A PROGRAMME FOR SOCIALISM

In order to outline what could be a credible programme for socialism it is necessary to recognise that the aspiration to overthrow capitalism has proved to be very difficult and that the majority of people do not consider that there is any credible alternative to the continuation of the present economic and political system. This does not mean that the aspiration to replace capitalism with socialism is impossible, or that history has ended with the ascendency of liberal democracy, but it does mean that the attempt to facilitate the victory of an alternative to the ascendency of capitalism will be very difficult and has already been expressed by important setbacks and the indication of the ability of the ruling class to be able to devise various strategies that enable it to maintain the situation of its continued domination. The result of these developments has been an increased sense of demoralisation within the working class about the possibility of establishing the success of any alternative and so this has led to the increased influence of various reactionary and populist ideologies. Furthermore, the forces of revolutionary Marxism have increasingly been marginalised and generally insignificant and so unable to provide the possibility of leadership of the working class in a conscious struggle to realise the aim of socialism. Instead it would seem that the present system despite its various limitations is effectively invincible and cannot be transformed in a progressive manner in terms of the realisation of an emancipatory alternative. But despite these apparently important problems in relation to the issue of the possibility of realising socialism given the durability of capitalism it is necessary to suggest that the alternative to the present system can still be indicated in terms of the development of plausible reasons as to why it can be possible to transform the situation and as a result establish the realisation of an emancipatory alternative. But this prospect cannot be the automatic or determinist result of the imperatives of increasing economic contradictions or the expression of the inherent political limitations of the political situation. Instead what is required is that the majority of the people of any given society become convinced of the credibility of the aim of socialism. This is why it is necessary for Marxists to outline the reasons why socialism can be a superior system when compared to the limitations of capitalism. In other words, it is not sufficient to merely develop mass support for demands that oppose capitalism and so establish some form of automatic dynamic in favour of the realisation of an alternative to the present system. Instead we have to recognise that because people do not recognise the possibility of an alternative to capitalism means that they do not even consider the credibility of socialism and instead attempt to realise their aspirations within the limitations of the present system. In this context only the small forces of Marxism generally believe in socialism. This means that the forces mobilised by the Corbyn led Labour Party know what they are against but are vague about what they recommend as an alternative because they generally lack any detailed conception of what could replace the present system. Instead we have the expression of many forms of activism that is based on sentiments of rejection of various aspects of capitalism and yet this form of consciousness is unable to articulate the principles and aims of what could express a progressive alternative to the present system. Hence the various types of activist opposition to aspects of capitalism has not been able to outline a constructive and positive conception of what could replace capitalism. Instead people often know what they are against but yet are unable to establish what they support in terms of the conception of a detailed alternative to the present system.

It has been argued that the various groups of revolutionary Marxists are inspired by the example of the Paris Commune and the Soviet democracy of the early period of the Bolshevik regime. But the problem with this standpoint is that it does not tackle the fact that the Paris Commune only referred to a brief period of time and the ultimate terrible defeat of the workers of Paris by the forces of reaction, and the supposed Soviet regime was effectively an expression of what became the elite and one party regime of the Bolsheviks. The result of this situation was the creation of the political conditions for the ascendency of Stalinism. In other words, the complexity of these developments meant that the possibility to establish genuine socialist regimes was very tenuous and instead various forms of counterrevolutionary developments occurred in order to undermine the success of what had been genuine expressions of the aspirations of the workers to create alternatives to capitalism. The result of these tragic setbacks has meant that it has not been possible to generate any durable success for the forces of revolutionary socialism because of the ability of capitalism to undermine the effectiveness of any alternative and also because of the opportunist limitations of Stalinism and Social Democracy. In contrast to the influence of these reactionary forces the groups of genuine Marxists have been small and often divided. This situation has meant that it seems that the present system is invincible and so cannot be overcome because of the apparently inherent limitations of the forces that represent an alternative. However, despite this problematical situation the level of discontent with the present system is significant. Very few people support capitalism because of genuine satisfaction with this type of society, and instead this acceptance of the system is based on a reluctant acceptance that there does not seem to be any alternative. In this context the possibility to develop support for the alternative of socialism is not impossible and this progressive sentiment is generated by the persistent limitations of the present system that continues to result in unemployment, poverty and generalised dissatisfaction with the various problems created by social inequality. However, this discontent does not create support for the alternative of socialism because few people have any explicit or elaborated understanding of what is meant by socialism. This ignorance is facilitated by the limitations of the various Marxist groups who fail to outline what is meant by socialism in any detailed or convincing manner. Instead the Marxist organisations tend to reply on the apparent dynamism of spontaneous struggle for creating a process of inherent change within society that will result in the generation of transformation to socialism. But this perspective has been shown to be flawed because what is ignored by this perspective is the very importance of a genuine process of interaction between party and class that will create the development of the ideas that results in increasing support for the aim of socialism. This type of interaction has rarely occurred in the history of capitalism because of the influence of the ideology of either support for the present system or belief in the possibility of modification or improvement of capitalism in terms of the realisation of the interests of working people. In this context the result of this situation is that the forces of revolutionary Marxism have been marginalised, and indeed they seem to discredit themselves because of the situation of fragmentation and sectarianism of the various Marxist organisations. Instead of recognising the various limitations caused by the situation of animosity between the groups they instead each claim to be the unique organisation that is able to express the historic interests of the working class because of their adherence to a given programme or principles. But what this situation of sectarianism has led to is the effective discrediting of the aims of the Marxist groups and so the result is a situation of fragmentation and the related inability to be able to connect to the aspirations of working people.

