Workers' Weekly

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Our message on May Day 1994:

There Is a Way Out of the Crisis!

IS there a way out of the crisis? This is the question preoccupying the minds of many millions of working people, unemployed, pensioners, students and other sections of society at this time of May Day, 1994. Is there no end to the crisis in health care? What is to be done about the problems of the education system? Is there a way to put a stop to the scourge of 10% or 4 million unemployment? How can the worries of job insecurity, the difficulties of the working poor and the lack of rights of working people be eliminated? Alongside such questions arises that of how people can gain control over the direction of their lives.

It can be said that although such questions are asked countless times, positive answers that people can believe in are hard to come by. The government demands that working people make ever greater sacrifices for the crisis to be solved. They promote that only by making the priority the success of "business" can a way forward be found. In opposition to this, our view is, yes, there is a way out of the crisis, but it lies precisely in rejecting the government's policies on each and every front.

On this May Day, it is necessary for the working class to affirm that there is a way out of the crisis. The policies that will remove the block on the path to progress for society are those which put the well-being of the people at the centre. This is the programme which the workers, the class given rise to by modern industrial production, must inscribe on their banner. This is the programme the workers must take to all sections of society. Our Party, RCPB(ML), is convinced that it is more than ever a vital necessity for the working class to assume its leading role in society so that the path out of the crisis can be opened up.

Despite the fact that the apologists for the interests of big business, those who promote that the responsibility of the workers lies in working for the success of capital, are denying that the working class should have this role, the class consciousness of workers is growing. They are opposing those who suggest that the only course open to them is to increase the competitiveness of British business, and that the working class should not lead society forward by having its own independent programme, a programme for the creation of a new society. The struggles, too, of working people are growing, with the working class and other working people in the forefront against the government's policies. The struggles in the fields of health care, education and other social issues need only be mentioned. The working class is beginning to rally round it all those social forces interested in deep-going transformations in society.

The message of this May Day most importantly centres around the working class taking up its responsibility as the leaders of society. For the working class to elaborate and disseminate its programme for solutions to the problems of society, for the way out of the crisis, is the order of the day. The crux of this programme is the fight to oppose those policies which are taking society back towards medievalism, and instead put forward those policies which have as the starting-point that society should be responsible for the claims of all its members, that it should guarantee the lives and liberties of all, that workers have rights by virtue of their being workers just as every human being in society has rights by dint of their being human. Spending on social programmes and public services should be seen as something which it is unthinkable to cut while people are in need. It should be seen as an investment in the future which should be increased not decreased, as an obligation of society so that the highest level of services and culture is available to all. Such

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Forwards or backwards?

A fierce struggle is developing over the issue of whether society should move forwards or backwards.

The big monopolies, which control all the most powerful means of propaganda, are trying to impose their own agenda on society. According to this, the state should have no obligation to meet the needs of the members of society with regard to welfare provision, social services, pensions, health care, education and other social spending. Such a programme has been under way throughout the last decade and more.

If the state does not take responsibility for the welfare of all members of society, then who will? Each individual will be left to fend for themselves. And this is what is intended. Those well able to look after themselves will continue to get richer at the expense of the majority.

Earlier this month, a Conservative Party think tank, *Conservative Way Forward*, issued a draft document on social security policy. Its proposals include a new retirement age of 67, drastic curbs on housing benefit, abolition of the state earnings related pension, Serps, and a freezing of child benefit, so that it is gradually phased out. In addition, it is proposed that anyone who opts out of receiving state welfare payments should receive rebates on their national insurance contributions. Claiming that the "welfare system has failed", the paper proposes the abolition of universal benefits; child benefit, for example, is claimed to be "unsustainable".

Whilst the *Conservative Way Forward* group is not an official government body, its proposals are very much in tune with government thinking and the philosophy behind its proposals is clearly the same. It reflects the direction which the offensive against the rights of working people is taking at the present time. What stand should workers take in the face of this attempt to take society backwards, to treat society as a collection of individuals left to fend for themselves and take away the responsibility of the state to look after the interests of all?

