

# FOUR LESSON COURSE

For the use of Communist Party  
Branches and Training Groups

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- I. The General Crisis of Capitalism.
  - II. The Next Stage for Mankind: Socialism.
  - III. The Working Class: Gravedigger of Capitalism.
  - IV. Unity Against the Main Enemy.
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COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

16 KING STREET, LONDON, W.C.2.

## LESSON I

### THE GENERAL CRISIS OF CAPITALISM

1.—The “free competition” of early capitalism gave place to the imperialist stage by the beginning of this century. Special features of imperialist stage: (a) Powerful monopolies control industry; (b) These monopolies merge bank capital with industrial capital—“finance capital”—with a financial oligarchy; (c) Export of capital on large scale; (d) International trusts divide the world; (e) All world divided between imperialist States, which are controlled by finance-capital groups. Important to realise that monopolies did not end competition, but made it on larger scale—instead of small capitalist competing, great monopolies compete, and use the State machine against their rivals in other countries. Hence came war—for more markets, and more spheres of investment.

2.—The world war did not solve difficulties of capitalism, but reproduced all difficulties on larger scale: more intense competition, greater riches of ruling class, greater poverty of workers and middle class sections. This stage known as the “general crisis of capitalism.” Special features: (a) One-sixth of the world’s surface removed from capitalist exploitation by Soviet Revolution, 1917; new Workers’ State as an international force, hemming in capitalism; (2) Large number of factories, mines, ships, permanently unusable by capitalism; (3) Also permanent large-scale unemployment in every capitalist country; (4) New countries—especially

Specially Recommended for reading in conjunction with this Course:

*The Programme of the Communist International* (6d.)

*For a Soviet Britain* (1d.).

*The Working Class Against Fascism* (Dimitrov). (2d.).

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Japan—have built up own industry, and compete with old capitalist countries; (5) Each periodical economic crisis is deeper, and the economic struggles in one country after another produce serious political crises.

3.—Under the pressure of these crises, the masses in each country become more discontented; but policy of leadership of Trade Unions and Labour and Social-Democratic Parties was to *salvage capitalism*, which could only be done, even temporarily, at the workers' expense. At the same time, the capitalist class in certain countries where crisis was deepest (Italy, Poland, Germany, etc.), organised to smash working-class movement, and thus postpone victory of workers. They could not trust army and police, and therefore set up "fascist" forces. At the right moment they transferred power from ordinary capitalist government to fascist government, abolishing parliament and democracy, and imposing open brutal dictatorship, smashing working-class organisations and murdering working-class leaders and militants. Similar preparations, but not so advanced, being made in each capitalist country.

4.—But fascism, like the war, only deepens difficulties for capitalism. With organisations smashed, workers unable defend conditions, and general lowering of standards, while monopoly groups served by fascists make greater profits. Result: intense pressure from fascist countries to find new markets and new masses to exploit. Hence

renewed armaments race, and new wars. Continuous international crises, all countries arming, tax burdens on people increase; in Germany, intense shortage of food, active discontent reviving. Hence we see that even in case of temporary victory by capitalists, its difficulties increase, and whole world faced by new round of wars and revolutions.

5.—Just because fascism can't carry on without war, aim of workers and Workers' State must be to prevent war. Each month without new world war increases internal contradictions in fascist States, and gives workers more time to build up their strength. Menace of fascist imperialist groups to other imperialist groups gives possibility of "collective security," the essence of which at this stage is joint resistance to fascist aggression. But this joint resistance only real where mass movement of people (workers and other sections) forces monopoly group of their own country to act, under threat of mass action.

6.—Hence increasing importance of alliance between workers of Soviet Union and workers of other countries. Soviet Government can and will act in world fight against fascism, but this only certain of victory if workers in other countries taking mass action to force their ruling class to support Soviet Union's action.

7.—In this period action of colonial and semi-colonial peoples of special importance: Chinese Red Armies mobilising whole people against Japanese aggression, thereby preventing Japanese

imperialism from solving its difficulties at expense of Chinese masses.

8.—Success of Soviet Union in building Socialism encourages masses to take revolutionary road when fascism threatens.

Reading: *Programme of the Communist International*, Sections I and II.

## LESSON II

### THE NEXT STAGE FOR MANKIND: SOCIALISM

1.—The increasing difficulties of capitalism lead to sharper class struggle, ending in armed struggle. When the workers are victorious, they set up a *new form of State*, a Workers' State. The essential points in the new State are (1) the workers have power—which means armed power, police power, court power, all the *means of repressing* the resistance and sabotage of the former ruling class; (2) the form of local and national government by the workers is the delegate council, the "Soviet," drawn directly from the workers in the factories, in the fields, in the armed forces; (3) it is much more democratic than capitalist society: the workers not only vote, but control their whole lives—in the factory, in the home, social insurance, etc.

2.—The job of the Workers' State is (1) to appropriate the large concerns, crushing any capitalist resistance; (2) to use all productive resources to raise the standard of the people; (3) to plan production and distribution in the interests of the people; (4) to win the small capitalists—small

farmers, shopkeepers, small business men, traders—by organising them into collective organisations, and convincing them by experience that they are better off; (5) to end all national oppression: give independence to colonies, withdraw troops, and help colonies to develop their own industry; (6) to raise the whole cultural and intellectual level of the people—make them happy and confident.