How can this situation be changed and transformed? Firstly, it is necessary to intensify efforts to create the developed of a united and single revolutionary group that is able to outline a credible programme for the realisation of socialism. Secondly, it is necessary to recognise the difficulties involved in the attempt to replace capitalism with socialism. The understanding of these problems will become the basis to develop a programme of change that is not based on the illusion that this process of transformation is imminent and is merely based on the increased support of workers for the aims of revolutionary Marxism. Instead the very process of class struggle has to become an expression of the aspiration of change to an alternative. In this manner there has to be a credible strategy able to promote revolutionary transformation and this approach has to be connected to the development of the genuine influence of creative Marxism. But instead of this possibility, various forms of dogmatic Marxism have claimed that the prospect of change is becoming increasingly favourable despite the actual situation of the durability and continuity of the capitalist system. It has often been the situation that the conception of what we would like the situation to be has replaced realistic understanding of actual developments and the related balance of class forces within capitalism. These issues mean that the progress of the increased unity of the forces of Marxism has to be accompanied with a genuinely realistic perspective for the transformation of society.

Instead of trying to outline a credible programme for the advancement of the class struggle, the Socialist Workers party has increasingly adopted a perspective that is based on the importance of the role of the activist. It is suggested that the various forms of political action will result in a dynamic of change that can create the possibility for socialism. But this perspective ignores the apparent fact that these forms of activity are based on the approach of trying to create forms of pressure on the ruling political parties in order to introduce various types of limited changes such as promises to introduce improvements to the ecological situation. There is no intention by these types of agitation to try and bring about the transformation of society in a socialist manner. But the illusion of the SWP seems to be that such forms of political activity will result in a dynamic that creates the impetus for a process of revolutionary change to occur. This is an illusion because it ignores the uncomfortable fact that the ruling class is not amenable to the acceptance of the policy aspirations of the various radical organisations and the ruling elite contend that it is not possible to introduce the measures being advocated by the activists. Hence the only manner in which the aim of improving the ecological situation or introducing other measures of social reform can be realised is by the act of facilitating the possibility of socialism via the actions of a mass movement based on this aspiration. Hence the ultimate issue is how to create a situation in which the aim of socialism has acquired genuine popularity and the related willingness to try and introduce this perspective. But this possibility means that it is necessary to create credible arguments that are able to generate mass support for the aim of socialism. This will be a difficult task because the demise of Stalinism has had the profound result of creating a lack of enthusiasm about the aspiration to create a socialist society. However, this scepticism can be challenged if we attempt to outline that the logical result of any successful mass struggles within capitalism about economic or political issues raise the question of an alternative to the continuation of the present system. This is because in the context of the continuation of austerity the possibility to acquire limited improvements to the present system has become increasingly problematical. This does not mean that wage increases, or the defence of public services, has become impossible, rather that such possibilities are increasingly difficult without the connected importance of the attempt to radically change the balance of forces within the process of production and in society within general. In this context it is necessary to strive to achieve workers control of the process of production and services, and so in this manner undermine the ability of the employers and government to try and achieve their reactionary objectives. However, it will be argued that such a perspective is unrealistic and does not recognise that the majority of people accept the continuation of the present system. This objection is valid and so it is necessary to try and develop credible reasons why people should strive to challenge the domination of the employers and government. What is being suggested is that the intensification of the situation of exploitation of the working class can only continue as long as the domination of the employers remains unchallenged. However, it will be suggested that this task is futile because the workers are not sufficiently strong or class conscious to be able to attempt to realise the success of the perspective of achieving the prospect of workers control of the economy within the capitalist system. However, we would suggest that this difficulty is because of a lack of class consciousness rather than because of any inherent limitations of lack of economic and political strength within the working class. But there is an issue of the lack of confidence within the working class because of the prolonged situation of the policy of austerity. This development has resulted in demoralisation which has led to the influence of reactionary forms of populism and nationalism as indicated by the level of support for BREXIT within the working class. Therefore in order to challenge the ideological views that have led to support for right wing ideas within the working class we would suggest that the basis to begin to challenge the regressive limitations of the present situation requires the election of a relatively left wing government led by Jeremy Corbyn.

