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Destroy the Old to Build the New!

A comment on the state, revolution, and the C.P.G.B.

by

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THE BRITISH ROAD TO SOCIALISM

The British Road to Socialism was first published in 1951. Since then it has been re-drafted, but it still retains those ideas which provoked such controversy when it first appeared. In this programme the main break with earlier Marxist thought lies in the claim that it is now possible for the working-class to *win control over* the capitalist state in Britain, by constitutional means, and then *transform* this capitalist state into one which will meet the needs of the working-class. Thus:

“At a time of mounting class struggle, when the entire working class is brought into action and is supported by other sections of the population, a general election fought on the issue of a socialist solution to Britain’s problems could bring decisive results. It could return to Parliament a Socialist Labour and Communist majority and establish a Socialist Government which, with the backing of the people, would begin to carry through a fundamental social change.

In this way, using our traditional institutions and rights, we can transform Parliament into the effective instrument of the people’s will, through which the major legislative measures of the change to socialism will be carried. Using the rights already won in the Labour movement’s historic struggle for democracy, we can change capitalist democracy, dominated by wealth and privilege, into socialist democracy, where only the interests of the people count . . .

Working class power is the essential condition for far-reaching social change. The programme of a Socialist Government must therefore aim to consolidate that power, and put an end to the political, economic and social power of the capitalist class. Only a working-class state, with the full support of working-people, can carry through the measures that will open the way to socialism.”

How is the capitalist state, which serves the interests of monopoly capital, to be transformed into a working-class state, which will serve the interest of the working-class?

“(The Socialist government will achieve the) consolidation of the political power of the working people by ensuring that those in commanding positions in the armed forces and police, the civil service and diplomatic services are loyal to the Socialist Government and increasingly representative of the people; and by democratic electoral reform, democratic ownership of the press, and control of broadcasting by the people.”

In other words, the *structure* of the state will not be modified, but there will be a purge of all those in high places whose loyalty lies with monopoly-capital.

Why is this programme controversial? Because it is just this line of argument which Lenin tore to pieces in *The State and Revolution*, written in 1917, and *The Proletarian Revolution and the renegade Kautsky*, written in 1918. Thus, from *State and Revolution*:

"If the state is the product of the irreconcilability of class antagonism, if it is a power standing over and above society, and *increasingly alienating itself from it*, then it is obvious that the liberation of the oppressed class is impossible not only without a violent revolution, *but also without the destruction* of the apparatus of state power which was created by the ruling class and which is the embodiment of this 'alienation.' The Commune especially proved that *the working-class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes* (my italics M.McC.). The words 'to smash the bureaucratic military machine' briefly express the principal lesson of Marxism in regard to the tasks of the proletariat during a revolution in relation to the state."

Again and again this point is driven home.

"It was Marx who taught that the proletariat *cannot simply conquer state power in the sense that the old state apparatus passes into new hands* (my italics M.McC.). As we have seen, Marx meant that the working class must smash, break, shatter (sprengung-explosion, the expression used by Engels) the whole state machine."

Lenin emphasises, and we in the working-class movement in Britain in particular need to remember, that *democracy is a form of the State*.

"A democratic republic is the best possible political shell for capitalism, and therefore, once capital has gained control of this very best shell . . . it establishes its power so securely, so firmly, that *no change, either of persons, or institutions, or of parties* in the bourgeois democratic republic can shake it.

We must also note that Engels is most definite in calling universal suffrage an instrument of bourgeois rule. Universal suffrage, he says, obviously summing up the long experience of German Social Democracy, is the gauge of the maturity of the working class. It cannot and never will be anything more in the present day state.

The petty bourgeois democrats, such as our own Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, and also their twin brothers, all the social-chauvinists and opportunists of Western Europe, except just this 'more' from universal suffrage. They themselves share, and instil into the minds of the working people, the false notion that universal suffrage 'in the *modern state*' is really capable of ascertaining the will of the majority of the toilers and ensuring its realisation."

