



**BRITAIN'S ROAD
TO SOCIALISM
STUDY GUIDE**

**Programme of
the Communist Party**

BRS Study Guide

Introduction

The purpose of this study guide is to help those using it to gain a greater understanding of Britain's Road to Socialism (BRS), the programme of the Communist Party, and also related areas of Marxist theory. It does not necessarily require any prior knowledge although it is equally appropriate for those with a much deeper understanding of Marxism.

The guide has been produced with Communist Party branches in mind and is therefore best used as part of a series of collective discussion sessions, as described below. However, where necessary, it could also provide a guide for individual study or correspondence sessions. Materials for tutor-led political education sessions are currently being developed by the Communist Party but this is not the purpose of this study guide. Rather, a collective discussion approach is taken.

The guide is split into six sections, to follow the six sections of BRS. Each section begins with a short article which summarises the key points of the relevant chapter of BRS. This short article is followed by four suggested questions to stimulate discussion,

and a list of recommended reading. All of the recommended reading is available from the CP, Communist Review, Manifesto Press or (in the case of classics) online at marxists.org. This is marked after each selection.

Further questions for each chapter can be found in the Further Study section near the back of this guide, with a focus on specific aspects of each chapter. Similarly, more in-depth reading recommendations for each chapter can be found in the Further Reading section at the back of the guide. There is also a section with questions for District or Nation discussions and suggestions of how to use them.

It is hoped that the questions set out in this study guide will help stimulate additional questions from within the group. Any particularly interesting areas for discussion can be fed back via the enclosed feedback forms, which can be returned to the Communist Party and will help inform future editions of this guide.

It is suggested that, for the purpose of collective

political discussion, at least one session should be set aside for each chapter. The branch may decide that more than one session is needed but themes can always be returned to either in this or a future cycle of BRS study. Used in this way, it is possible to use the guide for a spiral curriculum where sessions and topics are returned to a number of times, but different aspects studied or drawn out - effectively a completely new discussion each time. It is suggested that a copy of the guide is made available to each of the participants in the study group, alongside a copy of BRS which it is designed to accompany.

The choice of who introduces sessions should rotate through the whole group with adequate time being given for preparation on each topic to allow all comrades to feel comfortable and confident in introducing their session. The organisation of sessions should be co-ordinated by the branch Political Education Organiser or, in the case of broader discussion groups, by a comrade who volunteers for this task, but it is essential that the preparation of introductions does not always fall on this comrade.

Collective political discussions should be arranged on a regular basis and it is suggested that a monthly programme is drawn up from the start. During the current Covid-19 crisis, these sessions can take place through the CP's dedicated meeting software. For guidance on how to use this, please email office@communist-party.org.uk.

Reading should be set well in advance to provide a shared starting point for the discussion. The introductory article and relevant BRS chapter form the essential reading for each session. However, the set reading should not be seen as exhaustive and it is important that all comrades, not just the person introducing and/or facilitating the session, have access to recommended and further reading lists as a guide if they wish to read more. A flexible approach should be taken to choosing the agreed reading, based on the level of political development of the group members, and selections from the recommended reading could be used alongside the introductory article and relevant BRS chapter.

For branches that are focussing on a particular theme in some depth, or on an individual question, and where there is already a good knowledge and understanding of BRS, the comrade introducing the session may wish to choose a selection from the recommended or further reading as the set reading,

rather than the introductory article and relevant BRS chapter. Set reading should always be manageable within comrades' daily lives.

It is important to note that not all of the suggested texts, particularly in the further reading section, necessarily agree with the analysis in BRS. It is therefore important to develop a critical reading habit, as a group and as individuals, where texts are challenged and conclusions are reached through a process of discussion, not instruction.

The comrade introducing each session will be responsible for the selection of both questions and reading, and for the preparation of a short introduction to the session. In this, they may want to seek support and advice from the branch Political Education Organiser or another experienced comrade. Adequate time should be made available for the preparation of sessions, so it is advisable to prepare a schedule of discussions and comrades to introduce them well in advance.

Where this material is being used for individual or correspondence study, or where a live introductory contribution proves impractical for other reasons, the accompanying short introductory videos may prove useful in stimulating discussion. Alternatively, they can accompany the set reading.

It is important that the session itself is conducted as a collective political discussion, not a lecture with questions. The aim is that the questions chosen should be answered collectively by the group through the process of political discussion, not dispensed by an expert or tutor. Each session should be opened by a short (5-10min) introduction by a comrade chosen in advance to read widely and prepare an introduction. Following the introduction, the group should move into discussion on the basis of the questions selected for the study session. This should be a balanced discussion and the chair or facilitator (usually different from the comrade introducing the discussion) should ensure that all comrades are encouraged to participate in roughly equal measure.

However you are using this guide, we hope that it helps stimulate useful political discussion of direct relevance our collective struggle for a socialist Britain.

Gawain Little
April 2020

Session I – Capitalism and Exploitation

The bankruptcy of capitalism

Britain's Road to Socialism (BRS) begins by arguing that capitalism is economically, socially and politically bankrupt. As a system, it no longer makes a progressive contribution to human development. Capitalism's sole purpose – to make maximum profit for the private owners of industry and commerce – is exposed, together with its deep general crisis and the suffering it causes.

Billions of the world's people live in poverty, without access to education, medical services and sanitation. Populations starve, while food mountains are destroyed. Environmental destruction goes unchecked. Big business fails to cut carbon emissions, depletes finite resources and refuses to invest in safe, renewable energy.

Corruption discredits politics. Culture is usurped to try to ensure that selfishness and individualism permeate society. Social inequality is deep-rooted and endemic.

First, BRS outlines the development of capitalism, concentrating on its imperialist stage from the late 19th century. This provides important background for the whole of the programme that follows.

As monopolies grew, each sector of the economy came to be dominated by a handful of giant enterprises. Industrial and banking capital merged to form finance capital. Monopoly capitalists invested abroad, moving some operations overseas and forming vast trans-national corporations (TNCs).

Inter-imperialist rivalry over resources and markets intensified. State functions were enhanced during the First World War between the imperialist powers. The ruling class in each of the main capitalist countries used the power of the state to protect their monopolies. Economic and political power fused, giving birth to state-monopoly capitalism.

