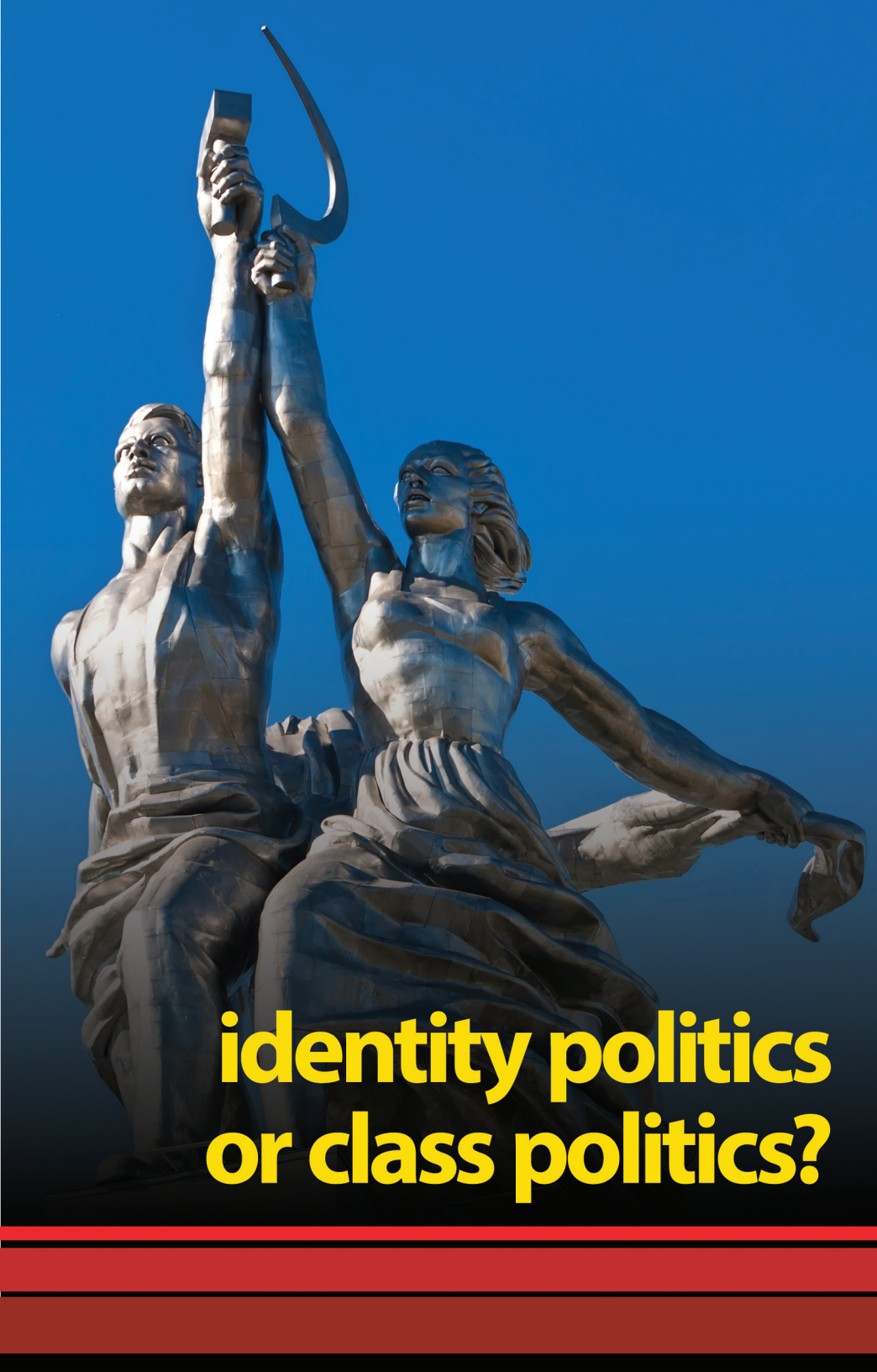
identity politics
or class politics?

Identity Politics or Class Politics?

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Identity Poltics or Class Politics?
Joti Brar and Ella Rule, 2024

ISBN: 978-1-913286-03-3

First published in Britain by CPGB-ML, 2024
PO Box 78900, London, SW16 9PQ

Front photo: 36884618 Sailorr | Dreamstime.com

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Note to readers

The bulk of this text was written in the summer of 2018, in the period leading up to our party's eighth congress, as part of the preparation for a thorough debate on the topic of identity politics generally and transgender ideology in particular. It was completed in the autumn of the same year, but for various reasons, its publication was postponed, although a part of the text appeared in the pamphlet *Identity Politics and the Transgender Trend* in 2019.

Since that time, many things have transpired to bring home to workers the parlous state of British capitalism – events that have refocused their attention and educated many of them, at least in part, as to the true nature of British bourgeois democracy and the British state machine.

We saw a further eighteen months of the three-and-a-half year parliamentary sit-in by MPs in a House of Commons determined *not* to implement the Brexit referendum. We saw the ignominious collapse of the Corbyn project at the general election in 2019, very much spurred on by the Labour leader's about-face on the Brexit question, and followed almost immediately by the onset of the Covid-19 health crisis in early 2020.

We saw how the stock market crash of February 2020 was covered up by the introduction of a blanket national lockdown that came too late (and was clearly not designed) to serve any useful

health purpose, but which did allow the government to bail out and subsidise monopoly capital in crisis under the guise of bailing out the people.

We saw how Covid-19 was both allowed to spread, killing off large numbers of old and vulnerable workers, along with many health workers, even as 'stopping the spread' was used as a justification for closing down access to education and healthcare – and for hugely accelerating the digitisation and privatisation of both, to the great benefit of monopoly capital and to the great detriment of the working masses.

Side by side with profiteering and power-grabs by big pharma and big tech, we saw the immense corruption of officials and government ministers. We saw and continue to experience the increased rationing of healthcare, the exponential growth of waiting lists and the resultant avoidable deaths, and a horrendous pandemic, more far-reaching than Covid-19 itself, in mental health and child development issues.

We saw and continue to see the rampant inflation resulting from a decade and a half of money-printing, which has been hugely exacerbated by the escalation of Nato's proxy war against Russia. The failed attempt to use a weaponised Ukraine to destroy Russia has triggered even more money-printing (subsidising the arms monopolies in the name of 'standing with Ukraine') and an all-out economic war against Russia, both of which have aggravated the already-existing 'cost of living' crisis.[1]

We have seen the first wave of strikes and protest by workers at the rapid decline in their living standards effectively crushed by the combined efforts of employers, the state, the Labour party and the trade union bureaucracies.

And today, as we go to print, politicians across the bourgeois spectrum are maintaining their absolute fealty to the zionist settler-colonial project, recognising this as a precondition for a career in 'mainstream' politics. British imperialism's complicity in Israel's horrific genocide, which is being conducted in the full glare of glob-

al publicity, has brought the prestige of its 'democratic' institutions and servants to the lowest ebb yet.

As a result, it may well be that the peak of the *transmania* that was gripping society five years ago, and our young people in particular, has already passed. While on the one hand growing cynicism towards politicians and the media have substantially undermined people's trust in establishment talking points, on the other it hardly needs pointing out that with wages falling, bills soaring and the war drive accelerating, we really do have more important things to be talking about than pronouns or ever-growing and more fantastical lists of 'gender identities'.

And yet, in some ways, with the ruling class more desperate than ever to find ways of dividing a working class that is beginning to show signs of rebellion and militance, the core messages of this pamphlet are more needed now than ever. Not only do our young people continue to be groomed in the nonsense of gender ideology via the educational and healthcare systems, but bourgeois feminism and a thousand varieties of bourgeois nationalism continue to be heavily promoted. Moreover, even the debate over the transgender trend has been turned into fodder for a decidedly unproductive culture war, in which raving clickbait headlines push those on both sides into taking increasingly strident and extreme positions, from which it becomes impossible to countenance not only any point made by the other side, but any individual making those points, however sincerely motivated they may be.

Returning to the text five years later, we considered whether we ought to take the time to debunk separately all the various forms in which identity politics have been and continue to be presented in the academic world in particular – 'intersectionalism', 'postmodernism' and the rest. But the truth is that once an overall understanding of this topic is outlined from first principles, there is simply no need to keep ourselves busy with the myriad pettifogging details of arguments that are based on spurious premises from the start.

As a result, we have done nothing more than make a few very

minor edits and add some explanatory notes. Our hope is that this is a text that can stand the test of time, providing a simple rather than an exhaustive Marxist overview of the topic that might help rescue us from the distraction and noise of empty 'culture wars' debates and allow us to get back to our essential task – that of building revolutionary unity among working people for the abolition of monopoly capitalism and the construction of a socialist society.

This pamphlet is thus a reminder that our analysis of any topic must always be carried out with this question in mind: *what will help and what is hindering the working class in carrying out its historic mission?*

We hope we have succeeded in providing the understanding that will allow sincere workers and activists to see how the divide-and-rule policy of the imperialist ruling class is carried out today, and to equip them to fight it effectively, while remembering that our goal in refuting wrong ideas is not to blame or make an enemy of every well-meaning individual who has been duped by these ideas, but to persuade them that they have been tricked and are heading up a blind alley.

Of course, those who are paid to spread these lies from positions of political or academic authority are another matter, and have richly deserved all the opprobrium that comes their way.

Joti Brar
Bristol, March 2024

Foreword

Two prongs of philosophical attack by the bourgeoisie have had devastating consequences for the communist movement since the end of the second world war. The first is *revisionism*, the second is *identity politics*.

Both of these pernicious ideologies seek to subvert the workers' movement *from within*. Both of them wear false colours, claiming to be 'progressive' or 'radical' while in fact dragging the movement backwards. Both claim to defend the interests of the working class, while in fact acting objectively in the interests of capitalism.

Both of them do their best to muddy the waters of Marxism's theoretical foundations, either misappropriating or inventing entirely new terminology for the purposes of misleading workers and generally spreading confusion, demoralisation and division – leading ultimately to disillusionment and apathy.

The end result of this remorseless two-pronged attack, against which the working class has had very little defence (owing primarily to the weakening of the communist movement due to the ravages of revisionism following the second world war and the relative prosperity brought to the working classes in the imperialist countries), is that we now face a situation where many of those who have the most reason to support the cause of socialist revolution in Britain view communists with derision, suspicion and even downright hos-

tility.

The roots, causes and results of revisionism – in Britain from the time of the publication of the then CPGB's *British Road to Socialism* (1951), in the Soviet Union from the time of Khrushchev's secret speech (1956); and in the world movement from the time of the Sino-Soviet split (1956-66) – have been well documented by our party, and will not be gone into here.

Those who have not already read *Perestroika, the Complete Collapse of Revisionism*, Harpal Brar's excellent analysis of the collapse of the Soviet Union, are encouraged to do so, along with his supplementary pamphlet *Revisionism and the Demise of the Soviet Union*. Our party and the Stalin Society have produced many other resources – videos, articles, pamphlets – on the topic of revisionism, which should be widely studied by those who wish to understand this vital question. Without understanding how and why our movement has gone wrong, we will be in no position to rebuild it on firm enough foundations to ensure the victory of socialism in Britain.*

The aim of this pamphlet is therefore to look in more detail at the second of these enemies of our movement: to give a brief overview of the recent history, evolution and role of identity politics, and to try to equip the reader with the means to refute and overcome the pernicious hold of this thoroughly bourgeois ideology on the mindset of so many who consider themselves to be progressive, and who want to play a useful part in the struggle for working-class emancipation.

* See 'On the current state and problems of the communist movement' by J Brar, *TheCommunists.org*, 11 November 2023.

Identity politics or class politics?

Where is the obsession with 'identity' leading us and why is it so inimical to the class struggle?[2]

I. LIBERALISM OR SOCIALISM?

1. Liberalism: the ideology of the bourgeoisie

> The hub of modern social life is the class struggle. In the course of this struggle each class is guided by its own ideology. The bourgeoisie has its own ideology – so-called *liberalism*. The proletariat also has its own ideology – this, as is well known, is *socialism*.

With these words Josef Stalin opened his 1907 pamphlet *Anarchism or Socialism?*, and they serve as an excellent starting point also for our discussion. Liberalism was the ideology of the rising bourgeoisie.

The revolutionary origin of liberalism (whose main content is an emphasis on the rights of the individual) was seen in the struggle against feudalism. Wherever the bourgeoisie fought to overthrow

serfdom, wherever it fought against landed aristocracies and absolute monarchies, it did so under the slogan of the *liberty and equality of all men*.

On coming to power, however, the limits of this slogan were revealed. As the new rulers made haste to secure their position and to disarm the workers who had supported them, it became clear that liberty and equality were *not* to be extended to the unpropertied masses, nor to women, slaves or colonised peoples. As a minority ruling class, the capitalists, like the feudal and slave-owning exploiters before them, set about modifying their ideals in order to fit them to their new position as masters of society – most importantly as an exploiting class whose wealth and power came from monopolising the wealth produced by the exploited masses.

In its quest to control nature and expand profitable enterprise, the bourgeoisie opened up the entire world to scientific investigation. But as discoveries of science began to come into conflict with the goal of preserving bourgeois class rule and the capitalist system of production, scientific investigation itself came under attack. Well-funded branches of pseudoscience were established to justify the hierarchy of exploited and exploiter, the second-class status accorded to women, the inhuman treatment meted out to colonised and enslaved peoples, etc – and to try to 'prove' the eternal nature of capitalist production relations.

As the great Russian Marxist Georgi Plekhanov noted in 1907:

> Marx very truly said that the greater the development of the contradiction between the growing productive forces and the existing social order, the more does the ideology of the master class become imbued with hypocrisy. The more the falseness of this ideology is revealed by life, the more elevated and virtuous does the *language* of that class become.*

* GV Plekhanov, *Fundamental Problems of Marxism*, Section XV, 1907.

And as Lenin observed in 1908:

> There is a well-known saying that *if geometrical axioms affected human interests, attempts would certainly be made to refute them*. Theories of natural history [ie, Darwin's theory of evolution] which conflicted with the old prejudices of theology provoked, and still provoke, the most rabid opposition.
>
> No wonder, therefore, that the Marxian doctrine, *which directly serves to enlighten and organise the advanced class in modern society*, indicates the tasks facing this class and demonstrates the inevitable replacement (by virtue of economic development) of the present system by a new order – no wonder that this doctrine has had to fight for every step forward in the course of its life. (Our emphasis)*

Bourgeois liberalism long ago ceased to have any revolutionary or progressive content – ceased in fact to be more than empty rhetoric used to cover actions by our rulers that are completely contradictory even to their own professed ideals. Today, when a tiny parasitic bourgeoisie presides over the vicious death throes of decaying monopoly capitalism (imperialism), the role of liberalism is entirely reactionary and utterly hypocritical.

While claiming to care about the rights of the individual, liberal ideologues justify the most obscene crimes against the vast masses of humanity – a mass made up of hundreds of millions of individuals, whose individuality is never remembered by the bourgeoisie until such time as it suits their latest agenda.

Hence the 'rights' of Syrians to live in a country that doesn't have a secret police or any machinery of repression was suddenly discovered to be a priority by the bourgeois liberals at precisely the moment when imperialism was fomenting its forces for proxy war and regime change in Syria.

* 'Marxism and revisionism' by VI Lenin, April 1908, *Collected Works*, Volume 15.

The fact that every state (being an organ of class rule) has a machinery of repression, including secret police, was not mentioned by the promoters of this liberally-blessed war. The right of the Syrian masses to live free from the fear of terrorising bombs and atrocities was equally absent from the freedom-loving liberal narrative, as was their right to choose their government and their political system.

Absent too was any reference to the fact that the state of emergency under which Syrians lived for decades, and which of necessity made the state machinery of repression more prominent in their lives, was necessitated *by constant imperialist attempts to destroy the country's independence*, which had been ongoing ever since Syria emerged from the grip of colonial France, and an *ongoing state of war with zionist Israel*, imperialism's stooge regime in the middle east, which has been illegally occupying part of Syria (the Golan Heights) since 1967, and never ceases to infiltrate the country with saboteurs and spies.

