

MLQ

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**Marxist
Leninist
QUARTERLY**

THE COMMUNIST FEDERATION OF BRITAIN (MARXIST-LENINIST)

The C.F.B.(M-L) is an organisation of Communists whose purpose is to help create the conditions to form a revolutionary party. The rising level of struggle against all oppression in Britain will not effectively challenge the ruling-class until the lessons of these struggles are widely understood by the working-class and its allies. A disciplined party guided by scientific socialism is needed to lead in this process of raising the struggle to a conscious political level.

No such party exists. The historical contradictions leading to the split in the international Communist movement in the early 1960's have not yet been resolved and the lessons applied to the actual conditions existing generally in Western Europe. Without this being done there will be no guiding political line and programme and no unity within the Marxist-Leninist movement.

The C.F.B.(M-L) is comprised of groups of Marxist-Leninists who have been working together since 1967 to aid in this vital task of forming a party. This process involves combining two forms of political work.

FIRSTLY: We study the main problems facing the British people and the world revolutionary movement, applying the scientific socialist method developed by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao Tsetung.

SECONDLY: We engage in immediate struggles on the main issues of exploitation and oppression.

We believe that only in combining the lessons of both these forms of political work can a correct line be developed. Without such a guiding line and programme the struggles on all the vital and immediate issues will continue to demonstrate the treadmill characteristics of the last 150 years.

In developing this line we recognise the need to destroy the influence of social democracy, revisionism and Trotskyism - the main defeatist ideological trends which act to disarm the working-class.

We understand that as all these tasks are increasingly achieved it will become possible to build a mass revolutionary movement capable of withstanding ruling-class attacks and finally of overthrowing and smashing the present system and its State machine. The working class and its party will then implement its own dictatorship over the present employing class to build socialism and prevent the restoration of capitalism.

Our basic policy document is 'The Marxist-Leninist Movement in Britain; Origins and Perspectives' published in 1969. Readers wanting to know more about our policy and political work should contact their local group or the Secretary of the C.F.B.

Signed articles in M.L.Q. do not necessarily represent the political line of the C.F.B.(M-L)

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Although we did not have a large print of our first issue we were surprised at how quickly we sold out. Within a few weeks after the first printing we found that we were unable to meet the demand for MLQ No.1. We had to have extra copies printed.

In this issue we have found it necessary to devote almost all our space to two articles. In view of the importance of their subject matter we make no apologies for their length, but our readers may rest assured that proper attention will be paid to the balance of the journal's content. As it is we have decided that the article on the Labour Aristocracy should be published in two parts. This has enabled us to carry two short reviews. We have decided to hold over several interesting items of correspondence for issue No.3.

Our first article 'The Origin and Development of Revisionism in the Soviet Union' deals with a subject which we feel has been paid far too little attention by most Marxist-Leninists in Britain. We expect it to arouse controversy. While the article is an expression of the views of its author and as such adopts positions and conclusions which should not be taken as C.F.B. policy, we are happy to publish it. It deals with issues of great importance about which there needs to be the fullest discussion.

'Notes on the Labour Aristocracy in Britain' likewise is a corrective to much dogmatic opinion that still exists amongst revolutionaries. On the basis of simple assertion there have in recent years been claims that the whole of the working class now constitutes a 'labour aristocracy' and stands in an exploitative relationship to colonial workers. Others, claiming to share the same Marxist outlook as those who hold this view, have argued, on the contrary, that there never has been such a thing as an 'aristocracy of labour' and that Lenin didn't really know what he was talking about when he defined it. We hope that issues 2 and 3 of MLQ will help to set the record straight.

In No.3 we shall be clarifying our position on the Marxist-Leninist party, with particular reference to some attempts at party-building in Britain during the 1960s. We shall also be returning to the question of internationalism and peaceful co-existence with a contribution critical of the article which appeared in our first issue.

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF REVISIONISM IN THE SOVIET UNION

Lenin said that without a revolutionary theory there could be no revolutionary movement. The history of the working class movement during this century has shown this to be true. The development of a revolutionary theory means much more than establishing a set of broad principles or repeating Marxist generalisations. One of the qualities that made Lenin and Mao really outstanding as revolutionary leaders was their ability to use Marxist analysis in order to understand and explain each stage of the developing process, and, on the basis of their analysis to guide action along a consistently revolutionary path. Like Marx and Engels before them, they did not act blindly, seeing only the immediate problem, but were able to see the present in relation to the past and thus lay open the course to the future.

The revolutionary movement is at present suffering from a serious lack of theoretical clarity. If the Marxist-Leninist forces in Britain are to develop, if they are ever to become capable of leading the working class to overthrow capitalism, then a serious analysis must be made of the contemporary situation in Britain and the world. Any analysis will remain partial and defective until certain important questions relating to the recent and not so recent past of the international communist movement are squarely faced.

Eight years ago it was still widely accepted amongst communists that the world was divided into two main camps, one socialist, the other capitalist. The Soviet Union and the new democracies of eastern Europe were considered part of the socialist camp despite the fact that their leaders were thought to be committing serious revisionist errors. Now, the assessment that Marxist-Leninists would make is very different. The Soviet Union is no longer considered socialist, but capitalist and "social imperialist". This re-evaluation clearly has serious implications for any assessment of the world balance of forces.

I do not think that sufficient thought has been given to some of the propositions accepted in recent years. Neither has there been from any quarter of the Marxist-Leninist movement in Britain any serious attempt to explain just how such a situation came to be. The tendency has been rather to adopt positions in the wake of the Communist Party of China. Whether the positions adopted are right or wrong, there can be no real development in the absence of Marxist analysis.

This article will raise and attempt to answer a few questions which can be brought together under the general heading "The development of revisionism in the Soviet Union". It must be made clear at the outset that this is not an attempt at comprehensive analysis. It is a small and inevitably inadequate beginning, undertaken in the hope that it will provoke discussion and argument from which will come greater elucidation and deeper understanding of a question which is important to the future of our movement.

THE SOVIET UNION - THE NATURE OF SOCIALISM

Unlike the revisionists who believe that the Soviet Union is still socialist and unlike the Trotskyists who believe that it never was, Marxist-Leninists consider that the Soviet Union was at one time a socialist country but is no longer. Both the revisionist and Trotskyist attitudes to the Soviet Union are based on wishfulness, not reality. They both avoid facing the question "What is socialism?" An incorrect evaluation of what socialism means in practice stems from an idealist method of thinking. A Marxist method starts not from any particular idealist notion that may come into the mind, but from a scientific examination of objective reality.

Socialism is not a completely formed, finite system, but a society in transition to communism. We cannot say that because inequalities exist in such a society ipso facto it cannot be socialist. The existence of bureaucracy, inequality, the prevalence of what Marx and Lenin termed "bourgeois"right" is inevitable for a more or less (depending on specific conditions) long period of time under the rule of the proletariat. Whether or not a particular country can properly be regarded as socialist depends primarily upon which class rules. Socialism can only exist under the rule of the proletariat. To the utopians who wanted to introduce the classless society the day after the revolution Lenin said:

"There can be no thought of abolishing the bureaucracy at once, everywhere and completely. That is utopia. But to smash the old bureaucratic machine at once and begin immediately to construct a new one that will permit the abolition of all bureaucracy - this is not utopia, this is the experience of the Commune, this is the direct and immediate task of the revolutionary proletariat... We are not utopians, we do not indulge in dreams of disposing at once with all administration; these are anarchist dreams, based upon a lack of understanding of the tasks of the proletarian dictatorship, are totally alien to Marxism, and, as a matter of fact, serve only to postpone the socialist revolution with people as they are now, with people who cannot dispense with subordination, control and "foremen and book-keepers". But the subordination, must be to the armed vanguard of all the exploited and toiling people, i.e. the proletariat". (i).

Lenin understood what would be the character of the "first phase of communism" - a system newly emerged from capitalism. He neither accepted its inevitable defects as virtues, nor did he try to exorcise them out of existence. He saw the problems of socialist construction for what they were and understood that the means to overcome them lay precisely in the construction of socialism and the struggle

for world revolution:

"... the first phase of communism cannot yet produce justice and equality: differences, and unjust differences, in wealth will still exist, but the exploitation of man by man will have become impossible, because it will be impossible to seize the means of production, the factories, machines, land etc. as private property.

