



# LIBERATION

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**WORKERS AND OPPRESSED, UNITE!**

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The General Election in Britain on May 7th 2015:

## Vote Labour - But No Illusions in the Milliband Leadership!

By Laurence Humphries, Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 20.3.2015

According to the opinion polls the 2015 general election is too close to call. There may be a minority Labour government or some sort of coalition with one of the smaller parties. The success of the *Scottish National Party* (SNP) may be a significant factor in the forthcoming elections. Scotland which has traditionally returned the highest number of Labour MP's may be challenged by the support in the referendum for the SNP.

The great majority of the working class in Britain has always supported the Labour Party which was formed in 1901 by workers organised in trade unions. The aim of the *Labour Representation Committee* was to campaign for Labour MP's to represent the working class in parliament. The British Labour Party is a bourgeois workers party representing the interests of the capitalist class as well as representing the wishes of the trade union bureaucracy which is a caste representing the wishes of capitalism at the very top of the trade unions. Their role is to ensure that their members vote and support Labour candidates in the forthcoming election.

### Social Crisis

Many workers and sections of the middle class are facing a massive onslaught by the present coalition government who are using the neoliberal austerity ideology to attack and suppress the working class and drag it further and further into poverty and degradation. The bankers and rich bourgeoisie are protected by this government whose role has been to dismantle all the social provision that Labour governments provided in the past like the NHS, social care, unemployment benefits and for people to be assisted by the state during periods of depression and slump.

Depression and misery has led to series of strikes over pensions wage claims and protecting decent working conditions. The bureaucratic caste in Labour and the trade unions has been careful to make sure that this does not lead to social explosion or insurrection.

Unemployment figures show the depression that British capitalism is suffering from. Despite official talk about "*improvement on the labour market*", there are still more than at least 1.91 million without a job. (1) Add to this that according to a TUC survey there are now about 1 million jobless people who are not included in the figures, because they are denied benefits.

Empirical research has shown that poverty is on a par with the

worst figures during the worldwide depression and slump in the 1930's. "*The UK is the world's sixth largest economy, yet 1 in 5 of the UK population live below our official poverty line*". (2)

The *Joseph Rowntree Foundation* has shown that poverty is not just affecting people out of work but people in work. "*In 2011/12, there were around 13 million people in poverty in the UK. Of these, around 6.7 million were in a family where someone worked. The remaining 6.3 million were in workless working-age families or families where the adults were retired. This is the first time in the history of this data series where in-work poverty has made up the majority of poverty*." (3)

A characteristic new development in a metropolitan capitalist nation is the emergence of so-called *Food Banks* which see a shocking rise in number of users. While the government cynically claims that "*there is no evidence of a link between welfare reforms and the use of food banks*", people on the ground know better. The *Trussell Trust*, the largest food bank provider in the UK, said benefit payments have been a particular problem since welfare changes were introduced just over a year ago. (4) This is as a result of the currently ruling coalition government of Conservatives and Liberal-Democrats driving people off the register to "prove" that unemployment is going down. What they are doing in fact is driving more and more people into poverty. "*The food bank charity the Trussell Trust, which handed out over 900,000 three-day food parcels in 2013/14, said 83% of its food banks reported that sanctioning is causing rising numbers to turn to them*". (5)

Zero hour contracts are another area where the coalition is driving people into casualization to benefit the rich patrons of the Tory party. "*The casualization of work leaves many on zero-hours contracts unable or unwilling to access existing employment rights. A common theme of callers to the Working Families helpline is stress and uncertainty; they are unable to predict how much they will earn in any week*". (6)

### Oppression of Black, Asian and Migrant People

National and ethnic minorities form an important part of the British population. According to the latest official census in 2011, white British people constitute 80% of the population in England and Wales, i.e. 1/5 of the population belong to national and ethnic minorities. Most of them are either black, Asians (mostly from the South-Asian sub-continent) or from Eastern Europe.