Something similar was seen in Britain during World War Two. The very real threat of invasion by Germany meant that Britain's state machinery was put onto an emergency footing. Potential spies (along with many innocent civilians) were rounded up and imprisoned; citizens were told to be watchful for any unusual activities that could indicate active sympathy for the enemy.

How would British workers have felt about a foreign power – the USA, for example – using that state of emergency as a justification for bombing their government out of existence? Would they have been more or less likely to support the government in such a situation? Would the destruction of their schools, roads, power stations, water supplies, factories, farms and hospitals by an invading force have been more palatable because it was supposedly motivated by a desire to free them from the abuses of their autocratic leaders?

Of course, this comparison is flawed because the British government is an imperialist one, while the Syrian government is *anti*-imperialist, and therefore it is on the same side as its people in the

struggle for independence from imperialism.

All the same, it serves to illustrate the nonsensical and hypocritical nature of the justifications given by liberals for imperialist war. Closer examination reveals that the only 'right' these 'humanitarians' *really* respect is *the right of the exploiters to exploit*. In the eyes of the liberals, resistance to the domination of the imperialists; attempts, whether by individuals, by mass movements or by whole nations, to take control of resources and use them for the benefit of the masses rather than for the profit of a few, must be ruthlessly crushed.

Liberalism's role in this process is to prettify it with slogans about peace, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

This example is one of thousands we could offer to make the same point: *bourgeois liberalism long ago lost the right to be judged by its words*; it must be judged by its actions, and by the outcomes of its actions. Bourgeois liberals may wax lyrical on the subject of 'universal' rights and equality, but these words are unfailingly a cover for actions that preserve the right of a tiny minority to maintain its political and economic grip over the vast masses of humanity, pushing them into ever deeper poverty while amassing vast wealth to itself.

Bourgeois liberalism is the *enemy* of the working class and oppressed peoples; the enemy of the struggle for socialism, which is a struggle for *meaningful rights and meaningful equality for all*.

2. The liberal myth of rights and freedoms for all

In capitalist society, bourgeois liberalism is infused into our veins from birth. It is drip-fed through the stories we read, through school and college curriculums, through newspapers, radio and television. It teaches us to put ourselves – our *individual* freedom – first, in order that we might achieve happiness and fulfilment.

We are told endlessly about our 'rights' – our right to choose how

and where we live; our right to choose what we do for a living; our right to choose whom to marry, or whether or not to have children; our right to 'follow our dreams'.

Entirely missing from all this discussion over our theoretical 'freedoms', 'rights' and 'choices' is the way that all these are *in practice curtailed more or less completely* by the conditions in which people actually find themselves. What choice does a child have about what kind of housing or education he is provided with if he is born into a poor family? What choice does a woman have about whether or not to have a child if she has no money and no family or community support? What choice does a worker have about where to live or how to eat if he has no job and no money? What choice does a sixth-former have about career paths if she has no ability to pay for training?

Bourgeois liberalism tells individuals they are free to choose – and then puts the blame on them if their 'choices' don't lead to happiness and fulfilment. But capitalist society sees to it that in practice many of these apparent choices are either extremely limited or entirely non-existent.

Meanwhile, capitalist production leads inexorably to a society where communal and familial bonds are increasingly severed and all that is left between individuals is what Marx called the 'cash nexus'.

> The bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part.
>
> The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his 'natural superiors', and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash payment'.
>
> It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into

> exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom – Free Trade.
>
> In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation.
>
> The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage labourers.
>
> The bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation to a mere money relation.*

This process has accelerated greatly even since Marx's day, and the result of the breaking of all social bonds is isolation and misery for vast swathes of the masses, who are increasingly bereft of meaningful social contact or support. Thus the mass of workers find themselves left alone to sink or swim as best they can in a world where nothing can be obtained without money, no matter how necessary it is for existence, and people are valued by their earnings and possessions, no matter what their personal qualities may be – all while they are endlessly assured that their trammelled and stressful existences are somehow the result of their own 'life choices'.

Liberalism's emphasis on the 'rights' and 'choices' of the individual in such a situation simply provides a cover for the workings of the capitalist system, which is just as social as any other, but whose ideological representatives *refuse to recognise the social relationships underpinning the creation of our rulers' wealth*. Capital is a social relation – a relation between people – first and foremost, but its ideologues push instead the idea that the poor are poor through

* K Marx and F Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 1848.

their own personal failings and bad life choices, rather than through the workings of the capitalist system of production for profit.

Socialism, on the other hand, recognises that man is first and foremost a collective, *social* animal. Nothing in society is achieved by individuals; we are all of us reliant on one other, and all of us are happiest when we are working together towards a common aim. And not only does humankind *need* social contact and a sense of community to stay sane and healthy, but the tremendous means of production that capitalism has called into being *demand* social action on a massive scale.

In order to harness society's productive power to the full; in order to *unlock its true potential* to provide a decent, cultured and ever-rising standard of living to the entire human race, *we must not only act collectively at work, but in all spheres of life* – and we must do so consciously, rather than unknowingly, as at present.

In order to resolve the contradictions of capitalist production (social labour, private appropriation) and create the conditions for the development of a new, higher and truly human civilisation, we must think and act as a collective.

Socialism therefore puts the needs of the collective above the needs or desires of any single individual. But in doing so, it creates the conditions in which individuals (*all* individuals and not just a privileged few) are truly able to flourish and express themselves – supported and valued by their community.

3. Left liberalism: a (petty) bourgeois conscience

> Liberalism must not be regarded as something whole and indivisible: it is subdivided into different trends, corresponding to the different strata of the bourgeoisie.

So wrote Stalin in *Anarchism or Socialism?* So far we have looked at liberalism as a whole. The particular trend within liberalism that

we are interested in here is *left* liberalism. Left liberals, like all liberals, wish to maintain the rule of the bourgeoisie, but they believe that the best way to ensure capitalism's survival is to try to reform the system's worst aspects and give it a friendlier face – very often dressed up in socialist terminology in order to make it more acceptable to the working class.

The left and right wings of liberalism in Britain share the same programme, which can be summed up in three words: *Save British imperialism*. Where their proponents differ is on *tactics*. The right-wing liberals' arrogance towards the oppressed workers at home and abroad upsets the left wingers, who have been affected by the progress of the movements for socialism and national liberation of the last century just enough to be embarrassed by such blatantly chauvinist attitudes.

Left liberalism is infused with concepts of *guilt and privilege*, and puts forward in practice a programme of conscience-salving activities. It is particularly characteristic of a certain section of the labour aristocracy (better-off, more privileged workers), some of the more altruistic members of the petty bourgeoisie and even a miniscule section of the bourgeoisie – that is, of those among the privileged classes who have become aware of the fact that the unequal distribution of wealth in society has in some way benefited them (by giving them a better education, for example, and access to well-paid jobs and better housing), and who wish somehow that amends could be made (so long, of course, as such restitution doesn't affect their own elevated position).

Left liberalism informs the ideology of a minority of the Labour party – its left wing – and of left Labour's various 'left' hangers-on such as the Trotskyites and revisionists. From the left-liberal standpoint, it is entirely respectable to criticise the worst aspects and abuses of capitalist imperialism, but only if the solutions on offer (if any are offered at all) are *those which do not threaten the system of capitalist production*. Any attempt to look beyond capitalism's limits is absolutely out of bounds, as is any serious suggestion that

those limits are anything but inevitable and eternal.

Trotskyism may have begun its life as a variant of socialism, but it degenerated very rapidly into a tool of the bourgeoisie for promoting imperialist ideas and goals under the guise of seemingly Marxist phraseology. Today it represents merely the extreme left wing of the bourgeois political spectrum at best, and a state-sponsored provocation at worst.

Socialism, on the other hand, is not a part of this spectrum at all. Marxism – scientific socialism – is *the political ideology of the proletariat* (propertyless wage-workers), the class whose interests are entirely opposed to those of the bourgeoisie.[3]

Socialism is based on historical and economic science, and is guided by materialist philosophy – an understanding that matter is primary, and that our ideas are a reflection of material reality, which exists outside of and irrespective of our imagination. Left liberalism, to the extent that it puts forward any programme of action to its followers, is based on emotion and individualism, and is guided by idealist philosophy – the belief that *ideas are primary* and that material reality exists *only in so far as we believe in it*.

As the ideology of the rising class – the class that is destined to take over the running of society in the interests of all humanity – Marxism is the ideology of the future, filled with energy and optimism, and infused with an unshakeable conviction that workers have the ability to conquer all challenges and raise humanity out of the filth and degradation that has been the inevitable by-product of all advance during the period of class societies.

Left liberalism, on the other hand, has no faith in the workers and only the most depressed vision of humanity's future. It is pessimistic through and through and believes the venality and corruption of bourgeois society to be an expression of *base human nature*, rather than an inevitable product of a particular social system.[4]

Left liberalism (usually characterised by Marxists as *opportunism*: the ditching of the long-term aims of the working class for real or imagined short-term gains), is in its own way *also* grounded in

material reality – namely, *in the privileges that its representatives draw from the continued existence of imperialism*; in the super-profits made by the imperialist ruling class. The fundamental programme of these opportunists – that capitalism can be reformed to become 'fairer' and more equitable – is pure idealism (ie, it is entirely imaginary).

In order to present a programme that seems to be plausible, however, left liberals promote the idea that the job of political activists is first and foremost to *change the attitudes of individuals*. Socialists, on the other hand, strive to change the economic and social system that *creates and shapes* those attitudes.

It is left-liberal opportunism that people have in mind when they think of a 'leftie' – a (probably vegan) do-gooder who combines a patronising attitude towards those less enlightened than himself with a desire to 'fix' the system through a combination of lecturing, hectoring, charitable works and reforms.

With the development of monopoly capitalism and the ever-increasing concentration of capital into fewer and fewer hands, the ruling class is becoming an ever-tinier minority of the population. This being the case, it must work hard to keep devising ways to divide the working class against itself so as to maintain its rule.

Its agents in the working-class movement and in the universities work incessantly to corrupt Marxism – the principal weapon of the working class in organising against capitalist rule – and to both denude it of its revolutionary content and separate it entirely from the mass of the workers.

The ruling class knows, as the workers do not, just what a threat their organisation under the banner of Marxist science would represent to decaying capitalist rule.

Identity politics have provided some of the principal levers used by the bourgeoisie over the last four decades to effect divisions within the working class and undermine the movement for socialism.

The aims of identity politics do not transcend the boundaries of

capitalism. Instead of fighting against the *system that creates inequality*, the root cause of most of our problems, the petty-bourgeois elements in the 'left-wing' movement are forever directing workers' energies into the harmless channels of obsession with various one-point programmes. Having gone through bourgeois feminism and black separatism, their latest obsession is to promote the ideology of 'LGBT+'. Left-liberal opportunists might see and even criticise the excesses and obscenities of moribund capitalist imperialism, but their limited horizons interpret these not as systemic failings, but as mere *unfairness*, which must be addressed first and foremost by somehow 'levelling the playing field'.

The fact that this goal (if it were really to apply to everyone) is entirely unreachable within capitalist society does not persuade the exponents of 'fair play' to think again. The demand for 'equal rights' *within capitalism* shows the absolute limit of the left-liberal mindset. An inability either to understand the roots of the present economic system, or to really imagine anything beyond it stops such people from understanding what is blindingly obvious to any right-thinking worker: *the capitalist system is not capable of treating people equally*.

For every person who does well, there will always be a hundred or a thousand or a hundred thousand who do not – not because of any intrinsic weakness in their character, or lack of application or natural ability, but because the opportunity is simply not there in a competitive anarchic system of production for profit.

Even if every single person in capitalist society had an equally fantastic education, including valuable work experience, cultural development and postgraduate training, there would still be an army of unemployed workers – only now this army would be a well-educated one, and new excuses would have to be found for its existence.

If every single person in capitalist society took their fantastic education and a pot of money in order to start a small business, only one in a thousand would be able to get that business off the ground

even for a year, never mind making it profitable in the long term – again, not because of any intrinsic weakness in their character, or lack of application or natural ability, but because the possibility for every business to succeed is simply not there. Not only are there not business opportunities for all, there are not even employment opportunities for all – the pool of the unemployed being as fundamental to the workings of capitalism as workers and bosses; as capital itself.*

In a world where jobs and opportunities are *rationed* – a world where workers are forced into constant competition with one another – every advantage of birth, education, gender, skin colour, etc can play its part in the outcome for any individual. It is this luck-of-the-draw randomness in the allocation of life chances under capitalism that is so uncomfortable for workers of all backgrounds to live with. The enormous part played by chance in determining our place in the social hierarchy often sits especially uneasily with those who happen to have fallen on the 'lucky' side.

While claiming (and perhaps even believing) to be acting in a most 'democratic' and 'socialist' way, the petty-bourgeois opportunists are only falling into the trap that has been laid for them by the bourgeoisie. It is perfectly right, of course, to oppose institutional discrimination on grounds of race, sex, nationality, religion, age or sexual orientation. Such discrimination offends against our humanitarian feelings precisely because it creates unnecessary divisions in the working class and prevents it from uniting against its common enemy. But it is thoroughly reactionary to elevate this opposition into a one-point programme that trumps all other questions and serves only to further *exacerbate* the divisions between workers.

For those who have been born into more than their 'fair share' of the world's wealth and resources, there are three main responses to the situation in which they find themselves. They can either:

* See K Marx, *Capital*, Volume 1, 1867, Chapter 25.

1. Deny that luck is involved at all, and come up with other justifications for their good fortune in life. This is what leads to the assertion that we live in a 'meritocracy', for example (an argument favoured by those whose superior education and family connections gives them access to the best-paid jobs). It also leads to the commonly expressed view of the upper classes (usually, but not always, in private) that the mass of poorer workers are by nature simply *not fit* for anything other than menial work.

2. Feel guilty and find some conscience-salving activity to engage in: charitable or other 'good works', campaigns for political reform, etc.

3. Recognise that there is no solution to the problem within capitalism and join the movement for socialist revolution, knowing that while we cannot choose what we are born into, we can certainly choose what we do with the start we have been given and with whatever resources we have access to.

4. How did we get here?

As *Black Agenda Report*'s Bruce A Dixon pointed out in his three-part series on the dead end of so-called 'intersectionalism' (the fashionable academic term for identity politics):

> If we're not asking and answering the question how can we take power, we're wasting our own and other people's time and energy.*

For the bourgeoisie, petty-bourgeois identity politics have proven extremely useful. Under the cover of Marxian phraseology, they have been smuggled into the working-class movement, taking advantage of the ideological retreat of socialism that came with the

* 'Are intersectionalism or Afro-pessimism paths to power? Probably not' by BA Dixon, *Black Agenda Report*, 16 February 2018.

triumph and advance of revisionism.

As the communist movement lost its theoretical foundations and firm leadership (from 1953 onwards, following the death of Stalin and the takeover of the Soviet and international communist leadership by revisionists), it retreated – slowly at first but then in complete disarray (from 1991, following the complete collapse of the revisionist Soviet Union), so that petty-bourgeois left-liberal trends such as Trotskyism, anarchism and identity politics found fertile ground on which to grow, and have joined forces to the extent that, as far as the masses are concerned, there appears to be a total consensus on 'the left' about the correctness of taking an *individual* approach to key *social* questions such as racism and women's oppression, and of taking a lead from bourgeois academia in framing our understanding of these issues.

Precisely because *they divert workers away from the struggle for state power*, the founders of our party have been fighting identity politics – along with other bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideas in the working-class movement – ever since they came to Marxism back in the late 1960s. At the same time as fighting pro-imperialist Trotskyism in the anti-Vietnam war movement, and pro-imperialist revisionism in the communist movement, these comrades fought pro-capitalist bourgeois feminism in the then newly emerging women's movement. From the 1970s onwards, while continuing the fight against revisionism and Trotskyism, they fought against pro-imperialist black nationalism and fake 'antifascism' in the anti-racist movement.