The policy of a possible Corbyn led government is pledged to negotiate a new deal with the European Union, and this would be subject to the approval of the people, and with the option of being able to vote in favour of the UK remaining within the EU. In other words, this policy would facilitate the possibility of overcoming the regressive political divisions within the working class, and in that context, it would become possible to advocate policies that were based on a situation of greater unity and related confidence within the people. In this context it would become credible to promote policies that would result in the ending of austerity and the transformation of the public sector in progressive terms. It would also become feasible to advocate nationalisation of many of the privatised public utilities like railways, gas and electricity, and with greater worker participation in the administration of these services. But in order to be able to promote the possibility of the realisation of this policy it would be necessary to overcome the divisions within the working class on the issue of BREXIT. It would seem that this possibility is unlikely because of the profound differences on this question which has resulted in the situation of polarisation that does not seem to allow for the possibility of compromise and the related reconciliation of opposing views. But the approach of Corbyn seems to provide the potential for the creation of unity because it is based on the acknowledgement of the interests of the advocates of opposing views. But the possibility to realise the type of compromise that he is advocating is dependent on the election of a left-wing Labour government. This means that it should be the obligation of the various Marxist groups to promote the possibility of the election of a Corbyn led administration. But the problem is that the various Marxist organisations advocate a BREXIT position based on ignoring its reactionary implications. Hence, they are part of the political problem. It is necessary that the Marxist parties change their position on BREXIT as that they can become compatible with the expression of what is genuine left-wing politics. Unfortunately, this type of change is unlikely because of their adherence to the apparent virtues of long-established policies. The result is that the forces of the Marxist left have become an expression of the promotion of a form of so-called left-wing nationalism. The result is that they are not suitable for the advocacy of genuinely socialist politics. This means that there is effectively no organised expression of the interests of the realisation of the aim of socialism. This means that the only expression of principled politics is the limited and inconsistent forces of the left-wing leadership of the Labour party. But in this context, there is no guarantee that the Labour party in governmental power will carry out measures of a progressive character because of the lack of an organised expression of the standpoint of left-wing views. Hence it is very important that the forces of the Marxist left reject the dogmatic views of the past and instead adopt policies that are adequate for the present and which are able to genuinely express the interests of the working class. If this development does not occur the interests of the working class will become exclusively expressed by the inadequate role of the leadership of the Labour party. Such a situation will not be satisfactory because it is entirely possible that the Labour administration will accommodate to the interests of capital, and in that manner undermine the possibility to act in terms of the realisation of the interests of the working class. Hence it is vital that Marxists try to overcome their differences and so unite to form an organisation that is able to exert pressure on a Labour government in an effective manner because of its growing popularity within the working class. In other words, we cannot accommodate to the illusion that even a left wing Labour government will act in a consistently progressive manner and so undermine the domination of the power of capital. Instead only a militant working class that is influenced by the role of an effective Marxist party can ensure that the Labour government will consistently act in terms of opposing the domination of capital. However, the fragmentation of the Marxist forces, and the fact that they are unable to develop a principled position on the issue of BREXIT is an indication of the problems of the present. The result of this situation means that it seems that the only hope of progressive change is exclusively expressed by the role of the Corbyn led Labour government. But even this potential could be seriously undermined by the role of the right wing of the Labour party in the formation of a coalition government in order to hinder the possibility of the formation of an administration led by Corbyn. Thus, it would seem that the balance of social forces is presently against the possibility to realise the objectives of left-wing politics. This situation is expressed by the extent of the influence of the ideology of nationalism and populism within sections of the working class, and the apparent weakness of the role of the left wing within the Labour party. Such problems are reinforced by the lack of a viable Marxist party, and this means that a vanguard of the working class is not being mobilised by an effective revolutionary organisation.

However, this apparently adverse situation should not mean that Marxists should accommodate to an attitude of despondency. Instead we should support the election of a Labour government because this could result in the improvement of the morale of the working class. The result of this situation would mean that the audience for Marxist views would be enhanced, and so the prospect of support for a minimum programme could be created in this newly favourable political situation. The aims of the minimum programme would be to develop support for the regeneration of the welfare state, and in that context the influence of the working class within society would be advanced. In other words, the realisation of the objectives of the renewal of the welfare state would become considered to be the expression of the possibility to undermine the power of capital and in that manner advance the realisation of the interests of the labour movement. This is because the functioning of an effective welfare state would be based on the generation of the influence of the trade unions and working class within society, and the result of this situation would be an increase of confidence that would generate increased aspirations for a process of progress to the realisation of socialism. But none of these possibilities will occur if a Tory government is re-elected. This is why it should be an obligation of all Marxists to articulate the aim of the election of a left-wing Labour government. Such a possibility is not progressive in itself, but it would mean that the morale and confidence of working people becomes enhanced by this development, and so the result of this changed situation is the increased determination to strive to realise progressive gains within capitalism. However, the influence of the right wing of the Labour party could undermine this very development. This is why all Marxists should support the end of the role of Tom Watson as deputy leader of the Labour party. He only acts to undermine the credibility of the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn and in that manner creates problems for the creation of a genuinely radical Labour government. But the major problem is to overcome the influence of nationalism and populism within sections of the working class. This is why it is necessary to develop ideas that indicate the reactionary limitations of this approach. Such a task is connected to opposing in an effective manner the re-election of a Boris Johnston led Tory government which would be the most reactionary since the Thatcher administration. This government would be a form of reactionary Bonapartism that would in the most authoritarian manner attempt to impose regressive policies that could only result in an acute political crisis. In this situation the possibility of a type of fascism would become a genuine possibility, and such a development would result in the banning of other parties and the end of the role of the trade unions. This situation would be the outcome of the situation of the acute economic crisis that would result from a NO-deal Brexit. The fact that this policy would mean economic crisis and the end of any type of affluence would mean that such a situation could only be sustained by the resort to a form of political authoritarianism. This is why it is vital that a progressive Labour government is formed after the next general election. Only in that context would it become possible to promote the basis of the advance of the aspirations of a progressive type of politics. This does not mean that Marxists should not prepare for any eventuality, but we should be explicit about what would represent the most progressive possibility in relation to the given social circumstances.