It follows that Parliament must not be regarded as the means whereby the working-class win power. In criticising a statement of Kautsky's which read: "The aim of our political struggle remains, as hitherto, the conquest of state power by winning a majority in Parliament and by converting Parliament into the master of the Government," Lenin wrote, "This is nothing but the purest and most vulgar opportunism, repudiating revolution in deeds, while accepting it in words."

The real road to power for the proletariat and its allies, Marx, Engels and Lenin maintained, was not into the Parliamentary cul-de-sac but through proletarian dictatorship. As Lenin wrote in *The Proletarian Revolution and the renegade Kautsky*:

"The formula 'dictatorship of the proletariat' is merely a more historically concrete and scientifically exact formulation of the proletariat's task of 'smashing' the bourgeois state machine, about which both Marx and Engels, in summing up the experience of the revolution of 1848, and still more so, of 1871, spoke for *forty years, between 1852 and 1891.*"

The capitalist state machine will be broken up by the working-class, who will use *their own* organisations to achieve this. It is these organisations which will constitute the main weapon whereby the capitalists are overthrown; these and not Parliament. It is these organisations which will form the nucleus of the new working-class state; these and not Parliament. (Although, of course, *once power has been won*, and the dictatorship of the proletariat firmly established, Parliament can be transformed into an instrument of the people's will).

Until the final and decisive struggle for power we cannot be sure just what forms these working-class organisations will take. They may be councils of action, shop stewards' committees, trades councils, or some new form of organisation. But in essence, whatever their form, they will be *centres of working class power* (Soviets); the means whereby the working-class exerts superior force against the capitalist state in order to win power. This is why Lenin wrote, in *Left-Wing Communism*:

"Gallagher . . . fully understands that only workers' soviets and not Parliament, can be the instrument whereby the aims of the Proletariat will be achieved. And of course those who have failed to understand this up to now are hopeless reactionaries, even if they are most highly educated people, most experienced politicians, most sincere Socialists, most erudite Marxists."

On the question of whether this road to Socialism was likely to be a peaceful or a violent one, Lenin was equally adamant. In 1918, when commenting on Marx's view, expressed in the 1870's, that a peaceful transition *might* be possible in England and America, he wrote:

"The revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat is *violence* against the bourgeoisie, and the necessity of such violence is *particularly* created, as Marx and Engels have repeatedly explained in detail . . . by the existence of a military clique and a bureaucracy. But it is precisely these institutions that were *non-existent* precisely in England and in America and precisely in the 1870's when Marx made his observations. (They *do* exist in England and in America *now!*)"

And in the 1960's have they disappeared?

For this leads us to consider the developments in the world since Lenin's time. We have seen that *the British Road* adopts, on this question of the relation of the state to the proletarian revolution,

an attitude which is identical in essentials with that advanced by right-wing opportunists in the past. But since the 1920's there have been immense changes in the world as a whole and in Britain. Do these changes justify us today in contradicting Lenin's teaching? Let us look at one of the most recent justifications. I quote from James Klugmann's article in *Marxism Today*, of October, 1960;

"Within imperialism, ever more restricted by the growing socialist system, the general crisis deepens. Imperialism is weakened, it attacks all sections of the people—not only the working class, but the peasantry, town petty-bourgeoisie, intellectual and professional people, even the smaller capitalists. Imperialism becomes more reactionary. It tends, more and more, not only to attack the living standards of the people, but to attack the limited democratic rights that the working people have won within capitalism, to renounce national sovereignty, to reject and turn against all that is best and most progressive in its own cultural heritage. It becomes identified with a policy and strategy of nuclear war.

In this situation, more and more clearly, the working class stands forth as the truly progressive force of each nation, the leader in the defence of peace, national sovereignty, liberty and democracy, the cultural heritage. Opportunities arise, in a way that did not previously exist to the same extent, of developing a broad political alliance around the working-class for peace, democracy, independence, living standards and cultural progress. At the same time the ideas of socialism gain ground amongst the working people.