The histories of some of these struggles are documented in the books *Marxism and the Emancipation of Women* (Ed Ella Rule, 2000) and *Bourgeois Nationalism or Proletarian Internationalism?* (Harpal Brar, 1998), both of which are essential reading for all comrades who are serious about mastering the theory and tactics of the struggle for socialism.

II. BOURGEOIS FEMINISM v WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION

1. 'Battle of the sexes' leaves the class system intact

In the women's movement of the sixties and seventies, our comrades set themselves the task of countering the ideas being put about by bourgeois feminists, which can be summed up in the assertion that the root cause of the inequality faced by women is the *nastiness of men in general*, and that the solution to women's oppression is therefore to be found in refusing to cooperate with the 'man's world', or in winning the right to act 'like men' in order to gain 'equality'.

A variant of this is to tell women that in their role as private domestic workers for the family – cooking, cleaning, caring etc – they are being *exploited by their husbands* and should therefore seek 'liberation' by demanding 'wages for housework'.

What is common to all these 'solutions' is that they remove the class antagonism and replace it with a domestic one – the 'battle of the sexes'. Instead of struggling alongside working-class men to change society, women are encouraged to *blame all men*, irrespective of class, and leave the system of production intact, with the main demand being that women should have their 'fair share'

of the top jobs running the bourgeois state and the big capitalist corporations.

Nowhere in all this is there any understanding of the fact that *women perform a social role (albeit in conditions of domestic slavery) when they undertake childrearing, caring and household duties* – that society would not last very long if these necessary tasks were not being performed. In primitive societies, where the work was undertaken collectively in communal homes, this was obviously the case. With the move to a class-based society, the social nature of women's work was obscured as they toiled in the isolated domains of their fathers and husbands.

Under socialism, such work will once more be recognised and performed as social labour, only this time on the basis of modern technique.

That is why socialists put the emphasis on *public provision* of services alongside equality before the law and equality of access to education and jobs in order to liberate *all* women, not only those from the more privileged classes. Such services will remove the private burden of cooking, cleaning and caring from working-class women and enable them to play a full role in social labour, as well as in the wider communal and political life of society.

Most of the 'solutions' on offer from the feminist movement, meanwhile – ranging from refusing to have children (in order to be able to compete in a man's world and liberate oneself from the 'tyranny of the family') to bra burning (rejecting the 'symbols of oppression'), sexual promiscuity (act 'like a man' to get 'equality') and ideological lesbianism (kick 'the enemy' out of your bed) – unsurprisingly found little sympathy amongst the less privileged mass of working-class women, many of whom had come to the movement in the wake of the Ford women workers' strike.*

The main concerns for these women centred around the daily issues they faced, such as the additional burdens placed on them

* See 'Made in Dagenham film review', *Proletarian*, February 2011.

by responsibility for household chores and family caring (children, elderly, the disabled, etc), the low pay rates for 'women's work' outside of the home, and their legal and social second-class status. Their interest in politics was sparked by a desire to be treated as equals in society and to have their excessive burdens lightened.

It was our comrades' goal to bring to the women's movement an understanding that the question of women's emancipation is first and foremost a class question, and that the solution is to be found in the working-class struggle for socialism. This analysis stems from Friedrich Engels' groundbreaking 1884 work *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, a key Marxist text whose profound insights were borne out by every successful revolution of the twentieth century.

2. Understanding the problem reveals the solution

Engels showed how the oppression of women came into being with the emergence of private property (unknown for the vast majority of human history) and the consequent split of society into classes (exploited and exploiters). The accident of history that put private property into the hands of men gave the men of the new propertied class an incentive for locking up and controlling their wives and daughters (the desire for legitimate male heirs to inherit their newly acquired private property), and so the complex system of social control (combining physical restraint with social and sexual morality, honour, etc) came into being.

This system was modified somewhat with each new revolution in the means of production and the consequent reordering of society – that is, with the change from slavery to feudalism, and with the change from feudalism to capitalism. Its bounds in the present era of decaying monopoly capitalism have been loosened to a great extent – firstly by the fact of so many working-class women being pulled into the field of capitalist social labour, and secondly by the

example of the Soviet Union, which, by its living practice, smashed the ideological arguments that had been created and refined over millennia justifying and perpetuating the subordination of women (eg, that women's place was ordained by God; that women are physically or mentally incapable of doing difficult, dirty and strenuous work, or of engaging in intellectual pursuits; or that women are just too unreliable, hormonal or inflexible to be useful outside of the home).

Everyone wanting to understand the women's question should read Engels and thoroughly digest the profound scientific analysis his work contains. What becomes clear from this standpoint is that the emancipation of women will only be fully realised with the emancipation of the working class in general – that is, with the establishment of socialism and the ending of exploitation, private property and the existence of antagonistic classes.

As Engels pointed out, and as the Soviet Union so powerfully proved in practice, only a socialist society has *both the will and the ability* to put in place facilities that enable not only a few, better-off women to enter all fields of work on an equal footing with men, but *all* working-class women to do so.

Only socialism can move women on from the bourgeois demand not to be forced to have children to the socialist recognition of *the right to have children without being personally penalised* for it – economically, socially or at work – and to be fully facilitated in bringing up the next generation with complete equality of opportunity for both parents and children.

Unlike societies based upon exploitation and private property, socialism doesn't have any requirement for keeping women tied to the home (in order to carry out social duties in a private, unpaid way). Nor does it have any problem in finding work for all its people.

Quite the reverse: socialism *positively needs to harness women's work and creative abilities in the social sphere*: to take part not only in the economic, but also in the social and political life of the community as it builds a new society.

It does this by taking simple, practical measures such as providing high-quality creches, nurseries and laundry services free at places of work; by providing high-quality subsidised public dining rooms where families can eat decent, nutritious food without having to shop and cook (or needing a degree in nutrition); by providing decent care facilities in the community for the elderly and disabled; by providing sanatoria for the sick; and by creating excellent after-school and holiday childcare provision, complete with a wide variety of extracurricular activities so that all children can develop their potential to the full.

Socialism brings back the old understanding that *it takes a community to raise a child* and puts it on a new, more advanced and *truly equal* footing.

Socialism also abolishes the legal and social distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children (a major factor in the social control of women for many centuries), and likewise abolishes the ability of individuals to amass or bequeath private wealth – the primary motivation for the oppression of women in former times.[5]

3. Men and women workers: allies in the struggle for socialism

In the fight for socialism, working-class men are not the *enemies* of women, but their *allies*. Who benefits from telling working-class men that their dignity is undermined if their womenfolk are too independent or strong-minded (too 'bolshie'?) Who benefits from telling working-class women that their menfolk are the enemy of their liberty? Only the capitalists.

Creating division amongst the ranks of the exploited is a necessity for any minority ruling class. The division between men and women is constantly fostered and revitalised by bourgeois propaganda – in part to justify the continued oppression of women, and also in order to maintain bourgeois rule.

The idea of half the workforce (as opposed to a few privileged servants of the bourgeoisie) forgetting their place and taking a full part in the political life of the country puts the fear of god into the ruling class – and with good reason. The history of all proletarian revolutions and national-liberation movements shows that *no revolution can succeed without the participation of working-class women*, while *with* women's determined and mass participation the movement becomes unstoppable.

4. Gender stereotypes sharpening for women workers as welfare provision disappears

It is noticeable as the capitalist crisis of overproduction continues to worsen, and the welfare state (which for a few short decades offered workers access to relatively decent healthcare, education, housing, work, pensions, benefits, etc, in return for giving up on the idea of a socialist revolution) continues to be gradually dismantled, that conditions of low wages, high unemployment and disintegrating social services have led to a collapse in social care, and that once more the majority of the burden of care is falling back onto working-class women.

Moreover, as stress caused by ever more draconian workplaces, by the abolition of vital services and by deepening poverty increases, more and more marriages are breaking down under the strain, with the burden of childrearing falling all too often onto single mothers, many of whom struggle to keep their families afloat and with a roof over their heads.

It should come as no surprise, then, that despite the collapse of much of the bourgeois morality and ideology that previously kept women tied to their designated family duties, and despite the fact that huge numbers of working-class women are earning independent incomes, the reinforcing of gender roles has actually *sharpened* in recent years.

From all sides and from their earliest years, women receive the message that being *decorative* (wearing the right clothes, shoes, make-up and accessories; having the right skin tone and body shape), being *agreeable* (not having too many opinions; not putting themselves forward) and being *caring* (being good at housework and cooking; being ready to be the prime carer for any family member who needs it) are their main functions in life.

Despite often working long hours at multiple jobs, working-class women are made to feel they have failed if they are not also keeping their houses spotless, their legs waxed, their nails manicured, their children perfectly turned out and their ovens full of freshly-baked cookies.

To drive the message home about what is feminine and what isn't, bourgeois media are full of images of women who have apparently 'made it' in life (by looking so good they were able to marry a prince or a premier league footballer, for example), and of celebrities whose standards are supposed to have slipped (by wearing an unflattering bikini on holiday, perhaps, or by failing to put their make-up on before going to the corner shop).

Those women, usually from the more privileged sections of the working class or the petty bourgeoisie, who *do* carve out a successful career in the professions or in public life must do so by paying privately for cooking, cleaning and childcare services. And they come in for far more vitriol in the media than do the men who do the same job in the same way, with a large proportion of that vitriol aimed at their appearance (clothes, hair, make-up etc) or their personality (too loud, too bossy, too pushy, too opinionated), as opposed to how they are doing their job.

The message is clear: if a woman wants to avoid abuse, she should stay at home, stay quiet and spend any spare bit of money and time she may have on her appearance. If she wants to receive praise, she should focus on cleaning, caring, dieting (for herself) and baking (for others).

All this is not to deny that damaging gender roles are pushed

onto boys and men as well; rather to show how the abolition of service provision is being accompanied by a concerted campaign to persuade society at large that it is right and proper that the pieces should be picked up by working-class women, and to condition those women to accept this situation as being entirely natural.

At the same time, this neatly ensures that most working-class women have on the one hand no time, and on the other no confidence or inclination to take part in political life.

Outside of those who are building paid careers for themselves in the bourgeois political parties and those who entered the women's movement in earlier decades, it is rare to come across a working-class woman who feels both willing and able to make time for political activity or study, or who feels confident in her ability to make a useful contribution to the movement.[6]

5. The dead end of 'equal rights' under capitalism

Meanwhile, the petty-bourgeois feminists who were so adamantly opposed to our comrades' desire to put the women's movement on a class footing back in the early 1970s went on to forge careers for themselves as bourgeois academics and 'experts' on 'women's affairs'. Those such as Germaine Greer and co, who turned poorer working-class women away from politics with their insistence on trying to find liberation through sexual freedom and the constant denouncing of men, have been promoted in the media and allowed to take over the narrative in universities to the point that generations have grown up thinking that 'This is what a feminist looks like' means 'This is what the women's struggle looks like'.

But while we continue to demand equality for women as their right, and as a necessary precondition for the advancement of humanity, that should not blind us to the fact that confining our vision to a struggle for 'equal rights' within the conditions of capitalism simply means working to secure the right of a section of better-off

women to be allowed to do jobs previously reserved for men.

This is what today's version of the 'gender pay gap' row has been transformed into by corporate media (the right to equal treatment for privileged women workers in extremely high-paid jobs), and why, presented in this way, it has become an issue that leaves most working-class women cold. If someone is struggling to make minimum wage and working two jobs around their caring duties, it's hard for them to feel much sympathy for the injustice of a BBC presenter *only* making £150,000 a year instead of £500,000.[7]

This is a clear example of how the struggle for 'equal rights' can continue to be loudly fought without having any impact whatsoever on the outcomes for the majority of less privileged working-class women, who do not have access either to the education or to the support facilities needed to enable them to enter the professions or take part in public life as it is currently constituted.

While many continue to work several jobs around their family responsibilities, or to be excluded from the workplace entirely (and therefore to be denied any independent existence) owing to the exorbitant cost of childcare when compared with minimum-wage earnings, the vast majority are also carrying most of the burden of cooking, cleaning, caring, etc.

And while the growing move for husbands and partners to 'do their share' at home is to be welcomed in that it signals a change of attitude in society and amongst couples, the sharing of this too-heavy *private* burden very often leads only to a situation where *neither* partner is able to get a decent amount of leisure or rest time, and hence neither one feels in a fit state to consider taking part in the political or social life of the community.

This is the net result of bourgeois feminism:

1. The sabotage of what had the potential to be a vibrant movement bringing large numbers of working-class women into the struggle for socialism.

2. The self-defeating rejection of scientific socialism on the basis that its primary texts were written 'by men', and are therefore irrelevant to women (thus this culmination of dearly-bought human knowledge has been neatly cut off from those who are in desperate need of its guiding light).

3. The widest propagation of the feminists' fake 'solutions' to the women's question in the media and the burying of the understanding that the women's question is first and foremost a *class* question.

4. The creation of a field of 'women's studies' in academia, which has spent years brainwashing university students with false consciousness, and which has created an identity-led discourse that is totally unquestioned by any in the petty-bourgeois 'left'.

5. A wide acceptance of the laughable idea that the state machinery controlled by the class that depends on oppressed women to perform a huge amount of socially-necessary but unpaid labour, and which has a strong vested interest in keeping the mass of working women out of political and social life, can be trusted to oversee the implementation of equality through legislation and policing, and via such initiatives as gender pay gap reports.

6. A huge and widening rift between privileged, university-educated workers, whose minds have been thoroughly infected with the bourgeois-feminist academic discourse, and who look down on the poorer workers who have no truck with it, and the poorer, less educated masses of the working class, who despise the obvious nonsense of such tropes as 'men are our enemies' and have been brought by the media to believe that this is the face of 'progressive politics' as far as the women's question is concerned.

6. Individual v collective solutions

Socialism recognises the *class basis* of women's oppression. It reveals the historical and property-based roots of that oppression, and thus explains *why* the machinery for enforcing it exists as well as how it operates.

Socialism makes clear the reasons why the capitalists are constantly fostering and reinforcing sexist attitudes towards women amongst workers (of both sexes) so they can be persuaded to accept and reinforce the ruling class's repressive, exploitative, divide-and-rule agenda.

The petty-bourgeois left, on the other hand, replaces this class analysis with an *individual* one. Ignorant and sexist attitudes are seen as being the problem of individuals, rather than something that has been deliberately engendered in the masses by the capitalist state. These attitudes are then presented as being either *intrinsic to men* (and therefore incurable), or as something that can be cured only by a slow process of *individual re-education* and exposure (from lecturing to hectoring and 'calling out').

Petty-bourgeois 'activists' put up barriers between individuals by asking them to prove their worthiness. According to their individualist philosophy, no man can be a true fighter for women's liberation since he has not *personally* experienced the pain of being oppressed *as a woman* (although if he is apologetic enough he might reluctantly be recognised as an 'ally', good for wearing feminist t-shirts and regularly proclaiming his guilt as part of 'the patriarchy'). This emphasis on personal experience and pain manipulates the natural feelings of empathy amongst the followers of feminism and sets them off down entirely pointless avenues of naval-gazing or oppression-hierarchy-building (trying to work out who is more oppressed than whom) while simultaneously cutting the women's movement off from its most important and most numerous allies

– working-class men.

Socialism, by contrast, opens its doors to anyone and everyone who has understood that capitalism has passed its sell-by date and wants to fight to abolish it. In the socialist struggle for women's equality, men have as much to gain as women, because the socialist society both are working for will put *all* their lives on a new, more dignified, and truly equal footing.

III. BOURGEOIS NATIONALISM v PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM

1. Black v white leaves the capitalist system intact

As in the women's movement, so in the antiracist movement, our party's founding comrades have for many decades set themselves the task of countering the ideas being put about by bourgeois nationalists, which can be summed up in the assertion that the root cause of the inequality faced by black and other dark-skinned minorities in Britain is the *nastiness of white people in general*, that racist attitudes are intrinsic and unavoidable to those who are born with white skin, and that the solution to racial oppression is therefore to be found in rejecting entirely the 'white man's world', or in winning the right to act 'like white men' (ie, to join the ranks of the exploiters) in order to gain 'equality'.