...Marx not only takes account of the inevitable inequality of man, but he also takes into account the fact that the mere conversion of the means of production into the common property of the whole of society (commonly called "socialism") does not remove the defects of distribution and the inequality of "bourgeois right" which continues to prevail as long as products are divided 'according to the amount of labour performed'. (ii)

Those who make a case that socialism has never existed in the Soviet Union usually start by asserting the impossibility of establishing a socialist system in a single country, and then go on to point to the existence of bureaucracy, inequality, wage differentials, censorship etc. etc. as proof of their original premise. The extensive cataloguing of apparently non-socialist phenomena in Soviet society from 1917 onwards does not in itself provide proof that socialism never existed there.

It seems to me that the kind of utopianism to which Lenin was referring lies at the root of most Trotskyist criticism. If one starts by defining socialism as a society "without classes, commodities, money and state", as does Ernest Mandel (New Left Review No. 47) (iii), then clearly socialism never existed in the Soviet Union, neither does it exist anywhere else. Other contemporary critics seem to argue on the basis of the same definition. But such a definition is completely un-Leninist. The only workable definition of socialism is that which regards it as a society in which "the proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest by degrees all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e. of the proletariat organised as the ruling class; and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible". (iv) Such a society is not classless - it operates a class dictatorship; it has not 'abolished' the State, the commodity market or money, and it has not introduced universal freedom. So, unless one believes that socialism and communism (or the lower and higher stages of communism) are the same (and such a view is un-Leninist), then it must be recognised that all the above-mentioned phenomena will exist, and are indeed inevitable for quite a long time under what Marx referred to as the lower stage of communism. The point is not whether the market,

commodity production, etc. exist, but in what direction such a society is moving, and that is determined precisely by which class holds political power. As long as political power is in the hands of the proletariat society can move in the direction of communism, i.e. towards the elimination of proletarian power through the establishment of a classless, stateless society. The key question is that of political power.

But the matter cannot be left there. While it is utopian to regard anything short of classless society as socialist, it is equally wrong to regard socialism as a complete and 'truly democratic' system. The inequalities referred to above, which prevail as long as goods are divided according to the amount of labour performed, are essentially in contradiction with the new social relations brought into being by the socialist revolution. They are both inevitable for a period of time, and also contrary to the goals for which society is striving. They are vestiges of pre-socialist society which must be eliminated in the course of building communism. It does not follow inevitably that the existence of proletarian power guarantees that such contradictory elements in the new society will be resolved successfully. The retention of proletarian power necessitates a bitter struggle, the intensity of which Lenin never ceased to emphasise, and the reality of which has been amply demonstrated in practice.

As long as market relationships are subordinated to proletarian power they can be eliminated in the course of time. The exercise of proletarian power in all fields of social life, not least in the field of ideology, is vital to the elimination of the market. The market cannot be 'abolished' at a stage where the level of development of the productive forces necessitates its retention, but equally the market and market relations must never come to be seen as permanent and desirable features of a socialist economy. Socialism is a transitional stage towards communism - a stage in which the necessary contradiction between centralised planning and market relations will continue to exist. The existence of this contradiction reflects a deeper contradiction, characteristic of all class societies, which still prevails in socialist society; that between the relations of production and the forces of production.

This brings us to a question which is important in the argument with the Trotskyist critics of the Soviet Union. As long as Marxist-Leninists direct their criticism of the Soviet Union today primarily against the inequalities referred to, all of which are so much in evidence in that country, then they miss the main point and lay themselves open to the inevitable question: 'what is your attitude towards similar manifestations during Stalin's lifetime?'

views Stalin expressed in 1925 in a lecture to the students at Sverdlov University. In reply to a question concerning the danger of the Party degenerating as a result of the stabilization of world capitalism, he admitted that there undoubtedly was such a danger. Expressing the view that the danger of degeneration did not only result from capitalist stabilization and possible long-term isolation of the Soviet State, he listed the following as the three main dangers facing the Party:

- " 1) the danger of losing the socialist perspective in our work of building up our country, and the danger of liquidationism connected with it;
- 2) the danger of losing the international revolutionary perspective, and the danger of nationalism connected with it;
- 3) the danger of a decline of Party leadership and the possibility connected with it of the Party's conversion into an appendage of the state apparatus." (viii)

In dealing with the second of these dangers he warned of:

" a lack of confidence in the international proletarian revolution; lack of confidence in its victory; a sceptical attitude towards the national-liberation movement in the colonies and dependent countries;..... failure to understand that the victory of socialism in one country alone cannot be final because it has no guarantee against intervention until the revolution is victorious in at least a number of countries; failure to understand the elementary demand of internationalism, by virtue of which the victory of socialism in one country is not an end in itself, but a means of developing and supporting the revolution in other countries."

Such an attitude, said Stalin, led along "the path of complete liquidation of the proletariat's international policy, for the people affected with this disease regard our country not as a part of the whole that is called the world revolutionary movement, but as the beginning and the end of that movement, believing that the interests of all other countries should be sacrificed to the interests of our country."

He went on to give examples of this 'new type of nationalist frame of mind which is trying to liquidate the foreign policy of the October Revolution.'

"Support for the liberation movement in China? But why? (say the nationalists) Wouldn't that be dangerous? Wouldn't it bring us into conflict with other countries?"

Wouldn't it be better if we established 'spheres of influence' in China in conjunction with other 'advanced powers' and snatched something from China for our own benefit?"

Stalin traced both liquidationism and nationalism to the growth of bourgeois influence on the Party in the sphere of internal and foreign policy respectively.

"There can be scarcely any doubt that the pressure of the capitalist states on our state is enormous, that the people who are handling our foreign policy do not always succeed in resisting this pressure."

He concluded:

"The first country to be victorious can retain the role of standard-bearer of the world revolutionary movement only on the basis of consistent internationalism...That is why losing the international revolutionary perspective leads to the danger of nationalism and degeneration. That is why the struggle against the danger of nationalism in foreign policy is an immediate task of the Party."

1923 - 1939

At the Sixth Congress of the Communist International in 1928 Stalin predicted the economic crisis that was actually to hit the capitalist world a year later. The period of stabilization was at an end, and, it was argued, the policies and tactics that had prevailed during the preceding five years were now outdated. What was needed was a fresh offensive against capitalism and all its agencies, including the social-democrats. The reformists were now regarded as 'social fascists' (a term that had not been widely employed before) and there could be no question of even tactical alliances with them.

It is not possible here to go into detail about this 'third period' of Comintern history during which the 'class against class' line prevailed more or less unaltered until 1935. Just a few comments are necessary.

Firstly, it was dictated by very real considerations. The conditions of international struggle had changed, and in country after country the social-democrats had revealed themselves in the hour of capitalist crisis as staunch defenders of the tottering status-quo. On the other hand the tactical line was one of crude oversimplifications which failed to take account of the real significance of fascism. In 1935 Dimitrov was to admit that many of the communist parties had been guilty of left-sectarianism in the treatment of the social-democratic masses. The influence of left-sectarianism in the Communist Party of Germany cannot be ignored as a factor assisting reaction in dividing the working class movement. But what Dimitrov did not admit was that the Comintern itself bore a large part of the responsibility for encouraging left-sectarianism.

By 1933 fascism had triumphed in Germany and Europe had clearly embarked on the road to a second imperialist war. Two years later at the Seventh World Congress of the C.I., the United Front/Popular Front line was proclaimed. The whole emphasis of the previous seven years' policy was changed. Dimitrov's report contained an analysis of the new world balance of forces and examined the strengths and weaknesses, the mistakes and achievements of the communist parties. He concluded that there was an urgent need to unite the working class and all anti-fascist forces to block the fascist-imperialist onslaught and to prevent war. He pointed to the class-collaborationist role of the social-democratic leaders as a major factor in opening fascism's path to power:

"Our attitude of absolute opposition to Social-Democratic governments, which are governments of compromise with the bourgeoisie, is well-known. But....we do not regard the existence of a Social-Democratic government or a coalition government formed by a Social-Democratic party with bourgeois parties as an insurmountable obstacle to the establishment of a united front with the Social-Democrats on definite issues." (ix)

Dimitrov was careful to emphasise that such governments could never bring 'final salvation' for the proletariat; that could only come through socialist revolution. He also attacked the Right opportunists who 'tried to establish a special 'democratic intermediate stage' lying between the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and the dictatorship of the proletariat, for the purpose of instilling into the workers the illusion of a peaceful parliamentary procession from one dictatorship to another.

