UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

It has been an increasingly obvious problem that it has been increasingly difficult to create an effective and popular revolutionary party in Britain. The reason for this situation could be considered the result of sectarianism and the continual aspect of the divisions between what are rival organisations. But it is necessary to try and provide a more convincing explanation of the apparent decline of the effectiveness of the forces of Marxism. It is necessary to also suggest that this aspect of insignificance is not because of the end to the development of militant struggles in order to try and achieve progress within capitalism. There has been the development of the popular importance of the ecological movement and other expressions of discontent with aspects of the capitalist system. But this situation has not led to the related development of the popularity and importance of the various Marxist groups. Instead, they seem to have become apparently irrelevant and so no longer relevant for the potential to develop forms of popular struggle against the capitalist system. This situation does not mean that there has been a related decline in the popularity of a left-wing viewpoint. Instead, this aspect of support for socialism was expressed by the importance of the leadership of the Labour party by Jeremy Corbyn, and the recent election of a new right-wing leader has not ended the importance of radical views within the Labour party. However, this radicalism within the Labour party has not resulted in the development of the importance of the various Marxist parties which seem to have continued to decline. Indeed, it could be argued that there has been a prolonged weakening of the role of the various Marxist parties since the demise of the role of the Independent Labour party in the mid 1950’s. In this context the opposition between Stalinism and Trotskyism has not been conducive to the development of a mass and popular revolutionary party, and the various sectarian divisions between the rival Trotskyist groups has only contributed to the problems involved in trying to create a revolutionary party. However, it could also be suggested that there is a more profound problem related to the apparent increasingly lack of credibility of the anti-capitalist perspective of the various Marxist groups. They do not seem to be able to develop what could be convincing programmes for the development of revolutionary change. Instead, they seem to express various forms of political illusion that seem to deny the importance of the difficulties involved in trying to establish the effective role of a Marxist party. It is also necessary to suggest that some of the organisations seem to deny the seriousness of this situation in terms of the promotion of a new type of revolutionary perspective based on the role of the activist movements for change within society. Hence it is being assumed that the various forms of popular protest within society will somehow result in the development of the increased influence and importance of the revolutionary party. But it is the actual character of these movements that they emphasise the significance of the role of popular spontaneity and so reject the necessity of the leadership of left- wing parties. Hence it would seem that this development is based on a rejection of the role and programme of the Marxist party It would seem that the very role of popular mass struggle has made the Marxist party irrelevant. But this conclusion is ignored by the Marxist groups which try to consider in an unconvincing manner that the role of the activist movements ultimately requires the importance of a process of interaction with the revolutionary organisation. However, this perspective is rejected in practice by the activists who seem to reject any form of political role for a party in relation to the development of their struggles. The result of this situation is that there are often numerous expressions of popular activist movements and the various Marxist parties end up merely supporting them in a passive manner. It would seem that the Marxist organisations have become irrelevant in relation to the aspect of the development of the possibility for struggle against capitalism. But this situation does not seem to be recognised by the Marxist parties that instead adopt an opportunist stance of support for the activist movements. In this context it would seem that the Marxist groups have accepted that they have become increasingly irrelevant in relation to the aspect of developing forms of struggle against capitalism. Hence it would seem that the various Marxist parties have accepted a situation in which they acknowledge their own irrelevance in relation to the issue of trying to change society.

In order to understand the present limitations of the role of the revolutionary organisations it is necessary to examine the history of the development of socialist parties. The problem has always been that of sectarian elitism. The initial major Marxist organisation was the Socialist organisation led by Henry Hyndman, which was authoritarian in character and adopted a dogmatic programme that had no real relationship to the class struggle and the aim of trying to achieve socialism in a democratic and dogmatic manner. Furthermore, the leadership of this organisation was increasingly influenced by national chauvinism in relation to its attitudes concerning the role of the UK in the first world war. In this context the principled character of socialism was expressed by the role of the Independent Labour party which adopted a pacifist position and attempted to support the development of the international solidarity of the European working class as a response to the first world war. But the Labour party which was connected to the ILP developed a position of national chauvinism and so tended to support the role of the British government in this conflict. A member of the Labour government, Arthur Henderson, joined the coalition government. Hence it was the syndicalist influenced trade unions which expressed a type of militant opposition to the war. However, in 1918 the situation was increasingly favourable to the role of reformism because the Labour party was effectively created and developed a constitution based on the aim of nationalisation of the economy in terms of the possibility of attaining a majority in parliament. In this context the forces of revolutionary socialism were expressed by the role of the Communist party which was created as a result of the October revolution of 1917 in Russia. But the problem was that the Communist party did not develop a credible perspective of revolutionary change that could express an alternative to the reformist character of the Labour party. However, the primary problem became the development of Stalinism in the Soviet Union which meant that the aims of the British communist party became defined by the interests of the Stalinist elite in that country. The most important problem was that the political character of the Communist party became expressed by the objectives of Stalinism which meant that it was not primary concerned with the tasks of developing a credible strategy for revolutionary change. In this context the emphasis on the possibility to create a principled socialist alternative was with the Independent Labour party, which attempted to uphold socialist principles within the Labour party. However, the right-wing trajectory of the Labour government of 1929-31 led the ILP to make the mistake of ending its connections to the Labour party. This meant it became a small group that was isolated from the majority of the working class. However, the ILP continued to promote a principled perspective of the aim of the transformation of capitalism into a form of democratic socialism. This objective became increasingly important because of the bureaucratic degeneration of the Communist party and the crisis of the Labour party caused by the opportunist actions of its leader Ramsey Macdonald who became the prime minister of a right-wing coalition government in 1931. It could have been a credible task to develop the role of the ILP as an expression of left-wing views within the Labour party. But the ILP made the mistake of effectively ending its political connections to the Labour party by 1932. This meant that it became a small and unpopular organisation. However, given the opportunist limitations of the Labour party it would have been an important task of principled Marxists to attempt to promote the development of the political influence of the ILP within the working class. The aim of the emerging Trotskyist forces, who joined the ILP, should have been to try and develop support for a revolutionary programme of mass struggle of the workers which could have become the basis to promote increased support for the aims of socialism. However, the Trotskyists did not have the patience to try and create an influence within the ILP and instead tended to leave the ILP and join the Labour party. This meant they became a marginal grouping within the Labour party and without support. Ultimately the Trotskyists could only establish their influence by forming an independent Revolutionary Communist party during the second world war. But this sectarian error meant that the possibility to develop the influence of the ILP was not realised, and ultimately this organisation was defunct by the 1950’s. This meant a possibility to develop the role of an effective and genuine revolutionary politics was not realised. Instead, the Trotskyists managed to uphold their influence by becoming support agencies for the militant struggles of the working class during the second world war.