But, from the 1917 October Revolution, imperialist domination was challenged by socialism. Fascism – the terroristic weapon of the most reactionary capitalists – was unleashed in Italy, Germany and elsewhere to crush the demands of working people expressed through their trade unions and communist and workers' parties.

After the Second World War, imperialism entered its second phase. States regulated the unprecedented demand for commodities, promoted monopoly profits and coordinated international trade and currency relations. At home, working people were kept 'on side' through enhanced living standards. Around the world, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and TNCs controlled newly-free colonies.

Inter-imperialist rivalry was moderated by the need to collaborate in hot and 'cold' wars against the Soviet Union, the new socialist states of eastern Europe and communist regimes in North Korea, Cuba and Vietnam.

Nonetheless, despite every attempt to 'manage' capitalism through regulation after the 1930s Depression, economic crises returned. The long, post-war boom ended in the late 1960s. From the late 1970s, neoliberalism gained ascendancy with its ruthless agenda of lower wages, labour 'flexibility', the suppression of trade unionism, privatisation, banking deregulation and the free movement of capital. The dismantling of socialism in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe allowed monopoly capitalists to seize opportunities in those countries and act with impunity to extend control over resources, labour and markets across the developing world. This heralded the beginning of imperialism's third and present phase.

Led by the US and backed by Britain, imperialism has pursued its agenda with all 'necessary' force, blitzing whoever stands in the way: Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia and Yugoslavia. China has been ringed with military bases. The September 2001 attacks on the US provided the pretext for a 'war on terror', allowing seizure of the oil, gas and strategic supply routes of the Greater Middle East. The end of the Cold War has brought intensified conflict,

not peace.

Next, BRS explains the inherent contradictions and crises of capitalism. Production is privately owned by capitalists and run for the maximum possible profit. However, the interests of working people to maximise wages and improve living standards are diametrically opposed to this. Thus capitalist society is always divided between the capitalist class and the working class.

Capitalism's drive to produce more and more commodities is the source of its cyclical crises. Workers must buy most of the goods and services but, as real wages decrease to maximise profit, they can afford less and less.

The point is reached when working people can no longer buy commodities at prices that sustain profit. Production is cut. Workers are laid-off. Demand is further depressed. The economy enters recession. Now, big companies take over failing ones, increasing productive capacity through super-exploitation and grabbing market share.

The cycle begins again, only to repeat itself in the succession of booms and crashes.

Lastly, BRS ends its first chapter with an analysis of capitalism's general crisis. This was created by the sharpening contradictions and class conflict of the 20th century, generating the historic challenge of the forces of socialism.

Counter-revolution in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe and the liberalisation of financial markets temporarily reinvigorated capitalism. But the huge bubble burst in 2007, once again starkly revealing the underlying general crisis. Capitalist governments and central banks had to rescue their financial monopolies with the biggest bailouts in history. Millions of people were thrown out of work in the leading capitalist countries, while the drive to exploit the developing world was intensified.

But the experience of deepening crisis has made working people aware of the inhuman nature of capitalism. They are realising that the economy can and must be run for the benefit of all, not for the few. They recognise the liberating potential of culture and that new technology can enhance life rather than reinforce the apparatus of war and oppression.

How capitalism can be overthrown and a progressive, just and peaceful society built is precisely what *Britain's Road to Socialism* goes on to propose.

Questions for Discussion

- How is surplus value created by workers and appropriated by capitalists?
- What are the key features of imperialism and how does it differ from earlier stages of capitalism?
- In what way is the environmental crisis linked to the capitalist mode of production?
- What is the distinction between the general crisis of capitalism and periodic crises of overproduction?

Recommended Reading:

Marx: Wages, Price & Profit (CP)

Lenin: Imperialism (marxists.org)

Griffiths: Global Imperialism or Peace and Popular Sovereignty (CP)

Session 2 – State-Monopoly Capitalism in Britain

State-monopoly capitalism today

The second chapter of *Britain's Road to Socialism* (BRS) is about power and how it is exercised in our society.

It seeks to define present-day relations between economic power and political power, the consequences for the lives of working people and the options that exist for shifting the balance of power in their favour.

The chapter begins by posing the riddle of our democracy. Workers secured the vote almost a century ago. Yet the interests of the very rich remain overwhelmingly dominant – so much so that the distribution of wealth has become even unequal over the past 50 years.

How can this be? How can working people gain the power to elect governments, yet find that political power is still exercised against them? The answer is that there is more to power than simply governmental power. There is also state power.

This represents the whole complex of institutions that ensure that the necessary conditions are continually reproduced in which capitalist exploitation can take place. They originate in the 17th century, when capitalist power was first consolidated in Britain,

This state power comprises all the institutions that make the unequal relationship between capital and labour inescapable and also, in terms of the way people see the world, make them seem necessary and normal.

These institutions are the legal system, the apparatus of government represented by the senior civil service and intelligence chiefs, the media, the education system and, in the last resort, the forces of armed coercion that defend the rights of capitalist property and prevent labour from exercising its full collective strength.

This capitalist state is far older than our democracy. It ensures that even a government wanting to move in a socialist direction is faced by a functioning system policed by market forces and an array of institutions that will seek to define and limit that government's options.

A bleak prospect, then? Yes, possibly. The past century certainly indicates as much.

But the Communist Party's programme also argues that change is possible and that the first step is to recognise the role of the capitalist state and analyse how it works concretely in present conditions.

The big problem with Labour governments has been that they have not done this. Instead, they have simply assumed that elected governments can improve the lot of working people by using parliamentary means to reform capitalism's abuses.

The communist approach put forward in BRS is quite different. Most fundamentally, it argues that socialist change can only be permanently secured by dismantling the capitalist state apparatus and replacing it through the collective power of the working class.

In the meantime, however, it insists that more limited advances can be secured in face of capitalist state power – but on two conditions.

The first is that an elected left-wing government must actively draw on the extra-parliamentary force of a mobilised working class to carry forward its democratic mandate. Only this can begin to counter-balance the concentrated power of capitalist state institutions.

The programme notes that one of the key objectives of the capitalist state in the 1920s was to get the Parliamentary Labour Party to agree that any sort of external trade union pressure on parliament was 'unconstitutional' (while that by banks and big business was totally normal and acceptable).

Previously it had always been assumed by those who fought for democracy in Britain that such electoral power had

to be exercised collectively as a class – hence the very term 'Labour' Party. Workers operating as isolated voters would be powerless in the face of capital. Hence the need for extra-parliamentary action to support a left agenda.

