means the acceptance of real politics. This contradicts revolutionary thought, which is not after describing but changing the world. If the tasks of the communist organisation are not limited to political power but rather to the effort and preparation to enable the class for emancipation and self governance; if it is not isolating itself at the centre of leadership and is in close contact with the existing movements instead of building leader-follower relationships; if it gives as well as takes, learns from as well as teaches the masses practical and political matters, then it would be able to prepare for the conditions of overthrowing capitalism and preventing its reproduction by building new relations that are opposed to the organisational methods of a capitalist society such as leadership.

There is no doubt that there are always people in any group, who for biological reasons (i.e. genetic and capacity of brain activity) or other social possibilities, are separated from others. With their higher IQ and subjective activity, they can place themselves ahead or in the practical struggle to become prominent. The point is not to reject them or deny these differences. The problem is that structures should not be built upon these differences. In other words, these differences or top-down relationships should not be institutionalised and placed into a structure. On the contrary, the structure should be such that it allows direct intervention of all individuals at various stages of decision making, implementation of those

decisions and control over such execution to prevent concentration of all affairs in the hands of the elite and as a result centralization of power. We should not forget Rosa Luxemburg's words; socialism is the work of each proletarian. This means that in building an ideal society a limited few should not be the designing engineers and the rest should build it. A society built in such a manner will not be a socialist and communist society. A difficult project is ahead, but the only way through is to carry it out.

5- Without a detailed programme, a centralised organisation, and a disciplined internal relation would the scope of these multi-factional organisations be limited to societies where a degree of democracy existed? In other words, what is the pre-condition for their existence and development? Can any pattern be identified for their future development?

The first part of this question is about this type of organisation's pre-conditions. It asks whether these organisations can exist without a degree of democracy. One could say, in a society living under despotic conditions the existence and activities of any sort of organisation are threatened. A disciplined organisation with a long in-depth programme under an oppressive regime is not any safer. Apparently, internal discipline is a defensive shield. However, it is effective to a limited extent. Our specific experience in Iran against a despotic regime and police oppression tells us that even organisations with maximum discipline have limited effectiveness. This is especially true if our perspective is from a mass social movement whose aim is not the capture of political power by a disciplined party, which relies on its internal forces, but rather to abolish the present political order and replace it with self-rule. If politics and political activity are not based on class and social movements, then they are meaningless. Under such conditions, the party will find another task and function.

Another realistic aspect of a movement existing under the oppression of a despotic regime is that those that lack so-called discipline and centralised leadership might cope better, receive less harm, and would therefore be safer. This would thereby enhance the possibility of continuity because communication channels would find its condition and bases of dialog on a mass scale. There would be no need for a steely disciplined organisation in order to distribute a few pamphlets and papers. Indeed, what do those disciplined steely organisations do other than try to make connections and new contacts. The experience in dictatorial Iran shows that movements continue to exist, operate, contact one another, and support each other.

However, regarding the future and its conditions of development one should wait and see. It is important to remember one or two points and principles about future developments. I mentioned those points earlier. In short, as part of the anti-capitalist camp, while rejecting all capitalist criteria and international capital's established political machine and institutions and trying to defeat its hegemony and organise a serious struggle, we should act with a certain degree of openness and flexibility in our activities and dialog, welcoming various efforts to build a future without capitalism. In this movement each force has its place and does not put restrictions on other forces. The movement follows the principle of no homogeneity and no hegemony. Organisations that participate on such a basis should base their internal relationships on such a principle. Let the programme come out of the heart of common action and struggle of all those individuals participating in the anti-capitalist struggle. Self-determination means all those free wills that capital takes away from people and turns them into slaves of capitalism. Therefore, after capitalism no one, nothing, or no force that has any intention of programming the participating activists and turning them into passive beings should replace it. On the contrary, the road for the full activity of each proletarian (i.e. the majority of humanity) should become open with maximum space and possibilities for popular participation. I refer to the methods of struggle used at present in Latin America (in particular Mexico and Argentina). These methods are

possibly the way for the progress and development of the organisation we have in mind. Research about them is important.

6- What, if any, are the similarities and dissimilarities between the new organisations, and Stalinist and social democratic types of parties?