In this context it was not possible to develop an effective form of an alternative to the politics of the coalition government that supervised the opposition to fascism. The ultimate result of this situation was that the workers developed increasing support for the Labour party, and the outcome of this situation was the election of a Labour government in 1945. It seemed that a reformist approach was the most credible basis to develop the possibility of making progress towards the transformation of society. However, the policies of the Labour government indicated that it was committed to managing a mixed economy in which the role of capitalism would remain dominant. But the reforms of this administration that led to the formation of the welfare state meant that the Labour government was popular with the working class, and the influence of the Trotskyist party was not important. Indeed, it could be argued that the forces of revolutionary Marxism were not able to establish the credibility of a strategic alternative to the Labour party which could provide a feasible alternative to the role of a Labour government. Furthermore, a protracted crisis of the forces of revolutionary Marxism occurred because alongside the important demise of the ILP there was a process of splits in the Trotskyist organisation which led to the creation of a number of opposing sectarian groups. It seemed that the cause of socialist politics could be most advanced by becoming a left-wing force within the Labour party. Indeed, this development occurred in terms of the importance of Nye Bevan who represented radical politics within the Labour party. Most of the Trotskyists became supporter of his group. But it has to be suggested that the apparent boom and affluence of the 1950’s seemed to have discredited the credibility of the standpoint of a revolutionary alternative to capitalism. It seemed that the most realistic manner in which Marxism could be promoted was by becoming the supporters of reform within capitalism. It could be argued that there was a general crisis of revolutionary Marxism in this period because it seemed that the only credible politics was to struggle for reforms within capitalism. However, the Hungarian popular revolution of1956 indicated the possibility of the influence of a revolutionary Marxism based on the role of a genuine Marxist party. Indeed, the Stalinist Communist party was in crisis and some of its members left to join the Trotskyist organisations. Furthermore, the electoral defeats of the Labour party seemed to indicate the importance of a new type of revolutionary politics. But the problem was that the various Trotskyist groups did not seem to develop credible perspectives of change. Instead, they were effectively parties of protest, and so did not credibly represent an alternative to the importance of the election of a new Labour government in order to replace the political hegemony of Conservatism. Indeed, this development seemed to be expressed by the fact that the various Trotskyist organisations tended to be part of the Labour party. They were committed to the attempt to achieve a socialist transformation of the Labour party, and so the objective was to attempt to influence the politics of this organisation rather than attempt to create independent revolutionary parties with a distinct programme. However, the expulsion of what became the Socialist Labour League led to the beginning of the attempt to create distinct political groups. But the problem was that this group was not organised in democratic terms, and instead justified a type of authoritarian elitism. The rival groups led by Tony Cliff and Ted Grant seemed to be organised in a similar manner. This meant that there was not an organised expression of revolutionary Marxism, and instead the idea of genuine socialism was upheld by talented individuals like EP Thompson. It could be argued that in the period after the effective demise of the united Revolutionary Communist party there was no genuine and organised expression of the aims of revolutionary Marxism. The effective demise of the Independent Labour party had not led to the creation of a genuine and popular alternative to the role of the Labour party and Communist party.

In other words, the culture of the role of Marxism was upheld by important individuals, which was ultimately expressed by the formation of the New Left Review. This journal was able to articulate the principles of Marxism in an effective manner, but this aspect could not compensate for the lack of the role of an effective and democratic revolutionary party. The result of this situation was that the reformist practice of the Labour government was not opposed in terms of the development of the influence of an effective and authentic revolutionary Marxism. Instead, the forces of Trotskyism were characterised by sectarianism and the development of authoritarian forms of political party. This situation generally characterised the period of the 1970’s, but in the 1980’s there emerged groups like Workers Power and Socialist Organiser which seemed to represent the possibility for the development of a genuinely more principled ty of Marxist political organisation. However, the possibility for unity between these two groups was not realised in a consistent manner and instead they remained as small and essentially sectarian formations. However, a promising situation developed when Socialist Organiser fused with the Alan Thornett group, and so they represented a possible expression of principled politics within the Labour party. But differences promoted by the Falklands situation in 1982 led to a split and the essential marginalisation of all of the forces of potential revolutionary Marxism. There was effectively only a collection of long established but bureaucratic organisations, and a number of small if also more democratic type of groups. The anti-poll tax struggle led to the increasing importance of the Militant group, but this progress was undermined by the split in this group caused by differing attitudes about involvement in the Labour party. By the late 1980’s there was a collection of groups that were based on sectarian opposition to rival organisations. The very period of the necessity to develop opposition to the policies of Thatcherism had not led to the ultimate revival of any of the left-wing parties and instead they continued to undergo a situation of decline and sectarian rivalry. This meant that this problem of the decline of various sectarian groups was not overcome by any attempt to establish the political basis for the reunification of the various Marxist organisations. Instead, they continued to uphold the illusion that at a certain moment in time they would become popular and relevant to the process of political struggle. Such an unpromising situation did not mean that at certain moments groups could not emerge based on the aims of attaining the unity of the Marxist forces. But these groups were marginal and unable to overcome the general situation of sectarian relations between the most important Marxist parties. But possibly what discredited the role of Marxist parties most significantly was the development of single-issue campaigns, such as the green movement, which seemed to undermine the importance of the role of revolutionary groups. It seemed that the activist and practical nature of these campaigns could replace the necessity for Marxist parties, and instead the role of popular struggle could achieve success in terms of the attainment of the given aims of the movement. This development was possibly the most important reason why the popularity and importance of the Marxist party seemed to undergo what appeared to be a process of irreversible decline. Furthermore, the election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour party seemed to revitalise the popularity of the view that left wing politics could be expressed by active support and involvement in the Labour party. Many of the adherents of the Marxist groups were inclined to become active supporters of the Labour party, and so the relevance of the revolutionary parties seemed to have been ended by the development of the expression of the aims of socialism within what had been a reformist party. The end of the period of Corbyn’ leadership of the Labour party because of serious electoral defeat of the Labour party, has not led to the revival of Marxism but has instead only increased the level of support for the green movement and other protest struggles. The inability to revive the process of the struggle of the workers seems to be an additional expression of the apparently antiquated approach of the role of socialism. Instead, the aspect of opposition to aspects of the domination of capitalism seems to be expressed by the role of the greens. Furthermore, this situation seems to be reinforced by what seems to be a populist and right-wing development within sections of the workers in support of the aims of a populist form of conservatism supported by Boris Johnston. The nationalist objective of leaving the European Union seems to have become more important than what seems to be the antiquated and increasingly ineffective aspect of the trade union struggle of the workers. In other words, the very development of a nationalist politics within capitalist society seems to have ended the role of class struggle. In these circumstances the prospects to revive the importance of Marxist organisations seems to be very unfavourable. This situation seems to be connected to the development of the influence of right-wing reformism within the Labour party. Hence the expression of radical politics seems to be limited to the role of various singe issue campaigns, such as the development of the green movement.