"We must increase our vigilance...bearing in mind that the danger of Right opportunism will increase in proportion as the wide united front develops more and more."

And there can be no doubt that Right opportunism did increase rapidly in the international communist movement from that time. The concepts of the United Front as defined by Dimitrov was, in the main, correct, but in attempting to implement it most of the Western communist parties, to one degree or another, fell into Right opportunism. But criticisms must also be made of Dimitrov and the CPSU, for in abandoning the policy of the third period the Soviet leaders and the E.C. of the Comintern made no self-criticisms of their own left-sectarianism during the preceding seven years. The Seventh World Congress report contains many ambiguities in its treatment of the Social-democrats. It reflects all the difficulties involved in trying to square the newly adopted line with the one just abandoned. Dimitrov's position was in many respects itself a rightist one. In a section dealing with world trade union unity he declared:

"We are even prepared to forego the creation of communist

fractions in the trade unions if that is necessary in the interests of trade union unity."

The period 1935-1939 saw the establishment of Popular-Front governments and movements in a number of countries. For the most part the communist parties increased in popularity and membership. The Spanish War brought the contradictions to a head and put the whole popular-front policy to the test. Whatever may have been the intention of the Soviet government and the Comintern, these years also saw the end of an independent class position on the part of most European communist parties. What was wrong with the struggle for the United Front and the People's Front was not the communist parties' failure to proclaim socialist revolution as their immediate aim, but that the defence of bourgeois democracy came to be seen as an end in itself. Dimitroff had stressed that the defence of bourgeois democracy against fascism was only a part of the long-term struggle to end bourgeois democracy and establish workers' power and workers' democracy. But in practice Lenin's teaching on the class character of bourgeois democracy came to be forgotten and the struggle against fascism came to be regarded as a defence of 'Democracy.'

THE END OF CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE USSR?

At this point it is appropriate to return to the points raised by Stalin in his lecture to the Sverdlov University students in 1925, and to ask whether the dangers against which he warned had not already come to loom large in Soviet policy. Two questions arise: 1) had the construction of socialism in the USSR come to be regarded as a 'final victory' of socialism? 2) had the 'nationalist degeneration' already begun to develop in Soviet foreign policy?

With regard to the first question it is worth comparing Stalin's presentation with that made by Mao Tse-tung in 1968. Stalin expressed the view that 'the victory of socialism in one country cannot be final because it has no guarantee against intervention.' Thus the decisive factor is seen to be the external one. It is the danger of intervention that prevents the victory of socialism being 'final'.

Mao put the question in this way:

"We have won a great victory. But the defeated class will struggle. These people are still around and the class still exists. Therefore we cannot speak of final victory. Not even for decades. We must not lose vigilance. According to the Leninist viewpoint, the final victory of a socialist country not only requires the efforts of the proletariat and the broad masses of the people at home, but also involves the victory of the world revolution and the abolition of the system of exploitation of man by man over the whole globe upon which all mankind will be emancipated. Therefore, it is wrong to speak lightly of the final victory of the revolution in our country; it runs counter to Leninism

and does not conform to facts.' (x)

Mao starts by stressing the internal factor; the continuation of the class struggle in China despite great victory in the Cultural Revolution. He then puts this in its global context, seeing the final victory of socialism not merely in the revolution in 'at least several countries', but its victory 'over the whole globe.' So in the two conceptions there is a different sense of what is meant by socialism's final victory. Mao's view is different from Stalin's in important essentials. By the late 1930s there is little doubt that Stalin had come to regard socialism in the Soviet Union as completely consolidated. This is a little strange in view of the purges that were taking place in the country at the time, but the evidence from reports and speeches made then shows that this was indeed his view.

In his report to the Eighteenth Congress of the CPSU in March 1939 Stalin outlined the two phases through which he said the Soviet State had passed since its inception. The first phase was 'the period from the October Revolution to the elimination of the exploiting classes.' The second phase was 'the period from the elimination of the capitalist elements in town and country to the complete victory of the socialist economic system and the adoption of the new Constitution.' The principle task in this period, he said, was:

"to establish the socialist economic system all over the country and to eliminate the last remnants of the capitalist elements, to bring about a cultural revolution, and to form a thoroughly modern army for defence of the country. And the function of our socialist state changed accordingly. The function of military suppression inside the country ceased, died away; for exploitation had been abolished, and there were no more exploiters left, and so there was no one to suppress. In place of this function of suppression the state acquired the function of protecting socialist property from thieves and pilferers of the people's property.* The function of defending the country from foreign attack fully remained; consequently the Red Army and Navy fully remained, as did the punitive organs and the intelligence service, which are indispensable for the detection and punishment of spies, assassins and wreckers sent into our country by foreign espionage services...Now the main task of our state inside the country is the work of peaceful economic organisation and cultural education. As for our army, punitive organs and intelligence service,

*Footnote: Stalin's reference to 'thieves and pilferers' should be compared to similar references in Khrushchov's reports to the 20th and 22nd Congresses of the CPSU. He castigated 'swindling and money grabbing' and those 'who maliciously break the rules of our socialist community.' Notable in both cases is the failure to relate these phenomena to continuing class antagonisms.

their edge is no longer turned to the inside of our country, but to the outside, against external enemies.....

As you see we now have an entirely new, socialist state without precedent in history and differing considerably in form and functions from the socialist state of the first phase."

And turning to the future, Stalin declared:

"But development cannot stop there. We are going ahead towards communism. Will our state remain in the period of communism also?"

And he answered:

"Yes, it will, unless the capitalist encirclement is liquidated, and unless the danger of foreign military attack has disappeared." (xi)

It emerges from this that the internal class struggle was at an end in the Soviet Union in 1939. The great purges had ended one year before and the period 1936-1938 had seen the liquidation of thousands of people. But according to Stalin, during that period 'there was no-one to suppress' except assassins, foreign agents, thieves and pilferers. The 'Trotskyite and Bukharinite leaders....were in the service of foreign espionage organisations and carried on conspiratorial activities from the very first days of the October Revolution.'

This picture does not square with reality. Although there can be no doubt that the fascist and imperialist states sent in large numbers of agents, it is inconceivable that the opposition in the Soviet Union consisted entirely of such people.

It also emerges from that part of Stalin's report quoted above, that he believed it was possible to build communism in one country. Such a proposition departs radically from the whole argument about 'socialism in one country' that had been conducted with the Trotskyists in the 1920s. It also departs radically from Marxism-Leninism. To talk about the state still remaining in communist society is an absurdity, made even more absurd by qualifications concerning the possibility of a hostile encirclement. Communist society presupposes the ending of classes and the withering away of the state and is, as Mao says, dependent on 'the abolition of the system of exploitation of man by man over the whole globe.' It is only possible to speak of final victory once communism has been attained.

In 1963 the Peking 'People's Daily' published a pamphlet entitled 'On the Question of Stalin', which attempted to make a balanced assessment of Stalin's role in Soviet and world history. Properly stressing his achievements, and concluding that these outweighed his negative side, the article nevertheless made certain criticisms. The Chinese considered that:

"The establishment of firm friendly relations between the two biggest powers in the world - the Soviet Union and the U.S.A. - would be of great significance for the strengthening of world peace....We want to be friends with the United States and to co-operate with it for peace and international security and also in the economic and cultural spheres. We propose this with good intentions, without holding a knife behind our backs."

For the first time a set of principles which radically departed from the traditional positions of Leninism was explicitly formulated and adopted as basic Soviet policy. This was a new departure, but the positions adopted at the 20th Congress did not come as a complete surprise to the world's communist parties. In one way or another many of them had been accepted for a long time already(v). The bombshell was Khrushchov's attack on Stalin. While it is true that the anti-Stalin platform was vital to the adoption of a comprehensive revisionist programme, it cannot be said that revisionism only gained the ascendancy after Stalin's death. An examination of Soviet history during the 'thirties and 'forties will, I believe, show that revisionist elements were present then also. A thorough examination of the origins and development of revisionism in the Soviet Union would fill volumes. Here it is possible only to deal with a few aspects.