Externally the rise and strengthening of the socialist countries exercises a growing moral and ideological influence amongst the peoples of the capitalist countries. Moreover the stronger the socialist camp, the more opportunity there is for preventing imperialist interventions against countries that take the socialist road, the more opportunity exists for giving economic and cultural aid to the peoples building socialism. Imperialism is no longer able to threaten, blackmail and intervene in the old way.

The Conception of *The British Road to Socialism* was that, taking into account the new more favourable relation of class forces in the world and inside Britain, taking into account the specific traditions and institutions that have developed in Britain, it was now possible for the working class to win around itself a broad popular alliance to win political power, to win a Communist and genuine Socialist majority in Parliament, to *transform* (my italics M.McC.) the capitalist state into a state representative of the interests of the working people, and to build socialism in Britain, not without continuous class-struggle, but without armed conflict."

This passage deserves a careful reading. The first three paragraphs outline, correctly, the main development since Lenin's time—the rise of the world socialist system—and the more favourable prospect which this has created for isolating monopoly capital in Britain

prior to its final overthrow, and for preventing imperialist intervention to restore the old order *after* a successful socialist revolution. The prospect of toppling monopoly capital is greater than in Lenin's time; the prospect that the revolution can be achieved with a minimum of violence, and without prolonged civil war, also greater. But even on Klugmann's own analysis the prospect of a constitutional revolution, of a legal transfer of power, is smaller. For he himself emphasises that as imperialism weakens, and it *is* much weaker than it was at the beginning of the century, it "tends more and more . . . to attack the limited democratic rights that the working people have won within capitalism." We all recognise that Parliament plays a *less* important role within the constitution than in the past. If any conclusion is to be drawn from this it is that the possibility of using "the specific traditions and institutions that have developed in Britain" (our constitutional liberties), to win power by peaceful, legal, constitutional means is *fainter* than it was in Lenin's time. If there has been a curtailment of constitutional liberties then constitutional advance to Socialism is *less* likely. In fact the conclusion which Klugmann seeks to draw in the fourth paragraph simply does not emerge from the preceding evidence.

"Imperialism," writes Klugmann, "becomes identified with a policy and strategy of nuclear war." But what does this entail? Greatly increased militarisation of the state. In fact, as all comrades know, the bureaucracy, the military and police, and the propaganda machine, have, together, been immensely enlarged since Lenin's time, as a direct result of the deepening crisis of capitalism. If the need to smash the capitalist state machine was particularly created "by the existence of a military clique and a bureaucracy" in the 1920's *then this must be even more necessary today*. This immense, top-heavy military and bureaucratic apparatus, which has been built up by British imperialism to contain the growing contradictions, which threaten to disintegrate its system, can never be *transformed from within*, by legal means. It must be *smashed from without*, by force.

Let us look at just what is involved in achieving power by constitutional means. "At a time of mounting class struggle, when the entire working-class is brought into action, and is supported by other sections of the population, a general election fought on the issue of a socialist solution to Britain's problems could bring decisive results." What an assortment of wishful thoughts! Consider the situation envisaged by *the British road* in this passage. When is "the entire working class," or even a major part of it, "brought into action?" Only during a widespread, or general strike. There have not been many such situations in British history. The general strikes of 1842 and 1926, the 1919 struggle, described so vividly in Gallagher's *Revolt on the Clyde*, can be cited. They were all *potentially* revolutionary situations, which might have developed into revolution given correct revolutionary leadership of the working class.

At such times, as the capitalists well know, *either* the workers and their allies press on to seize political power and smash the bourgeois state machine, *or* the bourgeoisie re-establish their grip and crush

the revolutionary forces. That class which can exert *superior force*, at the decisive moments, will win the struggle for power. That is why it is essential for the revolutionary leaders to maintain the initiative, preserve the cohesion of the revolutionary class and its allies, exploit every disagreement between different sections of the bourgeoisie, and, vitally important, win over decisive sections of the armed forces.