This perspective has been at least formally confirmed by the radical speech of John McDonnell at the 2019 Labour party conference. He promised that a Labour government would be committed to the realisation of a reduction of the working week to 32 hours, and the implementation of effective forms of participatory democracy within the various workplaces, together with the restoration of enhanced finances for local government, and the creation of an effective social care system. This programme would be connected to measures to improve the ecological situation and tackle climate change. In order to fund this programme a fairer form of taxation would be introduced. If this programme was actually realised it would represent the possibility of genuine advance towards the realisation of socialism or the creation of a situation in which working people were able to define their own destiny. Therefore, it is the task of Marxists to act to create support for the popular realisation of this programme in terms of the generation of the mobilisation of the working class and trade unions in order to ensure that it is realised in a popular and effective manner. Obviously, any Labour government will come under pressure to reject the implementation of this left-wing type policy because of supposed financial restraints and the interests of the economy in general. This is why it will be a vital task of Marxists to encourage the mobilisation of the working class in order to try and ensure that the Labour government acts in terms of its economic and social proposals. If this combination of mass pressure and the role of the Labour administration is effective the result could be the generation of a situation in which the economic and social power of the working class is enhanced whilst the influence of the role of capital is undermined. In these conditions the generation of a process of change that creates the conditions for the realisation of socialism will have been promoted. However, this prospect is dependent on the creation of a genuine alliance between the role of a Labour government and the aspirations of working people for a better type of society. In this context the opposition of the forces of conservatism and capital has to be opposed and instead the momentum for change has to be consistently upheld in terms of the role of a mass mobilisation of workers in support of the actions of a resolute Labour government. It is necessary to emphasise that this programme of change cannot be exclusively realised in terms of the perspective of ‘socialism from above’ or by the exclusive activity of the Labour administration. Instead only the effective expression of the aspirations of working people for social and economic change can ensure that this programme of radical measures is realised, or the success of ‘socialism from below’. In other words. the creation of a progressive tempo of developments can mean that the balance of power within society becomes in favour of that of the role of the working class instead of capital. This means that the radical promises of the Labour party have to become an actuality in terms of the conscious mobilisation of working people in order to realise the proposed programme for change. It is not sufficient for the working class to simply accept that the Labour party will implement its policies, instead people have to act in order to ensure that what is occurring is a process of social transformation based on the mobilisation of the people in an organised manner. The task of Marxists in these circumstances is to encourage the realisation of these measures to transform capitalism and in that sense advance the possibilities to achieve a genuine socialist society.

It will be argued by some Marxists that it is naïve to expect the opportunist Labour party to facilitate the realisation of a more progressive society that is based on the undermining of the power of capital. This point has validity in terms of the traditional role of the Labour party in acting to stabilise rather than change capitalism. But there is now a new left-wing leadership of the Labour party that has radical intentions. Instead of dismissing this prospect of the generation of the political conditions for the realisation of genuine change it would be more appropriate to outline a policy that puts the Labour leadership to the ‘test’. This means that Marxist should accept the apparent sincerity of the new Labour party and as a result critically support the view that a Labour government could take genuine measures that would advance the possibility to realise socialism. In this context it would be necessary to facilitate a process of progressive interaction between the actions of the Labour government and what would have become the new aspirations of the workers concerning what has become a genuine expression of the possibility of change. It will be argued by some dogmatic Marxists that this approach represents the justification of the dilution of the approach of Trotsky’s Transitional Programme which is based on the development of a process of mobilisation of the workers in connection with the influence of the role of a revolutionary party. But the point is that this approach cannot be reduced to the justification of a dogmatic standpoint. This is because what has emerged as a real possibility is the support of what has been a reformist political organisation for the aims of the realisation of a process of undermining the continued domination of capitalism. Instead of rejecting this potential in a dogmatic manner it is necessary for Marxists to support the possibility to create a new form of political relationship between a Labour government and the mass movement in favour of radical change. If such a process is successful, then it would mean that the aspirations to create socialism had been advanced in a consistent and genuine manner.