Black, Asian and migrant people constitute an ever bigger

share amongst the working class and in the urban centres. For example, in London in 2011, only 45% (3.7 million) out of 8.2 million usual residents were white British, i.e. the national and ethnic minorities constitute already the majority. In Leicester, the share of the white British is 60% and in Birmingham 65%. (7)

The huge majority of the national and ethnic minorities are nationally oppressed and super-exploited as labour forces. This means they are discriminated in the society because of their national and ethnic origins and they earn less than their white British class brother and sisters. Black, Asian and migrant people are disproportionately over-represented amongst the lower strata of the working class. In addition a substantial number belong to the lowest sectors of the self-exploiting petty-bourgeoisie. White British people, on the other hand, are disproportionately over-represented amongst the bourgeoisie, the upper middle class and the labour aristocracy. (8)

To give a few examples: 46% (1.22 million) of the Muslim population reside in the 10% most deprived, and only 1.7% (46,000) in the 10% least deprived local authority districts. (9) Around two-fifths of people from ethnic minorities live in low-income households, twice the rate for white people. Among those in working families, around 65% of Bangladeshis, 50% of Pakistanis, 30% of black Africans and 15-20% of Indians and black Caribbeans are in low income. These rates are much higher than those for white British (10%). (10) The capitalists gain from the super-exploitation of many migrants not only on an enterprise level but also via the state. According to the then minister for migration, Liam Byrne, the British economy grew by about £6 billion in 2006. According to the then financial minister, migrants' labour was responsible for 15%-20% of economic growth in Britain in the years 2001-2006. (11)

A study of the *International Organization for Migration* reported similarly that migrants in Britain paid \$4 billion more in taxes than they received in benefits in 1999-2000. (12)

During the crisis period which opened up in 2008, the national and ethnic minorities have been particularly hard hit. According to a recent report released by the Labour Party: "The number of young people from ethnic minority backgrounds who have been unemployed for more than a year has risen by almost 50% since the coalition came to power". (13)

### Imperialist Occupation

Britain is not an ordinary capitalist country – it one of the most important imperialist powers in the world. Britain's ruling class is the most important ally and has participated for many years in the barbarous imperialist war-drive led by the United States. As a result the US, British and other imperialists have occupied Afghanistan, Iraq and waged countless terror acts with their drones in other countries in the Middle East and Africa. The British government has sent hundreds of soldiers to help French imperialism occupy Mali and kill those they consider an obstacle so that they can control the vast resources in Western Africa. As a result hundreds of thousands of people have been slaughtered by British and US

soldiers and other European allies at the behest of the imperialist ruling class. Add to this Britain's long-standing occupation of Northern Ireland, which violates the Irish people's right to national self-determination.

The RCIT states that it is the primary duty of British socialists to oppose the imperialist policy of "its own" ruling class. It is therefore crucial to call for the immediate withdrawal of all British troops from foreign countries. We say: British army out of Afghanistan, Iraq, Northern Ireland, etc.! In addition the workers movement must demand the closure of all military bases on foreign soil.

In contrast to the left-reformists and centrists, the RCIT does not semi-heartily oppose imperialist wars and occupations. We support the resistance – including its armed wing – against imperialist aggressors – be it in Afghanistan, Iraq, Mali or Northern Ireland.

At the same time we oppose the bourgeois ideologies and leaderships which pre-dominate in the resistance movement. The RCIT calls on the working class to organize independently, to strive for leadership in the anti-imperialist movement and to connect the struggle against the imperialist monopolies and Great Powers with the international struggle to overthrow capitalism world-wide. (14)

### Program for Struggle

As we already elaborated elsewhere, revolutionaries should fight for a program for struggle. (15) They should advocate action councils and committees drawn from trade unionists, local communities and migrant organizations, some of these groups being the most oppressed and exploited. We should follow the example of the E 15 Focus Groups.

- 1) *Occupy empty housing!*
- 2) *Build defence groups to defend the occupiers from provocation of police or fascist attack!*
- 3) *Pass resolutions in trades councils and in trade union branches; No evictions to be carried out by trade unionists employed by councils or other housing groups!*
- 4) *Ensure that local authority housing departments have enough affordable housing and build council housing without the right to buy!*

The workers movement should mobilize through mass demonstrations and strikes to put forward the following demands for an incoming Labour government:

- 1) *Abolish the right to buy, transfer ownership of, or sell community buildings and public spaces!*
- 2) *Initiate a programme for the construction of council housing made available at rents tied to earnings!*
- 3) *Work with local homeless groups to requisition empty properties!*
- 4) *Immediately establish and activate rent tribunals!*
- 5) *Abolish the Bedroom Tax and Benefits Cap!*
- 6) *Abolish the New Universal Credit, reinstate housing benefits!*
- 7) *Reinstate secure tenancies, abolish short term contracts!*
- 8) *Repeal the 2012 act criminalizing squatting!*
- 9) *Full equality for migrants and ethnic/national minorities!*
- 10) *Immediately withdraw all British troops from foreign coun-*

*tries! British army out of Afghanistan, Iraq, Mali, Northern Ireland, etc.! Close all British military bases on foreign soil!*