Hesitation and delay at such a time would be fatal. Yet this is the moment, when the Communist Party of Great Britain, instead of leading a revolution, will call for—a general election! What a farce! What a negation of revolutionary leadership this would be! For such a slogan, such a demand, *surrenders the initiative to the ruling class*. They can then decide whether or not acceptance would best serve their interests. In all probability the demand itself would cut very little ice on either side, and would only serve to isolate the C.P.G.B. from the immediate, and unconstitutional, struggle. It would be like throwing a stone into mountainous seas. The two great classes locked in mortal combat and—the demand for a general election!

But if the C.P.G.P. *could* obtain mass support for such a demand at such a time might the ruling class not decide to follow their lead and hold a general election? For would this not give them a breathing space, of which decisive advantage could be taken? As a necessary preliminary the general strike would have to be called off. No general election would be possible with the country paralysed by a general strike. (One could not even print the ballot papers!) But once the strike is called off, the revolutionary enthusiasm and energy and activity of the masses *must inevitably subside*. Activity is followed by passivity. The masses are no longer controlling events, they are waiting upon them, as is usual in capitalist society. In fact, the class struggle *could* no longer be “mounting,” it would be declining.

During the following days and weeks of the election campaign, the capitalists would close ranks, and unite most of the petty-bourgeoisie, the middle classes, and many of the less class-conscious workers around “the defence of the constitution and traditional British liberties.” For note that this general election will be decided, according to the British Road, on the issue of socialism—for or against a socialist revolution. Day after day the press, radio and television would pour out a flood of calumnies and lies to bewilder and confuse the revolutionary masses. For or against red revolution. Liberty or tyranny. The united front between the workers and their allies would soon crumble. Opportunist leaders would waver, and then turn against a full socialist programme “at this stage.” Before long the ruling class would be in a position to isolate, and strike hard at those who persisted in presenting the revolutionary alternative to capitalism. Indeed the moon will turn blue before we succeed in winning a majority to vote for socialism *within* the legal framework of the capitalist constitution, and with the bourgeois state machine unbroken.

But let us assume this blue moon. Parliament has been captured. The “Socialist” government has been duly summoned to Buckingham Palace, and sworn in. It then proceeds with the task of transforming the capitalist state into a working-class state. The purge of capitalist minded civil and military authorities begins. But they are all capitalist-minded and bitterly hostile to the new government. Will they meekly accept the order to “dismiss”? No-one in his right mind will assume that state monopoly capital would commit suicide. The British Road states:

“The capitalist class cannot be expected to surrender its wealth and power without a struggle. The big capitalists, whose interests are threatened by the advance to socialism, are likely by every means in their power, constitutional and unconstitutional, to hold back the movement. At all stages in the struggle for progressive policies and for socialism, therefore, the working class and progressive movement needs to be vigilant and if necessary to use its political and industrial strength to defeat any attempts by the big capitalists to restrict democratic rights or block the road to democratic advance.

This will be of particular importance when the Socialist Government is established and begins to carry through measures to break the economic and political power of the big capitalists. The extent to which the working class is alert and prepared to use its strength in support of the Government’s measures will determine whether the big capitalists accept the democratic verdict of the people or attempt to resist it by force.”

In this passage we have recognition that the ruling class may use unconstitutional means of checking the revolution if constitutional means do not suffice. But what are “unconstitutional” methods. Quite simply, the use of force, the use of the army, to overthrow the constitutional “Socialist” government. How is this threat to be countered? By mobilising “the political and industrial strength” of the people. But political parties and trade unions cannot stand against an army. There is no escaping the need, at some stage of the revolution, for *armed strength* to back the political and industrial strength of the people. Only *the people in arms* can counter a putsch by the army. To ignore this fact is to ensure the defeat of the revolution. But it is ignored in *The British Road to Socialism*.

It has been said that those who criticise *The British Road* are dogmatists. But dogmatists are surely those who stick to a point of view in the face of all the evidence. A programme which revises basic Marxist teaching on the role of the state, which rejects the accumulated experience of the working class, is dogmatic beyond belief. With such an obviously false perspective is it any wonder that there is widespread reluctance within the C.P.G.B. to accept this document?