It can be clearly seen that in their aims and methods (these two have organic relations) that these types of organisations are different from both Stalinists and social democratic parties. Over the last one hundred years, social democrats and revolutionary parties split over their different methods of capturing power. Revolutionaries emphasised revolution and social democrats believed that by getting a majority into parliament they would obtain power. Both wanted to change the system. Social democrats washed their hands of altering the system and openly changed their aim to reforming capitalism. Their participation in the bourgeois state machine and its management had an impact. Revolutionaries put power in the hands of revolutionary parties. In spite of their claim to abolish the capitalist system, they too preserved this system, though carried out more important reforms in favour of the poor within the system but left capitalism intact.

There is no doubt that their methods, both in capturing power as well as managing power, was mainly based on the party. In reality members of the class, and the poor did not become active and political power was still concentrated in one place (in capitalism it is in the capitalist state and in revolutionary states it is in the hands of the revolutionary state or party state). Instead of abolishing capitalism, it became stronger than ever. People remained passive and separated from determining their actions from capitalist relations. In new parties and organisations (I do not have any particular organisation in mind) a condition where the aim is to change the system because the concentration of the struggle is varied, they can attack the system better from all directions. If they rely upon the activity and not passivity of the activists, then power after capitalism would not be

concentrated in certain hands. The parties formed in Europe, both in their aim as well as methods, have many shortcomings. However, they are different from Stalinist, Trotskyist, Maoist, and social democratic parties. Again, to find examples that are the most dissimilar to the examples given in your question and closest to my model, we should look at Latin America. I refer to the models that operate in Mexico.

7- The First International also consisted of organisations with different ideologies. In what ways are organisations such as the Socialist Alliance similar to the First International?

I do not have specific information about the Socialist Alliance.

8- What about the Workers' Front proposed by the Third International, which according to Trotsky aimed to prepare the conditions for the hegemony of the communist party? Should organisations such as RESPECT prepare the ground for the leadership of the communist party?

I think I talked about this matter in my previous answers. Anyway, I do not agree with Trotsky or other 20th century revolutionaries who advocated the party's hegemony and wanted to sort out everything via capturing power through the party. The result of the last one hundred years of struggle has proven that by capturing political power through the party, as I explained earlier, the capitalist system cannot be abolished, power will remain concentrated, and the system will continue to be reproduced. Therefore, I am seeking a different type of politics where political organisations serve all individuals, returns power from its concentrated point in the capitalist system (i.e. the capitalist state) into the hands of the exploited people, for emancipation, and self-governance. Therefore, the

Workers' Front should not be concerned with party hegemony, but rather with an active alternating movement against every aspect of capitalism not only the economic aspect, the work place and factories, but also in all aspects of human relations - between humans and institutions and between man and nature). That turns every individual producer from an object into a subject. Defeating capitalism means abolishing and destroying its criteria including the sphere of political power and rejection of being led, emancipation and self-governance.

9- The Brazilian Workers' Party is the home to Trotskyists, elements of guerrilla movements, Stalinists, trade unionists, religious groups, women's movements, landless peasant movements, etc. How do you see the future of this party - radicalising towards socialism or leaning towards social democracy?

The future of the Brazilian Workers' Party is to a great extent affected by the way it participates in the state and deals with the capitalist order. The Workers' Party is now in power and manages the system instead of the previous social democrats. If the party's rank and file go ahead with this and leave the leadership to continue in this way, then it will end up being no more than a social democratic party. However, developments in Latin America are spreading and it is not clear whether the party's base will stay unchanged. The mass movement in Brazil has good potential to make its mark on the development of Latin America.

10- In Iran, Leftist parties and groups have formed two different unities, Socialist Unity and Worker's Unity, whereas in Turkey only a small portion of the left supported and joined a similar unity. This clearly shows that different Marxist organisations perceived the unity of the left differently. Should the formation of multi-factional organisations be considered as progressive and therefore supported by Marxists or

should it be seen as a metamorphism into Social Democracy and therefore opposed?