Once again, the programmatic demands of bourgeois 'antiracism' take the mass of the working class absolutely nowhere. They range from setting up a parallel 'black' capitalism (where black politicians rule over black workers, who are all employed by or patronise businesses run by black people) to demanding 'equal rights' for black people to be 'fairly represented' in capitalist boardrooms (to have a proportionate share of jobs amongst the top-earning business,

media and political leaders).

None of this gets at the root causes of racism, which are fuelled by the system of capitalist exploitation itself, and especially by the latest, imperialist stage of capitalism: the divide-and-rule requirements of the minority ruling class at home; and especially the need for *justifications for imperialist war, occupation and looting abroad*.

Nor does it do anything to advance the lot of the mass of poorer black workers, who are unlikely to feel any better because the face fronting their exploitation, or even leading an armed assault against them, is black and not white.

One has only to look at the lot of poor black workers in the USA during Barack Obama's presidency for proof of this assertion – not to mention the lot of dark-skinned workers in Libya, Afghanistan and Syria as they faced the bombs and guns sent against them by the man black nationalists labelled 'Brother Obama' (ably and enthusiastically assisted by the feminists' favourite warmonger, 'Sister Hillary').

2. The Irish in Britain: a case study in colonial 'divide and rule'

Racism is *not* about some inherent quality or character of 'whiteness'. The first minority groups to suffer persecution and second-class citizenship in Britain had white skins. The jews, for example, were a primary scapegoat of choice all over Europe from the middle ages onwards, as were Romany travellers.

In the era of developing industrial capitalism, the most vilified group of workers in Britain were the Irish. Their case typifies (and set the pattern for) the treatment of superexploited workers on their arrival to Britain from every corner of the globe from that day to this.

Ireland's relationship to Britain was the classic colonial one: Ireland served as a source of food for Britain's industrial workers

and of raw materials to fuel Britain's industrial machine. Irish workers were the first to emigrate to Britain in large numbers.

They came because the British looting of Ireland made life impossible for a large percentage of Irish peasants, who were being steadily impoverished and reduced to starvation. Millions died as a result of imperialist-engendered famine (the so-called 'potato famine'), during which plenty of good food continued to be exported from Ireland to Britain, even as the potato crop on which the poor Irish peasantry relied for survival failed.

They also came because they knew there was work for them in the expanding British industrial cities of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In Britain, the immigrant Irish served two extremely useful purposes for the ruling class. The first was as a source of cheap labour. Owing to the terrible conditions from which they had fled, Irish workers were prepared to work harder for less; it was by and large Irish labourers who built Britain's canals, roads and railway networks, working for terrible wages and living in dire conditions as they did so.

Having a large pool of cheap labour to draw on enabled the ruling class to get this essential work done on the cheap, and simultaneously served to keep wages generally low, since the competition for jobs was high and the reserve army of the unemployed was constantly being replenished from overseas.

The second purpose the Irish served was to undercut British workers. Irish workers thus aroused hostility amongst their British fellows – an antagonism that was magnified by the ruling class, which was keen to further the perception among native-born workers of the Irish as an official 'other', who could be blamed and despised for their poverty and their slum living conditions.

This neatly drew native-born workers into a shared sense of superiority over the Irish that encouraged them *to identify with their own ruling class* and to buy into the excuses that were given for Britain's treatment of the colonised population in Ireland itself.

The pulpit and the press, as well as bourgeois politicians and ideologues of every type, played their part in fostering an atmosphere of distrust and resentment between British and Irish workers, creating the stereotype of the 'thick Mick', who was lazy, slovenly, feckless, both stupid and sly, a spendthrift, and a catholic to boot[8] – in a word, possessed of every backward and undesirable character trait, and unfit to manage his own affairs.

Marx and Engels pointed out repeatedly the essential role that the exploitation of Ireland played in keeping the British proletariat abjectly tied to the coat tails its own ruling class. The petty privileges enjoyed by native-born British as compared to the second-class citizen status and condition of Irish immigrant workers, along with a prevailing atmosphere of state-endorsed institutional prejudice, worked to divide the working class in Britain into two hostile camps, busy despising one another instead of uniting against their common enemies in the exploiting class.

This is how British-born workers were taught to identify with the ruling class on the basis of their shared Britishness, and to accept the colonisation of Ireland by the British ruling class as a 'natural' and 'civilising' act towards a 'backward' people.

> The English bourgeoisie has not only exploited the Irish misery to keep down the working class in England by forced immigration of poor Irishmen, *it has also divided the proletariat into two hostile camps* . . . In all the big industrial centres in England, there is a profound antagonism between the Irish and English proletarians. The average English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers wages and the standard of life. He feels national and religious antipathies for him.
>
> He regards him practically in the same way the poor whites in the southern states of North America regard the black slaves. This antagonism between the proletarians in England is artificially nourished and kept alive by the bourgeoisie. *It knows that this split is*

> *the true secret of maintaining its power* . . .
>
> Furthermore, Ireland is the only pretext the English government has for maintaining a large standing army, which in case of necessity, as has happened before, *can be loosed against the English workers after getting its military training in Ireland*.
>
> Finally, England today is seeing a repetition of what happened on a gigantic scale in ancient Rome. *A nation that enslaves another forges its own chains*. (Our emphasis)*

In more recent times, when the national-liberation struggle in the occupied north of Ireland (euphemistically referred to as 'The Troubles') was at its height, workers of Irish origin again occupied the unenviable position of chief 'enemy within' in the narrative of the British establishment.

Recent use of draconian anti-terror legislation in Britain has in the main targeted muslims, providing some PR cover to the bombing of muslim populations abroad. But it is worth remembering that this legislation had its origins in the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) that was used to deny basic rights to Irish workers as they were harassed and imprisoned en masse in an entirely unsuccessful attempt to break their support for the Irish freedom struggle. Nevertheless, this legislation had some success in its secondary aim of convincing workers in Britain that the Irish struggle was illegitimate and that 'any means necessary' were justified in suppressing all support for it.[9]

* 'Confidential communication on Bakunin' for the International Workingmen's Association (First International) by K Marx, 28 March 1870, *Collected Works*, Volume 21.

3. Rolling out the formula to Asia and Africa: the myth of 'civilising the unfit races'

Meanwhile, having so successfully created a formula for dividing the working class at home and justifying imperial crimes abroad as described by Marx above, the ruling class had no hesitation in re-using the template as the British empire expanded across the globe, keeping British workers acquiescent in the imperialist project on the basis of hefty bribes on the one hand, and a deep and constantly reinforced prejudice against the 'backward' and 'uncivilised heathens' of the colonised lands on the other.

After the second world war, Britain was once again in need of a plentiful supply of cheap labour. The native population was too restive to be expected to work for low pay in bad conditions, and the amount of work needed to rebuild Britain after the devastation of the war was simply too great to be done quickly with the available labour supply.

The ruling class looked to the colonies to fill the shortfall, but made sure to do it in such a way as to encourage hostility from native-born British, encouraging the segregation and ghettoization of new arrivals to Britain from the Commonwealth countries.

The fact that most of these workers had dark skin made the job of dividing the working class that much easier, especially as systematic propaganda regarding the 'unfitness of the darker races to rule themselves' had been ongoing for a century or more while the British empire sought to dress up its brutal role in the slave trade and the extension of its ruthless dominion across Asia and Africa as a force for progress and civilisation.

Fabians (the self-identifying socialists of their day) such as Bernard Shaw had long been assiduous in helping to push this line, declaring that imperialism should be viewed as a civilising force enabling the backward peoples to achieve the heights of British civilisation,

and that 'a Fabian was necessarily an imperialist'.

The Fabians' manifesto asserted:

> As for parliamentary institutions for native [ie, non-European] races, that dream has been disposed of by the American experiments after the civil war. They are as useless to them as a dynamo to a Caribbean.*

Fellow Fabian and notorious eugenicist Sidney Webb took time out from helping to found the Labour party and drafting the 'socialist' clause iv of its rulebook to bemoan the decline in the birth-rate of the 'thrifty', 'superior' (privileged) sections of the British population, predicting that if this trend were not reversed the country would be overrun by foreigners (a forerunner of Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of blood' speech).

> Twenty-five percent of our parents . . . [are] producing fifty percent of the next generation. This can hardly result in anything but national deterioration; or, as an alternative, in this country gradually falling to the Irish and the jews. Finally, there are signs that even these races are becoming influenced [by the trend to reduce family sizes]. The ultimate future of these islands may be to the Chinese!†

Class-conscious workers, however, have always understood that the solution to the problem of racism is *to do away with minority class rule*. It is simply not possible for the capitalist class, tiny as it is, to allow a situation to prevail in which workers *easily recognise their common identity as proletarians exploited by capital*. Not, at any rate, if it wishes to maintain its exalted position. For what then would stand in the way of workers uniting against the bourgeoisie?

Nor is it possible for the imperialists to allow a situation to prevail

* GB Shaw, *Fabianism and the Empire: A Manifesto by the Fabian Society*, 1900.
† S Webb, *The Decline in the Birth-Rate*, The Fabian Society, 1907.

in which British workers *easily recognise their common identity with workers around the globe* as victims of British imperialist plunder and exploitation. How would our rulers find workers willing to fight in its wars abroad? What would stop workers at home and abroad uniting against imperialism?

The accidents of history that put Europeans in a position to colonise the rest of the world during the modern era – and that led to humans in Europe having paler skins than those of humans elsewhere – have provided extremely useful material for the division of workers in the imperialist countries on the basis of skin colour – material that the ruling class has been quick in seizing upon and extremely enthusiastic in spreading.

4. Stoking fake 'national' divisions destroys class unity

Meanwhile, the solutions on offer from bourgeois nationalists to this division, by failing to address the root cause of the problem of racism, can lead only to the perpetuation of the very problem they claim to be trying to cure.

Foremost among the fake solutions on offer is the oft-peddled myth of 'national self-determination' for any and every self-identifying 'nation'. There is hardly a minority in the world that has not at some point been told it is an oppressed nation, whether or not it actually is.

Since the time when socialism's founders and foremost leaders emphasised the generally progressive nature of the struggle *by genuinely oppressed nations against imperialist domination*, claiming nationhood has been a shortcut to feigning 'progressive' credentials by all kinds of charlatans.

Thus we have been presented with the myth of the 'black nation' (or, even more absurdly in the USA today, the 'black and brown nation'), the 'Latino nation', the 'jewish nation' (the basis of the zionist founding myth for Israel), the 'islamic nation' (the basis of

the founding myth for Pakistan), the 'sikh nation' (cause celebre of the sikh separatists in India), and so on.

Bourgeois ideologues, along with their followers in the Trotskyite and revisionist fake left, not being given to reading Marxist texts such as JV Stalin's seminal work on the topic (*Marxism and the National Question*, 1913) have either *no idea* what a nation is or *deliberately cause confusion* over its definition – and they are equally unable or unwilling to perceive *whether a nation is oppressed* or not.

This leads to a general confusion where all kinds of arbitrarily-defined groups, of whatever kind, are described and recognised as 'nations', even if the grouping is based on skin colour or religion, rather than on a shared history, language, territory, and economic and cultural life.

Taking its cue from the black nationalists is the 'Back to Africa' movement, which endorses the idea that a worker with black skin *can never belong* in the place they were born and brought up in if that place is outside of Africa. This line of reasoning is exactly the same as is used by the zionists to justify their policy of giving automatic citizenship to jews from anywhere in the world to a state where the native population (the Palestinians) are denied that same citizenship.

In order to justify this programme, both groups propagate the idea that the rest of the world can never be brought to accept and live on equal terms with them; that non-blacks or non-jews are *by nature* inherently racist or antisemitic respectively – a racist theory if ever there was one.

A similar story was told to muslims in India in the run-up to partition (1947) and the creation of Pakistan. The British had long fomented divisions amongst the Indian population and used different national and religious groups against one other in order to conquer and keep control of the whole subcontinent. As the time approached for the ending of their direct colonial rule, they saw all the advantage of leaving a country at war with itself. A strong,

independent, and quite possibly socialist India was not something the British ruling class was in any hurry to see, given the huge resources and population that might then be closed off to its future exploitation.

And so, during the last days of the Raj, the antipathies it had carefully nurtured were whipped up to fever pitch, with regular pogroms being instigated. Muslims were told they would never be safe living amongst hindus; states such as Punjab and Bengal, where hindus and muslims had intermingled for centuries, were ripped apart by bloody terror in which as many as two million Indians lost their lives, more than fourteen million more were forced from their homes, and from which the Indian subcontinent has never recovered.

5. The dead end of 'equal rights' under capitalism

This is the end result of bourgeois nationalism:

1. The sabotage of what had the potential to be a vibrant movement bringing large numbers of working-class black and Asian workers into the struggle for socialism.

2. The self-defeating rejection of scientific socialism on the basis that it was written 'by white men', and is therefore irrelevant and 'eurocentric' (once again cutting off the pinnacle of dearly-bought human knowledge from so many of those who are in urgent need of its guiding light).

3. The widest propagation of the bourgeois nationalists' fake 'solutions' to the question of racism by the corporate media, and the burying of the understanding that racial oppression is first and foremost a *class* question.

4. The creation of a field of 'race studies' in academia, which has spent years brainwashing university students with false consciousness, and which has created an identity-led discourse that is totally unquestioned by any in the petty-bourgeois 'left'.

5. A wide acceptance of the laughable idea that the state of the class that depends on spreading racism can be trusted to oversee the implementation of equality through legislation and policing (the much-abused Equalities Act, 'racial origin' forms in schools and workplaces, etc), and such educational and cultural initiatives as 'black history month'.

6. A growing acceptance and propagation of the racist idea that workers with family origins outside Britain do not, in fact, belong here, and cannot find liberation until they either 'return home' or are given some self-sufficient territory of their own (within Britain or elsewhere, as in the case of Israel), where they can exercise 'self-rule' ('national liberation') – a notion that falls apart as soon as one considers children of mixed parentage, or of fourth or fifth generation descent.

7. A huge and widening rift between privileged, university-educated workers, whose minds have been thoroughly infected with the bourgeois-nationalist academic discourse of guilt and privilege, and who look down on poorer workers who have no truck with this narrative, and the poorer, less educated masses of the working class who despise the obvious nonsense of such tropes as 'all white people are racists', and have been brought to believe by the media that this is the face of 'progressive politics' where the question of racism is concerned.

IV. LGBT+ IDEOLOGY: A DANGEROUS DIVERSION

1. Gay 'liberation': a deliberate confusion

For decades, serious Marxists have simply kept away from the academic debates around gay rights, seeing the issue as a distraction and an irrelevance to the struggle for socialist revolution. Those self-identifying Marxists who *have* taken a position have done so out of fear; jostled by the petty-bourgeois left and the bourgeois media into agreeing with the precepts of identity politics in order to try to appear 'acceptable' to 'modern' eyes.

But the simple fact is that whom a person has sex with – assuming it is between consenting adults and no money changes hands – is *not a class issue* (by which we mean that it is not a central programmatic issue for workers struggling for socialism). Socialists are, of course, opposed to the criminalisation and persecution of homosexual activity that was carried out under the hypocritical pretext of upholding bourgeois morality, but such legislation and persecution are no longer in question in Britain. Even when they existed, they never justified the now prevailing idea that a person's sexual preferences are the defining point of his or her 'identity'.

As a columnist in the *Spectator* put it:

> Gay people should be as free and equal as straight people. And today they are. That's wonderful. But the fact you are gay is the least interesting thing about you. Tell me something else.*

What real interest is there in knowing who people are sleeping with, beyond prurient gossip? What does it say about the abysmal level of our class consciousness that workers have been brought genuinely to believe that there is something inherently *progressive* (ie, that it is something that advances history) about marching up and down to publicly proclaim their sexual preferences while politicians, policemen and Nato officers join in with rainbow flags?

This confusion of sexual questions with class issues is not new. It began among bourgeois proponents of women's equality in the nineteenth century, and was transferred wholesale into the 'gay liberation' movement of the late 1960s.