However, an important problem is that the various revolutionary parties do not seem to be able to tackle this issue in a constructive and effective manner. Instead, they tend to ignore the problem of their own marginalisation and insignificance. The result of this dogmatic approach is that they tend to promote an idealised understanding of the class struggle which suggests that the realisation of the popularity of a revolutionary approach is an immediate possibility. It is being implied that the workers are receptive towards a programme of activity and that they will begin to support the perspectives of the Marxist group in the short-term future. The fact that this development is never realised is not evaluated by the various organisations, and instead they continue to propagandise in favour of various programmes of mass action. This means that the issue of the marginalisation of the various forces of Marxism is not addressed in an effective manner, and so the revolutionary groups prefer to generate political illusions that have no genuine relationship to the challenges posed by the actual situation. Therefore, the issue of the marginalisation of the various Marxist parties is not being tackled in a convincing manner. In other words, the revolutionary parties prefer to promote illusions about the possibilities of the political situation rather than attempt to understand their unfavourable circumstances. Ultimately the importance of the adverse political conditions results in the decline of many different groups which essentially become defunct. Only a few groups are able to survive in this situation such as Red Flag which promotes an ambitious action programme and the Alliance of Workers Liberty which is based on the various books and articles of its leading members. What were important groups like the Socialist Workers party have become virtually defunct. In this situation the ideas of Marxism are most effectively defended by the various books and articles of a collection of intellectuals, but these are often of a historical character and often have little contemporary political significance. An important result of this development is that various Marxists have become sceptical about the revolutionary possibilities of the working class, and so outline different types of perspectives of change. The ultimate result of this type of demoralisation is to reinforce the influence of the view that it is not possible to change society. However, capitalism as a system based on the exploitation of labour has not been changed. This aspect indicates the continued importance of the objective of the emancipation of society from the hegemonic role of capital. In this context it would seem to be a principled and a necessary objective to try and create the political conditions for the effective unification of the various Marxist groups on the basis of support for a credible action programme for the aim of trying to realise a different socialist society. This prospect is entirely possible, but it is only the various sectarian histories of the diverse groups that undermines the realisation of this possibility. In other words, the different groups uphold a sense of their own superiority and interests above the requirements of the class struggle which suggests the necessity of a common revolutionary organisation in order to develop the possibility to create an effective interaction of the relationship of party and class.

We would suggest that the major standpoint of a possible agreed programme for the development of the class struggle has to begin with the situation as it is rather than trying to impose various illusions onto the situation which are unable to comprehend the complex difficulties of the class struggle. In this manner a credible programme has to recognise the importance of the era of austerity which has enabled the capitalist class to undermine important economic and political advances of the working class. The point being made is that an adverse balance of class forces has been created by the effective offensive of the forces of capital against labour. This means that the major tasks of the class struggle in terms of the interests of labour require a defensive perspective in order to uphold the gains of the workers that have been made under the capitalist system. However, the failure to realise these tasks has meant that the balance of class forces is in favour of the interests of capital and this situation has often led to the effective demoralisation and lack of struggle of the workers. But an important problem is that the various programmatic perspectives of the Marxist groups does not acknowledge this serious character of the situation and instead in a complacent manner they maintain that support for their objectives will result in the transformation of political circumstances in favour of the interests of the workers. But this development does not occur because the workers tend to be on the defensive because the balance of class forces favours the interests of capital. It is necessary to transform the role of the trade unions so that they become effective defensive organisations of the working class. This possibility is connected to developing the influence of a programme for the development of the strength of the trade unions in terms of increasing the importance of a perspective of credible forms of struggle in order to challenge the power of capital within the given enterprise and in national terms. But the problem is that there is not the influence of the role of an effective revolutionary party that could promote this type of programme. In other words, the issue of the development of a united Marxist organisation is a crucial fact if the possibility to create popular support for a radical programme is to be developed.

We would suggest that the principled basis of a revolutionary programme could be developed on the basis of the following demands and perspectives. The development of united action by the trade unions and community organisations against the austerity approach of the ruling class. This process would involve the strengthening of the role of the trade unions within the given enterprises. Ultimately the objective of the process of defensive struggle would be to achieve a more offensive type of mass action which would aspire to challenge the very continuation of the austerity policy of government and capital. Ultimately the aim would be to achieve effective forms of workers management within the economy in order to establish the economic and political conditions to challenge the continuation of the capitalist system. But there is an important political problem which seems to undermine the possible credibility of this type of perspective. This is that the working class seems to support the capitalist system in terms of acceptance of the nationalist agenda and populism of the Conservative party led by Boris Johnston. The influence of this type of approach led to the election of a reactionary government and undermined the popularity of the Labour party led by Corbyn. It seemed that the radical approach of Corbyn was not as popular as the reactionary nationalism of the Conservatives that was connected to the defence of the interests of capital in a situation in which the people of the UK had voted to leave the EU. It seemed that the appeal of nationalism had proved to be more important than the possible alternative of a type of internationalism. The result of this situation was that the Conservatives could promote a type of pro-capitalist type of ideology in terms of the role of the UK within the world economy and the related rejection of the apparently progressive social policy of the EU. In this context it would seem that the left-wing internationalism of the Labour party leadership had proved to be utterly marginal and unpopular and instead the connection of conservatism with nationalism had realised a popular type of appeal. The various Marxist parties were often unable to promote a principled alternative because they often upheld a dogmatic policy of rejection of membership of the EU by the UK in the name of abstract principles. In this situation of the ideological domination of conservative populism it was possible for the leaders of the Conservative party to consolidate their ideological domination by a convincing electoral victory. It would seem that the appeal of nation had undermined the declining importance of the aspirations of the class interests of the workers. In this context it would seem that there has never been a more serious crisis of the ideology of socialism and the connected role of working-class struggle.

In this situation it would seem that the major potential for progressive types of opposition to the interests of capitalism are connected to the role of the struggles of about the environment and related issues. However, the problem is that these activities are based on the attempt to obtain the acceptance by existing governments for measures of ecological change. They do not as a result attempt to provide the justification for the process of the transformation of capitalism in a socialist manner. Furthermore, despite the popularity of these forms of protest they are often not successful in an effective manner, even though the defenders of capitalism often hypocritically suggest that ecological policies have been implemented. But what is also problematical in terms of the objectives of socialism is that there does not seem to be any connection between ecological aims a d the perspective of changing society in a radical manner. In this context the various forces of Marxism do not seem to have developed a plausible programme connecting the objective of socialism with the aspiration to realise ecological aims. In dogmatic terms the relationship of ecology and socialism is often upheld but this has not led to the development of credible programme for the realisation of a non-capitalist society in these terms. Instead, it would still seem to be more realistic to support the attempts of the greens of trying to realise their objectives within the limitations of capitalism. Indeed, they would suggest that they have achieved success in these terms. Therefore, they would imply that their popular protests have been more effective than the apparent declining role of the working-class movement. However, Marxists would attempt to deny the polarisation between the ecology struggle and the political role of the working class. Instead, we would still suggest that the objectives of ecological progress can only be consistently realised in terms of the establishment of a socialist mode of production as the result of the collective actions of the workers. This means that there is no contradiction between ecological objectives and the attempt to develop socialism. Instead, only socialism can ensure that the possibility of realising the aims of the green movement can be realised in a consistent and principled manner because the domination of capital which undermines this possibility will have been ended. Therefore, a central task of Marxists is to try and create a unity between the aspect of the objectives of socialism and the importance of green issues.