SOCIALISM IN A SINGLE COUNTRY

On the basis of the earlier definition of socialism it can be said that in the great controversy between Trotsky and Stalin on 'socialism in a single country' Stalin's position was the right one. There is no point in returning to that argument now, but one point needs reiterating. The forces within the Soviet Union objectively opposed to the construction of socialism were not defeated; they have triumphed. To recognise this is not to admit the validity of the Trotskyist case, but it does mean that many of the assumptions held by communists about the final victory of socialism were erroneous.

In the late 1920s Stalin's position on this question was clear:

"But overthrowing the power of the bourgeoisie and establishing the power of the proletariat does not yet guarantee the complete victory of socialism. After consolidating its power and leading the peasantry after it, the proletariat of the advanced country can and must build up a socialist society. But does that mean that in this way the proletariat will secure a complete and final victory for socialism, i.e. does it mean that with the forces of a single country it can finally consolidate socialism and fully guarantee that country against intervention,

Criticism at that level is directed at surface phenomena, at the level of the superstructure. The main concern should be with underlying class relationships. In the Soviet Union and eastern Europe today there exists what some have termed 'market socialism.' 'Market socialism' accepts an elevated role for the market and market relations, regarding them as a desirable permanent feature of the transition to communism, the progress to which needs the implementation of incentive schemes, competition, and the fullest rein being accorded to market forces. Thus, what at an earlier period was regarded, correctly, as a necessary but temporary evil, is now regarded as something to be built deeply into the fabric of society. I shall argue that this development denotes the passing of power from the hands of the proletariat, and that, this being the case, whatever may be the proclaimed intention, the goal of communism has been abandoned; that the development of 'market socialism' marks a qualitative change in class relationships in the Soviet Union and that it is a euphemism for state capitalism.

Since the seizure of state power by the proletariat in Russia in 1917, there has been no violent overthrow of proletarian power, no counter-revolution in the sense most people have understood that term. And yet power has passed out of the hands of the proletariat. To try to ascertain when this happened is no mere academic exercise; it is a matter of considerable importance to the development of a Marxist-Leninist critique of the nature and development of modern revisionism within socialist countries.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE 20TH CONGRESS OF THE C.P.S.U.

There has been very little analysis of the development of revisionism in the Soviet Union. In so far as the question is dealt with at all in the Marxist-Leninist movement, it is usually presented as though everything was fine until Stalin died, after which, under the leadership of Khrushchov, all the good policies were reversed at the 20th Congress in 1956. The 20th Congress is regarded as the point of turning away from socialism towards revisionism. Such a description is far too facile and does not explain how the policies adopted at that Congress came to be accepted so readily. Also it fails to account for the continued defence of the Soviet intervention in Hungary which occurred after Khrushchov's supposed counter-revolutionary coup.

Nevertheless, the 20th Congress was an important landmark. In 1956 the CPSU announced its acceptance of the theory of peaceful transition to socialism. A new twist was also given at that time to the meaning of peaceful co-existence. Khrushchov claimed that:

which means against restoration? Certainly not. That requires victory for the revolution in at least several countries. It is therefore the essential task of the victorious revolution in one country to develop and support the revolution in others. So the revolution in a victorious country ought not to consider itself as a self-contained unit, but as an auxiliary and a means of hastening the victory of the proletariat in other countries." (vi)

In this formulation the socialist country is regarded as an 'auxiliary' of the revolutionary proletariat throughout the world. The 'final' victory of socialism cannot be achieved in a single country. We shall consider later what is meant by socialism's 'final' victory, and relate that to Stalin's assumption that restoration could only occur through outside intervention.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

Stalin's position was in accord with the views expressed by Lenin as early as 1915:

"Uneven economic and political development is an absolute law of capitalism. Hence the victory of socialism is possible, first in a few or even in one single capitalist country taken separately. The victorious proletariat of that country, having expropriated the capitalists and organised its own socialist production, would rise against the rest of the capitalist world, attract to itself the oppressed classes of other countries, raise revolts among them against the capitalists, and in the event of necessity, come out even with armed force against the exploiting classes and their states." (vii)

The general outline contained here could not take account of the complexities that were to arise during the subsequent decades of Soviet power, when the Soviet Union existed alone in a hostile capitalist environment. Socialism, existing within the framework of a single national state had to face the problems of its own destiny as a new system of political and economic organization, and its relationship to the proletarian movement abroad. The paramount problem was how to maintain a consistent proletarian internationalism and at the same time conduct necessary relations (which involved every aspect of its existence) with the rest of the world. The course to be followed was an extremely tortuous one, for obviously any betrayal of the first principle (proletarian internationalism) would in fact be a blow against the revolution inside the Soviet Union itself. On the other hand there would inevitably arise many occasions where various kinds of compromise in international relations were called for. How successfully such contradictions are handled depends

upon the clarity, strength and firmness of the revolutionary leadership and their ability to appreciate the contradictions. The calibre of the revolutionary leadership in turn depends upon how firmly the proletarian class is in power. If the dictatorship is weak - i.e. - if the masses are not increasingly and actively involved in handling the affairs of state - then the bourgeoisie will come increasingly to strengthen its grip within the institutions of proletarian power.

THE SOVIET UNION AND THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL.

From the early days of the Bolshevik revolution, the Soviet State enjoyed tremendous prestige throughout the international workers' movement. The establishment of the Communist International after the imperialist war was a necessary sequel to the revolution, in accordance with Lenin's strategic principles on world revolution.

The failure of the German revolution in 1919 had much to do with Rosa Luxemburg's and Karl Liebknecht's failure to grasp the Leninist method of party organisation. That is not to say that the revolution would have succeeded had the Spartakus Bund become a fully bolshevised party, but their errors were a factor in the defeat.

The creation of the Comintern was a necessary and overwhelmingly positive step towards organizing and strengthening the forces of world revolution. The principles of Bolshevism had to replace the disastrous class-collaboration of the Second International. However, there were dangers present from the beginning in the relations between the Bolshevik Party in power and the weaker parties abroad that had been brought into existence largely on the initiative of the Bolsheviks. The great prestige enjoyed by the Bolsheviks led other parties to regard them as the repositories of all wisdom and tended to produce amongst the Bolshevik leaders themselves a belief that they were the directors of the world revolution. Perhaps this development was unavoidable, but there is little doubt that such a lop-sided relationship came to prevail in the Comintern. Even if it is assumed that the political line of the Comintern (which was always the political line of the CPSU) was generally correct during the 24 years of its existence - and such an assumption would be a rash one - it cannot be denied that the sharp changes of policy in 1928, 1935 and 1939 came down to the member parties as something in the nature of directives. Of course those parties who accepted the directives uncritically, as most of them did, were largely to blame, but a style of work grew up in the late 1920s that was never corrected throughout the Comintern's existence.

STALIN AND INTERNATIONALISM - 1925

Before dealing in greater detail with aspects of Soviet policy in the 1930s, it is worth considering some of the

"In his way of thinking, Stalin departed from dialectical materialism and fell into metaphysics and subjectivism on certain questions and consequently he was sometimes divorced from reality and from the masses. In struggles inside as well as outside the Party, on certain occasions and on certain questions he confused two types of contradictions which are different in nature, contradictions between ourselves and the enemy and contradictions among the people, and also confused the different methods needed in handling them. In the work led by Stalin of suppressing the counter-revolution, many counter-revolutionaries deserving punishment were duly punished, but at the same time there were innocent people who were wrongly convicted; and in 1937 and 1938 there occurred the error of enlarging the scope of suppression of counter-revolutionaries." (xii)

There is no doubt that many thousands who were in fact innocent were arrested, detained for long periods without trial, and in many cases executed as 'enemies of the people' during these years. Evidence that has subsequently come to light, particularly concerning the east European trials of the late forties and early fifties establishes beyond any doubt that those convicted were wrongly convicted. But it was not simply a matter of 'mistakes'. Detailed information provided by the survivors of the 'Slansky' trial in Prague in 1952, reveals the systematic employment of psychological torture, the fabrication of incriminating evidence and the extraction of phoney confessions in political frame-ups supervised and staged by the Soviet security forces. It does not help for Marxist-Leninists to deny or ignore these unpleasant facts, or to make light of them. The point is to understand how such things could have come about.