It is perfectly correct to point out that the oppressive and hypocritical sexual morality of class society is a fetter on human relationships. Workers have long looked forward to a future in which love and sex are no longer mixed up with questions of class and property. But to move from this understanding – that the coming social revolution will also revolutionise *all* our relationships with one another (not only sexual ones) – to the idea that we must make sexual matters an object of primary concern *before* the revolution is putting the cart well before the horse, and simply offers yet another distraction from the real task that faces us – the task of organising the working class for socialist revolution.

Which is, of course, the reason that the capitalists have been so very keen to promote the idea. Since the living example of Soviet socialism started to undermine the foundations of the rigidly enforced moral code of bourgeois society, our rulers, while helpless to stop the mass rejection of this hypocritical and repressive morality, were quick to take the opportunity to divert workers from class

* 'Why I'm sick of Pride' by B O'Neill, *The Spectator*, 6 July 2019.

questions into pursuing a chimerical idea of *individual* liberation that could supposedly be achieved through giving full rein to their sexual appetites.

Today, much of the 'culture wars' presentation of this diversionary topic consists in contrasting the old hypocritical 'morality' with the 'sex as liberation' *lifestyle* ideology and asking workers to line up behind one or other of these equally bourgeois and dead-end attitudes, the better to keep them distracted from what really matters and fighting amongst themselves.

A century ago, discussing the demands and activities of the international socialist women's movement, Lenin warned the German communist and working-class women's leader Clara Zetkin of the dangers of getting distracted by discussions around sex and sexuality:

> I have been told that at the evenings arranged for reading and discussion with working women, sex and marriage problems come first. They are said to be the main objects of interest in your political instruction and educational work. I could not believe my ears when I heard that.
>
> The first state of proletarian dictatorship is battling with the counter-revolutionaries of the whole world. The situation in Germany itself calls for the greatest unity of all proletarian revolutionary forces, so that they can repel the counter-revolution which is pushing on. But active communist women are busy discussing sex problems and the forms of marriage 'past, present and future'.
>
> They consider it their most important task to enlighten working women on these questions. It is said that a pamphlet on the sex question written by a communist authoress from Vienna enjoys the greatest popularity. What rot that booklet is! The workers read what is right in it long ago in Bebel. Only not in the tedious, cut-and-dried form found in the pamphlet but in the form of gripping agitation that strikes out at bourgeois society.

> The mention of Freud's hypotheses is designed to give the pamphlet a scientific veneer, but it is so much bungling by an amateur. Freud's theory has now become a fad. I mistrust sex theories expounded in articles, treatises, pamphlets, etc. in short, the theories dealt with in that specific literature which sprouts so luxuriantly on the dung heap of bourgeois society. I mistrust those who are always absorbed in the sex problems, the way an Indian saint is absorbed in the contemplation of his navel . . .
>
> No matter how rebellious and revolutionary it may be made to appear, it is in the final analysis thoroughly bourgeois. Intellectuals and others like them are particularly keen on this. There is no room for it in the party, among the class-conscious, fighting proletariat . . .
>
> Why is the approach to this problem inadequate and un-Marxist? Because sex and marriage problems are not treated as only part of the main social problem. Conversely, the main social problem is presented as a part, an appendage to the sex problem. The important point recedes into the background.
>
> Thus not only is this question obscured, but also thought, and the class-consciousness of working women in general, is dulled.*

This point of Lenin's is key: there is nothing to be gained for the revolution by focusing serious attention on trying to solve class-society-induced problems of sex and relationships *before* the revolution. These are questions workers will solve for themselves as socialism develops into communism and all remaining traces of class society disappear from their lives, their minds and their culture.

Our preferences and partnerships *are bound to be shaped by the society into which we are born and the circumstances of our upbringing*, this much is clear. How relationships will evolve in the future, when class society is a distant memory and human rela-

* 'Lenin on the women's question', from an interview with Clara Zetkin, 1920.

tions have been allowed to develop free from the constraints of class and money, and free also from the hypocritical and prurient attitudes created by bourgeois life and bourgeois morality, we can only begin to imagine. It is a question that can only be settled by future generations.

> What we can now conjecture about the way in which sexual relations will be ordered after the impending overthrow of capitalist production is mainly of a negative character, limited for the most part to what will disappear.
>
> But what will there be new? That will be answered when a new generation has grown up: a generation of men who never in their lives have known what it is to buy a woman's surrender with money or any other social instrument of power; a generation of women who have never known what it is to give themselves to a man from any other considerations than real love, or to refuse to give themselves to their lover from fear of the economic consequences.
>
> When these people are in the world, they will care precious little what anybody today thinks they ought to do; they will make their own practice and their corresponding public opinion about the practice of each individual – and that will be the end of it.*

As far as the class struggle to overthrow capitalism is concerned, we can only state that freely undertaken sexual activity is an aspect of workers' personal lives; it has no bearing on capitalist exploitation or on the struggle for socialism.

Socialists are opposed to any discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, but we are equally opposed to the propagation of such misleading phrases as 'the LGBT community', which do nothing to enlighten anybody and only spread confusion. Since when did having a particular sexual preference make one part of a

* F Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, 1884.

'community'? Such a use of the term (endlessly employed by all the proponents of identity politics to give credence to the drivel they spout) simply renders it meaningless.

To the extent that the bourgeoisie uses the word 'community', it acts *not to unite but to divide* workers – encouraging them to identify with other 'gay people', no matter what their class, and to think that the path to 'freedom' is to be found in living in gay ghettos and buying into corporate-driven 'identities' that dictate their taste in clothes, music, decor . . . even how they walk and talk – which are all supposed somehow to be tied to their sexual preferences.

As with bourgeois solutions to racism and sexism, the bourgeois solution to homophobia is to *increase* ghettoization in the name of fighting it.

The truth is that the fight for 'gay rights' has been promoted as part of the campaign to demote and divert the women's struggle and the fight against racism, both of which can only be solved by socialist revolution, into a harmless 'rights'-driven agenda – ie, one that promotes *legal recognition of equality* as the 'solution' to problems that are built into the capitalist state machinery and which no amount of legislation by that same state will ever remedy.

As far as the working class is concerned, prejudice within our ranks cannot be solved by bourgeois state interference but only by working and struggling together for socialism. Exposure to those against whom we harbour prejudices is always the best remedy for solving what Mao termed 'contradictions among the people', which can be resolved by the working people themselves through dialogue and discussion (as opposed to contradictions with the enemy, which can only ever be antagonistic).

As far as capitalist society is concerned, removing barriers of prejudice that prevent better-off gay people 'getting on' in their careers, getting married or adopting children does absolutely nothing to change the exploitative relations in society, which remain the real bar to workers being able to live meaningful and civilised lives. Gay workers may cease to be excluded from some activities on ac-

count of their sexual preferences, but that won't change what type of work, education, housing or healthcare they have access to, which are based on their class background and not their sexuality.

We state again: *we are opposed to discrimination*, but it will not truly be ended without ending capitalism, which rations access to the resources needed to really 'level the playing field' and allow *everyone* to develop and express their potential to the full.

Sexism stems from the oppression of women that is built into all class societies. The capitalists cannot afford to socialise the work that women presently do privately and for nothing; they can neither afford to provide the facilities that will free women from the burdens placed upon them, nor provide meaningful work for them all in the capitalist labour market. Nor can they allow women to be freed en masse to take part in political life.

Thus, no matter how many better-off working women find a way to carve out careers for themselves under capitalism, the masses of working-class women will still be trained from birth to accept their lot and carry out their domestic duties.

Racism stems from the oppression of the colonies and from imperialist war, as well as from the need to keep workers divided at home. The imperialist ruling class can no more stop fighting wars for domination and plunder than it can stop the anarchy of private production.

Thus, no matter how many better-off black and ethnic minority workers find a way to carve out careers for themselves under capitalism, the masses of working-class black people (or Irish, or muslims, or whoever best fits the agenda of the day) will still be treated unfairly by the state and routinely harassed and criminalised in order to perpetuate whatever stereotypes the ruling class needs to help it justify wars abroad and keep workers divided at home. We have seen the *primary targets* of state-sponsored racism change over time (from Irish and blacks to muslims and eastern Europeans, for example), but the need for such racism to exist has in no way diminished.

This is not the case with the other rights lobbies, however, which is why they are so assiduously promoted by the bourgeoisie and its left-liberal hangers-on. Meeting all the demands of the gay rights lobby is perfectly possible without undermining the basis of capitalist exploitation, and has the added bonus of helping to confuse workers about what the fight for social justice really looks like. Moreover, it gives the exploiting ruling class the opportunity to take onto itself the mantle of 'defender of workers' liberties' while castigating those self-same workers for their backward attitudes. Win-win in fact.

Not only do the capitalists get to whitewash their endemic racism and sexism by allowing a black or openly gay president or a woman prime minister to be elected to preside over the perpetration of aggressive wars and the deepening of poverty for the masses worldwide, but they get to lecture the victims of their aggression about 'equality'. What could be more obscene than the 'pink-washing' of the fascistic, zionist state of Israel as it carries out its steady genocide of Palestinians side by side with the shedding of crocodile imperialist tears over the 'rights' of women and gay people in anti-imperialist Iran?

US president Barack Obama presided over an increase in shootings of black people at home and waged criminal wars against Libya, Afghanistan and Syria, but he was still awarded 'progressive points' by left liberals merely for having black skin, as well as for passing legislation that allowed gay men to take part in the crimes of the US imperialist army.

Hillary Clinton proudly took personal credit for the criminal devastation of Libya and the foul murder of its loved and respected leader, Colonel Muamar Gaddafi, yet she was vigorously promoted by left liberals as their choice to become the USA's first female president. It is a sad day indeed that sees people who claim to be champions of the working class celebrating such 'achievements'.

The weaponisation of identity politics has been noticed and criticised by a small but vocal section of conservative bourgeois com-

mentators, who often do a very good job of exposing their ridiculous and hypocritical essence. In the *Spectator* article cited earlier, Brendan O'Neill pointed out:

> It's no longer enough to leave homosexuals alone to live however they choose and to inflict on them no persecution or discrimination or any ill-will whatsoever on the basis of their sexuality, which is absolutely the right thing for a civilised liberal society to do. No, now you have to validate their identity and cheer their life choices. You must doff your cap to that omnipresent bloody rainbow. Today it isn't homosexuals who are persecuted; it's their critics . . .
>
> The new moral majority is pro-gay rather than anti-gay. It consists of the political class, the capitalist class, the media class and the celebrity class. Its flag is the Pride flag. Its branding and messaging are inescapable. If you're a truly virtuous person, you'll even wear the new moral majority's political paraphernalia, in the form of a Pride badge, a Pride t-shirt, or Pride socks on the actual TV news (Mr Snow). Doing so is a way of letting everyone know you're a good person. You're on the right side of virtue and the right side of history. You are an insider.
>
> But there are many reasons why it might be a good idea to dissent from the orgy of Pride conformism and to refuse to bow and scrape before the rainbow flag. That flag sums up everything that is wrong with our era. Its message is that you should be proud of yourself simply for what you are – for having been 'born this way', as Lady Gaga puts it – rather than for what you have achieved.
>
> As a symbol, it's a celebration of the self, of an accident of birth, of something as mundane as who one sleeps with. It's an invitation to narcissism and, as such, *it further corrodes the social solidarity and sense of community so many of us long for today*. Pride, the institution, is antisocial. (Our emphasis)

Sadly, Mr O'Neill's suggested antidote to the divisive individual-

ist navel-gazing of identity politics is the divisive tribal politics of bourgeois nationalism. Nevertheless, his plea that people should be encouraged to 'feel part of something bigger than themselves' can only be endorsed by communists, who aim not merely to help workers *feel* that they could be part of something bigger than themselves (by selling them an illusion of cross-class 'national unity'), but are able actually to *show them in reality* what that something is (the international proletariat; the class struggle for socialism), why it matters, and why workers with any shred of *real* pride in themselves and their class should be prepared to make every kind of sacrifice to ensure the growth and success of the revolutionary movement.

2. Equal rights and the hierarchy of pain

> After October 1917, the imperialists lost the moral high ground. When Soviet policy proved in practice the fallacy of bourgeois justifications for racism and national oppression (that colonised peoples were unfit to rule themselves) and for sexism (that women were physically and mentally incapable of doing 'men's work'), the popular sentiment turned against imperialism for good.
>
> The fact that modern-day imperialists are forced to pay lip-service to 'equality' and 'human rights' . . . is a telling legacy of October.*

Having been forced onto the back foot by the advances of the Soviet Union and the socialist camp; having lost the moral high ground in terms of its ideological dominance of workers' minds, the ruling class has worked hard to turn the new reality – where it has been forced to accept *in words*, if not in deeds, that there is no moral justification for sexism, racism or colonial oppression – to

* 'October Revolution: The future belongs to communism', resolution passed by the CPGB-ML's eighth congress, September 2018.

its advantage.

Just as the bourgeoisie has used the concession of free secondary education for all children to poison as many workers' minds as possible and turn them against the very concept of 'learning'; just as it has used the concession of free healthcare to provide a guaranteed market at astronomical prices to the monopoly drugs cartels; so it has used the forced concessions in the direction of equal rights for women and ethnic minorities to manipulate the struggle around these vital issues away from alignment with the class struggle and into harmless dead ends of debate over 'rights' and 'privilege'.

To cement this diversion away from class politics, any number of other minority groups against whom there has been prejudice in society have been brought forward to join the 'equal rights' agenda: those stigmatised or sidelined as a result of mental or physical disability, ill health or old age, for example.

Once again, for the benefit of those who are determined to misrepresent our views, we repeat that *communists are in favour of workers being treated equally*. In our organisation, we certainly put that principle into practice as far as we are able, without, however, bowing to the kind of militant political correctness that dictates our comrades should not hold a public meeting if they don't have access to a sign language interpreter, or that they should never allow a man to speak on the question of women's oppression. The need to carry out our work and make the best of whatever resources we have available to us – to do our duty to the working class and to the revolution – takes precedence over all our needs and preferences as individuals. It is a sign of how muddied our waters have become by individualism and the politics of identity that this should even need to be stated.

The point for workers to understand is that *equality of opportunity will never be granted to poor workers under capitalism*, no matter how much advance against limiting prejudice is made by the better off. The demand for equality is useful *in so far as it helps*

to reveal this basic truth and recruit forces for the revolution; if it is not being used to illustrate the need for socialism, it is a dangerous illusion that leads only to confusion.

The point is not that communists are opposed to equal opportunities or equal rights, but that we understand that these will not come while capitalist exploitation and the drive for profit continue to divide humanity into exploited and exploiters; continue to concentrate society's wealth into fewer and fewer hands while impoverishing the vast masses of humanity.

Taking advantage of the confusion already created in this area, the proponents of identity politics (particularly those working in bourgeois academia) are increasingly encouraging *all* workers to find a special minority with which to identify, and to imagine that the real or imagined difficulties associated with living as part of that minority give them some kind of precedence over others. Moreover, the question of racism, having been neatly transformed into a simple dichotomy of white versus black, has been minutely subdivided into *grades of oppression* related solely to darkness of skin.

In this hierarchy of suffering, to be perceived as 'more oppressed' is also to be recognised not only as being worthy of more sympathy (and the object of more guilt), but also as being *inherently more progressive* – a travesty of the concept that makes a mockery and a farce out of working-class politics, but which is all too often put forward in the name of 'Marxism'.

The effect of all this is particularly noticeable among the student population, exposed to what seem to them to be universally-accepted truths for years and from all sides, and expected to repeat them in essays if their studies have any connection with art, politics, history or social life. It is therefore only to be expected that identity-driven agendas should be introduced wholesale into the working-class movement by these thoroughly-indoctrinated student 'activists' and their academic mentors.

This is the situation that has produced the disgusting spectacle of

better-off and patently *privileged* workers vying with one another to claim a place in the officially-recognised and constantly evolving hierarchy of pain and oppression; a ridiculous exhibition of *competitive 'suffering'* that is mainly indulged in by those who are, in point of fact, suffering significantly less than the mass of poor workers at home, and exponentially less than the mass of impoverished workers globally, many of whom really *do* have trouble finding a 'safe space' – a roof, sanitation, running water, electricity, free from the threat of water, land or air pollution and Nato bombs – in which to try to feed, clothe and house their children.