It is not enough to complain about what is occurring. The working class needs to have its own proposals for how society should be run. The establishment of systems of universal health care, education and benefits in this century is one of the advances arising out of the struggle against medievalism. The question now is whether society should take this struggle against medievalism to its logical conclusion in terms of the provision of welfare and other services or whether it should go back to a medieval superstructure while keeping a capitalist economic base. Using the notion that society is merely a collection of individuals looking after themselves, the government is taking the stand that individuals have no claim on society but that moneylenders and business alone have.

A fundamental feature of a modern society is that it should be run in the interests of all members of the society. Workers need to take the lead on this front by demanding that society should be run in this way and that social security provision must be based on the principle of providing the maximum available to all members of society rather than services being available to those who can afford them. Rather than social spending on benefits, health, education and other social programmes being cut back, it should be seen as an investment in the future of society and increased.

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Party's message on May Day 1994

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spending cannot be seen as wasteful "expenditure" while the whole direction of the economy is geared to making maximum profits and windfall gains, it cannot be maintained that social services and other necessities are not affordable while repayments to the moneylenders are. RCPB(ML) calls on the working class to take the lead in the struggle for such policies and against the cuts, uniting all people in this fight.

At the same time, in our opinion, the working class must take up the call for the renewal of the political process, for changes to the political system so that the people themselves are empowered, so that they can make decisions on all issues affecting their lives. The working class must call for a modern constitution for Britain, for a modern state based on the equality of the freely participating nations. It is also a demand of the working class that the British government take its recognition of the right of the Irish people to self-determination to its logical conclusion, and unilaterally withdraw from northern Ireland. That Britain halt its policy of militarisation, end its policy of political and monetary integration with the European Union and withdraw from it, must also be the call of the workers. They must further demand that Britain ends its membership of the NATO alliance and stop meddling in the internal affairs of other countries. They must call for the democratisation of international affairs.

It is important on May Day to draw attention to the international perspective. Workers in Britain have seen the tragedies which have unfolded as the UN Security Council has been used as an instrument of the big powers, intervening wherever they wish it to, even committing aggression, as it did in Somalia and Iraq and is doing today in Bosnia. They are increasingly conscious of the fact that the uprisings of the people in eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and other countries demanding change have been utilised by world reaction to strengthen exploitation and oppression. However, throughout the world the working class is rising to face the situation, with the International Communist Movement in the lead. The British working class expresses solidarity with its sisters and brothers in other countries.

The issues of the working class further affirming its role as the leader of society and how to further open the path to the progress of society must become burning questions in the workers' and communist movement. In this respect, we believe that RCPB(ML) is making an important contribution through its work of developing its general line for this period. It has released its draft document **There Is a Way Out of the Crisis** for discussion, and we call on everyone interested to study and distribute the document and contribute to the discussion.

RCPB(ML), on this important occasion of May Day, calls upon the workers to:

1. Take up the programme that **There Is a Way Out of the Crisis**. This draft document which provides the full position of the line of RCPB(ML) is printed alongside other important documents on the same theme in the quarterly review of Marxist-Leninist thought *Discussion*, easily available from the Party (or see box below);

2. Oppose the cuts in education, health care and other social programmes and furnish support to all those waging struggles in these sectors by demanding that these cuts be reversed and investments increased;

3. Reject the government's stand that individuals have no claim on society, but that moneylenders and business alone have;

4. Fight for a socialist society on the basis of modern definitions, a society in which the claims of all are recognised by virtue of their being human.

DISCUSSION

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From Korea: Forty-Five Years Later

by Hardial Bains

AS reported in Workers' Weekly *Vol.21, No.8, of March 26, 1994, a delegation of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist), led by its national leader Hardial Bains, visited the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from February 12 to 22, at the invitation of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea. We are reprinting below the second extract (the first appeared last week) from the article written by Hardial Bains on the visit. The article first appeared in* Today/Tomorrow *Daily Fax Release.*

As the days passed and the program of visits, talks, receptions and cultural performances took their course and the people could be seen throughout the city pursuing their daily lives, a picture began to emerge of a dedicated and organized people, living a profound life which encompasses all aspects with the aim of improving their lot step by step. Going to the West Sea Barrage or to Panmunjon in the demilitarized zone or just looking at the residential areas, what came to mind was the thought that here is a country in which the people are the masters of their own destiny, a pre-condition for mastering nature.