However, this type of progressive development is undermined by what has possibility been the most important aspect in undermining the possibility and credibility of the struggle for socialism. This aspect has been expressed by the success of the forces of capital in the imposition of austerity economics and politics since the 1980’s. It was necessary for the defence of capitalism to undermine the collective strength of the working class in order to promote the increased development of capital accumulation within the economy. This objective could be achieved by policies to undermine the collective strength of the working class by the imposition of measures of austerity. In this context the economic influence of the workers within society, as in terms of an effective role of the trade unions, would be ended and instead the economic supremacy of the interests of capital would be asserted. Many struggles occurred in order to try and uphold the aims of the workers and their trade unions, but the result tended to be a situation of defeat. This meant that the interests of capital could be defended in a successful manner. The various revolutionary organisations did not develop convincing programmes in order to uphold and defend the interests of the workers in this situation. Indeed, their programmes often had little connection to the actual economic and political situation. Furthermore, the Blair Labour government indicated an acceptance of the approach of austerity, and it seemed that the possibility to provide a progressive alternative had been seriously undermined. The election of Corbyn as leader of the Labour party seemed to provide an alternative but his serious defeat by Boris Johnston in the recent election undermined the credibility of a left-wing alternative to popular conservatism. It seemed that it was possible for the representatives of capital to uphold the approach of austerity because of the problems involved in trying to develop popular forms of opposition to this situation.

In other words, despite a situation of increasing economic problems it was not possible to develop an effective and popular type of alternative. Instead, the only forms of effective struggle seemed to be the various protest movements which were not based on the objectives of opposing the domination of capital. In this context the various revolutionary parties seemed to try and deny the importance of the difficulties of the situation and instead promoted various perspectives that had little relationship to reality. Furthermore, these organisations continued to split and so did not express the possibility to represent the importance of a credible programme of change. It would seem that the capitalist system was dominant because of the very limitations involved in trying to develop the credibility of a progressive alternative. However, this situation did not mean that there was genuine support for capitalism. The political and economic limitations of the system meant that the possibility to develop the challenge of an alternative was not entirely undermined despite the apparent supremacy of the present system. Indeed, these possibilities were indicated by the development of the influence of left- wing views within the Labour party. But the problem was that the limitations of the Marxist groups meant that these influences did not become consolidated in terms of an effective expression of the influence of left-wing objectives. There was also the problem of the apparent decline of the importance of the trade unions in the period of austerity. The trade unions had not been effective defenders of the interests of the workers in the situation of the offensive of capital against labour. This meant that a general demoralisation of the workers meant that the credibility of the aim of socialism became undermined in a serious manner. The result of this situation was that it seemed that there was no alternative to capitalism. But the problem was that the various left-wing groups did not seem to have a credible understanding of the economic and political situation. The Socialist Workers party had the vague perspective of the downturn, but various popular demonstrations in the mid 1990’s led them to reject this understanding and to adopt a vague conception of the renewal of the dynamism of the class struggle. But the other left groups tended to avoid the issue of understanding the balance of the class forces because of their perspectives based on popular militancy. This meant that it could be suggested that no group had a plausible understanding of developments within the balance of the class forces. The result of this limitation meant that they were unable to provide convincing perspectives that could provide a genuine expression of how to develop the objectives of struggle against capitalism. These problems meant that it seemed logical that the only possible effective alternative was the struggle of the so-called new social movements, as in relation to the issue of ecology. The very crisis of the role of the working class meant that it seemed logical and credible that the only possible type of effective form of mass struggle was something that was no longer based on the traditional issues of economics and politics. In other words, the perspective of protest seemed to have replaced the importance of the objective of trying to transform the character of society via the role of the mass action of the workers. However, the various left-wing groups did not recognise that this situation had led to a crisis of Marxism and instead in a complacent manner continued to advocate perspectives based on the mass action of the workers. What was not understood was that it was necessary to provide new arguments in order to provide a more satisfactory understanding of the possibilities expressed by the class struggle. Primarily it was necessary to connect the role of traditional forms of mass action with the role of the new social movements, and primarily that of the ecological movement. However, it can be suggested that the various Marxist groups failed to attempt to develop this type of understanding. Instead, they continued to outline programmes of action of a very dogmatic character. There was a general political crisis of revolutionary Marxism. In this situation it was not surprising that the offensive of capital against labour was not effectively contested in a situation of austerity.

In other words, there was not an effective articulation of the interests of the workers in the period of the offensive of capital against labour in the context of austerity because of the prolonged crisis of the political organisations of revolutionary Marxism. Instead, the influence of social democracy resulted in a popular acceptance of austerity as a necessity and inevitability. This meant that the trade unions generally accommodated themselves to this situation. But what could de understood as an important problem was that the various Marxist groups did not provide the justification of a convincing strategy in order to develop mass struggle against austerity. They tended instead to promote dogmatic perspectives concerning the issue of change and as a result this meant that there was no organisation that was providing a critique of austerity and so providing an alternative. Instead, there was only a collection of left-wing intellectuals who in a theoretical manner were providing a critique of austerity and suggesting the necessity of a progressive alternative. The result of this situation of generalised confusion was that effective opposition to the imposition of austerity was not developed. Some commentators have referred to the inspiration provided by the Occupy movement in America. But the prole with this view is that it ignores the single-issue campaign character of this movement and the fact that it could not a theoretical or practical expression of the possibility to develop opposition to the imposition of austerity. In this context of the important limitations of the various left-wing movements it was necessary to develop a strategy for change that could be considered as credible, and which was relevant to the challenges of the situation. But it is questionable whether this development was realised. Instead, the left-wing groups were characterised by a failure to rise to the challenges of the political situation. They promoted perspectives which were based on wishful thinking, such as the nostalgia of people like John Rees for the anti-war movement of the early part of the new century. The point that was not being tackled was the challenges and problems involved in trying to develop a genuine left-wing form of class consciousness. In this context the very insignificance of the revolutionary Marxist groups was being ignored.

However, is it a simplistic perspective to suggest that what is primarily required is the development of a principled Marxist organisation with a feasible programme for social change? It can certainly be accepted that such a development will not result in inevitable progressive developments. But what we can suggest is that the advocacy of a programme by a Marxist group that was more than the expression of wishful thinking about the possibilities for social change would be an advance in relation to the problem of dogmatism that is influential in the present situation. A credible programme would be based on a recognition of the importance of the hegemony of the ruling class in the present situation, and which explains the insignificance of the influence of revolutionary forms of Marxism. In this context it would be necessary to develop a programme that aims to oppose the hegemony of capital in economic and political terms. It would be necessary to elaborate Marx’s understanding of why the exploitation of labour by capital is unacceptable and that instead it is necessary to justify the necessity for the development of a situation in which the workers can begin to define the character and objectives of the social formation. This approach would be connected to the contention that this development can correspond to democratic principles and so would not justify the domination of an authoritarian and elitist party. In other words, all forms of Stalinism would be rejected as expressing the aims of the creation of a new type of social exploitation of the producers. Instead, an emancipatory type of socialism would be justified and elaborated, and this objective would be considered to be compatible with the practice of the role of a multi-party democracy. In this society it would be possible for parties to have the right to advocate the restoration of capitalism. However, it is to be hoped that the democratic and economically effective character of the socialist society would mean that this type of development is not likely to occur.