The other condition is that the combined power of the working class – economic and political – should be exercised strategically to exploit the contradictions within the capitalist state.

The most fundamental of these contradictions goes back a long way. It is that the modern capitalist state no longer represents the capitalist class as a whole but only the dominant monopoly section.

Early in the 20th century, a few big producers began to dominate particular markets and were thereby able to extract super-profits at the expense of other capitalists as well as workers. This had two effects. One was to depress non-monopoly profits and hence lead to deeper and more protracted economic crises. The second was an accelerating accumulation of capital in the hands of monopoly that could not be invested internally without further intensifying crises.

The solution was for the state itself to intervene in the capitalist market – but on the terms set by the *dominant* groups of capital. This intervention was both to promote external expansion ('imperialism' as Lenin described it), and increasingly to seek to manage capitalist crisis by politically redistributing income to big business to stimulate investment.

The result is what has been described as 'state-monopoly capitalism'. The capitalist state increasingly operates only on behalf of a numerically small segment of the capitalist class and against the interests of the rest.

BRS details the accentuation of this process over the past decade. Super-profit is now increasingly extracted directly *through* the financial sector. Investment banks use the savings of working people invested in retail banks to control and manipulate the productive economy and to divert resources, in particular, towards international speculation.

The City of London is now the world centre for these activities – with the majority of the capital US-owned.

The economically destructive consequences affect not just working people but also the great mass of small and medium firms in services and industry.

Those who benefit, the super rich with the £4 million plus required to invest through investment banks, constitute far less than 1 per cent of Britain's population. Their interests enforce a system that is parasitic, dangerously dependent on an external imperialist power and which directly undermines our productive economy.

This is how the capitalist state operates in Britain today.

Hence the key importance of uniting around the labour movement a much wider alliance that can expose the anti-democratic character of state-monopoly capitalism, politically isolate the ruling class and advance an alternative programme for economic regeneration and democratic transformation as envisaged by the Labour Party's early pioneers.

How to accomplish this is considered in subsequent chapters of the Communist Party's programme.

Questions for Discussion

- What are the key features of state-monopoly capitalism?
- What is meant by the process of 'financialisation' of the British economy?
- What are the immediate opportunities and dangers created by Brexit?
- What threats did a Left-led Labour government pose to ruling class strategy in Britain and internationally?

Recommended Reading:

Lenin: The State and Revolution (marxists.org)

Binus, Landefeld & Wehr: State Monopoly Capitalism (Manifesto)

Foster: The Politics of Britain's Economic Crisis (CP)

Session 3 – The Case for Socialism

The case for Socialism

As we know from our current experience in Britain and the world, capitalism cannot solve crises, despite the fact that it commands the productive forces to do so.

The profit motive on which capitalism is based ensures that crises are endemic in this parasitic system. Far from solving crises, accumulation, speculation and greed ensure that the merry-go-round of temporary stability is quickly followed by recession.

Social democratic attempts to reform the system have had some positive effects. They have demonstrated the benefits of public ownership, planning and the redistribution of wealth. However, while capitalist economic and state power remains dominant, the social democratic experiment has always proved to be doomed. This is certainly the case in Britain, Germany, some Scandinavian countries, Australia and New Zealand.

On the other hand if democratic rather than capitalist public ownership had been implemented, with greater workers' control, less compensation for the former owners and a greater attention to public need rather than private greed, the outcome might have been different and longer lasting.

Socialist public ownership would end monopoly capitalist control of the economy and in doing so would put an end to the exploitation of the working class, because surplus labour would no longer be performed for capitalist profit. Instead, it would be used for the benefit of society as a whole.

Furthermore, the material basis for the oppression of women and black people which sustains class relations would also be removed. Racism and sexism have operated at an ideological and an economic level to sustain capitalist relations of production. Since its inception, capitalism has extracted super profits from women and black people: socialism provides the material basis for ending this oppression and super-exploitation. However, it doesn't eradicate it immediately.

The huge inequalities of wealth in capitalist society continue to have a major impact on the political system and on people's democratic capacity to control their own future ('popular sovereignty').

The economic, ideological and repressive apparatus of the state is constantly used to protect the interests of the ruling class. The fact that there is no effective representation of the majority class and that the likes of Murdoch control such vast sections of the mass media exposes the shallowness of capitalism's claim to democracy. Genuine popular sovereignty will only come about when the working class control state power.

But what happened in those countries which once offered an alternative to capitalism, notably the Soviet Union and the socialist countries of eastern Europe?

The pundits in the bourgeois media have written off the socialist era lock, stock and barrel. They conveniently forget some of the enormous gains made in what was – in the case of Russia – a semi-feudal autocracy. The Soviet Union was transformed into a society which provided housing, education and work for all. Above all, the role of the Red Army in defeating Nazism is shamefully underplayed.

Although the war-shattered Soviet Union and eastern Europe were then left to reconstruct their societies without any Western help, the socialist countries went on to assist national liberation movements against imperialism around the world.

However, all was not well despite the many achievements. Already, in the 1930s, there were severe violations of Soviet democracy with mass arrests of innocent people. By the 1970s, economic growth was falling behind the advanced capitalist countries. The command-style economy and the failure to mobilise the Communist Party and the

people led ultimately to stagnation and, in 1989, the collapse of the socialist system.

But the capitalism that replaced socialism in the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe has not solved the economic and social problems of those societies. Far from it – millions of workers have lost their jobs and all the social gains of the past 50 years and more have been eradicated.

Yet this has not been the tragic experience of other socialist states. For example, China, Cuba and Vietnam have taken their own roads to socialism in very different circumstances.

The Cuban model seeks to involve the people from the bottom up. Cuba has built advanced first-world health and education services despite its Third World beginnings, while also having to defend its national sovereignty against US imperialist incursions.

Vietnam had to embark on its socialist path of development after French occupation and a long and brutal war waged by the US against national freedom and unification.

In China, a country of 1.3 billion people (almost one-fifth of the world's population), great emphasis has been placed on economic and social development. A combination of Communist Party rule, state ownership and planning, market reform and foreign private capital has lifted 600 million out of extreme poverty since 1981.