From August 15, 1945, when Korea was liberated from the Japanese, through to the Korean war and since then, the people of Korea have been forced to live in a special and tense situation imposed by the US aggression and occupation. The USSR and the US had divided Korea along the 38th parallel, so that the Japanese could surrender to the Soviet Union in the northern zone and to the US in the southern. The Soviet armed power was removed from the northern zone soon after, while to this day the Americans maintain their armed occupation of the South and persist in their plans to destroy the North and enslave the whole of Korea. The country is divided, and the Americans have erected a concrete wall in their sector just south of the DMZ. The wall stretches the entire breadth of Korea for 240 km., from the West Sea of Korea to the East Sea of Korea, with only 10 km. around Panmunjon left free of it, protected instead by military police. Even animals and the river waters are impeded from moving freely from north to south and vice-versa. Only the birds have free access, while hundreds and thousands of families have been split and have not been permitted to see their relatives for decades-on-end or even exchange correspondence. Successive fascist regimes or, more recently, those claiming to be democratic, have been imposed in South Korea under US imperialist armed occupation, leading to untold suffering amongst the people there, widescale repression of the forces demanding the reunification of Korea and a broad movement against the violation of human rights. Our delegation had the honour of meeting with the well-known Korean People's Revolutionary Army war correspondent, Ri In Mo, who was arrested in the South during the war. When the POWs were returned, the authorities in the South refused to release him and condemned him to seven years in prison under wretched conditions. After he was released he was again imprisoned, this time for 17 years. However, after serving 15 years under terrible conditions, he was detained for another 12 in a preventative custody house and released in October 1988. Nonetheless, he was only finally permitted to go North to be reunited with his wife and daughter in 1993. All this long period of 34 years of incarceration and inhumane treatment has been justified on the basis that he was a "red." The South Korean authorities have held many prisoners like Ri In Mo who were strictly political, and they are accused of keeping others even today. This example is but one of the many which reveal the kind of democracy which exists in the South. People in the North and South do not live normal lives as they should, as can be seen by the huge deployment of US troops and weaponry in the South. Even the seas which surround Korea on three sides are cluttered with aggressive US naval ships.

Seeing the concrete wall built by the US is an experience which leaves a lasting impression. It is quite outrageous that the US, which made such a hullabaloo about bringing down the Berlin Wall, denies the existence of the concrete wall built by them, ten metres thick at the base and five metres thick at the top, with emplacements for guns and weapons of all kinds. It is also enlightening to see how the American and South Korean troops behave on their side of the demilitarized zone. For miles, the music they play and the abuse they shout towards the North Koreans can be heard, since it is broadcast with the aid of amplifiers which are so big they can be seen from miles away. It is a testimony to the kind of world which exists at this time. The US can do anything it likes and deny whatever it likes at will, while the peoples who are fighting for their freedom and independence are condemned as "terrorists", as "anti-democratic" and as "violators of human rights".

A strong feeling of anger against the US set in as the appreciation took hold of a people engaged in improving their lot on a planned basis, by depending on their own strength, while the

American government is trying to sabotage and block their progress. Yesterday it was the pretext of "containment", today of eliminating the "nuclear threat" from the Korean peninsula, as if it wasn't the US stockpile of nuclear warheads in the south which is the source of the danger. In a way, it is quite clear for anyone who wants to see that the role these forces play in Korea is the same as within their own countries; people want to improve their lot while the financial oligarchs have their plan, which is to maximize their profits and they care nothing about what happens to the people, either within their own countries or on the world scale.