Revolutionaries in Britain do not support pseudo-alternatives to Labour like the left-reformist alliance called the *Trade Union and Socialist Coalition* (TUSC) or the so-called *Left Unity* (LU). TUSC is an alliance dominated by members of the *Socialist Party* (CWI section in Britain) and the *Socialist Workers Party* (SWP). In past elections it polled in most constituencies only about 0.1 to 0.5% of the total vote. LU is an assembly of sectors of the old, demoralized reformist and centrist left. Both TUSC and LU spread a left-reformist program and do not represent a significant minority of the workers vanguard moving to the left. Therefore revolutionaries should not give a critical vote for TUSC or LU.

### Critical Support

There is no doubt that a majority in the working class and the more progressive sections of the middle class will vote for the Labour Party as a class response to the actions of the bourgeoisie in driving thousands into poverty and recession. Hence the RCIT recommends a critical vote for Labour on May 7<sup>th</sup>.

The RCIT stresses that it is important not to spread illusions about a Milliband government. True, Milliband and Balls are pledging that a future Labour government would deliver some sort of social reforms like the repeal of the Bedroom tax, the removal of zero hour contracts, and the repeal of the social care act in the NHS.

However, there can be no doubt that such a Labour government will be a capitalist government. Both Ed Milliband and Ed Balls are committed to a capitalist economy and have said they will cut public expenditure and make workers redundant in the public sector if the books do not balance.

In Bradford West, the RCIT calls for a critical vote for sitting MP, George Galloway. We do so because Galloway has built over the years organic roots amongst the Muslim minority by his record of campaigning against imperialist wars in the Middle East and Islamophobia. As stated above, these layers form an important sector of the oppressed and the lower strata of the working class. However, we warn against harbouring any illusions in Galloway's reformist opportunism which has been expressed in his political adaption to reactionary Arab regimes like those of Saddam Hussein and Bashar el-Assad, as well as by his alliance with a small clique of Muslim businessmen and reactionary community leaders. During this election campaign, socialists must issue a revolutionary programme warning of the coming betrayal of Milliband and his Labour government if elected. The RCIT proposes utilizing a united front tactic to try and win the best elements inside and outside the Labour Party over to a revolutionary programme. The RCIT proposes that revolutionaries should support all those in Labour trying to build a left-wing opposition against the leadership (e.g. like those around the "*Left Platform*" of John McDonnell and Jeremy Corbyn). They should, however, not refrain from criticising the left-reformist limitations of their policy and argue for an authentic revolutionary program. Such a program should contain demands like the following:

1) Nationalise all key companies under workers' control without paying compensation! Reinstate all public utilities that have privatised by both Labour and Tory led Governments!

2) Repeal the Anti-Trade Union Laws! Legalise the right to strike and withdraw your labour!

3) Cancel all household debts!

4) Oppose Milliband's racist immigration policies! For equality of black, Asian and migrant peoples! For all migrants' full citizenship rights, for the right to use their native tongue, and the right to all their cultural rights including the right of dress!

5) British army out of Afghanistan, Iraq, Northern Ireland, etc.! Victory to the Resistance!

6) *For a workers' government based upon councils of action and for an armed workers militia!*

7) *For a workers republic in Britain! For a United States of Europe!*

It is crucial to unite revolutionaries inside as well as outside the Labour Party on the basis of such a revolutionary program and to build a revolutionary workers' party. The RCIT looks forward to collaborating with British revolutionaries in order to achieve this goal and to build, as the first step, a pre-party organisation.

### Footnotes

(1) BBC: UK unemployment falls to 1.9 million, 21 January 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-30913960>

(2) OXFAM: Poverty in the UK, <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/our-work/poverty-in-the-uk>

(3) Tom MacInnes, Hannah Aldridge, Sabrina Bushe, Peter Kenway and Adam Tinson: *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion 2013*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, p. 26

(4) Brian Milligan: Food banks see 'shocking' rise in number of users, BBC, 16 April 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-27032642>

(5) Amelia Gentleman: 'No one should die penniless and alone': the victims of Britain's harsh welfare sanctions, *The Guardian*, 3 August 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/aug/03/victims-britains-harsh-welfare-sanctions>

(6) Sarah Jackson: Zero-hours workers scared to assert their rights, quoted in *The Guardian* online, 26 February 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/feb/26/zero-hours-workers-scared-assert-rights>

(7) Office for National Statistics: 2011 Census: Key Statistics for England and Wales, March 2011, p. 4 and 11.