The only satisfactory explanation is that Stalin and most of the Soviet leadership, including the opposition, had become seriously divorced from the masses and were either unable or unprepared to face up to the real contradictions before them. In many respects Stalin's analysis of the problems facing the Party and the country had been brilliant, but by the thirties he had come to commit some of the mistakes against which he had warned at an earlier period. In the years immediately following World War II nationalism began to assert itself more and more in Soviet foreign policy. A serious blurring of the international revolutionary perspective occurred. Stalin had earlier warned against 'believing that the interests of all other countries should be sacrificed to the interests of our country.' But such a tendency began to appear in Soviet policy during his lifetime.

The tendency to develop a 'national' interest apart from the world revolutionary movement, ironically, began to appear at a time when Molotov could talk about the Soviet Union entering the epoch of 'transition from socialism to communism.' The Soviet Union came to be described as the 'homeland of victorious socialism' at a time when Voroshilov could point proudly to the fact that Red Army officers had received average pay increases

of nearly 300% in 5 years, giving them an average annual pay of 8,000 roubles, while ordinary soldiers received an annual average of 150 roubles. At the time when socialism was supposed to have achieved complete victory, Shvernik could say, 'the policy of our Party with regard to wages has been directed towards stimulating labor productivity, towards abolishing indiscriminate equalization in the wages paid for skilled and unskilled work, towards abolishing levelling in the wage scales of the various branches of industry.' (xiii)

The point to be made here is not that socialism did not exist at all, but that it was very much socialism of the lower stage. To fail to recognise this, to entertain notions about 'entering the path of transition to communism', indicated a failure to understand the objective situation.

Stalin had warned in 1925 that to lose the international perspective involved the danger of nationalism and degeneration and said that the basis for such a degeneration was the growth of bourgeois influence in the Party and the state. The people handling Soviet foreign policy, he said, do not always succeed in resisting the enormous pressure from the capitalist states.

This pressure increased tremendously during the decades following 1925. With the ever-present and increasing danger of an imperialist attack on the Soviet Union during the 1930s; with one country after another going under the fascist jackboot, it is not surprising that Stalin reviewed the situation with some alarm and looked to the defence of Soviet frontiers. But, from approximately the time of launching the Popular Front movement, it can be said that concern with the national position of the USSR had taken precedence in policy over the interests of the international communist and workers' movement.

The failure of the united front movement and the 'collective security' policy to prevent the outbreak of war, led to the signing of the German-Soviet Pact of Non-Aggression. While in the circumstances prevailing the Soviet government had no alternative but to sign such a pact, the conduct of Soviet and Comintern policy between November 1939 and June 1941 can be regarded as nothing other than the abandonment of proletarian internationalism. (xiv)

WORLD WAR II

The analysis of the war made by Dimitrov for the ECCI in November 1939 correctly concluded that it was an imperialist war. But the directive to the communist parties involved another 180° switch in the policy to be adopted towards social-democrats. The Seventh Congress in 1935 had called for the removal of quotation marks from 'left' social democrats and the forging of alliances with all social-democrats for the common struggle against fascism. This policy most communist parties had embraced with a deep sigh of relief after years in the wilder-

ness. Now, in November 1939, the social-democrats were again to be considered as a major enemy. Dimitrov told how in September 1939 'the imperialists of Britain and France had passed over to the offensive, have hurled their people into a war against Germany, endeavouring in every way to win a number of other states to their side.' (xv)

Clearly expediency had taken over. In his report on the war Dimitrov presented an analysis which was dictated by the needs of the Soviet Union's national defence. It did not even amount to an equal condemnation of all the capitalist countries involved in the war, but virtually presented Germany as the victim of Anglo-French imperialist aggression. This was also the tone of most Soviet reporting of the war during its first year.

When, in 1941, the Soviet Union was itself the victim of Nazi aggression, the war was no longer simply an inter-imperialist one. The popular front policy of the 1930s, briefly interrupted during the period of the Pact, now gave way to the 'grand alliance' of the united nations against the fascist Axis.

The Soviet Union played by far the major part in defeating fascism in World War II. Nothing can detract from the heroism and tremendous sacrifice of the Soviet people between 1941 and 1945. In comparison with their titanic struggle the war on every other front was a picnic. Over 20 million Soviet lives were lost and a third of their country laid waste. The great toil and self-sacrifice of a whole generation of Soviet workers and peasants was largely obliterated by the Nazi invaders. Over 20 million were made homeless. These points should not be forgotten when considering the Soviet Union's role in the war. And Stalin's conduct of the war was perhaps his greatest achievement. His example, his calm confidence in victory and his iron determination were a great inspiration to the Soviet people. It was not for nothing that thousands of Soviet soldiers died with 'Long live Comrade Stalin!' on their lips. (xvi)

To criticise certain aspects of the way the war was conducted and certain negative features that became more pronounced in Soviet society during the war, is in no way to denigrate the heroic efforts of the Soviet people.

During the war there was, understandably, an upsurge of national feeling against the Nazi aggressors, but Stalin encouraged this far beyond a point compatible with the proletarian internationalist principles on which the Soviet state was based. He invoked the spirits of Russia's imperial past in the early days of the war:

"Let the manly images of our great ancestors - Alexander Nevsky, Dimitry Donskoy, Kazuma Minin, Dimitry Pozharsky, Alexander Suvorov and Mikhail Kutuzov - inspire you in this war! May the victorious banner of the great Lenin be your lodestar!" (xvii)

Writers like Alexei Tolstoy and Ilya Ehrenburg helped to whip up a nationalist hatred of all Germans. Towards the end of the war Ehrenburg said that he entertained no hopes of a popular uprising in Germany, because 'for a popular movement you need people. But what we have in Germany is millions of Fritzes and Gretchens, a greedy and stupid mass, some brazen, others timorous, but still incapable of thinking or feeling.' (xviii) The constant repetition of a propaganda line which dismissed all Germans as brutalised sadists could not but prevent any real understanding of fascism. Presumably in order to invest bourgeois nationalism with some dignity, Stalin expressed the peculiar opinion that the Nazis were not really nationalists: 'Can the Hitlerites be regarded as nationalists? No they cannot. Actually the Hitlerites are not now nationalists but imperialists.' (xix)

In the Red Army there was a return to pre-revolutionary traditions. After 1942 soldiers were officially released from all socialist obligations. Their only duty was to serve their fatherland. New regiments were created with names taken from the Tsarist past. Epaulettes were re-introduced as well as segregation of 'officers' from 'other ranks'. The generals assumed a role of great importance, just as in bourgeois armies, and they were constantly being decorated. Stalin himself assumed the title of 'Marshal' and 'Generalissimo' and his portrait appeared in a uniform covered with medals.

Although Stalin was not himself swept along on the nationalist tide, he did not try to stem it. He even encouraged it. Perhaps there was no alternative, but that begs the question about the nature of policies prior to the war. The war was fought in the way it was because no other course was possible. A 'people's war' in the sense that the Chinese have explained it, could not have been waged by the Soviet Union in 1941, because the political-ideological prerequisites, which alone would have made it possible to mobilise the people in that way, did not exist.

In a word, what was lacking was a real 'mass line'. Both Lenin and Stalin had emphasised the need to draw the masses of workers into the governing of the state. Stalin had talked about the need to revitalise the Soviets;

"It will be impossible to reform the state apparatus, to alter it thoroughly, to expel elements of bureaucracy, and corruption from it and make it near and dear to the broad masses unless the masses themselves render the state apparatus constant and active assistance....The Soviet state apparatus...merges with the masses, for it cannot and must not stand above the masses if it wants to remain a Soviet state apparatus for it cannot be alien to these masses if it really wants to embrace the millions of working people." (xx)

There is no evidence that the Soviet state apparatus really did begin to 'merge with the masses' or 'embrace the millions of working people'. In the absence of a mass line the degeneration of the Party and the state was inevitable sooner or later. The basis of such a degeneration is to be found in the representatives of the bourgeoisie within the apparatus itself. If the dictatorship of the proletariat undergoes a constant strengthening and purging from beneath - from the masses, then the contradictions arising in the process of socialist construction can be successfully handled. If this does not occur then all the dangers against which Stalin warned in 1925 become facts of life. The Party becomes increasingly divorced from the masses and social contradictions are inevitably mishandled. The bourgeoisie increases its grip on the state in order to retain and perpetuate everything that is essentially bourgeois in the social relations. Eventually the course is changed, for eventually the bourgeoisie comes into complete control.

