

in the Socialist and Communist Parties, not only in elections, but also politically and organizationally. It is therefore impossible to make any real progress towards the unity of the proletarian front while disregarding this relative confidence or by assuming that the Socialist or Communist workers will join this front regardless of the attitudes and reactions of their own leaderships.

It follows that a policy of united front directed towards the Socialist and Communist Parties is a *tactical component of the general strategic orientation*. But that is all it is—a component of, and not a substitute for, this orientation. This is particularly true since the maximum unification and politicization of the entire proletariat requires *both* the commitment of the Socialist and Communist workers *and* a break by the great majority of these workers with the options of class collaboration upheld by the bureaucratic apparatuses.

It is interesting to note, by the way, that the simplistic reduction of the strategy of unification of the proletarian forces and maximum elevation of class consciousness to the policy of the united front of the Socialist and Communist Parties is frequently paralleled by the spontaneist illusion that the actual formation of such united fronts is alone sufficient for the workers to break with the reformists, by virtue of the breadth of united struggles that would result. Even more illusory and spontaneist is the notion that the experience of a 'government without capitalist ministers' would suffice to open the road to a break by the toiling masses from reformism and to the formation of a genuine, anti-capitalist 'workers' government'.

The experience of history shows that these notions are false. It is enough to recall, for example, that after no less than *six* 'pure' Labour governments in Britain—and by that I mean governments containing no bourgeois ministers—the reformist apparatus continues to maintain its grip on the majority of the working class, even though this apparatus is integrated into the bourgeois state and bourgeois society more tightly than ever and even though it advocates and practises a policy of ever closer class collaboration with big capital.

The tactic of the united front serves the strategy of unification of the proletariat and elevation of its consciousness only if various conditions are adequately fulfilled.

First, united-front proposals addressed to the Communist and

Socialist Parties must centre on the most burning issues of the class struggle and must call upon the leaderships of these parties to unite in order to fight for specific objectives that *articulate the interests of the workers* on these issues. They must therefore contain a programmatic facet—otherwise they could even (under revolutionary conditions) facilitate operations against the working class.

Second, these proposals must be formulated in a manner that is credible to broad masses, at times when it appears possible to implement them and in forms that take due account of the level of consciousness of the workers who still follow these parties. In other words, one of the essential functions of these proposals is *actually to bring common action about*, or at least to exert such pressure from the ranks that the apparatuses would have to pay a high price for their refusal to opt for the road of united action.

Third, either through the actual achievement of the united front (which is, of course, by far the most favourable variant) or through mounting pressure from the ranks in favour of the front, these proposals must unleash a process of mobilization, struggle, and, at a certain point, self-organization of the masses either through the broadening of the front itself or through the struggle for it. This process, which is related to the growing role of the revolutionary party, accentuates the objective strength of the proletariat, increases its self-confidence, raises its level of consciousness, leads massive sectors of the working class to break with reformist ideology and strategy, and cultivates the capacity of the workers to go beyond the bureaucratic apparatuses in action.

Fourth, in order to facilitate this entire process, the revolutionary party has to link these united-front proposals with warnings to the workers about the real nature and objectives of the leaderships of the Socialist and Communist Parties; there must be no illusion that the character of these parties can be changed through the united front; there must be no reliance on these leaderships (or on a government composed of them) to implement the objectives of the united front and to defend the interests of the proletariat. The call for the united front must therefore be accompanied by the preparation of and call for initiatives by the workers themselves to solve their problems through their own mobilization, their own struggles, and their own self-organization on the broadest possible scale. The united front