The British Road is like one of those medieval paintings, produced before the laws of perspective had been fully grasped. The foreground, our decaying capitalist society, is seen in all its ugliness. In the background a Socialist Britain stands out in full glory. But the

middle distance, the intervening ground which links the two, and should give coherence to the whole picture, is somehow blurred. The perspective of advance is false. For this there is no excuse. The laws of perspective *have* been discovered—by Marx, Engels and Lenin—and we must apply them to Britain.

(Repeatedly rejected for publication in 'Marxism Today,' the monthly journal of the C.P.G.B.)

Two letters on the need to build a Marxist-Leninist Party in England, Scotland and Wales:

Dear Jim,

We can agree that an opportunist faction which controls the Party organisationally has, over a period of years, denied the Press to Leninist arguments, with occasional exceptions, and denied branches the right to hear speakers put the Leninist view on theoretical and practical questions. (That they have a mass base for their line does not alter the fact.) This faction has, therefore, not operated the basic principles of democratic centralism over many years. These principles *must* be operated in order to achieve a correct line and advance those slogans which meet the needs of the Party and the working class in each historical period. We *cannot* arrive at the truth, as a Party, and act upon that correct understanding of objective reality, when the basic methods of Party work are being flouted by the Party leadership (which, through its organisational control over the Party, is self-perpetuating).

The argument therefore, which you advance, that we must work to win a *majority* of the Party to our way of thinking, by working away within the permitted framework laid down by the opportunist leadership, is not a correct one because the means whereby Party opinion can crystallise around a correct subjective understanding of the objective world *do not exist*. The facts on Yugoslavia, India, Albania, etc. are not printed in the Party press and only appear, if at all, in distorted form in the capitalist press. How can the majority ever be won under such circumstances, no matter how rapidly objective conditions develop?

Looked at another way, I am saying that a Marxist-Leninist, a Communist Party, does not yet exist in Britain. Our job is to create one. And that cannot be done without organising, uniting the Marxists to fight the revisionists for the minds of the militant workers, a big proportion of whom remain within the C.P. because of its association with the revolutionary traditions of other peoples, notably the peoples of the U.S.S.R. and because it alone *claims* to stand for a Socialist alternative to Capitalism.

It is necessary to begin by pulling together an alternative leadership to the social democrats who have captured the Party organisation, and that cannot be done without breaking Party rules *as operated by them*, in defence of democratic centralism. To quote Lenin describing what I maintain is an analogous situation:

"It is a fact that the whole of the German Social Democratic Party (and the same is true of the French and other Parties) does *only* that which pleases Sudekum, or which can be tolerated by Sudekum. *Nothing else* can be done legally. Everything *honest*, everything really socialistic that is done in the German Social-Democratic Party is done in *opposition* to its centres, is done by avoiding its Central Committee and Central Organ, is done by *violating* organisational discipline, is done in a *factional* manner in the name of anonymous, new centres of a new Party, as was the

case, for instance, with the Manifesto issued by the German Lefts and published in the Berner Tagmacht on 31st May of this year. As a matter of fact a new party is growing up, gaining strength, and being organised, a real workers' party, a real revolutionary Social Democratic Party, unlike the old, rotten, national-liberal party of Legien, Sudekum, Kautsky, Hause, Scheidemann and Co.

It is necessary to proceed to the building of a revolutionary organisation—this is demanded by the changed historical situation, it is demanded by the epoch of proletarian revolutionary action—but it is possible to proceed in this direction only *over the heads* of the old leaders, the stranglers of revolutionary energy, *over the heads* of the old party, by *destroying it*. (*Collapse of the Second International.*)”

In practice one *cannot separate* the Party from the leadership around which it has been built up over many decades. To talk of winning a majority against them within the rules they operate is to dream of the impossible. You, as an educated Marxist of deep conviction and of strong character, have influenced maybe 50 comrades over recent years, by standing firm as an individual against strong moral pressure, and operating within the permitted legal framework. But how many, who have not chanced to meet you, or other Marxists, within their branch, have been lost to our movement in the past 20 years? Comrades of energy and enthusiasm whose development into Marxists could not proceed without help from those of greater experience. For every *one* that individuals such as ourselves have been able to influence *ten* have been lost to the Movement.