Although the process of degeneration was not completed in the Soviet Union until some time after the war, it was already well advanced in 1939. At the agreements struck at Teheran and Yalta it was decided that Europe should be divided between the allied powers into 'spheres of influence'. At Teheran in 1944, an agreement was struck between Stalin and Churchill by which Britain was to be allowed a free hand in Greece in return for Soviet supremacy in Rumania. At Yalta, in February 1945, in an agreement with Roosevelt, the Soviet Union obtained the Japanese Kurile Islands and the southern part of the island of Sakhalin, as well as Port Arthur. Soviet foreign policy in 1945 was a far cry from Stalin's 1925 warning about the danger of losing the international revolutionary perspective, and the associated danger of nationalism. (xxi)

Revisionism, which was already evident in the Soviet Union from 1935, had, by the end of the war, succeeded in turning the majority of European communist parties into parliamentary reformist parties. The British Communist Party led the way with Harry Pollitt's class-collaborationist articles published between 1945 and 1947, leading up to the formulation of 'The British Road to Socialism' which was published prominently and in its entirety in 'Pravda' in 1951.

By the time Stalin came to write 'Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR' in 1952, the course of degeneration was irreversible. It is clear from that work that he had seen many of the danger signals, but it was already too late. (xxii)

If, on his death, Stalin left behind him a proletarian dictatorship, it had certainly undergone a good deal of erosion. It has been said that the biggest criticism that can be made of Stalin is that he was followed by Khrushchov. And that speaks volumes.

M.F.

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- iii. New Left Review No.47. 'Trotsky; An Anti-Critique' by E. Mandel.
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- vi. Stalin 'The Foundations of Leninism' Moscow 1934. P.40
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- xi. Stalin. Report to the Eighteenth Congress of the CPSU, March 1939. ('Land of Socialism Today and Tomorrow').
- xii. 'On the Question of Stalin' Peking 1963. This article repeats, although somewhat less strongly, the criticisms of Stalin made by the Chinese Communists in 1956 in 'On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat'. According to Edgar Snow (recent revised edition of 'Red Star over China') Mao told him that the assessment of Stalin contained in the earlier document reflected his own views precisely.
- xiii. N. Shvernik. Speech at the Eighteenth Congress of the CPSU.
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- xvi. See Alexander Werth 'Russia at War'.
- xvii. Stalin 'War Speeches' Radio broadcast, July 3rd, 1941.

- xviii. 'We Come as Judges' Soviet War News. Collection of articles from 'Red Star' by Ilya Ehrenburg.
- xix. Stalin 'War Speeches'.
- xx. Stalin. 'Collected Works'. Vol.7. Page 161
- xxi. In an interview with a visiting group of Japanese socialists in 1964, Mao Tse-tung expressed criticism of Soviet territorial policies negotiated at Yalta with regard to Mongolia, Rumania and the Japanese Kurile islands. (Report in Japanese paper 'Shekai Shuho' August 11 1964).
- xxii. It appears that Stalin was intending to tackle these problems by resorting to another purge of the kind that was then in progress in eastern Europe. The notorious 'Doctors' Plot', with its insidious undertones of anti-semitism, was reminiscent of the charges brought in the Rajk and Slansky trials and had all the hallmarks of another frame-up.

NOTES ON THE LABOUR ARISTOCRACY IN BRITAIN (PART I)

"IMPERIALISM AND OPPORTUNISM"

"Out of the enormous superprofits (since they are obtained over and above the profits which capitalists squeeze out of the workers of their 'own' country), it is possible to bribe the labour leaders and the upper stratum of the labour aristocracy. And that is just what the capitalists of the 'advanced' countries are doing: they are bribing them in a thousand different ways, direct and indirect, overt and covert.

The stratum of workers-turned-bourgeois, or the labour aristocracy, who are quite philistine in their mode of life, in the size of their earnings and in their entire outlook, is the principal prop of the Second International, and in our days the principal social (not military) prop of the bourgeoisie. For they are the real agents of the bourgeoisie in the working class movement, the labour lieutenants of the capitalist class, real vehicles of reformism and chauvinism.

Unless the economic roots of this phenomenon are understood and its political and social significance is appreciated, not a step can be taken toward the solution of the practical problems of the Communist movement and of the impending social revolution."

(LENIN 1920)⁽¹⁾

The importance of the existence of bourgeois ideology in the labour movement is rarely denied by socialists of any description. But increasingly over the recent decades there has developed a dominant trend of ascribing such ideas either to institutions like the Labour or Communist parties or to ideologies such as reformism or revisionism.⁽²⁾ However this approach, at best, merely classifies the ideas, but does nothing to explain their influence or analyse their relationships to the economic base - the specific stage in the development of capitalism and imperialism.

Lenin's explanation on the other hand connected the super-profits from imperialism with the opportunism of leading sections of the Labour movement. He asserted as did Engels that the key reason why only the minority of any European working-class (and especially the British) developed a revolutionary Socialist consciousness was the failure effectively to combat bourgeois ideology within the labour movement. He further asserted that it was essential to understand the economic basis of that ideology. Indeed he referred to that understanding as "the pivot of the tactics in the labour movement that are dictated by the objective conditions of the imperialist epoch", and in the same work described the "connexion between imperialism and opportunism" as the "fundamental question of modern socialism." (LENIN 1916)⁽³⁾.

Since Lenin's death there does not seem to have been any real analysis of the relationship between imperialism and opportunism to take into account the developments of the last fifty years.(4). To help lay the basis for such an analysis these notes will in this first part summarise the position of Marx, Engels and Lenin in some detail in order to understand better the developments in this aspect of changing working class structure before the First World War. The second part of this article will then attempt to outline the main developments which have occurred since then and propose certain policy conclusions for the C.F.B.

WHAT WAS THE LABOUR ARISTOCRACY?

A general outline of Marx, Engels and Lenin's approach and conclusions on this subject is more than adequately represented in the quotations from Lenin that open these notes and comprise the Appendix. The labour aristocrats were defined by their above average earnings, their mode of existence and their relationship both with other workers and the employers.(5). The economic base for this was Britain's early 'monopoly position in the world market', her 'vast colonies', and increasingly, towards the end of the century the super-profits sucked in as a result of overseas investment. This enabled the 'bourgeoisification' of most organised workers (see for example in the Appendix Engels' letters to Kautsky (1882) and Sorge (1889)) and especially of the trade union and political representatives and leaders. By selective quotation it is not difficult to 'prove' that Engels or Lenin thought that either all workers, or all unions were totally corrupted or on the other hand only a few leaders were bought off. The only way to prevent the discussion of the labour aristocracy descending into ritual exchanges of such quotations is to proceed with a historical analysis. This is what I will endeavour to do.

WHO WERE THE LABOUR ARISTOCRATS?

In studying the development of the labour aristocracy and its relationship to imperialism we are engaged in relating internal contradictions in society to certain external causes.(6). We know that internal contradictions are 'the basis for change' and external causes 'the condition for change'. Specifically we must note that while the artisans or skilled workers who formed the labour aristocracy were objectively members of the proletariat - selling their labour power and producing surplus value - their actual function was that of generally pre-industrial craftsmen. Builders, engineers, and shipbuilders who formed the basis of the new model unionism of the third quarter of the nineteenth century were little affected directly by the industrial revolution except in their materials and the power applied to their manual tools (see Hobsbawm 1964 op.cit. p.193 and pp.280-1)(7). Even less affected were the more traditional crafts of printing, cabinet-making, tailoring etc. It was not these workers who were controlled by the machine or carried out the repetitive and mindless jobs characteristic of the textile industry at the time. On the other hand there was none

more 'aristocratic' than the skilled textile operative who supervised the production process. As the secretary of the Operative Spinners put it - 'The employers have had a splendid selection and they select the giants...inworking capacity.' It was in these craftsmen's relation to production that lay the basis for their bourgeois consciousness and their contempt for other workers. 'The artisan creed with regard to the labourers is that the latter are an inferior class and should be made to know and keep their place,' (quoted in Hobsbawm 1964 op.cit. p.275). The intense craft consciousness and protectionism was most akin to the medieval guilds where even the beggars of Basle in the 14th century allowed no outsider to practise their trade.