In Britain, our road to socialism will be different. Nobody can predict the future, but the power of the British working class throughout its 200-year history to re-group, reconstruct itself and fight back is legendary. It will be strengthened by learning from its own mistakes and those of others.

Among other things, it must ensure that working class unity incorporates the fullest recognition of race and gender – vital dimensions that have been neglected in the past.

Questions for Discussion

- Using concrete examples, what is the impact of social democracy's failure to involve and mobilise the working class and its allied beyond elections?
- What lessons can be drawn from the experience of socialist countries in the 20th and 21st centuries?
- What is the relationship between capitalist public ownership, progressive public ownership and socialist public ownership?
- What is the relationship between ideology, oppression and super-exploitation?

Recommended Reading:

Marx & Engels: Manifesto of the Communist Party (CP)

Luxembourg: Reform or Revolution (marxists.org)

Davis: Women & Class (CP)

Session 4 – The Labour and Progressive Movements

The role of the labour and progressive movements

Which forces in society can be mobilised to resist the policies of state-monopoly capitalism and won for progressive change and socialism?

Britain's Road to Socialism (BRS) aims to maximise the forces for progress and revolution, and minimise those in opposition at any given stage.

Different groups of people have their own reasons for challenging aspects of today's economic and social system. But their common enemy is state-monopoly capitalism, which exploits workers here and abroad, oppresses large sections of society, strives to roll back democratic rights, blocks progress on every front, generates militarism and war, and now threatens the viability of our planet.

The working class has the most direct interest in overthrowing the system that rules and exploits workers, condemns them to poverty at various stages in life and confines most people to a lifetime of inequality and insecurity.

BRS identifies at the core of the working class those industrial workers who produce commodities directly for capitalist profit. But it also breaks new ground with its insistence that public sector workers are exploited as well, although the benefit of their unpaid surplus labour accrues to the capitalist class as a whole through the state. Public services are essential for the functioning of capitalist society, not least those that sustain and enhance the provision of labour power.

In fact, without the labour power supplied by these workers, capitalism would almost immediately cease to function.

Self-employed and sub-contracted labour also helps provide surplus value for the capitalist class.

Yet the conditions of capitalist production, trade and administration create the potential for the working class to liberate itself. Workers who share the same premises, employer or industry have a common interest in organising to improve their terms and conditions of employment. Through trade unions, in particular, they can develop and express their collective strength as a democratic, disciplined force in society.

BRS fully recognises the importance of trade unionism embracing many more public sector, women, black, part-time and casual workers, and establishing itself more widely in small and hi-tech enterprises.

It is in the interest of all workers to prevent super-exploitation of one section of the working class, which is used to undermine terms and conditions for all.

Unions can also seek to represent the wider and more fundamental interests of workers in society. The Trades Union Congress (TUC) and various socialist organisations established the Labour Party at the beginning of the 20th century, not only to represent working class interests in parliament but to strive for a socialist society.

More politically advanced workers founded the Communist Party in 1920 to fight not only for reform, but for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism.

These organisations, together with the cooperative movement and other bodies built by the working class, comprise the labour movement. Only this movement has the organisational capacity to overcome the forces of state-monopoly capitalism.

Since its formation, the Labour Party has been the mass party of the organised working class. It continues to enjoy the electoral support of large sections of workers.

But its politics and ideology have predominantly been those of social democracy, seeking to manage and reform

capitalism in the immediate temporary interests of the labour movement, rather than abolish it in the fundamental interests of the working class and humanity as a whole. Labour's reformist outlook neglects socialist education and sees political campaigning almost entirely in terms of elections.

The 'New Labour' faction emerged in the 1990s from within social democratic trend, breaking from it to champion neoliberal policies and imperialist 'globalisation'. It openly represented monopoly capital in the emerging new phase of imperialism.

Yet the Labour Party's federal structure, especially its trade union affiliations, has ensured the continuation of a significant socialist trend within the party. This trend was strengthened during the Corbyn leadership of the party and many new, young and returning members were drawn to Labour, and to this trend within it, by a radical social-democratic policy programme.

However, the weaknesses noted above, in particular the lack of attention to socialist education and to building an extra-parliamentary movement, combined with internal attacks by the liberal pro-EU wing of the party, led ultimately to electoral defeat and a shift to the right in the balance of forces within the Labour Party.

The working class and peoples of Britain need a mass political party, based on the labour movement, that can win general elections, form a government and implement substantial reforms in their interests.

But this requires the unions themselves to fight both inside and outside the Labour Party for policies that will challenge state-monopoly capitalism.

Other forces, whether in left-wing parties or in the Green and Welsh and Scottish national movements also have an important role to play in shifting the political balance of forces to the left.

So, too, do movements fighting oppressions based on gender, race, age and sexual orientation. The self-organisation of women, Black people, youth, students and the unemployed must be supported and their needs and aspirations championed by the labour movement.

The peace, anti-war and international solidarity movements uphold a proud record of internationalism and anti-imperialism in one of the world's oldest imperialist countries.

Rooted in the working class, but active in all the major movements that bring people into activity against oppression and injustice, is Britain's Communist Party.

Its Marxist-Leninist outlook, creativity, discipline and role as part of the international communist movement enable it exercise influence way beyond its small membership.

History and experience show that a powerful, influential Communist Party is essential if a mass movement for revolutionary change is to succeed.

Questions for Discussion

- How does the nature of capitalist exploitation give the working class both the means and necessity of ending capitalism?
- What are the lessons of the Left leadership of the Labour Party 2015-2020 and its defeat in the 2020 leadership election?
- What is the relationship between the working class and the progressive movements and alliances which have been built to resist specific aspects of monopoly capitalism?
- What is the role of the Party's programme *Britain's Road to Socialism* and how should it be used within the movement?

Recommended Reading:

Lenin: Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder (CP)

Little: New Draft of BRS (Communist Review)

Communist Party: All Power to the Working Class – The Role of the Communist Party (CP)

Session 5 – An Alternative Economic and Political Strategy

An alternative economic and political strategy

Strikes and demonstrations are a constant feature of capitalist society, but they often proceed in isolation from each other and fail to confront the capitalist system itself. So what is needed to overthrow this system of booms, busts and wars orchestrated by a minority of business barons – a system dominated by financial speculators and millionaire politicians who steal the wealth produced by the labour of others?