But the possible radical role of a Labour government does not mean that the role of genuine Marxism has become superfluous. Instead it is still the task of Marxist to promote the development of the class consciousness of the working class and in that manner facilitate its ability to be able to carry out actions that facilitate the transformation of society. The major agency of change is still the role of the working class even if the Labour government is also prepared to be the promoter of social transformation. Thus, Marxists have to act to facilitate the generation of the independent mobilisation of the working class in support of the measures being taken by a progressive Labour administration. Indeed, it may be necessary for the influence of Marxists in these given circumstances to mean that they might be prepared to promote the realisation of measures that the Labour government is reluctant to implement such as the effective creation of a situation of workers control of the economy. In these circumstances the interaction of the role of the Labour government with the aspirations of the working class could become the basis to facilitate an effective dynamic of the transformation of society in terms of the realisation of a socialist society based on public ownership and workers management of the economy.

However, there is an immediate problem about the willingness of the Labour party to adopt the radical programme being proposed by John Macdonell. The right wing of the Labour party is utilising the issue of BREXIT in order to assert its influence in terms of the promotion of support for remaining in the EU. This influence could become translated into opposition to the radical policies being advocated by the Labour leadership. The point being made is that the agenda of the right wing is based on accommodation to the interests of capital and effective opposition to the aim of socialism. If the right wing become dominant, then the possibilities to advocate a policy for the radical transformation of society will be seriously undermined. Thus, Marxists have to critically support Corbyn in his attempt to uphold a perspective for the transformation of society. This does not mean adopting an uncritical stance, but it does mean that the issue about who dominates the Labour party should not be a matter of indifference for Marxists. The point being made is that the present political situation is uncertain and the possibilities for the promotion of radical change could be undermined by regressive developments within the Labour party. However, whatever the outcome of the power struggle within the Labour party Marxists should continue to advocate the promotion of the realisation of the type of policy presently being advocated by the leadership of the Labour party. This point is also important if the Conservatives win a general election. The point is that in these circumstances the Labour party becomes an ineffectual opposition that accepts uncritically the legitimacy of the role of a Conservative government. But Marxists should argue in these circumstances that they have no genuine mandate for reactionary policies and instead the task will be to promote the mobilisation of the working class in favour of revolutionary change. This is because the Conservatives will be reactionary administration that acts to undermine the social gains of the people. In this context the primary task of Marxists is to facilitate the mobilisation of working people in defence of their social gains and for the rejection of the continuation of the policies of austerity. But the problem in this context will be the extent of the influence of the ideology of populism and nationalism that could undermine the development of genuine solidarity within the working class. This is why it is vital that a policy on BREXIT is adopted that could provide the political basis to reconcile the differing views within the working class on this issue. In this context it is important to strive to elect a Labour government that could promote a policy that is able to reconcile the differing views within the working class on this question of BREXIT. However, if the Conservative policy of No Deal is implemented the result will be economic upheaval and the prospect of increased unemployment and the end of trade with the EU. This situation would mean the possibility of mass demoralisation within the working class that could facilitate the development of new right-wing forces that would propose the formation of an authoritarian government. In this situation the task of Marxists would argue that the Labour party should adopt a revolutionary approach based on the necessity of the extra-parliamentary mobilisation of the working class in order to generate the possibility of mass action in favour of the socialist transformation of society. The major task of Marxists in this context would be to influence the Labour party to adopt this perspective. However, this development is not something that Marxists would favour and this is why the immediate priority is to try and promote the possibility of the formation of a Labour government that was prepared to establish new relations with the EU and was willing to try and implement a left wing policy of the transformation of social power within society.

It could be argued that the approach being supported is unrealistic because of the lack of influence of revolutionary Marxism and the low level of consciousness within the working class. This means that the demoralisation caused by austerity and the disorientation as a result of BREXIT will continue to be the primary aspects of the political situation. Such a viewpoint is understandable, but this is precisely why it is necessary to facilitate the possibility to enhance the influence of Marxism within society in terms of the immediate possibility of the unification of the various left-wing groups. They should unite in order to critically support the formation of a Labour government on the basis of the promotion of a minimum programme that would facilitate the possibility of the process of transformation to socialism. The present disunity of the forces of Marxism means that the influence of a distinctive and principled standpoint in favour of socialism is not being articulated within society. Instead it seems that the Labour party is the only possible effective expression of the possibility for the progress of the approach of the interests of the working class. But it has to be recognised that the promise of the present polices of the Labour party may never be realised if an effective expression of the approach of Marxism is not developed in terms of the creation of the unity of the various Marxist organisations. The result of this unity would be the generation of the ability to create an effective expression of the influence of a revolutionary socialist approach that would generate the basis to ensure that the Labour party does not repudiate its promise when in government to realise a progressive minimum programme that could become the basis to advance to the transformation of society in a socialist manner.