A second and allied characteristic of this section was that they combined together to form trade unions. Indeed with the exception of a few sectors like the miners federation unionism in this period meant craft unionism. These model unions, believing in 'a fair day's work for a fair day's pay,' consciously reformist and collaborationist in character, were those that Lenin was describing (see Appendix). They demonstrate the most reactionary trend in British trade unionism and should help teach Marxists not to romanticise about unions. However it is equally instructive that Marx himself was able to build the British section of the 1st International around such a Junta. He saw unionisation, even on that basis, as a real step forward.

The scarcity of these workers and the results of unionisation enabled them to maintain and, until the 1st World War, generally increase the wage differentials between themselves and other workers. The details of this are unimportant for this article but Hobsbawm shows that the labour aristocrat earned about 100% more than the unskilled, and considerably more than that when the unskilled were women or children. Just as important, the artisans earnings were relatively stable at a time when unskilled workers had little or no security - infinitely less even than the present-day situation. Mayhew, writing of the 1840s described a situation where only a third of the poor were employed, with a third unemployed and a third partially employed. In comparison unemployment rates among craftsmen varied about a figure of 5%.

Most of the above notes describe a situation prevailing in England up to the 1880s. In this period the 'labour aristocrats' (a term in general use at the time) were skilled craftsmen - fitters, turners, spinners, boilermakers, carpenters, printers etc., were socially much nearer to small masters and managers than to other workers, were marked by membership of effective, narrowly-based craft unions, and had a regular income approximately double that of those unskilled in employment. The development of capitalism and its productive forces, and the dominance of British imperialism in the thirty years before the 1st World War were to have a very significant effect on the class structure of Britain and to undermine internally the craft supremacy of the labour aristocrats.

STATE MONOPOLY CAPITALISM AND THE IMPERIALIST ERA

The profits from Britain's colonial trade of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries provided much of the original capital which projected Britain as the first industrial power. Similarly the resultant dominance: Britain's position as 'workshop of the world', not only produced a situation where as such she 'exploited the whole world' through trade, but also provided capital for the massive increase in the financial sector which heralded the imperialist epoch. The power that had been achieved by an industrial monopoly was to be maintained for a time by the export of finance capital. This development itself demanded a great increase in those employed in banking, insurance and allied sectors, (9), not to mention the considerably enlarged armed forces. But of much greater significance to the internal class structure of Britain was the growth of state monopoly capitalism. As the forces of production developed, international competition intensified and the trade cycle (booms and slumps) became increasingly more violent, a large bureaucracy, both privately and publicly employed came into existence. At the same time the fragmentation of function (division of labour) characteristic of capitalism developed further and whole new grades of technicians came into existence to service industry. Parallel with this was the growth of clerical labour to keep records and accounts for the increasing number of very large firms. Although unions for clerks and draughtsmen were founded before the 1st World War, 'white-collar' union membership was not common until after 1945. These new sectors of workers had, in their attitudes to less skilled workers and in their differentials, certain similarities to the nineteenth century labour aristocrats. Nevertheless because of the historical period of their emergence and their lack of lengthy historical craft traditions they did not display the same narrow pride or flagrant collaborationist philosophy which characterised the nineteenth century labour aristocrat.

LABOUR ARISTOCRATS BEFORE THE FIRST WORLD WAR

In 1864, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, in their introduction to their rules defended 'restrictions against the admission into our trade of those who have not earned a right by probationary servitude' (i.e. apprenticeship). But by 1896 the Webbs were able to point out that any man with five years experience in engineering 'even if merely as a boy or a machine-minder' was accepted into membership. The reason for this change as the Webbs explain (see note 7) was 'the disintegration of their old handicraft'. In an illuminating passage they describe the eighteenth century engineer who could use an axe, a hammer and a plane with precision, could calculate velocities and the power of machines, draw in plan and section and build bridges and canals. For all this a certain formality of training was necessary. But by the end of the nineteenth century, 'what the millwright formerly executed with a hammer and file is now broken up into innumerable separate operations, each of

which has its appropriate machine' (Webbs op.cit. p.471). Thus the skilled engineer, who had till that point benefitted materially from the industrial revolution without suffering the attendant division of labour, became inexorably subjected to the machine, so removing the basis for the wage differential and his status on which he relied for his 'aristocratic' position. It is this change in the forces of production that I believe we must see as primary in the ending of the labour aristocracy and which the decline of the imperial tribute underlined rather than caused.

It is not that super-profits were unimportant. The period of thirty years before the 1st World War is notable for a relatively slow increase in both monopoly and modern mass-production in Britain. Far from being the pioneer in new industrial methods Britain fell well behind the techniques used abroad, especially in Germany and the United State. British business was protected for the time from such competition by her previously gained technological and colonial dominance and the huge returns on foreign investment. In this way many crafts were under less pressure than the engineers, and class-collaboration flourished. Thus the Boilermakers, one of the few unions to retain its craft exclusive ideology almost untouched to the present day, (despite considerable modern 'left' rhetoric) could sing:

"Now 'tis true that capital
All the risks must run
Like a ship exposed to all
Winds below the sun
Feels the first trade's ebb and flow
Must keen competition know.
So 'tis just and meet
Labour should co-operate
And to help with all their might
Masters to compete."

(quoted Hobsbawm 1964, p.320)

None of this should be taken to mean that the labour aristocracy were at any time passive or indeed not conscious of the essential contradiction between employer and worker. Giving evidence to the Royal Commission on Trade Unions in 1870, and on their best behaviour, William Allan of the Engineers denied that the two sides of industry had identical interests. His associate on the Junta, George Howell, stressed that strikes were 'essential for the well-being of the working class.' Daniel Guile of the Ironfounders stated, 'long experience has taught us that it is to our advantage to get anything out of capital that we can when there is a chance.' But even had they been militant craft leaders, and that would overstate the position, they would have in no way broken from the sectional nature of their trade interests.

It was the leaders of such unions who earned the special contempt of Lenin. It was not that he was against full-time

officials as such - he saw that the acceptance of their necessity was a step forward for English workers. (Lenin (10) 1902). Nor of course did he believe that workers would reach a socialist consciousness if only they would 'wrest their fate from the hands of their leaders.' (11). But it is exactly in the situation where reformist consciousness dominates, that trade union leaders, although coming from the same background as their members, tend to lose even the elementary economist class-consciousness that day-to-day exploitation makes possible. They do however retain a mode of speech appropriate to their shop-floor experience and continue to present their ideas to the membership dressed in appropriate terminology. The 'mode of production' of trade union officials is by necessity negotiation and compromise, and without the weapon of scientific socialism, a guiding collective and a revolutionary membership the result over time is almost certainly opportunism. (12). In a sense therefore the dominant tendency for trade union leaders exists regardless of whether they were representing labour aristocrats or the unskilled. But in the period Lenin was analysing it was the officials of craft unions who represented the English scene.

SUPER PROFITS

Britain's economic dominance in the nineteenth century rested on her early monopoly of industrialisation, her colonies and increasingly on large investments overseas, both in the colonies and elsewhere. The signs of this dominance were the control exercised over international trade, and the remittance of profits from foreign investment as well as their reinvestment. In the second part of this article these factors will be quantified and compared with their decline in the last fifty years.

The 'workshop of the world' relied on foreign trade to dispose of her products. This meant 'exchanging its own manufactures and other supplies and services of a developed economy (capital, shipping, banking, insurance and so on) for foreign primary products (raw materials and food). In 1870 British trade per capita (excluding the invisible items) stood at £17.7s.0d. as against £6.4s.0d. for each Frenchman, £5.6s.0d. for each German and £4.9s.0d. for each citizen of the U.S.A.' (13).