Britain's Road to Socialism (BRS) argues that two fundamental, interlocking elements are needed if state-monopoly capitalism is to be challenged successfully.

First, a coherent alternative economic and political strategy (AEPS) has to be developed that inspires and unites the organised working class and progressive movements.

Second, a popular, democratic anti-monopoly alliance of forces has to be built to pursue such a strategy – an alliance that is sustainable and unstoppable.

Progress towards socialism will require the left and the labour movement to learn from the disparate industrial and community battles that take place, and work to unite a mass movement in which the organised working class would be the leading force.

BRS recognises that such an alliance must take account of the different conditions in Scotland and Wales, with their own distinctive legislatures, politics and policies. However, as the majority of the capitalist monopolies are owned or controlled at the British level and political power is predominantly exercised through the British state, it is essential to maintain and strengthen the unity in the labour and progressive movements built up across the three nations of Britain.

To be effective, the AEPS must have at its heart a Left Wing Programme (LWP) of policies that promote the interests of the working class and the majority of ordinary people. As the class struggle has three distinct but inter-related fronts – economic, political and cultural/ ideological – the LWP addresses these areas.

The economic objective must be to protect and improve living standards for working people and their families based on full employment in a modern, productive, balanced and sustainable domestic economy.

The People's Charter for Change, the Charter for Women and the Charter for Youth all contain policies that set out the first steps in this process. In doing so, they lay the basis for more advanced policies to be developed by a future left-wing government committed to curbing the City of London's financial domination of the economy.

The LWP therefore proposes taking the financial sector and key industries into democratic ownership, imposing controls on the export of capital and ensuring that Britain can pursue its own foreign policy independent from the United States, NATO and the European Union. This, alongside establishing a progressive taxation system, would make it possible to fund the massive investment needed in public services, manufacturing and housing, and to develop an integrated, publicly-owned transport system and new and safer forms of energy production.

In order to expand and democratic rights and people's participation in every form of struggle, the LWP proposes the repeal of all anti-democratic, racist and anti-trade union laws, abolition of the House of Lords, the renewal of local government and progress towards a federal republic including a parliamentary chamber for England.

The LWP also includes policies to promote the values of collectivism, cooperation, multiculturalism and solidarity, encouraging the development of a people's, democratic culture. The media monopolies that promote racism, sexism, homophobia, ageism and the values of monopoly capitalism would be broken up in favour of wider participation.

The *Morning Star*, as the only daily paper of the labour movement and with an editorial policy based on *Britain's*

Road to Socialism, will play an increasingly important role in the 'battle of ideas' to inform, mobilise and inspire the popular and revolutionary movement.

The election of a left government based on a Labour, socialist and communist majority, backed by a popular democratic anti-monopoly alliance and committed to the Left Wing Programme, would mark the opening stage of Britain's socialist revolution.

But it will not be achieved without the working class fully engaging in the electoral struggle. This necessitates the building of a movement outside of parliament which has the working class at its core, whose political expression is backed by the mass of working people across Britain.

Winning elections in England, Scotland and Wales will be necessary to ensure that such a Left Wing Programme has the democratic endorsement of the people. Popular support and participation will be vital when countering attempts by monopoly capitalism and its supporters – within and outside the state apparatus – to challenge and sabotage the left government and its policies.

Questions for Discussion

- A strategy involves much more than a set of aims, policies or demands. What are the key elements of the Alternative Economic and Political Strategy and how are they related?
- The policies of the Left Wing Programme form a key part of the Alternative Economic and Political Strategy. In what way do they seek to take the struggle forward?
- To what extent does local government reinforce state-monopoly capitalist power and to what extent can it be used to resist?
- What is the role of the Morning Star in relation to the economic, political and ideological fronts of the class struggle?

Recommended Reading:

White: Building an Economy for the People (Manifesto)

Katz & Bain: We Want Real Jobs (CP)

Communist Party: From Each According to their Means (CP)

Session 6 – Towards Socialism and Communism

Winning state power and socialism

The revolutionary strategy proposed by *Britain's Road to Socialism* is based on the understanding that the state is a machine for the oppression of one class by another.

This is not an over-simplification or a one-dimensional view. Indeed, Marxists have been at the forefront of identifying and analysing the complexities of the modern state and its various functions.

However, these complexities cannot be allowed to confuse the question and mask the essential nature of the state. It exists to defend the economic and social system and the ruling class in whose interests that system operates.

Whether it's the workings of a legal and judicial system founded on the principle of private property, the use of the armed forces to ensure the extraction of super-profits abroad, or the role of the state broadcasting system in marginalising dissent and whitewashing the crimes of imperialism, the state acts to maintain and reproduce the current system of inequality and exploitation.

The election of a left government will not change this. A host of mechanisms within parliament and the political system, as well as outside them, help to maintain and where possible widen the gulf between the people and their elected representatives.

It is on this question that the strategy outlined in BRS differs fundamentally from those on the left who support a parliamentary road to socialism. For communists, there needs to be fundamental change not only in terms of who runs the state apparatus, but in the very structure, role and character of the state. A left government in Britain would be surrounded not only by top state personnel who are hostile to socialism, but also by a state apparatus designed to protect and maintain capitalism – not to abolish it.

Even the most modest measures to shift the balance of power towards the working class are likely to come under sustained attack from within the state, the capitalist media and elsewhere.

The only long-term solution to this problem is to move beyond the parliamentary struggle. The working class must take state power from the capitalist class and use it to begin building socialism and defeating all attempts at counter-revolution.

Britain's Road to Socialism does not envisage this struggle as a single decisive battle. Rather, it will be a revolutionary process, going through a number of distinct but inter-connected stages, proceeding from the contradictions within capitalism and within the state itself.

The inability of a democratically-elected left government to make changes without facing serious opposition from within the state will help to expose the nature of capitalist democracy. This leads directly to the need to replace it with a socialist democracy in which the great mass of the people can participate directly in the exercise of state power.

As BRS argues, 'new bodies of working class and popular power are likely to be necessary to monitor or take over state functions', the aim being to 'restructure and then replace ... the administrative and political apparatus ... with one designed to dismantle capitalism and construct a system that serves the interests of society as a whole' (p59).

Although this struggle is an ongoing process, its purpose is the essence of revolution: the taking of state power by the working class. While mass extra-parliamentary activity and the election of a left government would represent an important first stage, it is the process that follows that will prove decisive.