Both Iranian unities that you mentioned were unsuccessful. One of them dissolved itself after a few years and the other, after a decade, is nothing more than several political activists in Europe and the US getting the support of trade unions in their host countries for the workers' movement in Iran. To a considerable degree, both unities during their formations and in their activities followed the position and political thought of the traditional left. At least one of them claimed that unity was based upon cooperation of various tendencies. In spite of that programme, an organisational method and platform similar to the past was used. Moreover, the capture of power by the party was still strong within them and therefore from the very beginning of their formation both organisations were not appropriate for those aims and therefore unsuccessful

If by multi-functional you mean the struggle against the domination of capital in all aspects of life, economy and politics, social relations, the women's question, minorities, and in relation to the nature, then I could not agree more. That is much more than progressive, that is the only way to struggle against capitalism and for communism. Capitalism should be attacked as a system that has covered every corner of human life like a spider web. This web should be cut and destroyed from all sides. Hence, from this perspective, the real struggle is anti-capitalist for creation of the new communist rule. However, if the aim is to carry out some reform, as most of the present organisations are doing in spite of their communist names in that case we can talk about metamorphism. With regard to any of these instances specific analysis is needed.

11- Is there any other way to gain popular support for the communist left other than participation in umbrella organisations by the majority of the left?

I think I have already talked about the viable effective organisations of the communist struggle but the platform for more discussion to find various ways is always open.

12- These organisations confess that they are in a transitional period. No doubt, any attempt to finalise their organisational structure, policies, and principles would lead to serious opposition. Should they, in your view, compromise over detailed programmes and create disciplined internal relations or should they continue as they are maintaining their unity and postponing their unsolved problems?

One needs to see what purpose the unity serves. Is it unity for unity's sake or is it to strengthen the mass movement for self-government? If it is the first scenario, then surely they would form a discussion club to sit and solve disagreements, which is something they have been doing for years, but it hasn't worked. In those instances where they created big united monolithic parties in Russia, China, Vietnam, and other places, what did they do other than strengthen capitalism? In other countries, unities were formed between different tendencies, but with the same traditional method. Because they tried to unite all aspects and subjects, their efforts led to nowhere but failure. Shouldn't we learn a lesson from a century of struggle's by many devoted communist activists? Why can't we return to the essence of Marx's Manifesto (1848) and unite to progress the class movement. In this case unity will be a step towards the progression of the practical movement and not it's pre-condition. The problems of such a unity will be dealt with within the same movement and possibly find its answers and not through discussions about groups' and parties' programmes or by putting all the hopes on the miracle of dogmatic disciplined organisation and worship of the party.

Interview 2 with Dr Jafar Resa

1- The 1990s witnessed further splits in communist parties. Although the organisational and political illnesses are partly to blame for those splits, it is believed that regardless of the structural and political shortcomings, the traditional communist party, capable of organising all sections of society, cannot survive anymore and that is the main cause of the partition within the communist parties. What is your view?

I cannot agree with you that there is intrinsically something about political parties that makes them incapable of representing a particular social class or grouping without undergoing a split or fragmentation. Indeed, there are many historical precedents, which suggest that there could be very large and effective political parties representing the working class. Where there has been a split in these parties and where they have experienced a process of organisational degeneration over time, is more to do with social and political changes that have occurred in their national or global ambience and their inability to adequately respond to these changes.

One could consider the fate of communist parties belonging to the Third International in the 1920s and 1930s to see that the fragmentation of these parties in Western Europe for instance was more to do with the clash of different political outlooks between a burgeoning bourgeois class in the old Soviet Union who ruled in the name of communism and the militant working class movement which was still advocating revolutionary communism. In effect, you had two different political movements that only shared a common past whether in terms of the personalities involved or as symbols. If you look at the issue from this perspective, then the question becomes: to what extent can two different political movements co-exist within a common organisational structure? I suppose one obvious answer would be to the extent that each of

these different movements still believes that this structure serves their political purpose.

2- In the 1990s the left gave birth to a new form of political organisation in the different countries of Asia, Europe and Latin America. These newly formed organisations embodied, in addition to the working class, other social groups. For example, organisations such as RESPECT, consist of women's groups, trade unions, environmentalists, and even religious groups (e.g. the British Muslim Association), and peace movements. How do you define these newly formed organisations?