It is also necessary to elaborate a programme for the realisation of this process of revolutionary change and the establishment of the socialist alternative. This is possibly the most important challenge for the various Marxist parties. In general terms these organisations are reluctant to try and elaborate the problems and challenges involved in trying to achieve the process of socialist change. Instead, they are often content to uphold a programme based upon an underestimation of the difficulties involved in the challenges of the development of the class struggle. But instead of this unconvincing complexity we have to begin with recognition of the present situation of the marginalisation and insignificance of the Marxist groups. In this manner it would become feasible to outline a credible programme about how these organisations could increase their popularity and effectiveness. In this manner it would become possible to outline a credible understanding of how the Marxist party could become increasingly popular and effective. However, we have to recognise that there is nothing inevitable about this possibility, and that failure may be the result of the attempt to develop a successful Marxist party. In other words, only the rejection of a form of triumphalism and complacency is necessary if a Marxist organisation is to rise to the challenge of attempting to become a popular revolutionary party. In order to realise this development, it is necessary that Marxist parties be genuinely democratic and not based on the authoritarian leadership of particular individuals. This development has to occur alongside genuine discussion about the aspects of the programme of the party. Only in these terms will it become possible to convince people that it is possible to develop a democratic party with the aim of socialism. This type of development will be important in terms of attracting support for the objective of revolutionary change.

However, none of these necessary developments is sufficient in order to establish the increasing popularity and credibility of the revolutionary party. It is very important that the party is able to understand the problems of the people within capitalist society and is able to outline a perspective that can express a credible programme of change. This development means that the party is able to understand the very difficulties and challenges involved in trying to realise the possibility for revolutionary transformation of society. But in terms of the present situation that is the very aspect that the various groups reject because they tend to uphold an ideological view of reality that often ignores the complexities of society. The result of this situation means that the ideology of illusion and dogma is being justified and programmes that are connected to the complexity of the society are not being developed. This means the very issue of the marginalisation of the Marxist parties is not tackled and instead various illusions about the potential for the development of the influence and popularity of these organisations is being over-estimated. The result of this situation can only be effective demoralisation because of the inevitable inability to realise the perspectives based on these illusions. Instead, it should be understood that the possibility of socialism is not an inevitable realisation, and that the system of capitalism will continue to be dominant until the development of a credible and effective form of opposition to the social formation. In other words, only a recognition of the complex character of the capitalist social formation will result in an awareness of the character of the challenges that are posed in relation to the task of trying to achieve socialism. Hence it is necessity to reject any manifestation of dogmatism and complacency if it is to become possible to develop a revolutionary party that is equal to the challenges of trying to change the character of society. However, it could be questionable whether this type of organisation has been created. Indeed, the various Marxist organisations are characterised by an imposition of a hopeful conception of social change onto reality rather than trying to develop a more perceptive and thoughtful understanding of the process of change. In other words, the groups tend to impose a conception of how they would like reality to be instead of trying to develop a more accurate and perceptive understanding of the challenges posed by the political situation. Only when more realistic programmes of action are developed will it become possible to create more serious and perceptive Marxist organisations.

However, it could be argued that given the obvious insignificance of the various Marxist groups this means that the perspective outlined is over-ambitious and unrealistic. This would be the logical conclusion based on the present situation of the apparent ineffectiveness and lack of influence of the various Marxist groups. But if a form of unity could be achieved in terms of common support for a programme of change this could become the basis to establish the increased influence of the Marxist organisations within the working class. The promotion of a credible programme of political change could develop the possibility of increasing support for a radical approach. But in order that this standpoint is considered to be serious it is necessary that there is an acceptance of the present insignificance of the Marxist approach. In this context the aim would be to try and develop the importance of the revolutionary standpoint within the most class-conscious sections of the workers. Only if this approach has some form of success will it be possible to suggest that Marxism has acquired a political importance that is able to generate the possibility of developing the conditions for radical change. But in order that such a standpoint is credible the programme has to begin with the fact that the forces of capital are presently dominant within society. In this context the balance of class forces upholds the interests of capital and so the possibilities for change seem to be unrealistic. Thus, any programme of Marxism has t be based on an accurate understanding of the balance of class forces which presently favour the interests of capital. Therefore, the immediate objectives of a programme will be about how to develop the process of mass struggle so that it becomes possible to change the balance of class forces in favour of the interests of labour. This approach requires the elaboration of defensive policies that would enable the working class to develop its collective capacity to uphold its interests in a militant manner and so oppose the attempts of capital to defend the interests of the system. In this context it is necessary to support measures that would facilitate the democratic development of the organisations of the workers, and in that manner create the basis to uphold its interests in a militant manner. The domination of bureaucracy and elitism can only undermine the possibility to facilitate the collective actions of the workers, and so if the trade unions become genuinely democratic this would enable the possibility to generate forms of militancy and actions to support the interests of the workers in relation to the offensive of capital. However, in order to promote this type of struggle it would be necessary to develop the influence of revolutionary Marxism within the organisations of the working class. In this context the development of unity between the different Marxist groups would facilitate this possibility of transforming the trade unions into becoming militant expressions of the interests of the workers. However, this development is undermined by the fragmentation and sectarianism of the different Marxist parties, and they have become accustomed to a situation of insignificance. Therefore, it is vital to develop programmes of struggle which could unite the various groups around a common perspective of the promotion of the activity of the workers. The point being made is that it is necessary for the various Marxist groups to put the interests of the objective of developing the class struggle above their own sectarian concerns. The failure to support this principle has only consolidated the differences between the various groups and made the task of developing a credible perspective of class struggle more difficult. However, it could be suggested that Marxism is unable to undergo a process of innovation and development, and so is no longer relevant to the issues connected with the attempt to realise a better type of society. Hence if we are to establish the continued importance of Marxism for a programme of radical change, we have to analyse this issue. If we can outline the contemporary significance of Marxism, we can connect this relevance to the question of the development of the possibilities for human emancipation. In other words, we have to indicate that the aims of Marxism are still important and necessary if the objective of human emancipation is to be realised. In these terms we will be suggesting that if Marxism undergoes a process of irreversible decline the possibilities of human emancipation will be undermined in important terms. It is the very revival of Marxism that is necessary in order to make progress towards the realisation of the social liberation of humanity.