It is impossible to shake the emotion one feels as one makes the acquaintance of the people of North Korea. It was not so difficult to note that a people who have built highways absolutely straight on the basis of eliminating any obstructions caused by mountains and who have built the West Sea Barrage on the basis of their own engineers and forces within five years, in order to separate the salt water from the fresh and shield Pyongyang from floods, reclaim tidal lands, and make a 400 km distance by land into an 8-minute car or train ride, will surely overcome the obstacles placed in the path of their reunification and happiness by the US.

To put an end to the nearly half a century of division and confrontation and reunify the country, the North Koreans are calling for the creation of a confederate state to represent all parties, all groupings and all the members of the nation from all walks of live, whether they be communists or nationalists, rich or poor, atheists or believers, while leaving intact the existing two systems and two governments. The unified confederal state in which the two regional governments of the North and the South are represented equally should be independent, peaceful and non-aligned, which does not lean to any great power.

There are many things in the DPRK which leave a lasting impression but nothing is of greater significance than what the Koreans have built for themselves and what the US and other countries have done to Korea in the past and what they are doing today.

Generally, those who have never been to North Korea do not know what to expect. In Canada, either no impression is created about that country at all, or the impression is of a poor, isolated country which is experiencing serious economic difficulties and where the people are oppressed and repressed, carrying out backbreaking manual labour in either the fields or the factories. Everything would be grey according to this scenario: colourless and cheerless. Basically, the standard anti-communist spectre of a giant prison-house is conjured up before one's eyes. In spite of oneself, this quasi-official view is not easy to dispel. Clearly, the terms "poor and isolated" have a political and ideological connotation. They infer that the problems of North Korea are of its own making and are due to the socialist system. But if North Korea is such a terrible place, how can the necessity of building a concrete wall to inhibit access be explained? How is it that the US has so many troops in the South and is threatening the people of the North? As in the case of any country, Korea too faces internal difficulties, but at this time, its problems are mainly external in nature. There are some difficulties in the economic sphere, especially the oil shortages, but their origin lies in external factors, not internal ones. Without the backing of the US armed forces, the wall between North and South Korea will fall. The Korean people and nation will be reunified and the people of Korea will themselves choose whether they want socialism or capitalism.

North Korea is part of Asia, while Canada is part of North America and has a lot of links with Europe. When visiting Korea, a Canadian has not only to keep in mind the world we live in, but also to watch out for Euro-centrism and anti-communism which distances the individual from what is being seen. It is a form of anti-consciousness which, of course, must be discarded, whether looking at reality within one's own country, internationally or within another country. As a communist, this problem is complicated by the fact that it is not enough to dismiss the issue on the basis of ideological sympathy. Communists are obligated to be objective and open-minded. They must look at everything with a critical eye, by keeping the aim of opening the path to progress in the forefront. A person imbued with an outlook, an ideology which is suspicious of communism, may ignore all that has been achieved, while a communist may ignore those aspects which may not look so great. However, there is an objectivity, a feeling coming from

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life itself, which tells yet another story. This is revealed in the very aim for which the DPRK was established. Is there a truth greater than this? Sports and cultural performances, educational institutions and art objects, all provide a deeper insight into Korea.

It was impressive to see the Great People's Study House in Pyongyang. It is far more than a public library. Besides books and periodicals to the tune of 30 million, videos and music of all kinds, the Study House provides the people with every facility for their studies and education. Topical conferences are held frequently, and resource people are available readily to assist the learning process, including professors who help the students with their work when requested. Some 12,000 people are accommodated in the People's Study House daily, and hundreds of workers from all over the country come to advance their knowledge within their own field of work or another. North Korea boasts of 1.7 million intellectuals out of a population of just over twenty million.

Visits to other institutions also bore witness to how the people have provided themselves with every facility to make life easier for themselves and advance their level of culture. A children's five-day care facility in the service of people on shift-work was testimony to the attention the state pays to the raising of the new generation. It is a centre where children of people employed in various professions who have long and irregular hours of work from Monday to Friday are cared for. Our delegation also visited the Mangyongdae Children's Palace where all the school children of Pyongyang, some 15,000, are bussed after school every day from 3 to 6 pm. to participate in extra-curricular activities. The palace features facilities for every kind of club and activity in the fields of sciences, the arts, dance and music, as well as sports and games. The economic goal set at this time to further improve the living standards of the people as the only aim of social production is a proof that it is the people who are in power in Korea and that the people exercise control over their lives.