I think we need first to consider where these new political entities come from. There was a time where leftist tendencies in societies were associated with trends within the working class, whether they were anarchism or communism is not the issue. They were political movements within the working class, which, had engendered political organisations that represented these various leftist tendencies. From the 1960s onwards, the mantle of leftism was lost from the working class movement. The militant aspirations of the working class with regard to various social issues were lost or failed to offer such aspirations for new social issues. In the vacuum that was created and the absence of effective working class political organisations, we witnessed the emergence of one-issue movements. They had their impact for sometime but then realised that they could not deal with the rise of neo-liberalism and conservatism and thus found that by necessity they needed to regroup into bigger congregations. These new formations are in a sense a response to such a need but they don't necessarily enjoy a common broad vision and maybe they don't need to have such a vision because they are essentially pressure groups and not effective alternatives to current dominant political movements.

3- In the *Communist Manifesto* Marx defines the communists as the most conscious section of the working class. How would Marxism perceive an organisation that seeks to go beyond its main purpose of organising the working class for socialism?

In my reading of Marx, communism is not just about the working class. It is about the human race. It is about how a new human society could be born. The working class is the means to achieving such an aim. Remember, communism is about the emancipation of humanity from the yoke of capitalism. Wage-labour is a particular social relationship that obstructs the progress of mankind from such an ideal. In this sense, Marxism is by definition about going beyond the purpose of organising the working class for socialism. It can't be otherwise.

4- In your view are these organisations capable of leading the working class and the great majority of the population toward democracy and socialism?

I think one needs to be aware of the historical specificity of the word democracy. It is a particular political formation. It differs from liberty, which I suppose you might have in mind. Political democracy is about the establishment of the rule of law and a civil society, which is very much based on private ownership and wage-slavery. So I don't think working class organisations should endeavour to sustain their own source of wage-slavery. But going back to the question, the extent that such organisations can lead the majority of the population depends on the extent that they have managed to make their aspirations and ideals a reflection of people's needs for fundamental change. For instance, when people think about unemployment, to what extent do they think it is a matter to do with wage-slavery? When they think about

poverty, to what extent do they think that it is with us and will perpetuate as long as wage-slavery exists? When people think about war, to what extent do they think it is to do with capitalist competition based on wage-slavery and so on? Leading the people means convincing them of the genuine cause of their misery and the alternative there is for it. However, it is itself a historical challenge and depends to a large extent on the throwing away of the historical baggage that communism has had to carry with it during these decades. Without the passage of an historical era it is hard to imagine that the majority of the population would begin to see communism different from the relics of old currents purporting to be of such affiliation.

5- Without a detailed programme, a centralised organisation, and a disciplined internal relation, would the scope of these multi-factional organisations be limited to societies where a degree of democracy existed? In other words, what is the pre-condition for their existence and development? Can any pattern be identified for their future development?

Where we are now, the issue is not essentially about detailed programmes or degree of organisational centralisation or internal discipline. It is more about the preponderance of ideas, the popularisation of certain beliefs. In this sense, of course political democracy is a great help. It allows for the proliferation of such ideas much better than if there were some autocratic political structure at work. However, the growth of such ideas is essentially about how well they grow within the working class community. Without adequate germination of such beliefs among the working class communities, it is hard to imagine that they would have the social backing to develop into widespread ideas in the rest of society.

6- What, if any, are the similarities and dissimilarities between the new organisations and Stalinist and social democratic type parties?

I am not sure what new organisations you have in mind. But I take it that some of these organisations are indeed the product of splits and personalities of the old Stalinist and social democratic types of parties. So, I wouldn't be surprised if we could see some of the old antics in these new parties too. But maybe there is one distinct dissimilarity with the old political parties. For all their weaknesses and mischief, the old parties were organisations, which had a holistic programme for society. They were not one-issue organisations. At least in their ambitions, they were parties for government, albeit in opposition. The new organisations are, to a large extent, pressure groups that have become bigger and more vociferous in some places.

7- The First International also consisted of organisations with different ideologies. In what ways are organisations such as the Socialist Alliance similar to the First international?

I am not sure which Socialist Alliance you have in mind. To the extent that I am aware of the history of the First International, different organisations in this institution represented different ideologies and trends within the European working class movement in the 19th century. I am not sure that the same could be said about the Socialist Alliance. Indeed, the influence of the working class in this organisation is by no means comparable to that of the First International.