It could be argued that sociological developments within society have made the approach of Marxism antiquated. But it can still be shown that the continuation of the role of capitalism is an indication that Marxism still has a relevant importance for the understanding of the character of society. In this context there is a related necessity to develop Marxist parties that are able to elaborate strategies for the emancipation of society and the ending of the domination of capitalism. But this is the very problem the various Marxist groups seem unable to develop a convincing strategy that could convince people about the importance of the aim of the ending of the supremacy of capital. In this context the crisis of the Marxist approach is connected to the failure to create effective and practical Marxist parties. In this context there seems to be no alternative to the necessity to support the present system and to try and obtain improvements within its limitations. It will be suggested by some commentators that this issue has become irrelevant and instead what is of primary importance is to develop the various forms of dynamic mass action in order to create the conditions for the transformation of society. But the problem is that the lack of an effective revolutionary party contributes to the influence of the view that the possibilities for mass action have become unimportant in relation to the task of trying to achieve improvements for people within society. This means that there is a decline of industrial militancy that occurs alongside the decline of the role of the Marxist parties. It would seem that in this situation the domination of capitalism cannot be challenged. Therefore, achieving the task of creating a popular and influential Marxist party would seem to be an important contribution to the possibility to revive the various forms of class struggle and so in this manner achieving a challenge to the capitalist system. In this context there is no alternative to the task of trying to create unity between the divergent revolutionary groups. We would suggest the following objectives should be the basis of united action of the different political organisations. Firstly, the objective of achieving an international socialist system and achieving the end of the domination of global capitalism. Secondly, the elaboration of a programme of struggle that would encourage the workers to develop forms of collective struggle that would generate the possibility to increase their influence within society. Thirdly, the development of the connection between the struggle for the emancipation of the workers with support for the aims of all groups oppressed within capitalism. Fourthly, the recognition of the connection between the socialist struggle and the aim of ecological emphasis on the interests of conservation. Fifthly, the attempt to create an international socialist party in order to promote the realisation of these objectives. It will be suggested that these aims are still too vague and over-generalised. But the point is that the very development of a democratic socialist party will consider the details of this approach in democratic terms. The aspect of differences should not undermine the recognition of the necessity to develop a united organisation in order to promote the possibility to realise these objectives of the aims of achieving socialism.

It will be argued that society has changed and so the approach outlined has become antiquated in terms of the developments that have occurred within contemporary capitalism. But we would suggest that the aspect of the importance of the capital-labour relation has not been ended, even if there have been important sociological changes within society. Obviously, it is necessary to try and understand these developments and to connect them to the role of a programme for socialism. But it is also necessary to suggest these developments have not ultimately undermined the credibility of a perspective of trying to change capitalism into socialism. However, we also have to address the most important problem connected to the credibility of our perspective: why has it proved to be very difficult to create credible and popular revolutionary parties. The primary basis of an explanation is that the aim of socialism and developing progress within capitalism seemed to be expressed by the importance of the role of Stalinist and Social Democratic parties. In this context the various Trotskyist groups seemed to be utterly marginal and unimportant. Indeed, it could be argued that support for these types of parties within capitalist societies had led to the development of various reforms and progress for the workers. But the imposition of austerity led to political challenges for these parties which they could not tackle in an effective manner. This era led to the discrediting of the reformist perspective and instead consolidated the economic and political power of the capitalist class. It seemed as if only a revolutionary challenge to the capitalist class based on the development of an influence of a genuine Marxist party would be able to develop a principled alternative to the consolidation of the domination of capital. But the various limitations of the Marxist groups meant that this development was not realised. Instead, it seemed as if the supremacy of capitalism could not be challenged, and the various movements of opposition became expressed by the role of the various protest organisations, such as the ecological organisations. The sectarianism of the Marxist movement only contributed to what seemed to be an inevitable process of decline. But these groups did not seem able to recognise the serious situation that they were in and often continued to advocate programmes of change of the most dogmatic form. In this situation it did not seem to be recognised that what was necessary was to develop a perspective of unity that could contribute towards the formation of a united revolutionary organisation. Nor was it understood that this development had to be connected to the promotion of a perceptive programme of class struggle. Instead, the various Marxist groups seemed to prefer a situation of sectarian isolation and a related inability to come to terms with the challenges of the situation. In this situation the workers had to oppose the offensive of capital in the period of austerity in a spontaneous manner, but the limitations of this aspect contributed to the development of serious defeats in the class struggle. This meant that the balance of class forces favoured the interests of capital, but the Marxist groups were unable to develop defensive programmes in order to uphold the interests of the workers in this adverse situation. In this situation the defence of the interests of the workers became an intellectual task in terms of the defence of the approach of Marxism and socialism by various intellectuals. But ultimately the imposition of austerity led to important struggles of the workers as with the miners strike of 1984-85 and the anti-poll tax struggle in the UK. In this period left wing groups acquired temporary significance but this development was not sustained. Ultimately the ambitions of left-wing politics became related to left wing developments within various reformist parties and governments. However, in the long term there was a decline in the influence and popularity of the objective of socialism. It seemed that the standpoint of the interests of capitalism could not be challenged. The result of this development was the long-term decline of the various socialist and Marxist groups. It seemed that this situation could not be ended because of the apparent irreversible adverse changes in the balance of class forces. Indeed, it could be argued that this is the present situation in the UK and other countries. In this unfavourable situation some attempts to create new progressive types of parties have ended in failure. Hence it seems to be dogmatic to assume that a favourable situation could be created that would result in the formation of a popular and increasingly successful Marxist party. But despite these problems it is necessary to advocate a programme that could facilitate the possibility to realise the socialist transformation of society. Obviously, this promotion of a revolutionary perspective is not sufficient in order to establish the realisation of socialism, but it would at least be the basis to establish a principled revolutionary party.