BRS also addresses the question of the international balance of forces during the struggle for socialism. It is highly likely that a left government in Britain would face a huge propaganda offensive; attacks on sterling and the

government's ability to borrow in financial markets; restrictions on imports from Britain; and other measures of destabilisation.

Nonetheless, it is important not to overestimate these dangers. As BRS puts it:

'The policies in the Left Wing Programme are intended to reduce vulnerability to outside pressure and sabotage. This can be done, for instance, by taking strategic sectors and enterprises in the British economy into public ownership. Imposing exchange and capital controls, closing down tax havens and taxing the wealthy and monopoly profits would counter an attack on sterling and reduce the need for government borrowing' (p57)

Ultimately, it will be for the working class and the popular anti-monopoly alliance it has constructed to lead in both building and defending socialism in Britain. There are many lessons we can learn from previous and existing socialist countries. But socialism – and the higher stage of communism – will be an expression of the will of the British working class and popular movement.

'There is no reason why people should not comprehend that we share this Earth in common, that we are interdependent, that the individual good of the vast majority requires the collective good and that cooperation and is better than conflict.

'For the sake of humanity, the future is communism'.

Questions for Discussion

- What distinguishes working class democracy from a simple extension of bourgeois democracy?
- What is the difference between assuming government office and taking state power?
- In what way does the development of monopoly capitalism prepare the economic basis for socialism?
- In what ways is democracy curtailed by private ownership?

Recommended reading:

Lenin: 'Democracy' & Dictatorship (marxists.org)

Levy: Leninism, Democracy & Britain's Road to Socialism (Communist Review)

Foster: The Case for Communism (CP)

District Questions

The following questions have been identified as a basis for study to take place across Party Districts and Nations. These study sessions may be organised via the Party meeting software, or via a more ongoing correspondence method. One option is for branches to discuss the questions collectively, then present their findings to each other at a virtual or physical District/Nation education session.

Session 1 – Capitalism and Exploitation

- What is the breakdown of employment in your local area? Who are the key employers? Are they public sector or private sector?
- How has this changed over time? What are the reasons for this change?
- In what way are these workers exploited? Is there evidence of super-exploitation of specific groups of workers?
- What impact have periodic crises had on workers in your area?
- What are the implications of the above for organising resistance to capitalism and recruiting workers to the Communist Party?

Session 2 - State-Monopoly Capitalism in Britain

- Pick an example of one area of struggle in your local community – this may be a workplace struggle or strike, or it may be a community or political struggle. Try to map how power is exercised by decision-makers on this issue. What affects or circumscribes the decision-making of local managers, employers or government on this issue? On whom are they dependent?
- Make an equivalent power map of the workers involved in the struggle. What are their current sources of power? What potential resources do they have to draw upon? How will this affect the strategy they need to pursue?
- What are the weak links in the employer's/politician's position? Where should workers focus their energy?
- How could the Party play a positive role in relation to this struggle? Can you identify the key points where the Party could engage and make a difference?

- How can the analysis of state-monopoly capitalism be raised in the course of the struggle? What can be done to develop the consciousness of the workers involved?

Session 3 – The Case for Socialism

- Pick a key local industry, service or utility. What would be the advantages and disadvantages of it being publicly owned?
- At what level would this industry best be organised – local, regional or national? Would different decisions be best taken at different levels? Can you compile a list for each level?
- What could democratic or progressive public ownership look like in this case? Who would be the democratic decision-makers? Would this involve a combination of the workers and the users of this industry, service or utility? If so, what would the balance look like?
- How would this look different under socialism? How would you explain this vision to a worker or user of the industry, service or utility in its current form?
- What are the key campaigns or struggles that could bring us closer to the models described above? Are these campaigns for public ownership, workplace battles over professional control, something else, or a combination?

Session 4 – The Labour and Progressive Movements

- Map the labour movement in your local community. What does it consist of? What are the relative strengths of its constituent elements?
- Add to your map other progressive/democratic campaigns. To what extent do these overlap with the working class and its organised forces in the labour movement? To what extent do they draw in unorganised workers and/or members of other classes?
- What is the attitude of the local Labour Party to these different organisations and campaigns? How deeply is it embedded within the local movements you have identified?
- How and why might the attitude of the

Communist Party be different?

- What concrete actions could you take to build the unity of these forces and to embed the Communist Party within a broad democratic anti-monopoly alliance on a local scale?

Session 5 - An Alternative Economic and Political Strategy

- Take one policy, or group of policies from the Left Wing Programme. What groups of people might this policy appeal to? List as many as you can.
- How might this policy be framed to appeal to the different groups you have identified? What might their particular interests be and how could these be incorporated into the framing of the policy?
- What links and alliances might need to be built in order to develop campaigning around this policy or set of policies?
- What would be the distinctive role of the Party in this work? What would the initial steps be?
- How does this policy fit with the wider Alternative Economic and Political Strategy and how, in practice, could those who support it be won to the wider strategy?

Session 6 – Towards Socialism and Communism

- BRS envisages that “new forms of popular participation and direct democracy” (p62) will emerge during the construction of socialism. What expressions of working class democracy currently exist in your local area?
- Which groups of workers are engaged in these organisations and which groups effectively have no experience of real democracy under the capitalist system?
- How are these existing structures of working class democracy related to the formal structures of democracy in your local area?
- What can be done to strengthen and develop popular participation and direct democracy, either through the strengthening of existing structures or the development of new structures in the course of the struggle?
- How can the question of democracy most effectively be raised with workers in your local community? What examples and arguments can help them to see the “limited, distorted and precarious” nature of democratic rights in capitalist society (p60)?

Further Study

The questions for further study of each section have been organised into themes, reflecting the key areas of the relevant BRS chapter. It is not envisaged that all the questions listed would be covered in a single session. This would lead to a shallow discussion in which the relevant concepts are not covered in sufficient detail.

In selecting questions for discussion, it is suggested that one of the following methods is adopted:

1. For a focused discussion on one of the four themes identified, one specific set of questions may be chosen. This will be most appropriate for branches where a good understanding of BRS or the relevant chapter already exists amongst all comrades. It is particularly recommended for revisiting areas which have arisen from a previous more general discussion.
2. In certain circumstances, it may be decided that a single questions, of particular relevance to the branch, should be chosen as the focus for discussion. In this case, the comrade introducing the session will want to break this down into a number of smaller questions to guide the discussion and maybe give some thought to specific texts for the set reading for the session.