3. Hating the haters: the self-identifying 'left' in the service of imperialism

Not only have we reached the absurd situation where identity politics have created excuses for privileged workers to complain to less privileged ones about the pain of their oppression, but this has been further developed into a real weapon against the poorer mass of workers in the form of the militant policing of everything deemed by the self-appointed identity politics police as 'racist', 'sexist', 'homophobic', 'transphobic', etc. With the passing of the Equalities Act in 2010, the proposed updates to the 2004 Gender Recognition Act (updates that seem to be being widely implemented even before being officially written into law), and the gradual adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Association's (IHRA) zionist definition of 'antisemitism' by public bodies across the country, these fundamentalists increasingly have the force of British law and public institutions to back them up.

Such simple and anodyne statements as 'It's alright to be white', 'Women don't have penises' and 'Zionism is racist' are liable to call down not only the hysterical opprobrium of the left-liberal cognoscenti, but also the vitriol of the capitalist media, the retribution of state institutions (from creches to schools and universities; from

local council offices to social workers; from doctors' surgeries to clinics and hospitals), and even the full force of employers and the law in the form of sackings and prosecutions.

While we do not subscribe to the pessimistic hypothesis that everything that happens has been precisely planned by our Machiavellian and all-powerful ruling class, it is equally clear to us that our rulers are not to be underestimated. They are infinitely adaptable. When they suffer defeats they are quick to use whatever is to hand to try to turn their remaining power and influence to good account. In the case of Marxism – the ruling class's most dangerous enemy – a century and a half of paying good money for endless distortions of Marxist science, and a century of paying good money for countless corruptions of Leninist revolutionary theory, have brought huge dividends.

Nearly a century ago, the ruling class was sinking into the greatest crisis it had ever faced, and its system was teetering on the brink of collapse, even as the new Soviet Union was going from strength to strength and the working classes all over the capitalist world had militant, revolutionary organisations that looked to the USSR for inspiration and gave class-conscious leadership. These organisations popularised the demands that fascism and racism should be fought, that women should be emancipated, that colonialism should be ended, and that socialism should be every working-class organisation's ultimate aim.

Today, the imperialists are enmeshed in an even worse crisis, but they have – for the time being at least – no well-organised working-class army to take advantage of their weakness in their own heartlands. Indeed, so successful have they been in spreading confusion that those whose alienation should lead them to fight the system are instead fighting each other. As has begun to be noticed by the more thoughtful of conservative bourgeois commentators, in former times, an antisemite was someone who hated jews; today, an (alleged) 'antisemite' is someone who is hated *by* (militant zionist) jews (and their state-sponsored 'protectors'). Previously,

a homophobe was someone who hated gays; today, an (alleged) 'homophobe' is someone who is hated *by* (militantly ideological) homosexuals (and their state-sponsored 'protectors').

What is equally clear is that while in former times, the righteous anger of the masses was being harnessed against the iniquities of the system, in today's topsy-turvy bastardisation of these *real* struggles, it is the oppressors and the privileged who unite to attack and denigrate the poorer workers, or those who in any way threaten the system of capitalist imperialist exploitation – whether poor white workers who voted for Donald Trump, poor white workers who voted for Brexit, or Jeremy Corbyn for failing to be a militant zionist while heading up her majesty's loyal opposition.

Indeed, the identity-driven approach to politics has so saturated the mindset of privileged workers that their idea of the class struggle today is not of uniting workers under the banner of scientific socialism; not of building an organisation capable of leading the workers to challenge capitalist state power, but of *adopting an identity* and joining a social club. What matters to these 'activists' is that their adherents should wear the right clothes and badges, design their materials using the right colours and fonts, and of course, keep themselves pure by refusing to associate with anyone who isn't a signed-up member of their particular club.

Like followers of rival bands on an obscure music scene, these self-identifying 'socialists' are so engrossed in the petty rivalries (usually online) between their various sects that they are completely oblivious to the fact that the mass of workers have no idea they even exist, never mind any awareness of (or interest in) their manufactured controversies. The understanding that their role should be first to understand Marxist theory and then to *do everything in their power to connect that theory with the masses*, who will be able to put the theory into action, is entirely missing from these cultists' conception of 'socialist activism'.

4. Transgenderism: identity politics squared

REG: Furthermore, it is the birthright of every man –

STAN: Or woman.

REG: Why don't you shut up about women, Stan. You're putting us off.

STAN: Women have a perfect right to play a part in our movement, Reg.

FRANCIS: Why are you always on about women, Stan?

STAN: I want to be one.

REG: What?

STAN: I want to be a woman. From now on, I want you all to call me 'Loretta'.

REG: What?!

LORETTA: It's my right as a man.

JUDITH: Well, why do you want to be Loretta, Stan?

LORETTA: I want to have babies.

REG: You want to have babies?!

LORETTA: It's every man's right to have babies if he wants them.

REG: But . . . you can't have babies.

LORETTA: Don't you oppress me.

REG: I'm not oppressing you, Stan. You haven't got a womb! Where's the foetus going to gestate?! You going to keep it in a box?!

LORETTA: *Crying*

JUDITH: Here! I – I've got an idea. Suppose you agree that he can't actually have babies, not having a womb, which is nobody's fault, not even the Romans', but that he can have the *right* to have babies.

FRANCIS: Good idea, Judith. We shall fight the oppressors for your right to have babies, brother. Sister. Sorry.

REG: What's the point?

FRANCIS: What?

REG: What's the point of fighting for his right to have babies when he can't have babies?!

FRANCIS: It is symbolic of our struggle against oppression.

REG: Symbolic of his struggle against reality.

— *The Life of Brian*[*]

With the transgender movement, identity politics has reached its absurd apotheosis. Ironically, its arrival has upset no one more than the leading proponents of bourgeois feminism and black nationalism.

After all, how can militant feminists protect their sphere from evil men if a man can now proclaim himself a woman at the drop of a hat? And where will the fashion for self-identifying lead us once the principle has been ceded? What if white people start identifying as black? What if gentiles start identifying as jews? What if young women who might have grown up to be lesbians have a sex change instead and identify as straight men?

The sight of feminist campaigners arguing vehemently that 'women don't have dicks' would be funny if it weren't so tragic.

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* *The Life of Brian*, Film script by Monty Python, 1979.

And the fact that this simple fact is up for dispute and is attacked as 'hate speech' should send a shiver down every worker's spine.

What kind of Orwellian world is being created before our eyes when a forty-year-old comedy sketch written to lampoon the sectarian nuttiness of the ultra-left of the time and show it reaching absurd and (at the time) unimaginable heights should have turned out to be a simple prediction of the future? Could the bourgeoisie make it any clearer that it has reached the point of utter degeneracy – that it has nothing at all to offer workers and seeks merely to distract them from the plunge in their living standards – than to whip up a controversy out of a simple statement of biological fact? It seems we are indeed reaching a point where even geometrical axioms are up for debate.*

The bourgeoisie creates confusion in all spheres of life in order to retard the movement for socialism. It is the job of socialists, therefore, to speak the *truth*, no matter how unpopular or unpalatable some truths may be to some sections of the population.

A good example of a mass delusion that is heavily propagated by the ruling class is religion. In its revolutionary youth, the bourgeoisie allowed science to smash the dogmas of the Church. Bourgeois science has provided ample evidence for the material basis of life and the universe, so that humankind no longer has need of supernatural explanations for natural phenomena. And yet, as capitalist rule has matured and reached its senile years, the bourgeoisie has encouraged every kind of superstition and backwardness in order on the one hand to console exploited workers and encourage them to accept their place in the social hierarchy, and on the other to justify their exploitative rule as being ordained by God.

Socialists are materialists, and the communist party is guided by Marxist science and philosophy; by dialectical and historical materialism, which leaves no room for religious belief. Nevertheless, we do not refuse religious workers (of whom there are many) admit-

* See footnote on p11.

tance into the ranks of the party. Rather, we tell them: the contradiction is for you to resolve as best you can. If you wish to join the struggle for socialism in Britain; if you are prepared to accept the party's programme and discipline, then your personal religious beliefs are your private affair – only don't proselytise for converts amongst the membership or amongst the wider masses.

These are the terms on which we accept religious workers into membership. We do not give up our right to propagate materialism out of sensitivity to those members' feelings – to do so would be a dereliction of our duty to tell the truth to the workers. But neither do we deny the opportunity to such workers to play their part in the struggle. In that most *meaningful* sense, we are tolerant and promote unity.

We do not promote unity of the kind demanded by the left-liberal ideologues: the 'unity' of never saying anything that might possibly offend or upset any other worker. Given the extent to which wrong ideas have hold of the minds of the masses, to promise never to say anything that might offend people's prejudices is to promise never to try to make revolution. The revolutionary movement has the potential to grow as external conditions develop, but whether or not it does so depends entirely on how successful communists are in persuading workers to lay aside the prejudices pushed onto them by a hostile class and to accept the truths that Marxism has to offer.

It is not possible for socialists, out of consideration for the feelings of those who have been fooled by such lies, to tell workers that gender dysphoria is a condition that requires lifelong and expensive medical treatment. The tiny minority of people who are born hermaphrodite or with abnormal chromosomes should naturally be supported and offered the best possible chances in life, including medical treatment where necessary. *But they do not account for the growing number of young people turning up at the doors of transgender clinics in the imperialist countries.*

The twenty-first-century growth in gender dysphoria is a result of

the remorseless promotion and enforcement of gender stereotypes on our children, especially by the capitalist media and retail giants; of the promotion of identity politics; of the breakdown of community; of the destruction of class organisation and class solidarity; of the rise of the ultra-processed food industry and of social media direct marketing; of the fall in living standards and diminishing life prospects (education, housing, healthcare, work, access to nature, sport, culture and everything else that makes life interesting and worthwhile). So many people in today's decaying capitalist society are isolated, alienated and unhealthy; gender dysphoria is just one of many manifestations of the unhappiness and ill health that this crumbling system is generating on a mass scale.

The transgender movement seeks to tell such people that *they* are the problem that must be fixed; that the solution to their alienation is to *accept* the bourgeois propaganda about what it means to be a girl or woman and what it means to be a boy or man and to change their bodies to try to fit in with those entirely artificial and damaging constructs. But a lifetime of personal striving for the perfect body will not bring relief for these sufferers from problems that have been caused by capitalism. The solution can only be a *social* one: collectively to refuse to accept the *roles* assigned to us and to join the struggle for a society in which people are valued for their contribution and not their looks.

Socialists are motivated by a great love for humanity and by a desire to help move it forward to a world in which people are actually treated as human beings and not as mere consumers of commodities – or as commodities themselves. It pains them greatly to see so many people, especially young people, having their mental and physical health destroyed by life in the capitalist system; to see so many young workers turning their alienation in on themselves, so desperate to escape the pain that any mutilation seems acceptable if it might offer some relief.

But the charlatans who push this insidious ideology onto young children – promoting the idea that any unwillingness to conform to

arbitrary and totally unscientific gender roles is an indicator that they are 'in the wrong body' and should seek medical help – *are guilty of child abuse*. They are amply funded by big business interests that have spotted a market – an opportunity to make huge profits from selling hormone-manipulating drugs and expensive operations to workers who are too young to understand the ramifications of their actions, all of which are irreversible and will render them drug-dependent and infertile.

According to one investigation into transgenderism's financial backers and their motivations:

> With the medical infrastructure being built, doctors being trained for various surgeries, clinics opening at warp speed, and the media celebrating it, transgenderism is poised for growth. The LGB, a once-tiny group of people trying to love those of the same sex openly and be treated equally within society, has likely already been subsumed by capitalism and is now infiltrated by the medical-industrial complex via transgenderism.*

No amount of hysterical screaming from the liberal left should stop us from acknowledging these simple facts. Anyone who doubts them would do well to consider just why it is that the bourgeois state is so keen to update laws such as the Gender Recognition Act and the Equalities Act in a way that will brand even the *discussion* of the scientific and biological basis of ideas being pushed by the transgender movement as a 'hate crime'. Why is there such a need for everyone to promote and accept this pseudoscience that is being forced through our legislature so precipitately? Why is the duty to police it being imposed onto all those who are in any way employed by the state, whether civil servants, council workers, health workers or teachers?

* 'Who are the rich, white men institutionalising transgender ideology?' by J Bilek, *The Federalist*, 20 February 2018.

Under the cover of 'opposing prejudice' and 'protecting workers' rights', the bourgeoisie is legalising the mass abuse of and experimentation on children and normalising this pinnacle achievement of identity politics, which has slowly but surely shifted its ground (under the loving guidance of bourgeois academia) from 'Racism must be opposed' to 'Only a black man can oppose racism' to 'Only someone with exactly the same skin-tone as mine can appreciate my level of oppression' to 'No one else can understand my personal pain' to 'No one can question my identity: I am whatever I say I am'. And so now we have arrived at the farcical moment where it is proposed to enshrine in law that a person may *choose* their gender[10] – something that was decided by material biological forces at the moment of conception, when the sperm first fertilised the egg in their mother's fallopian tube.

The insanity of 'self-identifying' men and women is not lost on most workers. Indeed, there are many commentators even amongst the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois classes who are decidedly unhappy with the promotion of the transgender movement, and their voices are not silent.

The real danger to the *socialist* movement comes from the misidentification of *left liberals* as socialists or progressives, so that the unquestioning acceptance of the corporate-backed transgender movement by these same left liberals causes workers to believe that this is the only progressive way to think. In which case, say many workers, give me the un-PC brigade any day! This is fertile ground on which populism everywhere is breeding, while too many self-identifying 'socialists' rush around trying to bend their distorted brand of 'Marxism' to the demands of left-liberal individualism.

Once more, identity politics, and the hysterical policing of the politically-correct vocabulary and discourse that accompanies them, are pushing a wedge between the mass of workers and would-be 'progressives', and sending the masses into the arms of right-wing populist demagogues, who happily fuel the culture wars hysteria in the name of a 'common sense' that creates much heat but very

little light.

While the capitalists seek to confuse workers by asserting that the liberals speak for the working-class movement, true communists must make it most emphatically clear that *they do not*.

V. IDPOL: THE ENEMY OF CLASS UNITY

1. Political correctness gone mad: how to kill a conversation

Identity politics are driving a wedge between privileged workers and the mass, to the disadvantage of both sections, and to the detriment of the working-class movement in general. Moreover, by presenting themselves as a progressive force, proponents of identity politics are forcing the masses into the arms of right-wing demagogues, those false friends of the people whose fake solutions at least recognise the concerns of workers rather than lecturing them about their vocabulary or their 'privilege', and whose refusal to kowtow to the political correctness police is a rebellion that makes them immediately more acceptable to the put-upon lower strata.

Another little-discussed aspect of the politically-correct identity discourse is that it makes those who have not been thoroughly steeped in its precepts afraid to speak for fear of using the 'wrong' word or expressing a 'wrong' idea. Already at a disadvantage by a lower educational level and by life circumstances that have taught them to shut up and accept their fate, poorer workers now have the added barrier of being immediately pulled up for saying 'black'

when they should say 'person of colour', 'mixed race' when they should say 'dual heritage', or – most dreadful of all – using the 'wrong pronoun'.

Not only does this make workers terrified to speak up, effectively shutting them out from what remains of public and political life, but the limitations imposed on speech and vocabulary can only lead to a limitation on thought itself. If there are ideas that cannot be expressed because the vocabulary has been banned, then, whatever the stated intentions of their (useful idiot) proponents, identity politics are taking us towards a truly Orwellian dystopia. In Orwell's twisted universe, the threat of such a dystopia came from communism. In point of fact, it is the capitalists who would love to reach a situation where they could have total control over the minds of the masses.