However, it could be argued that the above perspective is entirely over-optimistic because of the influence of reactionary views within the working class. The majority of the working class, except for its most organised trade union sections, have become demoralised by the period of austerity and as a result tend to support reactionary views that express the influence of nationalism and populism. This means that the possibility of making progress towards the realisation of socialism is not realistic. Such a view is relevant in terms of understanding the present situation which does not seem to be favourable in relation to the task of generating the political possibility for success in the class struggle. But Marxists have to be optimistic that such an unfavourable situation can be transformed by the application of a principled and realistic perspective. In this context there would be a constructive process of transformation if a left-wing Labour government was elected. This would express the immediate realisation that the influence of populism within the working class could be effectively undermined by the creation of a progressive alternative in terms of the election of a Labour government on the basis of the advocacy of a genuine minimum programme of reforms. If this perspective was realised with the popular support of the working class, the result would mean that the balance of class forces had become to favour the interests of the people and that the interests of the role of capital had been seriously undermined. However, such a situation would be unstable and possibly changeable if these developments were not consolidated in terms of the generation of definite advances towards the socialist transformation of society. In this context the radicalised working class would eventually have to go beyond the inherent limitations of the perspective of the Labour government. Even a left-wing labour administration would be content with the realisation of a programme of reforms and the establishment of the limited development of the influence of the working class within society. But in this context, it would be the task of Marxists to outline why only the transformation of social relations in a socialist manner would be necessary. This would mean that the balance of power between the interests of capital and labour would have to be resolved in terms of the interests of the latter on the basis of the establishment of the management of the economy by the producers. Such a development would mean that society could be based on the aims of need and not the accumulation of capital. In contrast even a left-wing Labour government would aspire to reconcile the interests of capital and labour. Such a situation could provide gains for the forces of labour for a limited period of time but ultimately capital would try and act to re-establish its effective domination over society. Hence there would be no alternative to the necessity of revolutionary change if the gains made by the working class were to be maintained and consolidated. It would be vital to ultimately go beyond the limitation of the approach of the minimum programme. But such a development is not likely to occur if the influence of Marxism has not progressed within society. Therefore, there are two important objectives, firstly to elect a radical Labour government, and secondly to create an effective Marxist party that can act as an independent expression of the revolutionary interests of the working class. Without the realisation of these two aspects the situation could become defined by the success of the influence of reactionary populism. This would only undermine the possibility of making genuine progress in the class struggle.

In other words, the vital immediate task is to challenge the influence of populism within sections of the working class. The result of this situation is that the influence of genuine class consciousness is replaced with the expression of reactionary views that reject the necessity to strive to develop the genuine interests of the working class. It has often been argued that this perspective has become unrealistic because various social changes within society have marginalised the role of workers and so they can only articulate their views in a reactionary manner. But this situation refers to an unfavourable balance of class forces that is not unalterable. Instead the working class can still make progress and so modify the presently unfavourable balance of class forces in terms of the realisation of a minimum programme, which would be connected to the realisation of a radical Labour government. In this manner the possibility to undermine the influence of reactionary views within the working class would be enhanced. However, how is it possible to elect such a government if important sections of the workers are presently under the influence of right-wing populism? This dilemma can only be undermined and overcome by the Labour party, with the support of Marxists, acting to challenge the present reactionary views within sections of the working class. This would mean that there would have to be a consistent political attempt to establish the ideological hegemony of left-wing views and so undermining the present influence of right wing populism. The successful result of this development would be the immediate election of a Labour government. This perspective does not mean that what is being advocated is a conception of socialism from above because the possibility for the successful realisation of this creation of a left-wing administration is dependent on the development of the class consciousness and activity of the working class. Therefore, what is being proposed is the unity of the role of a conception of ‘socialism from above’ and ‘socialism from below’. This means the interaction of the activity of a left-wing Labour government with the dynamism of the role of a working class that has become militant and prepared to participate in the transformation of the political situation. Without this process of constructive interaction, no change will be possible or credible. In other words, the overcoming of the present low level of class consciousness and passivity of the majority of the working class is crucial if the process of change is to occur. This development would not mean that the aim of socialism would be on the immediate agenda, but what is apparent is that the increased militancy and activity of the workers would create the conditions for the process of change that would begin to make socialism seem to have become a feasible possibility. The increased level of morale of the working class in this situation in which its ability to realise change had become apparent and realisable would mean that people would begin to acquire increasingly ambitious aims such as that of socialism. Indeed, in these circumstances the role of the Marxist organisations would be to outline a feasible conception of what is meant by socialism and to indicate how it means the realisation of the ability of working people to determine the priorities and character of the economy and of society in general. But the failure to elect a Labour government will mean that these possibilities become more difficult to realise and that instead the influence of demoralised views will become more important and significant. The point is that the election of a Labour government under present circumstances will mean that the level of confidence and ambitions of working people will become greater, and so under these circumstances the ability of the working class to transform society is more feasible.

Therefore, it will be more difficult to realise the advance of progressive options if the Conservatives are re-elected. If this is to occur, it will indicate the extent of the influence of populism and nationalism and that the demoralised situation of the working class is an expression of the character of developments. However, this possibility should not result in the demoralisation of Marxists. Instead we would have to outline a perspective based on the unfavourable situation and this would include the promotion of the approach of internationalism as the only genuine alternative to the reactionary limitations of nationalism. The point being made is that the reactionary hegemony of the politics of populism has to be opposed with the only alternative of socialist internationalism. Only in this manner can the genuine class interests of working people be upheld and advocated. However, the present fragmentation of the Marxist groups means that such a task is more difficult, and this is one of the most important reasons why the unity of the left-wing organisations is a vital necessity. It is an urgent responsibility that the Marxist forces should put the interests of the working class above their narrow sectarian concerns and the limitations of polarised history. The political unity of the Marxist forces should be based on the simple policy of support for the election of a radical Labour government in order to implement progressive policies and the importance of the success of this approach for the realisation of socialism. The importance of the challenges of the class struggle means that there is no necessity to defend the supposed virtues of sectarianism. It is an illusion to believe that any of the many and small revolutionary organisations will become the exclusive expression of the aspirations of the working class. Instead the credibility and feasibility of the small forces of revolutionary Marxism can only be effectively expressed in terms of support for a simple but principled policy for the promotion of the genuine interests of the working class under the given circumstances. In contrast the continuation of a situation of disunity can only contribute to the reinforcement of the present situation of demoralisation within many sections of the working class.