Session I – Capitalism and Exploitation

Set 1

How is surplus value created by workers and appropriated by capitalists?

Are public sector workers exploited in the same way?

What is super-exploitation and how does it occur?

What is the role of ideology in developing and maintaining super-exploitation?

Set 2

What was the basis of the shift from early capitalism to the stage of imperialism?

What are the key features of imperialism and how does it differ from earlier stages of capitalism?

How has imperialism changed since Lenin's time?

What are the similarities and differences between the Marxist account of imperialism and the everyday use of the word?

How does the term "globalisation" conceal and confuse?

Set 3

In what way is the environmental crisis linked to the capitalist mode of production?

Would socialism make the solution of this crisis inevitable?

What might a socialist solution to the climate crisis involve?

How would a socialist solution to the climate crisis differ from the solutions advocated by others?

What similarities are there?

Set 4

How are profits maintained during the early stages of a crisis of overproduction?

What impact does this have on the crisis itself?

What is the distinction between the general crisis of capitalism and periodic crises of overproduction?

What lessons can be drawn from the economic and financial crisis which began in 2007?

What is alienation and why does it matter?

Session 2 - State-Monopoly Capitalism in Britain

Set 1

What are the key features of state-monopoly capitalism?

How does this affect our understanding of the state as an instrument of the ruling class?

What implications does the development of state-monopoly capitalism have for strategic alliances between the working class and sections of the capitalist class?

What examples are there of the British state acting to secure super-profits for British monopolies internationally?

What examples are there of the British state acting to secure super-profits for British monopolies domestically?

Set 2

What are financial derivatives and how do they work?

What is meant by the process of 'financialisation' of the British economy?

What has driven this process and what impact has it had?

How would you characterise the relationship between the City of London, the EU and US finance capital over the last 30 years?

What impact has this relationship had on British manufacturing?

How might this be affected by Brexit?

Set 3

How would you characterise the role played by the EU over the past 30 years?

What are the immediate opportunities and dangers created by Brexit?

BRS suggests that some sections of capital will seek to "pursue an aggressive policy of free trade agreements with the US, China, India, Japan and elsewhere" (p18), whilst others will seek continued alignment with EU monetarist policies.

How can both dangers be avoided?

What is the military, political and economic role played by NATO?

Set 4

Why did capital prefer a Tory government in 1979 and a New Labour government in 1997?

What were the shifts in ruling class strategy in the period 2008-2010 and how were these represented in the arena of politics?

What threats did a Left-led Labour government pose to ruling class strategy in Britain and internationally?

What limitations would a Left-led Labour government have faced, both externally and internally?

Session 3 – The Case for Socialism

Set 1

What are the limits of social democracy?

Using concrete examples, what is the impact of social democracy's failure to involve and mobilise the working class and its allies beyond elections?

What are the contradictions within the welfare state under capitalism?

If the state is best understood, in Lenin's words, as "an instrument for the exploitation of the oppressed class", why do communists support the concept of state education?

Set 2

What benefits did the October revolution bring to:

- the peoples of the USSR?
- the working class in advanced capitalist countries?
- the peoples of the Third World?

What factors contributed to the collapse of socialism in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe?

What are the lessons for British socialists?

How has China pursued a different path to the Soviet Union and what are the intentions of this approach?

What lessons can be drawn from the experience of socialist countries in the 20th and 21st centuries?

Set 3

In what way does capitalist ownership of the economy produce “crisis, destruction, inequality and waste on an enormous scale” (p24)?

Why do capitalist markets tend towards monopoly?

What is the relationship between capitalist public ownership, progressive public ownership and socialist public ownership?

Is there a relationship between public ownership and tackling climate change?

Set 4

How does the description of oppression in BRS draw on the analysis presented in *Women & Class*?

What is the relationship between ideology, oppression and super-exploitation?

BRS argues that ideologies of oppression operate across class boundaries. What impact does this have on the composition of movements against oppression?

If ideologies of oppression apply across class boundaries, why is the impact of oppression felt most severely by those in the exploited classes?

In what way does socialism provide the material basis to end oppression?

Session 4 – The Labour and Progressive Movements

Set 1

How does the nature of capitalist exploitation give the working class both the means and necessity of ending capitalism?

Does the exploitation of public sector workers differ from that of private sector workers and, if so, what are the implications of this for class struggle?

What about those workers officially classed as ‘self-employed’ but who are in fact directly exploited by their de-facto employer? How do these workers differ from the genuinely self-employed?

What are the intermediate strata of the population and how can they be won for the anti-monopoly alliance?

Is it important to win small businesses to the side of the labour movement and, if so, how can the organised working class do it?

Set 2

What were the main causes of Labour’s electoral defeat in 2019 and how can the labour movement overcome them?

What are the lessons of the Left leadership of the Labour Party 2015-2020 and its defeat in the 2020 leadership election?

How would you characterise the relationship between the Communist Party and the Labour Party?

Why is ‘left unity’ not a substitute for labour movement and working class unity?

What is the role of the local trade union councils in the labour movement?

Set 3

What is the relationship between the working class and the progressive movements and alliances which have been built to resist specific aspects of monopoly capitalism?

How is this different from the relationship between the working class and the intermediate strata?

How can involvement in these progressive movements and alliances bring people to class politics?

Why is it important for the organised working class to play a role in these progressive movements and alliances?

What is the role of local trades union councils in bringing together the organised working class and the progressive movements and alliances?

Set 4

How does the Communist Party differ from other political parties?

What is the role of democratic centralism in building an effective organisation to fight capitalism?

How is the Communist Party’s internationalism manifested in the context of the struggle for socialism in Britain?

What is the role of the Party’s programme *Britain’s Road to Socialism* and how should it be used within the

movement?

In what way can the Communist Party provide 'revolutionary leadership' to the movement and how is this different from the leading role of the working class?

Session 5 – An Alternative Economic and Political Strategy

Set 1

A strategy involves much more than a set of aims, policies or demands. What are the key elements of the Alternative Economic and Political Strategy and how are they related?

What is meant by "democracy is not an institution but a process of emancipation" (p42)?

How can a high level of trade union consciousness exist in the working class alongside a much lower level of revolutionary consciousness? How can we transform one into the other?