All this also reinforces the carefully nurtured antagonism between less-educated and better-educated, poorer and more privileged workers. It is becoming glaringly apparent that today's left-liberal identity zealots are more likely to show tolerance of mass murder by imperialism than of a worker who uses a word they disapprove of; or of a working-class white man who has the temerity to disagree with a black man or a woman. A toxic culture of 'calling out' has developed amongst these armchair revolutionaries and Twitter warriors, who, ever ready to defend the 'rights' and 'feelings' of everyone else, jump to close down all opinions that differ from theirs with vapid shouts to 'check your privilege' – a truly nauseating state of affairs.

2. The ultimate end: an army of one

The petty-bourgeois individualism that drives identity politics is reinforced, and its effect is multiplied, by the vogue – welcomed, nurtured and enthusiastically endorsed by the ruling class – for *personal purity*. That is, that no one should ever be seen to as-

sociate – even for a moment, never mind organisationally – with anyone they *in any way* disagree with politically, or even with anyone who has *ever said or done anything they (or someone they know, or a hypothetical someone they imagine) don't (or might not) like*. Indeed, the fear of being *morally tarred by association* is now enough to stop many so-called 'progressives' even speaking on the same platform as someone whose political views are deemed (by the arbiters of moral or political correctness) to be 'beyond the pale'.

This is a recipe for disunity, and so, unsurprisingly, is assiduously and incessantly promoted in the capitalist media, which never fail to dig up some personal 'scandal' against anyone they wish to undermine in public life. How often has a trade union leader been smeared by some scurrilous story in the press just at the moment he is about to lead a well-organised and clearly justified strike that has wide public support? The incident may have no bearing on the merits or conduct of the strike, but the message is clear: how could workers possibly support a cause if its leadership includes someone who would have an affair, or fiddle his expenses, or appear on a platform beside a 'fascist', or talk to the country's 'enemies' . . ?

This entirely apolitical approach harms no one but the working class, *whose salvation can only come through organisation*. Because organising workers in a meaningful way *presupposes an ability to unite those who have disagreements*. A moment's serious reflection should be enough to persuade us that almost any group of workers is *bound* to consist of individuals who hold widely differing views on all kinds of topics, and whose approaches to daily life and behavioural norms are similarly diverse.

The fundamental principal of working-class organisation is not that workers should all look, think and feel the same in order to be able to work together, but that they should *unite around a core aim* – the need to build a vanguard party and fight for socialism; the need to build a trade union and fight for better pay and conditions – *and agree a common programme for action* that enables

them to rise above or set aside their differences. Where they differ on important points that are pertinent to the struggle, the minority agrees to submit to the majority. On all other matters, they simply agree to disagree.

And when it comes to our personal lives, as far as possible, we leave them at the door – unless they are in some way disrupting our ability to organise. What counts in this context is a person's *willingness and ability to contribute to the work*. The endlessly disseminated bourgeois line that workers should have nothing to do with any person with whom they have any disagreement, or who has merely done something the ruling class's media have seen fit to create a hypocritical furore over (which often has very little substance beyond the screaming headlines), has but one aim: to prevent workers from coming together in effective action.

Yet again, the ruling class reveals its understanding of what too many workers have allowed themselves to forget: *there is immense power in our numbers, would we but realise and learn to use it*. Instead, we are constantly encouraged to decrease our circle of association until we reach the purest point: an unsullied (and entirely impotent) army of one.

The ghetto mentality of identity politics reinforces, and is reinforced by, this 'never talk or listen to anyone who isn't just like you' approach, which is further fuelled by the echo chamber of social media, with its 'friends', 'followers', 'likes', retweets and endlessly self-reinforcing algorithms. Moreover, unquestioning acceptance of this mindset has led inexorably to the present mania for 'deplatforming', particularly prevalent amongst student 'radicals', which is presented as a *progressive* act, but which is, in point of fact, entirely *reactionary*.

And so we have arrived at a place where the popular perception of progressive politics is of self-identifying, personal-pronoun-choosing, vocabulary-policing 'Marxists', who on the one hand demand protection from divergent opinions and difficult debates (that might, horror of horrors, engender *hurt feelings*) in 'safe spaces',

while on the other feel justified in acting with unrestrained viciousness toward every perceived violator (who all too often seems to be a less privileged worker) of their impenetrable code – provided, of course, that the moral crusader in question is protected from any comeback by force of numbers or by the anonymity of their antisocial media platform of choice.

True progressives, on the other hand, have no interest in stifling debate. Nor do we need to shout down or abuse our opponents. Our arguments and criticisms are *political*, and we welcome any opportunity to make them before the working class. We will certainly never refuse to share a platform with another speaker on the basis of disagreement. That is merely to guarantee that misinformed workers never get the chance to change their minds. Why would communists deny workers the chance to hear what we have to say when Marxism holds the key to their liberation?

Communists, moreover, understand that the real target of 'deplatforming' is us. Once the principle has been established against a universally accepted demon (the 'fascists', whose programme, more or less diplomatically expressed, can in any event be heard from the lips of perfectly respectable politicians and commentators), it can easily be extended to anyone the ruling class wishes to silence. That is why any communist with a shred of sense will stand up for the right of *all* to be heard. No one but us will put forward our message; if we're not presenting the case for socialism then workers are not hearing it.

For now, the ruling class doesn't need to single out communists for public attack – that would merely be to give us unnecessary publicity.[11] Their faithful servants in the social-democratic establishment (all those self-identifying 'socialists' in the Labour party, Trotskyist and revisionist parties and trade unions) do an excellent job of refusing a platform to communists on a daily basis, as do the bourgeois media. On every issue – from Brexit to industry and the economy, from the arts to the health service, from war and solidarity to poverty, unemployment and inequality – no trade

union platform ever includes a communist speaker at its meetings; no 'broad front' is broad enough to admit of a non-bourgeois anti-imperialist analysis being expressed from its platform (and preferably not even from the floor of its meetings); no 'unbiased' media outlet would be so insane as to let an undistorted working-class view be heard.

How many workers are aware of what Marxism is, what socialism is, or that there is such a thing as a communist party in Britain? How many are aware that there are other reasons for promoting Brexit than a desire to end immigration or to 'take back control of our great democracy'? The media has been extremely careful to keep such knowledge away from those who might be inspired to act on it.

Rigorous no-platforming has been a feature of life for Marxists since Marxism first reared its terrifying (to the capitalists) head, but *the rebranding of this censorship as something progressive marks a new low for the self-identifying 'progressives' of the identity politics fraternity*.

As Lenin long ago pointed out:

> In its struggle for power the proletariat has no other weapon but organisation. Disunited by the rule of anarchic competition in the bourgeois world, ground down by forced labour for capital, constantly thrust back to the 'lower depths' of utter destitution, savagery and degeneration, the proletariat can, and inevitably will, become an invincible force only through its ideological unification on the principles of Marxism being reinforced by the material unity of organisation, *which welds millions of toilers into an army of the working class*.
>
> Neither the senile rule of the Russian autocracy nor the senescent rule of international capital will be able to withstand this army. It will more and more firmly close its ranks, in spite of all zigzags and backward steps, in spite of the opportunist phrasemongering

> of the Girondists of present-day social democracy, in spite of the self-satisfied exaltation of the retrograde circle spirit, and in spite of the tinsel and fuss of intellectualist anarchism.*

If we wish our struggle to be successful; if we are sincere in our desire to liberate humanity from the yoke of exploitation and inequality, we must learn to harness and direct this latent power.

3. The communist answer: build a movement based on scientific socialism

Long before they evolved into modern *homo sapiens*, our early ancestors took their first steps away from the rest of the animal kingdom with the capture and control of fire. With fire they kept themselves warm, kept predators at bay and began to cook their food – thus beginning the process of development that resulted in the modern human brain and, ultimately, in modern human civilisation.

In its struggle against capitalism, Marxist science is to the working class what fire was to early man. Workers in Britain have for decades been drenched in recurrent downpours of hostile ideas against which they have had little or no defence. The shelters that had been painstakingly built up by previous generations were not maintained as they should have been. They developed first leaks and then gaping holes. In the end, their rotten timbers were swept clean away by the deluge. Amongst the sodden wreckage that remains of class consciousness in Britain, our comrades have been searching out what little pieces of dry kindling we can find and have, with the establishment of our party, succeeded in lighting the tiniest of sparks.

But a tiny spark must be carefully guarded if it is not to go out.

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* VI Lenin, *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, 1904.

Our hold on Marxist science, the only weapon we have, is fragile and threatened from all sides. We are still in the early stages of the arduous work of rebuilding a revolutionary organisation in Britain; at a stage when the slightest slackening of our vigilance could destroy all our careful work. We must be on the watch for every careless splash from a misplaced foot, every drip from the edge of our too small umbrella, every runnel down the sleeve of a sodden coat.

The ruling class's ideology can find a route down the arm of every one of us who is a product of bourgeois society. Only by recognising this fact can we have any chance of combating the all-pervasive influence of bourgeois prejudice and propaganda. Harmful ideas *can* be combatted once they are recognised – they can be held up to the light, revealed for what they are, and their pernicious influence can be dispersed by careful and targeted application of the fire's heat.

And as we work to recreate what we have lost, we must make sure that, this time around, we are not satisfied with merely putting up a few shelters in which the workers may keep dry together for a time. We must push ahead with building a fortress of steel and stone that no storm can topple, amassing the forces under its command for a mighty onslaught on the stronghold of the enemy that will put paid for good to the entire system of exploitation, and with it all the harmful and divisive ideas with which workers are presently inundated.

And as we strive to combat the stifling influence of bourgeois ideology in our movement, let us always bear in mind that real *liberty of the individual*, that watchword of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois philosophers, *is unattainable for the masses without socialism*.

> We did not build this society in order to restrict personal liberty but in order that the human individual may feel really free. *We built it for the sake of real personal liberty, liberty without quotation marks. It is difficult for me to imagine what 'personal liberty'*

is enjoyed by an unemployed person, who goes about hungry, and cannot find employment.

Real liberty can exist only where exploitation has been abolished, where there is no oppression of some by others, where there is no unemployment and poverty, where a man is not haunted by the fear of being tomorrow deprived of work, of home and of bread. *Only in such a society is real, and not paper, personal and every other liberty possible.* (Our emphasis)*

Joti Brar
Bristol, July 2019

* Interview with Josef Stalin by R Howard, 1 March 1936.

Against identity politics

How can we build a tried-and-tested leadership that is capable of guiding the class struggle against capitalism and for socialism?[12]

1. What is a communist party for?

To understand our party's take on identity politics, it is essential to understand one or two very basic points.

The purpose of existence for a communist party is to serve the cause of the proletariat by providing it with a leadership that will enable it to overthrow capitalism and, through the dictatorship of the proletariat, to establish and develop socialism – ie, a planned economy that has the aim of satisfying to the greatest extent possible the physical and cultural needs of the masses of working people and their families.

That leadership is often compared to the general staff of an army. Just as no army can succeed in overcoming an enemy unless it has a leadership well versed in the science and art of warfare, and which enjoys the trust and support of the troops, so the proletarian masses cannot succeed in overcoming the mighty force of its

capitalist and imperialist enemy without a leadership that is able to offer it effective guidance.

Nor will the working-class masses trust and support that leadership unless their life experience has taught them firstly that proletarian revolution is the only way forward, and secondly that the leadership it is being offered is one that can be relied upon to offer effective guidance for that purpose.

2. The battle of ideas

The battle to overthrow the bourgeoisie has not, in imperialist countries, reached the stage of armed confrontation, but that does not mean that it is not being waged. It is being waged at the ideological level, with a bitter struggle for hearts and minds, in which the bourgeoisie is occupying all the best vantage points.

It controls the mass media. It controls education, both in schools and in universities, and has infinite financial resources. The only advantages that the meagre forces of the proletariat enjoy are, first, that workers hugely outnumber the bourgeoisie, and second, that truth and history are on their side.

Their capitalist enemy is being constantly undermined by the system's decay, while the only possible solution to the problems being caused to the workers (poverty, war and planetary degradation) by the continued existence of the capitalist economic system and minority class rule is the overthrow of the class enemy, which really has nothing but misery to offer the working masses.

It is obvious, and has been so throughout the history of class society, that a minority ruling class can only hope to continue to rule by undermining the masses' ability to act determinedly to overthrow the oppressor class. The methods the ruling-class ideologues use to achieve this involve diverting the anger of the oppressed masses in directions that are harmless to the rule of the exploiters.

The classic divide-and-rule tactics mobilise popular prejudices to

cause different sections of the oppressed class to blame each other by resort to racism, casteism, religious differences, etc – any general weakness that can be exploited. If we look at Britain today, we will readily see that the main weapons of the bourgeoisie for weakening the working-class movement are racism, anti-immigrant sentiment and islamophobia.

It is also able to persecute and discriminate against people who take up the communist cause by prejudicing their career prospects and/or condemning them to long-term unemployment.

The bourgeoisie has many ways and means of sending its class enemies barking up the wrong tree, devoting all their energies to causes that do no harm to the system – for example, through religious fundamentalism, cults, etc, but also through persuading them by the occasional concession (‘that really makes a difference to people’s lives’) to confine themselves to reformism, or to devote themselves, to the exclusion of revolutionary politics, to charitable works and the like.

The drive of the bourgeoisie to promote sexual/gender politics comes under this general heading. People whose genetic gender (as determined by their chromosomes) does not match up to other prevalent biological characteristics of that gender (eg, the wrong physical reproductive organs, the wrong hormonal make-up, attraction to the same sex) have a problem in that they do not fit the normal pattern of male or female biological sexual stereotype that everybody imbibes from their earliest experiences of what men are and what women are.

The brains of humans, and many other animals, receive stimuli from the material world that cause them automatically to create mental models of what to expect in relation to the manifold phenomena that surround them. When faced with something that does not fit the mental model built up from experience of the material world, this necessarily produces discomfort and/or anxiety and a struggle for understanding.

Therefore, for example, people who fulfil some, but not all, of the

expected criteria of the standard male/female mental model, often do give rise to discomfort in others, unless and until people have sufficient familiarity with these exceptionals that they incorporate them into their mental models. Until then, exceptions are not readily understood by the majority of people who do not suffer these difficulties, and they can as a result face hostility and discrimination.

It is important to note that their difficulties are not a result of class society, but the result of being oddities of nature. People who suffer genetic faults like Downs Syndrome, dwarfism, blindness, deafness, congenital illnesses, etc, are also unfairly disadvantaged, but it rarely occurs to anybody to try to claim that they are victims of capitalism.

3. Reform and revolution

It is, of course, right that people who, through no fault of their own, experience the difficulties typical of those who are 'different', should not be victimised. It is right that people who do fit the majority pattern should be encouraged to understand those who are harmlessly 'different', incorporating them into their mental models – ie, to overcome prejudices arising essentially from fear of, or impatience with, the not-understood.

Thus, people who are accustomed to working, say, with people who are disabled or physically deformed, very soon lose any feeling of discomfort in their presence. If that process of spreading understanding of those who are 'different' in any way but harmless can be assisted, that is all to the good.

We have no more objection to this kind of reformist activity than we have to people campaigning to help refugees, or to raise money for guide dogs for the blind, and we wish them luck. We are not in any way opposed to measures to make life easier for people who have been dealt a genetically rough deal on the gender front.

However, reformism is not the function of a communist party. There are thousands of people able, ready and willing to do good works within capitalism to try to improve people's lives, and we should let them get on with it.

There is, however, a grave and dangerous shortage of people prepared to do the urgent work of preparing for the proletarian revolution that humanity needs for its long-term survival. Our militants have more than enough revolutionary work to do without getting involved with reformist distractions that would never amount to more than putting a flimsy plaster on deep-rooted ills of capitalism.

Such activity amounts to fiddling while Rome burns.

A revolutionary who happens to be gay or transgender, if they want to serve the cause of humanity by helping to prepare for the proletarian revolution – and why shouldn't they? – has the perspective that the hideous problems faced by the vast majority of humanity who are exploited and oppressed have to take priority over their own individual difficulties.

For a revolutionary, this is a no-brainer.

There have recently been young comrades who have struggled hard to twist Marxism-Leninism in support of their desire for the party to drop revolutionary work (of which we are already unable to do enough because of difficulties in recruitment that are down to the curse of opportunist domination of the working-class movement) and become *campaigners for the acceptance of difference*.