The Social Democratic leadership of our Party will never budge from their general line of *pushing* the existing Labour Movement, Unions, Co-op, and Labour Party, into more radical actions, but always within the confines of Imperialism, within the laws of our capitalist constitution. They will continue to cover this general line of betrayal with a thin ‘Marxist’ fig leaf. This is their role, objectively. (Whatever their subjective motives, objectively they have betrayed the working class). This general line, which they represent, and the organisation which they have built up around them, to implement it, is not Marxist. It cannot be changed from within. We can only build a revolutionary, Marxist Party by *smashing the old party*, by appealing over the heads of the leadership of the C.P.G.B. to all honest militants within the working class movement.

All best wishes,

MICHAEL MCCREERY.

Dear Jack,

Many thanks for your letter. I am sorry that John and Mary don't yet see the need for an alternative Party built around an alternative leadership. Why is this necessary? Because the C.P.G.B. has been built up, at least over the last 20 years, around a group of men whose political philosophy is *Left Social-Democratic*, not Marxist. This radical philosophy was well outlined in Harry Pollitt's *Looking Ahead*, published in 1947. And although it was later withdrawn, its main idea, *implied in all the actions* of the leadership of the C.P.G.B. both before and after its publication, re-emerged in the first draft of the British Road to Socialism, moved by John Gollan and ‘accepted’ by the Party in 1951; full discussion in Party press and Party branches being denied by the leadership then and subsequently.

What is the essential idea around which the political philosophy of these men is built up? It is the idea that it is possible to win working class power by *capturing* the existing machinery of State. Marxists, however, have always held that the capitalist state machine can never be captured, but must be *smashed*. All Socialist revolutions have confirmed in practice the truth of this theory. It is a universal truth.

Stemming from this basic error are all the main false ideas contained in the British Road to Socialism, which motivate *all* the practical actions of the C.P.G.B., e.g. the false idea that the Labour Party must be *transformed* into a Socialist Party before the working class can hope to capture state power. (Left-social democrats unite!); the false idea that the trade unions, organisations with an *economic* aim, have it within their power to transform the *political* character of the Labour Party, tied as it is to the capitalist constitution, hook, line and sinker; which implies that the trade unions can be *transformed* into *political* organs of the working class via the capture of leading positions in them by Communists and Left-Socialists. Either we pursue a general line of turning towards the working class, the mass of the people, to mobilise them for action against capitalism, despite capitalist laws, the capitalist constitution, or we pursue a general line of attempting to *capture* the existing legal organisations, economic and political, in which workers are to be found, with the aim of capturing, finally, the machinery of the state within which they operate. The road to Socialism lies through mobilising the common people for action against capital, not through the capture of existing organs of state. This is not to say that whilst the main aim is to mobilise the masses, to release their great potential, revolutionary energy, we do not at the same time, and *as a result of*, success in this main task, welcome the capture of all existing, legal, positions by progressives. Successes in this field are important, indeed vital, *but* because they advance the main aim, which is to mobilise the common people for action, *not* because in themselves they bring us one whit nearer to working class power.

One must conclude that there is no Marxist-Leninist Party in Britain today, nor has there been for at least 20 years. There is an organisation, the C.P.G.B., which purports to be Marxist, within

which there are many *individuals* with a correct Marxist understanding, but the *organisation* is Left Social-Democratic. This is the *practical* result of implementing radical bourgeois philosophy. There is no real mass line, there is *only* constitutional work, within the legal framework of imperialist Britain. To *restrict* Party work to this is to abandon the aim of revolution, to become an appendage of the Labour Party, itself an appendage of the capitalist state.