8- What about the Workers' Front proposed by the Third International, which according to Trotsky aimed to prepare the conditions for the hegemony of the communist party? Should organisations such as

RESPECT prepare the ground for the leadership of the communist party?

Again, I suppose one needs to put the idea of the Workers' Front in the historical context of its time. Above all, it was an idea for uniting the European working class beset by years of war, deprivation and hardship in the struggle for their own survival and social well-being. It was an idea about a time where the European working class was split in the middle between reformist social democracy and militant communism. I suppose revolutionaries like Trotsky thought that by actively leading a better struggle for the well-being of the working class, the communist movement would be able to attract vacillating workers to its ideals and aspirations. But RESPECT is far from such settings. It is essentially a pressure group, which aims to put the mangles on foreign adventures of American and British imperialisms and in so doing it has found very strange bedfellows who do not in the least share any of the aspirations of the working class.

9- The Brazilian Workers' Party is the home to Trotskyists, elements of guerrilla movements, Stalinists, trade unionists, religious groups, women's movements, landless peasant movements, etc. How do you see the future of this party - radicalising towards socialism or leaning towards social democracy?

I am not that much familiar with the Brazilian Workers' Party and its composition. But I know that since coming to power they have done some good work to alleviate the extreme hardships of the dispossessed and the working class in Brazil. They have tried to become the social democratic alternative in that country. But none of their reforms are as fundamental as you would have expected from a genuine die-hard social democratic party worthy of the name.

All of the social and economic indicators demonstrate that Brazil is as much a capitalist society as it was before this party came to power, there is an abject disparity in wealth and power as there was in the past and the fundamentals of Brazilian capitalism are still as strong as they were before. So, the future of this party is probably towards a split where the more militant part of the party would find it difficult to offer legitimacy for actions and measures, which in truth only strengthen the rule of capitalism.

10- In Iran leftist parties and groups have formed two different unities, Socialist Unity and Workers' Unity, whereas in Turkey only a small portion of the left supported and joined a similar unity. This shows clearly that different Marxist organisations perceived the unity of the left differently. Should the formation of multi-factional organisations be considered as progressive and therefore supported by Marxists or should it be seen as a metamorphism into Social Democracy and therefore opposed?

I can see that there is a common thread linking this question with the spirit of your previous questions. You see the issue of structure and organisation very much in abstraction. For me, the matter starts not so much from structures but from political and social movements that try to organise themselves. So, the formation of multi-factional organisation is neither progressive nor regressive on its own because the first issue to consider is what these factions represent. Do we have a working class movement in Iran, which is striving to organise and is made up of distinct factions? Do these factions try to work under a common organisational umbrella? Do leftist parties that exist in Iran represent these various factions and are they trying to form a unitary organisation? If the answer to all of these questions is "yes," then we could discuss whether this unitary organisation is progressive or not depending on the political programme and tactics it is pursuing. In the absence of clear evidence for any

of these questions it is hard to discuss the fate of such would be unitary organisations in any meaningful way, albeit very much hypothetical.

11- Is there any other way to gain popular support for the communist left other than participation in umbrella organisations by the majority of the left?

Yes, of course. But first you need to develop your vision and need to bring it to the working class. This vision is not just about pressuring the ruling parties but also about a view of the future and society. Then you need genuine working class leaders to accept your vision and help you to convey it to the working class at large. Once you've gone that far then you begin to have popular support for communist beliefs and your sceptics would accept that you have a genuine alternative to participation in umbrella organisations by the majority of the left.

12- These organisations confess that they are in a transitional period. No doubt, any attempt to finalise their organisational structure, policies, and principles would lead to serious opposition. Should they, in your view, compromise over detailed programmes and create disciplined internal relations or should they continue as they are maintaining their unity and postponing their unsolved problems?

I don't think they should paper over any real differences in policies or visions. Nor do I think that disciplined internal relations are a long-term remedy if indeed it even works in the short-term. Genuine organisations are the outcome of organising efforts of social and political movements. And for those claiming to be communist, it has to be the outcome of such organising efforts in genuine working class movements. Without such a foundation, even the most disciplined organisations are no more than a caricature of the real

thing whose existence is as ephemeral and transient as the very ideas and schemes they represent.

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