The aspects of this possible programme have been outlined by Istvan Meszaros in his ‘Historical Actuality of the Socialist Offensive’ (Bookmarks, London 2004) which is based on his larger work: ‘Beyond Capital’. His major point is that it is not possible for the forces of labour (the working class) to be able to overcome the domination of capital by the realisation of a majority for a socialist party in parliament. Instead, only the mass action of the workers can bring about the transformation of this situation. He summarises his strategy in the following terms: “The role of a revolutionary extra-parliamentary movement is two-fold. On the one hand, it has to formulate and organisationally defend the strategic interests of labour as the historically viable socially metabolic alternative. The success of this role is feasible only if the organised forces of labour consciously confront and forcefully negate in practical terms the structural determinations of the established material reproductive order as manifest in the capital-relation and in the concomitant subordination of labour in the socioeconomic process, instead of more or less complicitously helping to re-stabilise capital in crisis, as invariably happened at important junctures of the reformist past. At the same time, on the other hand, the open or concealed power of capital which now prevails in parliament needs to be, and can be challenged – even if only to a limited degree – through pressure which extra-parliamentary forms of action can exercise on the legislative and executive.”(p30) But the problem with this approach is that it does not recognise that generally people accept the legitimacy of parliaments as the basis of political activity. In this context the role of the collective actions of the workers is limited to defensive actions that do not call into question the supremacy of bourgeois parliaments. Hence if Meszaros’s perspective is to be credible he has to outline how it will be possible to develop a form of effective popular democracy that provide a genuine alternative to the expression of parliamentary democracy. In vague terms it is suggested that what is necessary and principled is a programme that will challenge the domination of capital, but how will this development occur given the apparent marginalisation of the various socialist parties? What is being suggested is that the objective necessity of a socialist programme of revolutionary change will somehow become plausible and popular given the increasing limitations of capitalism. But what has actually occurred is that the very problems of the present economic system have led to an offensive of capital to undermine the importance of labour in economic and political terms. Indeed, it could be suggested that capital has been successful in relation to these objectives. In other words, we have to establish the reasons why an effective defence of the interests of labour has not occurred in the period of the offensive of capital. Why has an opposing development of an offensive of labour not occurred? It seems that instead of answering this problem in a satisfactory manner, Meszaros instead assumes that in the long-term the development of an offensive of labour against capital will occur. But such a perspective does not seem to explain the importance of the difficulties that undermine the possibility to realise this approach in an effective manner. Instead, we have to assume that in the present period the forces of capital have been able to uphold its interests without the development of the problem of the effective opposition of the workers. In other words, we may accept that capital has entered a period of increasing crisis that it is unable to solve, but this development does not necessary result in the increasing radicalisation of the workers and the development of popular opposition to the system. Indeed, it could be argued that the very expression of the crisis of capitalism could undermine the collective strength of the working class as with the development of increased unemployment and the imposition of policies of deflation. But Meszaros seems to underestimate the importance of these issues by suggesting that there is an alternative to an acceptance of subordination to capital which is to develop the politics of opposition to its domination. But the problem is that these types of political activity do not seem to be elaborated and instead are reduced to a dogmatic contention of the necessity to develop the offensive of labour in order to oppose the domination of capital: “Under the circumstances of actually existing “advanced capitalism” the worsening condition of the labour force cannot be countered – let alone the painful structural dependency of labour challenged – without a fundamental rearticulation of the socialist movement from its defensive posture to one capable of offensive action. For not only the traditional parliamentary mode of political control but also the reformist accommodation of labour within it have run their historical course.” (p127) But the only perspective that is adopted is the vague advocacy of extra-parliamentary activity by the working class. In other words what is not explained is how this type of mass struggle will create the economic and political conditions for transition to socialism. The point is that the success of the Soviets established by the Russian workers in 1917 was because there was not the development of a stable political system based on the institutions of parliamentary democracy. Where these have been created the possibility of proletarian revolution has not been realised. Thus, it would seem that the concept of the socialist offensive outlined by Meszaros does not actually come to terms with the issues created by the role of parliamentary democracy. Instead in a vague manner he advocates an offensive for socialism by the workers. The problems involved in the successful development of this perspective are not sufficiently analysed.

But primarily he does not seem to analyse the difficulties involved in trying to realise a popular socialist consciousness within the working class. Instead, an assumption seems to be made that the promotion of a socialist perspective will be able to obtain support of the workers in a popular manner. However, the problem with this approach is that the difficulties involved in trying to achieve the influence of a socialist approach are ultimately being underestimated, and instead it is considered that in some automatic manner the connection of Marxism to the interests of the workers will be realised. But the history of the role of socialist ideology indicates a more complicated situation. Primarily the very doctrine of socialism has been undermined and compromised by the role of Social Democracy and Stalinism, and this has meant that the very possibility to promote a principled and convincing conception of socialism has been undermined. The result of this situation is that the working class has not been able to develop an adequate consciousness that is capable of advancing the possibility to realise a genuine and democratic socialist society. Indeed, the genuine Marxist parties have been very small and insignificant and so the actual influence of principled revolutionary politics has been undermined in this situation. This has meant that when the working class has been in a position to change the character of society this possibility has not been realised because of the role of the opportunist expression of socialist politics. The result of these developments is that capitalism has been able to perpetuate its domination over society. But despite these problems it has not been possible to create genuine revolutionary parties that could challenge the supremacy of Social Democracy and Stalinism. Indeed, it could be suggested that there has been a gradual decline in importance of revolutionary Marxism, and this problem has not been overcome by the increasing development of new forms of mass struggle that have occurred over the past forty years. Hence the problem of the new social movements is that they ultimately lack a perspective for bringing about the transformation of society, and so are reduced to being essentially protest movements. This is the situation that characterises the present. The various advocates of the new social movements have been unable to outline a credible strategy for changing the character of society. Hence this means that they ultimately uphold a new form of reformism and attempting to modify the character of society by means of the influence of protest. In this context the view that society should be changed by the importance of a revolutionary process of change has been essentially rejected. Indeed, the various small Marxist groups seem to have accepted this situation in terms of no longer advocating a process of revolutionary change. They are essentially no more than the left wing of the protest movement. In this context it is difficult to suggest that there is an effective expression of revolutionary Marxism in global terms. The era of the fourth international is over, and the various adherents of a new fifth international also lack credibility. But can we conclude from this adverse situation that the possibilities represented by revolutionary Marxism are over? It would be pessimistic to make this conclusion. Instead, we should attempt to provide the basis to elaborate a new revolutionary programme which could become the basis to establish a new principled international for the struggle for socialism.

We would suggest that the following aspects could become the basis for the development of a programme of a new international that is based on the objective of socialism. Firstly, that the global capitalist system is still based on the exploitation of labour and so cannot provide in an effective manner the level of affluence that is required in order to ensure the necessary material standards required for the possibility to have a prosperous and affluent material situation. This aspect is still the major reason why it is necessary to strive to realise a global socialist alternative type of economic system. The realisation of this society would aim to end the exploitation of labour as the basis of the mode of production and instead would attempt to establish genuine economic democracy which would create the conditions for the establishment of the affluence of all of society. Secondly, this system would be based on the development of political democracy in which the major socialist party would aim to obtain support for its economic system in terms of the role of the expression of a multi-party system. In this context it would be possible for parties that supported the restoration of capitalism to be able to function and express their standpoint. But it is to be hoped that the successful expression of the aims of socialism would mean that support for the capitalist system would not become a majority opinion that would result in the restoration of that type of society. Thirdly, the people of any given socialist state would attempt to promote the realisation of socialism in global terms. It has to be understood that the continuation of capitalism in the USA would represent a problem for the possibility to create a credible socialist society in other countries. This is why the issue of the economic and political character of the USA is of primary importance. It could be argued that this perspective is not realistic because very few people are inclined to vote in favour of genuinely socialist parties. It can be accepted that this is an important problem that undermines the possibility to realise socialism in national and international terms. Thus, it is necessary to promote the principled unity of the various socialist parties in order to enhance their level of credibility with the people of the world. The development of democratic socialist parties would facilitate the possibility to transform forms of militant struggle into becoming an expression of the possibility to achieve a revolutionary transformation of society. This process of change could occur via a successful process of the general strike or by the electoral victory of the socialist party. In order that these developments can be realised it is necessary that the revolutionary organisation becomes more popular and influential than the reformist parties. Until this development occurs it is not likely that the issue of the demise of capitalism will become a practical possibility. Thus, the revolutionary party has to carry out a process of ideological struggle in order to undermine the influence and importance of the reformist organisations. Without success in this context, it is not likely that capitalism will become undermined in revolutionary terms. Therefore, the issue as to whether the present economic system remains dominant is connected to the level of success that can be realised in relation to the attempt to build an international socialist system.