(8) See on the RCIT's analysis of the oppression of migrants and the revolutionary answer see Michael Pröbsting: *The Great Robbery of the South. Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism*, 2013, chapter 8iv), pp 179-188. (The book can be read online at <http://www.great-robbery-of-the-south.net/>.) See also: *Marxism, Migration and revolutionary Integration*. These are a summary of a booklet on this issue which has been written in German language by Michael Pröbsting and which can be downloaded at <http://www.thecommunists.net/publications/werk-7/>. See also the respective chapters in the RCIT's program *The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto*, <http://www.thecommunists.net/rcit-manifesto/support-the-national-liberation-struggles/> and <http://www.thecommunists.net/rcit-manifesto/fight-against-oppression-of-migrants/>.

(9) Muslim Council of Britain: *British Muslims in Numbers. A Demographic, Socio-economic and Health profile of Muslims in Britain drawing on the 2011 Census*, London 2015, p. 18

(10) The Poverty Site: Low income and ethnicity, [www.poverty.org.uk/06/index.shtml](http://www.poverty.org.uk/06/index.shtml)

(11) House of Lords (Britain): Report - Economic Impact of Migration in UK (2008), p. 22

(12) International Organization for Migration: *World Migration. Costs and benefits of international migration* (2005), IOM World Migration Report Series Volume 3, p. 170

(13) Matthew Taylor: 50% rise in long-term unemployment for young ethnic minority people in UK, 10 March 2015 <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/mar/10/50-rise-in-long-term-unemployed-youngsters-from-uk-ethnic-minorities>

(14) See on this e.g. RKO: *The August Uprising in Britain - A Report of the RKO delegation on its visit in London in August 2011*, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/britain-report-from-uprising/>; Nina Gunić and Michael Pröbsting: *The strategic task: From the uprising to the revolution! These are not "riots" - this is an uprising of the poor in the cities of Britain!* 10.8.2011, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/britain-uprising-of-the-poor/>; Michael Pröbsting: *What would a revolutionary organisation have done? August uprising of the poor, the nationally and racially oppressed in Britain*, 18.8.2011, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/britain-august-uprising/>; Michael Pröbsting: *Britain: The left" and the August Uprising 2011*, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/britain-left-and-the-uprising/>

(15) See on this e.g. RCIT: *After the Woolwich attack in Britain: Stop imperialist war-drive and racism! Socialists must not solidarize with Britain's professional army but with the anti-imperialist resistance!* 24.5.2013, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/britain-woolwich-attack/>

(16) Laurence Humphries: *Housing crisis cuts in adult social care and children's services. What this means for working class communities in Britain who are under attack by Cameron and the Coalition*, in: *Socialist Fight* No. 19 February/March 2015, p. 7

# Resignation from Socialist Fight (Britain) and Joining the RCIT

A Statement by Laurence Humphries (27.02.2015)

**Note by the Editorial Board:** The following statement of comrade Laurence Humphries has been sent to Socialist Fight, a small centrist group in Britain.

\* \* \* \* \*

Comrades,

I formally resign from the Socialist Fight Group and the LCFI. I have returned by Post all financial documentation (Cheque Books, Paying Books statements etc.) to comrade Gerry Downing at his London address. I have joined the *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) and therefore I will not be attending the Socialist Fight Central Committee Meeting to be held on Saturday March 7<sup>th</sup> in London. I will be part of the RCIT delegation attending the open sessions of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Socialist Fight Conference on April 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>.

My reasons for resignation are as follows.

1. **Characterisation of Russia and China as Semi Colonial Countries:** Socialist Fight is wrong to call for an Anti-United Imperialist Front which is nothing more than a Social Imperialist position (supporting one Imperialist Bloc Russia and China). The RCIT has used comprehensive empirical evidence and the Marxist method to show that Russia and China are new rival powers of imperialism. The RCIT advocates revolutionary dual defeatism. Which means that they refuse to support any of the imperialist Powers in the Conflict. (Russia, China, USA, EU Countries and Japan). [1]

2. **Greece and SRIZA:** The LCFI's statement on Greece was a sectarian statement by refusing to give critical support to Syriza instead advocating voting for OKDE and EEK small Pseudo-Trotskyist organizations. The RCIT correctly applied the United Front tactic in giving Syriza a critical vote in the coming Elections. The RCIT again called for the development of a left wing formation inside Syriza with the possibility of an entry tactic in Syriza together with the following slogans:

- a) Cancel all Debts
- b) Nationalise Key Corporations without paying compensation
- c) Leave the Euro Zone
- d) Increase the Minimum wage
- e) Equality for all Migrants (Full Citizen rights –right to have their native Language)
- f) For a Workers Government based on workers Councils which will organise the workers and Popular Masses and establish an armed Workers militia. [2]

3. **Ukraine:** The LCFI Statement on the Minsk ceasefire is very confusing and wrong. The RCIT has shown that the Donbass and Donetsk republics were heavily infiltrated by Russian agents deployed by Putin. *"From early April onwards a wave of Russian politicians and fighters joined the uprising and – irrespective of their inner conflicts – increasingly centralized and took over the uprising."* [3] You assert: *"We do not call for the overthrow of the Donbass leadership in the circumstances of this civil war until they have exposed themselves as anti-working class AND collaborators with imperialism and the class has grown in strength and class consciousness to overthrow them with a revolutionary socialist leadership that can appeal to the working class in western Ukraine, in Russia and the whole region and the world to rally to their cause and the cause of international socialism."*

[4]. This is adaption to Russian chauvinism. The social imperialist line which the LCFI advocates is support for Russian imperialism whereas the RCIT advocates the dual defeatist position for the defeat of all imperialist forces whether they are east or west. Concrete demands are *"The central task was to build councils of action based on regular mass assemblies in places of work and Neighbourhoods, equally such democratic mass organisations should control the workers and popular Militias"*. [5].

4. **Brazil:** In Socialist Fight no 18 there was a statement by Liga Comunista, the LCFI section in Brazil, which advocated 'a United Popular Front' and not an Anti-Imperialist United Front. The RCIT section in Brazil (Corrente Comunista Revolucionara) advocated a United Front and called *"the rank and file workers of the PT and CUT [to] force their leaderships to break all associations with the PMDB and the other bourgeois allies and mobilize for the expropriation of big business, the media, and the banks, and their placement under workers' control"*. [6]. *"The united front is in clear opposition to the rotten method of popular frontism as practiced by various leftist organizations, either covertly like the PSOL or overly like the LC"* [7] who campaigned for a vote for Rouseff, the PT candidate in the Presidential Elections. The CCR took a defeatist position and campaigned for a no vote or null vote in the Presidential Elections.

5. Socialist Fight in Britain remains a centrist group on the periphery of the working class which adapts to the labour aristocracy, the upper stratum mostly organised in Trade Unions in Britain, and this usually involves supporting rank and file candidates against the bureaucratic apparatus. It has very little contact with the middle or lower stratum of workers many who are not organised in trade unions and are either migrants or from layers of workers from the global south. The RCIT has demonstrated in practice through its sections in Pakistan and Sri Lanka that it can attract workers, poor farmers and peasants from the south which now comprises the biggest proletarian base in the world.

For all these reasons I join the RCIT and will commit my resources to build a section in Britain. I call other comrades in Socialist Fight to join me in this task.

Footnotes:

(1) See on this RCIT: On the 100th Anniversary of the Outbreak of World War I: The Struggle against Imperialism and War. The Marxist Understanding of Modern Imperialism and the Revolutionary Program in Light of the Increasing Rivalry between the Great Powers, Revolutionary Uprisings, and Counterrevolutionary Setbacks, 25.6.2014, in: Revolutionary Communism No 24, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/struggle-vs-imperialism-war/> as well as RCIT: Russia as a Great Imperialist Power. The formation of Russian Monopoly Capital and its Empire – A Reply to our Critics, 18 March 2014, in: Revolutionary Communism No 21, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialist-russia/>

(2) RCIT: Elections in Greece: Vote SYRIZA but Don't Trust the Tsipras Leadership! 22.1.2015, in: Revolutionary Communism No 31, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/greece-election-statement/>

(3) RCIT: The Uprising in East Ukraine and Russian Imperialism, 22.10.2014, in: Revolutionary Communism No 28, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/ukraine-and-russian-imperialism/>

(4) Socialist Fight: The Minsk Agreement and the fall of Debal'tseve, 22.2.2015, in: Socialist Fight No. 19, <http://socialistfight.com/2015/02/23/the-minsk-agreement-and-the-fall-of-debaltseve/>

(5) RCIT: The Uprising in East Ukraine and Russian Imperialism

(6) Corrente Comunista Revolucionária (RCIT Brazil): Brazil: Right-Wing Opposition threatens with a Coup d'État, 18.11.2014, in: Revolutionary Communism No 31, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/latin-america/brazil-coup-danger/>

(7) ibid