Set 2

BRS states that, "the labour and progressive movements need a unifying programme of alternative policies" (p42). Why is this necessary?

The policies of the Left Wing Programme form a key part of the Alternative Economic and Political Strategy. In what way do they seek to take the struggle forward?

In what way do the policies of the Left Wing Programme appeal to different sections of society? Think of specific groups, individuals, campaigns and how they could be won to support the LWP and the broader aims of the Alternative Economic and Political Strategy.

To what extent are the policies of the Left Wing Programme fixed aims and to what extent are they dynamic, changing with time?

Set 3

To what extent is state-monopoly capitalist power exercised at the following levels:

- the constituent nations of Britain (England, Scotland, Wales);
- Britain;
- international institutions, such as the EU, NATO, IMF, WTO;

and what prospects are there of organising resistance at each of these levels?

What conclusions can we draw from this in terms of the question of Scottish and Welsh independence?

What advantages would progressive federalism bring to the daily lives of workers in your area?

To what extent does local government reinforce state-monopoly capitalist power and to what extent can it be used to resist?

Set 4

How does the monopoly media help reinforce the hegemony of the ruling class?

What is the role of the Morning Star in relation to the economic, political and ideological fronts of the class struggle?

In what way is Britain's Road to Socialism reflected in the pages of the Morning Star?

What does your Party branch do to win new readers for the Morning Star? How could this be improved?

What does your Party branch do to ensure coverage of local labour and progressive movement stories in the Morning star? How could this be improved?

Session 6 – Towards Socialism and Communism

Set 1

What kind of external threats might a Left government in Britain face?

What domestic measures may be necessary to reduce our vulnerability to outside pressure and sabotage?

What are the arguments against the possibility of socialism being developed in one country and why are these rejected by Communists?

How have existing socialist countries protected themselves external threats whilst developing their own model of socialism?

Set 2

BRS refers to working class rule as the “dictatorship of the proletariat” (p61). In what sense is the term dictatorship used here?

What distinguishes working class democracy from a simple extension of bourgeois democracy?

What is the difference between assuming government office and taking state power?

What is the relevance of our understanding of democracy and state power to the current stage of the struggle for a socialist Britain?

Set 3

Marx and Engels always argued against the utopian socialists of their time that it was not possible to set out a blueprint of what a future society would look like. Why then does BRS include sections on *Building a Socialist Society* and *The Transition to Full Communism*?

In what way does the development of monopoly capitalism prepare the economic basis for socialism?

In what way does the development of monopoly capitalism make it more difficult to envisage socialism as an alternative?

Will small businesses, the self-employed, cooperatives and the voluntary sector have a role to play in the development of socialism and, if so, how could this be balanced with the demand for economic democracy at a national level?

Set 4

In what ways is democracy curtailed by private ownership?

What role might economic planning play in a socialist society in the 21st century?

BRS envisages that “new forms of popular participation and direct democracy” (p62) will emerge during the construction of socialism. What are the possible bases for this under capitalism and are there any precedents in previous revolutions?

What impact would economic democracy have on culture?

Further Reading

This section lists a variety of texts that may prove useful for further study of BRS. It is recommended that this list is made available for comrades who wish to do some broader reading around the sessions, and that it may prove useful for groups or individuals organising further study beyond the basic BRS course, as outlined in the previous section. If a text from this section is being used as set reading (for example in a more focused further study class), it is important to ensure that all comrades have access to the text with enough time to read and digest it.

All texts in this section should be approached critically, as should all reading, as they represent a variety of viewpoints, some of which are contradictory with each other and with the analysis set out in BRS. It is only by approaching reading critically, and through the clash of ideas, and of course the interaction of this with practical struggle, that we sharpen our political analysis.

Aaronovich: The Road from Thatcherism – session 5

Althusser: Ideology and the ISAs – session 6

Azad: Heroic Struggle, Bitter Defeat – session 3

Bottoms: Cuba's Socialist Revolution (CP) – session 3

Communist Party: A world to Save (CP) – session 1

Communist Party: Workers of All Lands (CP) – sessions 2, 5

Communist Party: China's Line of March (CP) – session 3

Connolly: The Reconquest of Ireland – session 3

Coyle: Lies, Damn Lies and Anti-Communism (CP) – session 3

Davis: Women, Race and Class – session 3

Davis: Marx 200 (particularly Benton on Ecological Marx and O'Neill on Political Ecology) – session 1

Davis: Comrade or Brother – session 4

Engels: Origins of the State, Private Property and the Family – sessions 2, 6

Engels: Letter to Joseph Bloch - session 1

Griffiths: Marx's Das Capital and Capitalism Today (Manifesto) – session 1

Griffiths: The EU, Brexit and Class Politics (CP) – session 2

Griffiths: Nationality, Nations and Imperialist Globalisation – session 5

Fine & Saad-Filho: Marx's Capital – session 1

Foster: The EU, For the Monopolies, Against the People (CP) – session 2

Harvey: Limits to Capital – session 1

Harvey & Hood: The British State – sessions 2, 6

Hoffman: The Gramscian Challenge – session 6

Keeran & Kenny: Socialism Betrayed – session 3

Latham: The State and Local Government (Manifesto) – sessions 2, 5, 6

Latham: Who Stole the Town Hall? – session 5

Lenin: The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky – session 6

MacDonald: Neoliberalism is Bad for your Health (CP) – session 1

Mao: On Contradiction – session 1

Marx: Wage-Labour and Capital – session 1

Marx: Theses on Feuerbach – session 4

Meszaros: Marx's Theory of Alienation – session 1

Miliband: Capitalist Democracy in Britain – sessions 2, 6

Miliband: The State in Capitalist Society – session 6

Murray: The Imperial Controversy (Manifesto) – session 1

Murray: The Fall and Rise of the British Left – session 4

Slovo: Has Socialism Failed? – session 3

Feedback Form

Course & Session:

Course organiser details:

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Position (if relevant):

Organisation:

Attendance:

How did the session go?

Were there any issues that arose?

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank Liz Payne, John Foster, Mary Davis, Rob Griffiths and Anita Wright for the preparation of introductory material (which has been further edited in the production of this guide). We would also like to thank David Grove, who developed many of the original questions on which this study guide is based, in the context of BRS study in the Greater Midlands District of the Party.



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