The highlight of our delegation's visit was a meeting with the General Secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea and President of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Comrade Kim Il Sung. So much derisive and negative propaganda is carried against him by the Western media, but it was a great pleasure to meet him in person and have lunch with him. It can be said that, in many ways, he represents what is best in Korea, its patriotism and determination to carry on along an independent path in the profound sense of the word. Independence, it seems, is a way of life for the Koreans, a quality nurtured in its entirety in the decades of struggle in East, North and South Manchuria, where the Koreans, along with the Chinese, fought against the Japanese occupation and in the Paekto mountain guerilla base and throughout Korea proper. The struggle for independence from foreign domination in the course of the anti-Japanese liberation war and after, against the aggression of the US and its South Korean puppet regime, and the building of socialism, present in quintessential form all that the North Koreans hold most dear. Frank and open opinions fully confident in victory and a deep-going humane spirit - this was the distinct impression formed of the great leader of the Korean people, Comrade Kim Il Sung, who has been active in the patriotic struggle for independence and socialism since he was 13 years old, for the greater glory of the Korean people. This giant of a man who will be 82 on April 15 and who has fought so many battles in his sixty-nine years of political life, showed no signs of weariness or frustration, in spite of the twists and turns experienced in the battle against a barbaric enemy. On the contrary, he communicated in strong words that Korea shall never be a slave. Having read his *Reminiscences With the Century* in four volumes ending in 1936, in the course of our visit and since then, it became evident that here stands a man of revolutionary actions who has dedicated his life to the struggle for the creation of a new world.

The snow had almost melted by the time our delegation was ready to leave the DPRK. The beauty of Pyongyang was slowly emerging out of the grey and white shadows of the winter months. It is not a cosmetic beauty but a natural beauty which appears from the application of labour to nature, for the benefit of both. Soon the trees will blossom and the fountains will gush their water into the skies. The Taedong and other rivers will flow in all their majesty and the people will throng in the streets, their laughter adding to what is most noticeable in Pyongyang - that it is a city built by the people, for the people. If winter were the only spoiler, the DPRK would find ways to maintain the beauty of spring and fall all year around. Even in winter, at times of celebration, fresh flowers of all colours decorate the main intersections, preserved so as to withstand the winter cold.

As the delegation departed for the airport at the end of its stay in Korea, the thought of a people creating their own destiny kept coming to mind. Alas, imperialism is still around. It is that dark shadow cast over Korea which has divided the people and enforces hardships of all kinds, including those of an economic nature. Over forty years after the Korean war, one felt as if only there were

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A great step forward for the Azanian people

THIS week, the Azanian people celebrated the first elections in the history of South Africa to have taken place on the basis of the universal franchise.

This is a great step forward in the struggle during which thousands of martyrs laid down their lives to bring about an end to the barbaric apartheid system and to establish genuine democracy. The British government, which for so long was, along with the United States and other big powers, one of the biggest backers of the apartheid regime, is now welcoming and encouraging the establishment of a new government in South Africa. Why should the British government have changed its stand?

It has to be recognised that the demands which the Azanian people are making go beyond the establishment of the universal franchise. Whilst this is a great advance in the decades-long struggle, it will not end the struggle for the establishment of genuine democratic rights unless the demands which the people are making are turned into reality. For example, the state which implemented the apartheid system has not been destroyed, it has merely allowed an extension of the franchise. So, too, has the economic system which it protected and under which the Azanian people lived in enforced poverty, not been changed. Neither is there any suggestion that those, in South Africa or abroad, who benefited from the apartheid system will be punished for the crimes of colonialism or enforcing the apartheid system onto the Azanian people, or for the atrocities committed against them over so many years.