However, if a revolutionary party is to be established it is necessary that the supporters of the many small Marxist groups realise the importance of the necessity to develop a single and universally accepted organisation. The continuation of divisions between the groups can only undermine the possibility to create a credible political organisation of the working class. This is why it is necessary to promote a programme that can facilitate the possibility to develop the required level of unity that can result in the establishment of this universally accepted revolutionary party. We would suggest that some of the essential elements of a revolutionary programme would be the following. Firstly, the acceptance of the objective of the necessity to overcome the domination of global capitalism and to instead establish an international socialist society. Secondly, the necessity to develop a strategy that would facilitate the possibility to achieve this objective. This would involve a programme of mass struggle that would aim to create the economic and political conditions for the transformation of global capitalism into socialism. Such an approach would not necessarily be opposed to participation in elections in order to reinforce the development of popular support for the process of revolutionary change. In this context the possibility of change via the role of the electoral process cannot be excluded. Thirdly, an important objective of the process of revolutionary transformation would be to end the exploitation of labour by capital and to end all forms of oppression. Fourthly a crucial aim of the process of revolutionary change would be to advance the possibility for the realisation of ecological objectives and to therefore establish a type of green socialism. Fourthly, the new revolutionary government would be prepared to submit for the approval of the people its measures in terms of the holding of a general election. If the people vote against the socialist government, the administration would as a result accept this verdict. But it is to be hoped that a government that was genuinely principled and democratic would obtain the majority support of the people in any election.

However, the important problem is the present lack of popularity and credibility of the various Marxist groups which are small and unpopular. In this situation the domination of capital seems to be consolidated and the possibility for change is not feasible. This means that the various revolutionary organisations should try to reject the tendency to promote programmes of change that have little relationship to reality and instead attempt to tackle the challenges posed by what seems to be an adverse situation. Their starting point should be the present insignificance of the revolutionary approach and the apparent hegemony of the ideology of the capitalist class. However, this adverse situation should not be expressed by demoralisation and instead it is necessary to develop a feasible programme for revolutionary change. This approach should begin with the understanding that the capitalist system is dominant and is not being challenged in a serious manner. In these terms it has to be understood that the role of revolutionary socialism is presently marginalised and indeed most people no longer know what is meant by the ideas of Marxism. Thus, it is necessary to develop a programme of propaganda of the ideas of Marxism and so attempt to develop a critical culture within the most advanced sections of the working class. The genuinely popular support for Jeremy Corbyn was an indication that there is a sizeable group of people who could be amenable to supporting the approach of revolutionary Marxism. But an important problem is that the various Marxist groups have failed to outline their views in an accessible and popular manner.

We would suggest the following principles could become the basis of a principled programme for the promotion of the aim of socialism. Firstly, socialism is a type of system in which the intention is to end the domination of capital over labour. This means that a major objective is to achieve the ascendency of labour within the relations of production and in this manner overcome the supremacy of the capitalist class. Secondly, the prospect to realise this development will require the role of the collective organisation of the workers in order to facilitate the possibility to achieve an alternative to capitalism. This development does not exclude the role of the electoral process in order to try and create a socialist government by means of democratic activity. Thirdly, the creation of a united revolutionary party in order to try and promote the possible realisation of this standpoint. Fourthly, the connection of any national process of progressive change to the development of an international process of revolutionary struggle. It will be argued that this proposed programme does not consider the present ideological and economic hegemony of the capitalist class which seems to uphold the continued domination of the capitalist system. This objection is indeed an indication of a valid problem, but it would be to accommodate to a defeatist view if we concluded that the present situation of the supremacy of capitalism cannot be challenged. However, we also have to recognise that there is no inevitable potential for the realisation of revolutionary change. Hence, we have to outline how we think this perspective can be realised in feasible terms.

The most immediate issue is to attempt to encourage the development of the militancy of the working class in terms of the development of effective mass action. The apparent supremacy of capital is connected to what seems to be the problems connected with the attempt to develop effective forms of mass opposition to the present economic system. It seems that the trade unions no longer are important and instead the defenders of capital are able to impose their aims in an unchallenged manner. But what this situation indicates is the problems involved when the trade unions accept the objectives of capital and so become reluctant to support actions of a militant character. Therefore, it is necessary for the revolutionary forces to try and obtain popular support for a programme of mass action by the trade unions. If this approach became popular and credible it would become possible to begin to challenge the situation of the present uncontested supremacy of capital over labour. The development of an approach of mass action would increase the level of confidence and initiative of the workers and so they would then become receptive to the approach of a radical programme of change. In this context the major objective of the workers should be is to oppose the continuation of austerity. It has been the imposition of austerity which has expressed a change in the balance of class forces in favour of capital and against the aspirations of the workers. In order to express this perspective, it would be necessary to strive to realise the genuine expression of the objectives of labour in relation to the economic decisions made by capital. In this context a limited expression of a possible socialist society would begin to be expressed within capitalism. This development would be reinforced by obtaining the support of social democratic parties for this standpoint. But even without this development this perspective should become the basis of a united activity of the various revolutionary groups. They should act in terms of advocating this programme of mass action and struggle to change the balance of class forces in the interests of labour and against that of capital. It will be argued that this perspective is not realistic. But the point is that without the development of support for this approach it will not become possible to develop effective forms of mass activity that can facilitate a change in the balance of class forces in favour of labour and against the interests of capital.

It will be argued that this approach is unrealistic, but what is actually unrealistic because it is defeatist is to refuse to adopt this programme in the name of realism. The point is that it is the present unorganised and defensive character of the working class which enables the offensive of capital against labour to occur and so facilitates the imposition of the approach of austerity. This situation has become accepted precisely because of the failure to develop a strategic and programmatic alternative. The various reformist parties of the working class have no alternative because of their very reluctance to support forms of defensive mass action by the workers and trade unions. However, the revolutionary organisations seem unable to promote a programme of action that is based on trying to respond to the challenges of the class struggle. Obviously, it could be suggested that the adoption of a programme of action will not guarantee success for the workers in the class struggle, but the point is that without the adoption of such a perspective the possibility to develop the strength of the workers will not be progressed in an important manner. This point is only reinforced by the apparent fact that people accept the imposition of austerity as an inevitability because of the very fact that it seems not possible or feasible to develop support for an alternative. The influence of this type of pessimism is reinforced by the apparent failure to develop a credible revolutionary party that is able to advocate what would seem to be a credible perspective. Hence it would still seem that the attempt to facilitate support for a radical approach is connected to the objective of creating a revolutionary party.

In conclusion we would suggest that the possibility of making progress in the development of the class struggle is connected to the creation of an effective and popular revolutionary party. However, it seems that the problems involved in achieving this development are very complex and that the possibilities of achieving success in this issue are hard to achieve. But the point is that without the development of an influential revolutionary party it will be very difficult to overcome the domination of capital in a progressive manner. Therefore, it can be suggested that there is no alternative to the necessity to try and achieve the development of a revolutionary party. We have tried to outline the challenges of this task and how they can be tackled in an effective manner. However, what would certainly be beneficial in this situation would be the recognition by the supporters of the different groups that they have a common task in trying to create a credible and popular revolutionary party. This type of agreed understanding would not solve the tasks connected with the aim of the creation of a viable revolutionary organisation but this type of non-sectarian attitude would certainly make a contribution towards the creation of a viable and possibly influential revolutionary party.