It could be argued that the role of the Marxist groups has become irrelevant and that what is primarily required is to support the role of a possible progressive Labour government. But the point is that the present leadership of the Labour party by left wing forces is tenuous and could be changed, and in that context right wing reformism becomes dominant. This is why it is so important to develop an effective expression of the views of revolutionary Marxism. The realisation of this possibility could only consolidate the role of the present left-wing hegemony within the leadership of the Labour party. We also have to be aware that the concern with being elected could mean that the leaders of the Labour party could compromise in relation to the demands they are presently making for progressive change. This is why we need to develop effective rank and file organisations within the Labour party and trade unions that could become the expression of an independent articulation of the aspirations for progressive change within society. Such a development could result in the formation of councils of action that become community expressions of the aspirations for the realisation of radical measures by a Labour government. The point being made is that without an effective expression of the aspirations of socialism from below it will not be possible to achieve the realisation of socialism from above. It would be an error to rely on the role of the leadership of the Labour party and trade unions. This elite still have a tendency for compromise and the dilution of principles, but they could act in a decisive manner if they have the effective support of rank and file organisations. However, such a process of genuine interaction is not likely to occur without the influence of a unified Marxist articulation of perspectives and the role of a programme of activity that could develop popular support. It is the lack of this type of development which means that the situation remains unfavourable and is reduced to the influence of the progressive motives of the Labour leadership. But this reliance on the apparent virtues of ‘socialism from above’ is problematical because it is based on a tenuous reliance on the determination of the Labour leadership, and so ignores the possibility for the compromise and dilution of the programme in order to achieve compromise with the forces of the ruling class. This is why the minimum programme to end austerity and to defend the welfare state can only be successful in terms of the effective expression of the process of socialism from below. There needs to be a genuine process of interaction between a Labour government and the working class if a minimum programme for the transformation of capitalism is to be effectively realised. But it is also necessary that the issue of the leadership of the Labour party is not a matter of indifference. This means that it is important that the left-wing leadership of the Labour party is not ended and replaced with a more traditional reformist leadership. This development would mean the end to any possibility of the promotion of the realisation of measures for the realisation of a genuine programme for the reform of capitalism. In this context it is necessary for the Marxist left to support the role of the Corbyn leadership of the Labour party in a constructive but critical manner. The aim of this support would be to enhance the possibility for the introduction of measures by a Labour government that would transform the balance of class forces in favour of the working class within society. Such a possibility can only promote the potential for the renewal of the class struggle of the workers in favour of challenging the power of capital within society. The task of Marxism in this situation would be to facilitate the ability of the workers to be able to become dominant within society and to create the conditions for the ending of the present hegemony of capital within the economy.

However, it is argued that the very aim of socialism is unrealistic because it rejects the importance of the role of individual initiative and the dynamism of the profit motive for the promotion of the possibility to achieve a dynamic economy. The apparent problematical example of the Soviet Union is utilised in order to indicate the failure of the attempt to realise and develop a socialist society. It is suggested that the conception of socialism is impractical and can only result in the domination of the state and the economy by the role of an elite. In this context what has occurred is inferior to the dynamism and initiative of an economy based on the freedom to become an entrepreneur, and that is actually the aspiration of many members of society. In other words, Marxism is a dogma that upholds the aim of the creation of a type of social formation that is not practical, effective and feasible. But this apparent defence of the capitalist system tries to ignore the importance of the fact that the process of capital accumulation has to be based on the exploitation and alienation of the workers within the process of production. This aspect means that there is a continual basis for the generation of discontent within the relations of production of capitalism. Only a few people can ultimately benefit from the system which is based on the undermining of the interests of the majority of society. Hence the social gains that have resulted are effectively because of the actions of the workers to acquire more benefits and in that manner the very character of the capitalist system is continually questioned and challenged. But despite this discontent it has not resulted in the creation of a genuine alternative because of the lack of belief that socialism is a credible possibility. Indeed, socialism as a doctrine has been discredited as a result of the domination of so-called socialist societies by the role of a party elite that has falsely claimed to be creating a progressive alternative to capitalism. But the continuation of the limitations of capitalism means that people will continue to spontaneously strive for the realisation of an alternative. But in order for this prospect to be realised requires that the working class develops the belief that it has the capabilities to become the major organisers of the creation of a new socialist society. In order to promote this understanding, the forces of Marxism have to popularise the view that the working class has the potential to become the major organisers of economic activity. This means it is necessary to popularise the view that the working class can develop the dominating role in the direction of the economy, via the realisation of workers control of production and services at the given workplace. However, if this aim is to acquire practical possibility it is necessary to develop strong trade unions with the ideology of the aspiration to realise the aim of workers management of the economy. Furthermore, it is necessary to promote the importance of this perspective within the Labour party and to create a situation in which the increased influence of the working class in the economy becomes part of its manifesto. The creation of these political conditions means that the potential to advance the realisation of workers control is no longer a remote possibility, but instead becomes the major and most conscious aspect of the class struggle.