The Azanian people will not settle for anything less than the elimination of the economic basis of the apartheid system which benefited a tiny handful in South Africa and abroad at the expense of the overwhelming majority who were driven from their land. They will not settle for anything less than the elimination of the state under which colonialism and apartheid were enforced. Whilst Britain and other powers will attempt to give legitimacy to the new government and suggest that the struggle is over, workers and democratic forces in Britain need to exercise vigilance against this.

Workers' Weekly hails this milestone in the struggle of the Azanian people. We are confident that they will carry this struggle on under the new conditions through to the establishment of a genuinely democratic economic and political system in South Africa.

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some magic by which imperialism could be blown away. According to the Korean people, their unity around their Party and leader and their striving for freedom and independence are that magic. It is difficult not to see that magic operating in the DPRK. The Korean people are creating a life for themselves, full of human care. A song could be written expressing that splendour which can only be the creation of the finest of human emotions.

As the plane took off, our only wish was that this magic should become stronger as the Korean people go on defending what belongs to them, their independence and their future.

As the plane gained altitude piercing through the clouds, the feeling that the Korean people shall not be defeated became stronger and stronger. North Korea with its mountains and valleys and rivers and seas receded further and further into the distance, while the spirit of solidarity became stronger and stronger. What was it which made one love the people of the DPRK and wish them all the best? It was the spirit of freedom and independence which one cherishes oneself. It was clear that during this period of retreat of revolution, there are steps to be taken, things to be done, in order to take the offensive when conditions become ripe and the revolution goes into flow.

Our delegation did not go to North Korea to compare words, to see if they are one and the same. No, the delegation went there to see the deeds out of which spring the emotions, the warm feelings, proletarian love and affection. We went there with plenty, and we received plenty more. The visit of our delegation to the DPRK further strengthened that bond which exists amongst those fighting for their freedom and independence. A new reality of strengthening understanding, friendship and unity between the peoples of Korea and Canada was born. The coming months and years will witness its all-round development, leading to the normalization of relations between peoples put at war by the machinations of US imperialism.

The delegation of CPC(ML) returned home wishing the people of North Korea all the best in their struggle to make life even easier for themselves and for the peaceful reunification of their motherland. We wished them victory over the US threats and against their presence in the Korean peninsula. These were sincere wishes for the victory of their own kind of socialism, chosen by the Korean people themselves according to their own circumstances, on the basis of independence.

NATIONAL CONSULTATIVE CONFERENCE

Hampden Community Centre, 150 Ossulston Street, London NW1

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June 25 and 26, 1994

Opening Session: June 25, 9:00 a.m.

Closing Session: June 26, 5:00 p.m.

The Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) is organising a **National Consultative Conference** on June 25-26, 1994, in order to discuss the draft document released for discussion at the rally on March 19, 1994, celebrating the 15th anniversary of its founding.

The aim of this conference is to involve all the forces which are concerned about the present state of affairs in Britain and the world in elaborating the draft document **There Is a Way Out of the Crisis** and to begin planned work to build a practical programme on this basis.

All activists in various struggles, other Communist Parties, their leadership and rank-and-file and broad masses of the people are warmly invited to attend the conference where discussion will take place on a topic-by-topic basis in which individuals will contribute their comments by turn. A number of papers prepared by the Central Committee of RCPB(ML) will be presented in order to facilitate the discussion.

Anyone who would like to intervene on the basis of a prepared paper must contact RCPB(ML) at least two weeks before the National Consultative Conference takes place.

Hardial Bains, national leader of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist), has been invited to open this conference and participate in the discussion. Various other Communist Parties and organisations from across the five continents have also been invited to attend, along with progressive and democratic personalities.

The National Consultative Conference is the most important forum which has been organised by RCPB(ML) in order to promote discussion on the questions of vital interest for the working class and people of Britain and internationally. Everyone is welcome. A registration fee of £25 is required to meet the conference expenses. Sandwiches and refreshments will be provided during the proceedings.

The conference proceedings will also be made available in print and video form.

For further details contact RCPB(ML), 170 Wandsworth Road, London SW8 2LA. Tel: 071-627 0599

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