3.—After the workers take power, they inherit capitalist society with all its defects: bad economic organisation, unused resources, inadequate training of youth, backward position of women, division between mental and manual labour, etc. (Illustrate each point.) Therefore impossible to step straight into complete Communism. Long process of organising industry and distribution, training workers for efficient administration and production; training whole people to get over their old capitalist outlook. In the meantime many defects: but (1) State power not protecting defects as in capitalism, but trying to root them out; (2) therefore rapid improvement from year to year, though progress may be hampered by outside interference (foreign intervention and sabotage) as well as by internal resistance of remnants of capitalist class.

4.—Stages reached quickly: (1) unemployment ended, partly by immediate reduction of hours, and then by increase of industry; (2) workers have *security*, really adequate provision being made for illness, old age, etc.; (3) workers raise their whole cultural standard, through having more time and

opportunity—everything is theirs; (4) hence workers *happy*.

5.—After a short period, all exploitation of man by man is ended—society as a whole owns all means of production, everyone is working for all, there are no *classes*, i.e., all are workers, no landlord class, no capitalist class. This is Socialism—the next stage for mankind.

6.—But this is not yet complete Communism. Production not yet high enough to give everyone *all* material and cultural needs; and individuals still have the *heritage of capitalism* in their outlook. But once Socialism is reached, progress still more rapid: production rising, cultural level rising, people working willingly for society (Stakhanov a forerunner of this), no longer division between manual workers and mental workers—everyone doing both kinds of work. Finally the stage is reached of complete Communism; in this stage (1) everyone regards work not as a means of living, but as the first necessity of life—they *want* to work for society, not for themselves; (2) individuals have developed with all-round capabilities, instead of narrow specialists; (3) production high enough for everyone to have whatever he needs without any restriction. Only at that stage, Marx says, will it be possible “for society to inscribe on its banner: from each according to his ability: to each according to his needs.”

This is our ultimate goal, and we must understand that it can only be reached through struggle

with those who are interested in preserving the present society, because it gives them power and privilege at the cost of other people's labour and poverty. How to reach Workers' Power is subject of next lessons. But must point out that: (1) only the revolutionary section of the working class—the Communist Party—can win victory in the struggle; (2) only this same section can use Workers' Power to bring Socialism and Communism. The Party is the necessary organiser and leader right through.

Reading: *Programme of the Communist International*, Section III, “The Ultimate Aim of the C.I.—World Communism” (the lecturer should also read Sections 4 and 5, to be able to answer questions).

Also Lenin: *The State and Revolution*, Ch. V, Sections 2, 3, 4.

And *For a Soviet Britain*, Sections II, III, IV.

### LESSON III

#### THE WORKING CLASS: GRAVEDIGGER OF CAPITALISM

1.—In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels said the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class; that the workers are “the grave-diggers of capitalism.” But we must realise that the workers are not born as conscious revolutionaries; that the influence of the ruling class, through the education system, press, etc., *prevents* the workers as a whole from becoming conscious. In

the course of a long development, they first become conscious of their special interests as craft workers (the *craft* unions), then at much later date *general* unions, and slow growth of *political party*. At same time, growth of Consumers' Co-ops., to protect interests as consumers. All these forms of organisation developed out of workers' struggles against capitalist class.

2.—At same time, capitalist class improved its organisation—federations of employers, and close connections between these and the capitalist governments and civil service. But capitalist class anxious to avoid open struggle: therefore, while always prepared to use repression as last resort, its main aim was to make the workers' organisations harmless, by influencing their policy. Hence (1) direct and indirect bribery of working-class leaders, by simple measures like giving them drinks and cigars, titles, paying them for articles in the press, etc.; (2) flattery of them as "responsible," "patriotic," etc., "taking them into their confidence" about the international position, etc.; (3) when concessions have to be made because of danger of workers' action, presenting the concessions as "due to Mr. Bevin's skill as a negotiator," and so on; (4) encouraging them to maintain standard of life higher than workers.

3.—Hence two tendencies in labour movement: (1) tendency of labour leaders to alliance with capitalists against the conscious section of the working class; (2) instinctive tendency of rank and file,

because of their class interests, to fight capitalism, and development of a conscious section which leads this fight. These tendencies are to be found in every working-class organisation, political, industrial and co-operative. But not only in organisations—even in individuals. Which way individuals go is not just chance: it depends on the work of the conscious section. But the conscious section can only work if organised: hence need for distinct Communist Party. Main task of Party is to win the masses away from class collaboration tendency, and to active struggle against capitalism.

4.—The Communist Party is "the organised *political* lever by means of which the *more advanced* section of the working class *leads* the whole *proletarian* and *semi-proletarian* mass." Explain each term: *political*, not just parliamentary, but fighting for class interests and finally for class power; *more advanced*, not just because it has a party card, but because it has learnt from working-class experience and theory and its own practical work; *leads*, not in the air, but with a following; *proletarian*, does not necessarily mean with no property such as a house, but with no source of income other than his labour; *semi-proletarian*, middle classes generally, small farmers, shopkeepers, small employers who also work themselves, professional and technical workers.