In your letter you recognise, and this is the essential and vital point of agreement between us, 'the need to build up a cadre force capable of producing an *alternative* leadership, inside a *real* Marxist Party.' The only doubt I have with regard to this formulation is to the word 'inside.' Leadership is not 'inside' but 'of' a Marxist Party, because a Marxist Party can only be built up *around* a Marxist leadership. You will know that no Social Democratic Party has ever been won for Marxism. The present leadership has built up the Party around itself and in its own image.

Further, all Marxist Parties have had *small* beginnings. It was a *handful* of men who founded the Bolshevik Party, the Communist Party of China, the Cuban Revolutionary Party, etc.

When you write "Do you agree that to the extent to which we win support inside the C.P. now, and when the times comes when we find ourselves in a position to create the real alternative, i.e. a real Marxist Party, that we can be stronger to the extent of saving us time, valuable time for building up a strong cadre force?" you are in effect *postponing* the establishment of an alternative leadership on the grounds that we have not yet a sufficient number of cadres to establish this leadership. This is not true. Marx and Engels were only two, but they regarded themselves, and correctly, as a Party leadership, and fought to win mass support for the correct line they advanced for over 40 years. Today in Britain the knowledge of Marxism is much more widely spread. There are more than two who can *now*, collectively, establish that Marxist leadership which the working class and the working people *must turn to* as conditions deteriorate in Britain. But the *growth* of a Marxist Party can only *follow* the establishment of a leadership, it cannot precede it. In effect you are asking for the impossible.

Can the establishment of a leadership be achieved without a breach of the rules of the C.P.G.B. as interpreted by the revisionists? No it cannot, any more than state power can be won without breaking capitalist laws. The breach of democratic centralist procedure by a revisionist faction *forces* Marxists to unite in defence of democratic centralism—that is the significance of the Appeal which I am proposing you sign. It unites Marxists within the Party in defence of the basic principles of Communist work, through operation of which *collective opinions* can be formed and *collectively acted upon*. The truth can be arrived at in no other way than by observation of the principles of democratic centralism.

When you write "it needs to be remembered that the basic unit of C.P. organisation is the Branch—not the individual" as a reason for opposing the Appeal, your remark only makes sense in the light

of an assumption that the Communist Party is a Marxist Party which is implementing the principles of democratic centralism. But you well know that it is not. The press is now completely denied to us. Branch meetings are completely denied to us. For years, in fact, Leninist opinions and arguments have been deliberately excluded from the Party press and Party branches, and only the *occasional* letter and article has been allowed, to create the illusion that the opposition was weak *and* that it was allowed its say (e.g. one or two of my pieces were allowed, basically because I believe they still hoped to win me, and as a result I have emerged as a known opponent to the revisionist line, but many other comrades have been completely silenced for years, denied the Party press. We can prove this.) But only *if* the Party press is open to Marxist argument can the alternative leadership emerge to challenge the opportunists on a *national* level. While Marxists are restricted to short, *verbal* contributions in their own branches, the alternative Marxist leadership will never, can never, emerge; the minds of the active cadres cannot be reached. Arguments must be hammered home again and again in print and verbally, in order to win conviction on questions of basic theory and on vital practical issues. Closure of the branches and the Party press to us makes this impossible unless we take *extra-ordinary* action. The fraction which dominates the Party calls itself Marxist-Leninist. Then let us expose it for its failure to act in a Marxist Leninist manner. The abandonment of democratic centralism by the Party leadership compels Marxists to expose this betrayal. *If not now, when?* A public statement must be made by all Marxists in the C.P.G.B. and a public campaign launched in England, Scotland and Wales to expose revisionism. The onus of splitting the Party is upon the revisionists, and all militants will recognise this to be so. Many of course, will not recognise this initially; many will not at first understand our action, but sooner or later they will do so, if they remain active and honest, for objective developments will force the truth upon them.

All the best,

MICHAEL McCREERY.