However, this possibility of the adoption of radical demands is dependent on the advance of popular support for the aim of socialism. At the present moment there is no mass basis for the aim of socialism because such a perspective is not understood, and it is commonly accepted that the capitalist class is the most efficient and superior organisers of the process of production and the role of services. In other words, people accept their subordination within the economic system because it seems that this is the most practical manner in which productive activity can occur in the most successful terms. Hence, they do not recognise that they are the primary basis for the development of the process of production. This situation means that it is necessary for the various Marxist organisations to develop convincing analysis which would indicate the possibility and feasibility of workers control of production. Without the increased influence of this standpoint it is not likely that people would support the approach of socialism because they would not consider that any alternative to capitalism could be credible and emancipatory. At present people generally consider that entrepreneurs are the most plausible expression of who should dominate within economic activity, and so they deny their own importance to the process of production and services. It is uncritically accepted that the economy should be based on the domination of an unaccountable elite because this is the most efficient manner in which production can occur. This uncritical acceptance of capitalism implies that people do not believe in an alternative, and as a result the very conception of socialism is not understood or supported. The various Marxist organisations have adopted to this situation because they have become parties of protest and activism which means that they do not elaborate in any effective manner the arguments in favour of an alternative type of society. Instead they consider in a vague sense that the dynamism of activism will somehow create the political conditions for the realisation of revolutionary change. However, the changes that have occurred within the Labour party are a promising basis to develop a perspective of how the process of revolutionary transformation can occur and so create a socialist society in which the domination of capital is replaced by the supremacy of labour.

The radical reforms proposed by the Labour party leadership indicates the possibility to transform the balance of economic and political power within society in favour of the interests of the working class and so in that manner undermine the continuation of the supremacy of the domination of capital. However, this policy can only become truly radical if the working class begins to develop the initiative and forms of economic and political action to enhance its developing power within society. The introduction of measures like the 32 hours week should become the prelude for the workers to carry out actions that result in the ability to genuinely participate in the process of the management of their enterprises. The success of these actions should express the potential to enable the working class to challenge the very ability of capital to continue to dominate the economy. The success of this process would represent the transformation of the economy into one that is based on the contrasting aims and objectives of socialism, or the primary importance of the realisation of the needs of society. In other words, this situation would enable the introduction of a plan that would express the dynamics of socialism as opposed to capitalism. However, this development will not be possible without the initial success of the minimum programme of the Labour government. Indeed, the realisation of this policy would become the impetus to make progress towards envisaging the possibility for advance to the revolutionary transformation of the economy. But this perspective is not credible if a radical Labour government is not elected. This is why our immediate task as Marxists should be the promotion of the prospect of a left-wing Labour government. If this perspective is not successful, then the programme for the realisation of socialism has to be developed in more adverse circumstances. Hence it is the obligation of the forces of Marxism to outline the reasons why the formation of such a type of government is a priority. Indeed, this possibility has been facilitated by the decision of the Supreme court to declare that the proguing of Parliament by the conservative government was unlawful. This is an indication of the extent of the political crisis and the related possibility to develop support for the conception of the socialist transformation of society.

But an important problem is the passivity of the forces of revolutionary Marxism and its apparent inability to understand the extent of the situation of political crisis and what it means in terms of the promotion of a revolutionary alternative. Hence, Marxists have three major priorities. Firstly, to promote the election of a Labour government. Secondly to unite and advocate a coherent policy for the realisation of socialism. Thirdly to facilitate the development of the class consciousness of the working class so that it can reject nationalism and become an effective agency of revolutionary change. In other words, the present situation is based on possibilities and challenges. There is the potential to advance the realisation of socialism, but there is also the prospect of the consolidation of the forces of populism and Bonapartism. Success or failure are the options in a changing situation. The task of Marxists is to try and understand this present situation so that we can contribute to the possibility for transformation in a revolutionary manner. It is necessary to overcome the pessimistic complacency caused by a long period of defeats for the working class. This means that Marxists have to try and recognise that success in the class struggle is not a futile task, and that instead the overcoming of the domination of capital is possible. However, this prospect requires the adoption of a principled approach that is not based on illusions or pessimism. The left wing transformation of the Labour party enables advances to be made in the class struggle, and in this manner to challenge the influence of the implicit view that capitalism is an eternal and unchallengeable system. History has not come to an end with capitalism. Instead its domination can be undermined by the role of the advocacy of a credible and realistic programme that outlines the reasons why the transformation of society is possible.