Even on the 'acceptance of difference' front, they seem keen to get us to accept activities that are counterproductive to that cause, such as advocating the surgical and hormonal mutilation of children when there is absolutely no proof that this does not do the person concerned more harm than good, and brainwashing people into accepting that this is their 'right'.

If this is the kind of activity that they feel is so important that it is imperative to drop even an hour's revolutionary work in order to engage in it, then we would suggest that they would be better off in the Conservative party, which, according to Theresa May, is only

too happy to give it huge priority.[13]

4. Marxism misunderstood

Some comrades making these demands have dabbled in Marxist philosophy, but regrettably have read it with such a prejudiced mind that they have been unable even to begin to understand it.

It is solemnly proclaimed by them that maleness and femaleness do not exist in material reality but are purely social constructs that modern advances in genetics will enable us to avoid.

They do not appear to have understood that people develop concepts of maleness based on the typical pattern of physical maleness *that exists in the material world*. Society can and does attribute different *roles* to males as opposed to females (and vice versa), but people are in material reality male or female *before* society can differentiate between them in the assignment of social roles.

The roles can and do change, and may to some extent differ from one community to the next, but to suggest that gender difference does not exist in material reality is idiocy of the Monty Python variety.

A possible comparison might be the 'logical' deduction that since scientists are now able to tell us that water is made up of hydrogen and oxygen molecules, and that it is possible to convert water back into those separate molecules, therefore water doesn't really exist in material reality. But of course it does.

One comrade, while complaining that his own views had been misrepresented in some unspecified way, himself grossly misrepresented the views of party members who disagreed with him. He alleged that we claim that transgenderism does not exist and then accused us of idealism for refusing to accept material reality. But nowhere has anybody in the party, let alone the party itself, claimed that transgenderism does not exist.

He engaged in hysterical denunciations of a party leading com-

rade as 'supporting the eugenics movement' because an attempt was made to draw his attention to the *material fact* that the joining of the genes of two separate individuals (one male and one female, as it happens, as only one of them will carry the foetus, and therefore has a different overall function to the other) for reproductive purposes tends towards the genetic strengthening of the offspring.

The fact is that *in material reality* it does. This is why incest is discouraged – because in cases of incest, the genes passed on, although they come from two separate individuals, are nevertheless too alike to favour the genetic strength of the offspring.

This would have been observed at first hand by thousands of years of animal breeding and, even in human societies, can be noticed in societies where first-cousin marriage is the norm and, as a result, there is a significantly higher rate of birth defects among the offspring.

This is *material reality*, it is not the pseudoscience of eugenics, which seeks artificially to promote desirable characteristics in offspring (usually 'intelligence'), hand in hand with an ideology of disentitlement of those perceived to be lacking in the characteristic concerned. Eugenics is a pseudoscience that stems from an attempt by the ruling class and its favoured handmaidens to justify their privileges as being due to their 'superior breeding', and it is, of course, the most utter rubbish.

To try to conflate two completely different issues simply because they both relate to genetics is like condemning the alphabet because it can be used to write counter-revolutionary twaddle. In this case, though, one understands the temptation!

5. The value of experience

It shows a complete lack of any sense of proportion that self-identifying communists should be willing to hurl these outrageous accusations of egregious intellectual incompetence at our party

leadership.

These are people who for the most part have spent a lifetime studying Marxism-Leninism, teaching Marxism-Leninism, putting Marxism-Leninism into practice, and who have managed to put together a communist party whose policies attracted the comrades who went on to become so critical of our stand on LGBT politics – until they came under the influence of the bourgeois distraction-mongers who lie in wait in all our universities to trap idealistic and talented youth into the bourgeois, anticommunist camp.

Of course, it is possible for the leadership to get things wrong, but not as likely as that people who have only just emerged from brainwashing educational institutions in an imperialist country, and have been in contact with scientific socialism for only a few months, are likely to get themselves into a muddle.

This is why any communist party that hopes to *survive* as a truly communist party capable of serving the masses has to protect itself against attempts by wellmeaning and not so wellmeaning individuals to subvert it from within.

This is one of the aims of democratic centralism. Party members choose a core of their proven, most trusted and reliable members to make up the party's central committee, and the central committee, between party congresses, determines party policy – being nevertheless answerable to congress if they get it wrong.

The bulk of party members, some of them also very experienced and talented, but some of them also very raw and theoretically still relatively weak, have no power whatever to make party policy on the hoof, although of course everybody can make suggestions to the central committee if they feel that the party needs a new policy.

The party ultimately is of course governed by the will of the majority, but is set up in such a way as to ensure as far as possible that when the majority does make a decision it does so on the basis of the best possible knowledge and understanding on the part of everybody involved.

That is what democratic centralism is about – creating and following a scientifically-driven leadership, not the herd.

Ella Rule
London, July 2018

Appendix: Identity politics resolution

The following resolution was passed overwhelmingly at the party's eighth congress in September 2018, following a six-month inner-party debate.

Identity politics are anti-Marxian and a harmful diversion from the class struggle

While being totally opposed to discrimination on grounds of race, sex or sexual proclivity, this congress declares that obsession with identity politics, including sexual politics, is anti-Marxian.

Congress therefore resolves that the propagation of identity politics, including LGBT ideology, being reactionary and anti-working class and a harmful distraction and diversion from the class struggle of the proletariat for its social emancipation, is incompatible with membership of the party, rendering those involved in its promotion liable to expulsion.

NOTES

1 For more detail, see our 2023 pamphlet *Manifesto for the Crisis*. p6

2 Quick definitions:

Identity politics: a political approach based on prioritising issues perceived as most relevant to a restricted racial, religious, ethnic, sexual, social, cultural or other *identity*, and forming political alliances with others on this basis and irrespective of social class.

Class politics: the politics of working people, based on a recognition of the individual's underlying social relationship with the means of production* irrespective of their racial, religious, ethnic, sexual, social, cultural or other *identity*.

* Workers, at the mercy of their employers, have a common class interest, and struggle for better conditions of life and employment within the capitalist system. They also struggle to end exploitative class society altogether and replace it with socialism, which will abolish private ownership of the means of production, thereby doing away with class antagonisms and exploitation.

Hence the Marxist slogan: 'Workers of the world unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains, you have a world to win!' p9

3 There is much confusion these days about what it means to be 'propertyless'. The ruling class has deliberately promoted the idea that having a few shares in British Gas or owning their own home (with or without an onerous mortgage) gives someone a 'stake in the system' and counts as 'property'. But in the Marxist sense, property means wealth someone is able to use as capital in order to live by exploiting others. A home someone lives in, even if they nominally 'own' it, is certainly not 'property' in this sense!

In essence, a proletarian is a wage-worker who must sell himself by the hour,

day, week etc in order to get money for survival and who has no other means of support. p18

4 The concept of 'human nature' is another one that has been the subject of much obfuscation by the ruling class. It is endlessly repeated, for example, that socialism is impossible because it 'goes against human nature' – humans 'self-evidently' being selfish and greedy.

The Marxist understanding of human nature is that man's beliefs about what is 'natural' for humans has changed with every change in the mode of production. While primitive communist tribes considered it to be human nature that people should share and cooperate, class societies have all in various ways described human nature as being something quite different.

It is unsurprising that for many people born into and shaped by an economic system that rewards sociopathic behaviours, it should indeed appear 'self-evident' that humans are inherently selfish and must therefore be unsuitable material out of which to build a communistic society.

The truth, however, is that we are shaped as much by our environment as by our genetics. Indeed, our genetics themselves are responsive to our environment. The experience of the USSR and other socialist countries has been that the behaviours which people routinely exhibit (and which therefore appear to reflect their 'nature') change very quickly once their environment has been changed. Without the insecurity and competition of life under capitalism, the true extent of our innate selfishness is seen to be far less than has been traditionally supposed by upholders of the 'capitalism is merely a reflection of human nature' theory.

Our true essence as human beings, that which remains no matter what society we are part of, will only become clear when we are freed from the fetters of class hierarchies and exploitation. But that the humans of the future are more likely to resemble those of our primitive communistic past (whose existence accounts for the overwhelming majority of human history) can perhaps by deduced from the plethora of mental and physical illness that plagues people in western societies in which all bonds of community and meaningful human connection are breaking down. No amount of cash and no mountain of stuff, it appears, can satisfy the basic human need for a social place and social meaning. p18

5 In October 1918, the original family law of Soviet Russia codified principles that had first been laid down in the 'Decree on Birth and Divorce' that had been published in December 1917.

The family law gave a woman the right to freely divorce her husband without consent, to have an abortion without the consent of the father, and to conduct her personal life without the tutelage of church or family. The law also abolished all distinction between children born within or outside of marriage.

See 'Original Family Law of the RSFSR', *Seventeen Moments in Soviet History* on the Michigan State University website (soviethistory.msu.edu). p29

6 Since this text was written, there has been a noticeable upward trend in the numbers of working-class women of all ages who are entering our movement. This shift was especially noticeable around the Corbyn project, which, if nothing else, revealed the very deep desire of many workers to take part in something that feels constructive and looks as though it might really be capable of bringing about a reversal of the harm done to lives and communities by decades of austerity, impoverishment and the steady demolition of the welfare state.

While many of those mobilised by the false dawn of Corbyn's Labour leadership have since dropped out of political activity, demoralised (for now) by the crushing of their hopes, the experience proved to be positive for some to the extent that it showed them the need to take part in the social movement themselves and taught them that they must go beyond left social democracy if they want their activity to bear fruit.

As the economic crisis deepens and the imperialists' war drive accelerates, as inequality widens and poverty spreads, and as the gap between our rulers' words and deeds becomes ever more obscene, we can expect this trend to continue. p32

7 While many headlines and Radio Four discussions centre around the gap between the pay of men and women at the top of the pile, we are usually assured that the pay gap at the bottom has been eliminated via legislation.

In fact, at all pay levels, the gender pay gap persists, in most part owing to the so-called 'motherhood penalty'. Single mothers are especially vulnerable to the effects of this, since they have no second household income to balance out their loss of earnings and no way to make up for the reduced pension they will receive after decades of having to work fewer hours at the lowest-paid 'flexible' jobs that can be made to fit around their caring commitments. p33

8 It is worth remembering that the mindset of the English working class regarding Catholicism had its origins in the anti-feudal struggle of the English revolution. The legacy of this period of intense class struggle was that 'Popery' was seen by most English workers as tantamount to Devil worship, giving the industrial capitalists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a readymade tool for dividing workers against one another – one that they were not slow to take advantage of. p40

9 We note in this context the increasing use of antiracism and anti-terror legislation to police the Palestine solidarity demonstrations that began in October 2023 as Israel launched its genocidal *blitzkrieg* against Gaza.

This has come on the tail of a series of laws aimed at creating a more hostile atmosphere for the act or expression of any kind of dissent. A plethora of social control measures were rushed into law during the Covid crisis and more have been enshrined in the years since then.

Laws such as the Public Order Act 2023, the Minimum Service Levels Act 2023, the Nationality and Borders Act 2022, the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 and the Covert Human Intelligence Sources Act 2021 are aimed at making it almost impossible for people to exercise their supposedly guaranteed 'democratic' rights to protest, withdraw their labour or use their collective power as workers for any purpose whatsoever. p41

10 It is to be hoped that anyone carefully reading this pamphlet will have noted that we do not dispute the fact that *gender roles* are social constructs which change according to the prevailing ideology of the times and the economic and social requirements of the ruling class. We do, however, dispute the idea that *gender* and *gender roles* are the *same thing*. Gender, as far as we are concerned, is simply a synonym for sex, an immutable biological category that exists outside of the will of society or the individuals within it.

One of the more disingenuous ways in which fake Marxists chose to 'argue' with our points about the pernicious nature of transgender *ideology* (not genuine transgender people!) is by conflating these terms, setting up arguments that purport to be about 'gender' but which are in fact centred on gender roles. Having set up this straw man, they then go on to complain vociferously about our supposed refusal to acknowledge how oppressive society's gender stereotypes and demands can be. Which could all be put down to a misunderstanding over language if it ended there.

In fact, what usually happens in such pieces is that our learned dialecticians go on to use the same word, 'gender', to refer to actual gendered characteristics, and to try to back up their arguments that these are mutable or negotiable and open to interpretation by reference to the tiny proportion of people who are born with some abnormality of their sex chromosomes or some malformation of their sexual organs. There usually follows a long and irrelevant discursion into the history of how such people have been treated and labelled in various societies throughout the ages.

None of which really backs up the point they are ultimately aiming at, which is that there is a 'Marxist' justification for going along with the medico-pharma-backed campaign of 'automatic affirmation' for children and young people suffering with *socially-induced* gender dysphoria (the overwhelming majority of cases today) and a consequent need to demand 'healthcare access' for them. Which is all to say that Marxists ought to be joining the campaign to demand state funding (more subsidies for big pharma and the private healthcare industry) so that the numbers subjected to these abusive, experimental and

debilitating 'treatments' can be exponentially expanded and their waiting time for reflection cut down or even cut out altogether.
The recent recognition by Britain's National Health Service that these treatments are in fact unproven and experimental, liable to have lifelong deleterious consequences for the children involved, is a sign that the moment of peak trans hysteria may well be passing. As with cholera in Victorian London, the ruling class and their mandarins may not care how the children of the poor are suffering, but it is another story when their own families are affected by this anti-human crusade being perpetrated on society by the medical-industrial complex, its marketeers and ideologues. The mobilisation of well-meaning but entirely uneducated young 'Marxists' into their train is a tragedy for our movement, and one can only hope that at least some of them will wake up to what they have been tricked into promoting under the guise of 'niceness', 'inclusivity' and the 'fight against oppression'. p70

11 As if to highlight this point, we note that the recent targeting of our party comrades for doing the same work we've been doing for twenty years but in a situation where there was a genuine possibility that our analysis might find a ready audience amongst the most militant and disenfranchised of the Palestine solidarity demonstrations, has backfired spectacularly.

More information on the arrest of our comrades under charges of 'inciting racial hatred' (later dropped) and 'supporting terrorism' (pending at the time of publication) can be found on our website (*thecommunists.org*). Suffice it to say that by drawing attention to our factual analysis of zionism and our principled and longstanding support for the Palestinian resistance, all the state has done is to help speed up the process of connecting our party with the growing numbers of solidarity marchers who are looking for information on these topics. p77

12 This article was originally written for an inner-party bulletin as part of the debate on identity politics that took place before our party's eighth congress, which was held in September 2018. p83

13 For more information, see 'Theresa May plans to let people change gender without medical checks' by R Mason, *The Guardian*, 18 October 2017.

As Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn offered his full support to May's proposal that the government should push changes to the Gender Recognition Act through Parliament that would allow self-identification with no medical requirements. Plans to change the law were dropped in 2020 after public outcry and campaigns by women's organisations. p88

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Ever since the arrival of the modern proletariat as a social and political force, the capitalist ruling class has trembled at the thought of the latent power resting in its lap – the power not only to withhold labour-power and bring production to a standstill, but to overturn the outmoded system of unplanned production for profit altogether.

The 1917 October Revolution in Russia heralded the dawn of a new socialist era, the era in which workers will replace capitalists as the masters of society. In their bid to postpone the evil day and cling onto their senile rule, the lords of finance capital have thrown untold resources into all kinds of efforts aimed at bribing, coercing, confusing, distracting and dividing the mass of propertyless wage-workers, hoping to keep them from understanding and carrying out their historic mission.

The slow but steady takeover of the western left by liberalism and the divisive and reactionary politics of identity took place during decades when revolutionary Marxism had suffered serious defeats and was passing through a period of confusion and disarray. In order to bring this period of defeat and retreat to a close and regroup the forces for socialism, the working-class movement must be purged of the plethora of anti-Marxian ideas that have become so pervasive, setting our struggle once more on a solid footing and preparing the way for a new and decisive advance.

As the worst-ever global crisis of capitalist overproduction spirals out of control, spawning war and poverty on an unimaginable scale, this task has never been more urgent.

978-1-913286-03-3

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