5.—Lenin said that to win masses, propaganda was not enough; the masses must learn through their own political experience. Therefore aim of

each Party group must be to bring workers round them (in factory or Ward, or T.U., Co-op., etc.) into action on simple immediate issues, out of which they learn (1) the power of mass action; (2) the class opposition of the capitalists. But must never *limit* fight to simple immediate issues; must also try to bring them into action on political issues of general character; otherwise no political development towards not only militancy, but revolutionary outlook.

6.—As general crisis of capitalism develops, issues *more frequent* and *deeper political content*. More obvious fight for *class power*; capitalist victory, fascism; working-class victory, Soviet power. Less easy for class collaboration tendency to justify itself to workers; its main aim in this period to prevent mass political action (unemployment, Spain). But masses more ready to follow conscious section, and rapid increase in Party in every country. Especially necessary for Party membership to have clear understanding of political situation, as this grows more complicated. Essence of situation: as final crisis approaches, more urgent for working class to *win allies* for its fight against ruling class. This point developed in next lesson.

Reading: *Programme of the Communist International*, Section VI.

The lecturer should also read *Foundations of Leninism*, chapter on "The Party"; and *Left-Wing Communism*, Chapter X ("Some Conclusions").

## LESSON IV

### UNITY AGAINST THE MAIN ENEMY

1.—The particular forms of the class struggle in each country depend on (1) the development of capitalism; (2) the development of the working class and masses. Even to-day there are many countries which are not entirely capitalist: survivals of feudalism in Spain and Portugal, also South-Eastern Europe, also colonies and semi-colonies. Also in all countries *intermediate sections* between main classes of big capitalists and industrial workers. Essence of revolutionary strategy is to unite maximum possible forces against the main enemy, the monopoly capitalists.

2.—This strategy developed out of working-class experience: for example, *Paris Commune*, 1871. When workers set up Commune, they won support of patriots of all classes who had a "national" standpoint against the Germans; also of capitalist republicans, afraid of return of reactionary monarchy; also of small shopkeepers, who were allowed by Commune made no serious effort to win the peasantry, which was one reason for defeat. 1905 *Revolution in Russia*. Lenin pointed out that *at that stage* the main enemy was the Tsar and feudal nobility; it was necessary to unite with all those who wanted to get rid of Tsar and establish parliamentary government, as first step forward. *March, 1917, Revolution in Russia*: Tsar thrown out by workers acting with all peasantry and to

some extent capitalists. Only after this capitalists became main enemy, and workers and poor peasants and middle classes mobilised against them for November, 1917, revolution.

3.—The People's Front is in essence the same strategy: combination of maximum forces against monopoly capitalists (French Communist Party way of putting it popularly: "against the 200 families who rule France"). But owing to the fact that the working-class movement itself is split, essential first step is to unite workers. Main resistance to unity of workers comes from those consciously working for alliance with monopoly capitalists. In France and Spain, where Socialist Parties consist only of individual members, form of working-class unity is "united front" of Communists and Socialists; in Britain, where Labour Party includes organisations, form is affiliation of Communist Party to Labour Party. Experience both in France and Spain shows that way to unity is (a) active Communist Party, giving the lead to rank and file Socialists for mass action jointly; (b) arising from joint mass action against fascists and reactionary government, leaders compelled to agree to united front. The same principles apply here.

4.—United working class will draw into alliance intermediate sections of population, all who are suffering in general crisis of capitalism, also those who fear political reaction and war. In Britain, Liberal Party still has mass following in certain

parts. But main sections of middle classes unorganised in political party, though associated with professional organisations, peace societies, etc. Can be drawn into People's Front through these.

5.—People's Front Programme varies with stage of development. In Spain, it was mainly restoration of gains of democratic revolution of 1931, when Alfonso was turned out and parliamentary system given a chance of expressing people's will; now unity in fight against fascism; in France, unity against fascism and Government's emergency decrees against workers and peasants and middle classes; later, positive programme of social improvements; in Britain, must be against fascism and war and Baldwin Government; later, for positive programme of Labour Government. Way paved for this by local programmes for united action.

6.—Same strategy underlies *colonial policy*: unity of all nationalists against main enemy, imperialist exploiters and of course those sections of national landlords and big capitalists who depend on imperialism.

7.—People's Front can fulfil immediate needs of struggle against reaction—as in Spain; partially in France, on Blum's social legislation. But it cannot bring Socialism: it is only a stage in the fight for Workers' Power and Socialism. Further advance depends on working class taking the lead, and especially on Communist Party taking the lead within working class: that is, on the masses being



won for social revolution. First step, united front, also depends on growing strength of Communist Party. When majority of Socialist or Labour Party has been won for revolutionary outlook, then possible to unite Communist and Socialist Parties in a single party of the working class, which will have such strength that it can carry the masses forward to Socialism.

Reading: Dimitrov.



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