Towards the end of the century as other industrial countries broke Britain's monopoly and as the resultant overproduction caused the first international depression - the Great Depression (from the mid 1870s to the mid 1890s) - foreign investment became the important method used to break the trend of falling rates of profit. 'On the eve of the First World War British capital abroad had grown to constitute probably about a third or a quarter of the total holdings of the British capitalist class and current foreign investment may even have slightly exceeded net home investment.' (14). Thus while capital at home is estimated to have grown between 1875 and 1914 from £5000m. to £9,200m., capital held abroad

grew from £1,100m. to £4000m.(15). The importance of these investments is underlined when Lenin, quoting a contemporary economist, Giffen, pointed out that the British ('rentier') income from foreign investment exceeded the profit on all forms of British trade by five times. Lenin then summarised the situation by saying, 'The rentier state is a state of parasitic decaying capitalism and this circumstance cannot fail to influence all the socio-political conditions of the entire countries concerned in general and the two fundamental trends in the working-class movement in particular.' These two trends were he said, quoting Hobson, the 'economic parasitism' of the ruling class which allows bribery of sections of the workers, and secondly the reliance on native armies to oppress their own countries (shades of Vietnamisation) which further increases metropolitan parasitism.(16).

THE IDEOLOGY OF THE LABOUR ARISTOCRATS.

Lenin writing in 1912 on that year's I.L.P. conference in Britain referred to 'the petty-bourgeois craft spirit in the ranks of the labour aristocracy which has been divorcing itself from its class, trailing behind the liberals and been contemptuous of socialism as a 'utopia'.' Referring to a progressive resolution to separate the Labour group in the House of Commons from the Liberals, he nevertheless noted how it was 'drawn up in the 'pure' British manner: without any general principles (the British pride themselves on their 'practicality' and their dislike of general principles; this is an expression of the same craft spirit in the labour movement)'.(17). This pride in 'practicality', the 'common sense' of the British labour movement either expresses itself in the reformism of the Labour Party (of which the revisionism of the C.P.G.B. is merely a modern variant) or in its 'militant' strain shows itself as the surrender to spontaneity. This trend is represented by those who dismiss the importance of leadership by arguing that the working-class need not worry about national campaigns, national leadership elections (and still less about developing a scientific socialist philosophy through constant study of all aspects of class society). (18). This kind of opportunism characterizes the ideology of many union militants and can as Lenin pointed out, 'be expressed in the terms of any doctrine you like including that of Marxism.' (LENIN 1912 p.145 op.cit. note 16)

It should be clear that this 'practicality' has remained with and indeed spread throughout the British Labour movement since then. But this should not prevent us from noting that the 'narrow craft spirit' before the First World War took specific class collaborationist forms which were unique to that period. Classical among these were the Birmingham Alliances between employers and unions in that area. One such signed stated: 'The object of the Alliance shall be the improvement of selling prices, and the regulation of wages upon the basis of such selling prices...thereby

securing better profits to manufacturers and better wages for work-people.' Employers promised to employ only the signator union's members while the union promised that only employers selling goods at the agreed price would be worked for by their members. As the Webbs commented: 'To the idealist who sees in Trade Unionism a great class upheaval of the oppressed against the oppressors, it comes as a shock to recognise in the Trade Union official of this type, pushing the interests of his own clients at the expense of everybody else, merely another embodiment of the 'spirit of the bagman'.'(19).

It was in this situation that Engels noted that Trade Unions had come to be accepted by employers as 'useful means of spreading sound economical doctrines amongst the workers.' (20). Similarly the Communist International meeting in 1920 made it clear how such policies and ideology were prolonging the life of international capitalism.(21).

Until the late 1880s British trade unions were generally speaking confined to the artisans. Women, children (often Irish) and the unskilled were excluded membership. There was broad ideological agreement with the ruling class that wages were a fixed proportion within the economy and could only alter with prices.(22). (Many unionised workers in the metal industries and in mining were covered by a sliding scale which specifically related wages to prices.) 'Labour' representation in parliament was merely treated as a way of ensuring legislation favourable to unions. Most unionists were firmly attached to the Liberal Party though the leader of the Cotton Spinners stood for the Conservatives. In any case overall political aims were specifically excluded in the constitutions of many unions.

These were the illusions of privilege and it was this privilege arising from Britain's favourable economic position which was seen by Engels in 1885 as 'the reason why, since the dying out of Owenism, (that) there has been no Socialism in England,' (Engels 1892 op.cit. note 20). Similarly it was the reason why a bourgeois Labour Party was inevitable from the beginning.(23). Nevertheless the creation of a Labour Party was a necessary advance for the British working class and was itself the result of the new forces of unskilled workers organising the 'New Unionism'(24). Union membership totalled about half a million in the 1870s and 1880s. It had reached six million by 1920, organising perhaps 60% of male manual workers. At the same time there was gradual changes taking place in the ideology of even the craft unions. The Webbs in 1896 record that even the Cotton Spinners union was changing. Previously members had accepted as perfectly proper for their technical officials to go and work for the employer when they were offered higher wages. By the 1890s this had become 'stigmatised as desertion.' In the period immediately before the First War the Engineers were accepting into membership a wider range of membership

despite considerable misgivings. The growth of the shop stewards movement over the same period, and especially during the war, weakened to some extent the power of the full-time official.

It was in these changes and especially the New Unions that Engels could record in his famous 1892 Preface (see note 20) that, 'Today there is indeed 'Socialism again in Britain' and plenty of it.' What focussed Lenin's analysis upon the continued existence of the Labour Aristocracy as a key element of reformism was of course the collapse of the 2nd International into chauvinism at the outbreak of the War. However the War, the subsequent economic crisis and the further development of productive forces acted to lessen the influence of the labour aristocracy. It is these developments and the generalisation of imperialism in the post-War period that will be followed in the second part of this article.

S.M.

NOTES

- (1) LENIN. Collected Works Volume 22 pages 193-194 (LENIN C.W. 22.193-4) Preface to French and German editions of 'Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism.'
(N.B. in this, as in all subsequent quotations, stresses are given as in the original, unless otherwise stated.)
- (2) See especially 'The British Road to Socialism' (1968 edition)p.19 for the C.P.G.B. 'explanation' of reformism; and the 'The British Working Class and its Party', by the self-styled 'Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist)' for the same approach, despite differing conclusions. The latter organisation in fact explicitly denies Lenin's analysis:- '. . . as Marxists we can never say . . . that it is ever open to that power ('Imperialism') to bribe, corrupt or appease any section . . .' (op.cit.p.2), and refers to such a suggestion as merely having been 'glibly argued' (p.1). For a useful analysis of the 'C.P.B.(M-L)'s' economist and chauvinist position see 'Economism or Revolution - a critique of the C.P.B.(M-L)', published by an organisation called 'Marxist-Leninist Workers Association' (1/289 Green Lanes, London N.4.).
- (3) LENIN C.W. 23.114 and 105. 'Imperialism and the Split in Socialism'. This is perhaps the most important work by Lenin on the subject and I have therefore included a section

of it as an Appendix to this article. This section summarises the position of Marx and Engels on this subject, and will therefore do something to relieve the weight of quotations.

- (4) This statement should only be taken to apply to works by British Marxists and even here there could well be some material I have missed. However some useful ideas, despite the revisionism of some of its conclusions, are in 'Trends in the British Labour Movement' and a brilliant summary of the evidence on 'The Labour Aristocracy' was produced by the same author, Eric Hobsbawm, in an essay with that title:- both in his collection, 'Labouring Men' (publ. Wiedenfield and Nicolson 1964). In April 1970 the U.S. publication 'Monthly Review' produced a centenary edition on Lenin called 'Lenin Today', in which essays by both Eric Hobsbawm and Martin Nicolaus appeared which largely speaking summarised the views of Marx, Engels and Lenin. This latter essay by Hobsbawm was repeated in 'Marxism Today' - July 1970.
- (5) See also Hobsbawm 'Labouring Men' p.273 et seq. for a detailed examination of the criteria involved.
- (6) See 'On Contradictions' Mao Tse-Tung 1937, especially Section I, for the relationship between internal and external contradictions.
- (7) See also 'Industrial Democracy' (1920 edition) by the Webbs, Chapter X on apprenticeship regulations changing under the influence of new machinery.
- (8) The Junta - the general secretaries of five craft unions centred in London. See for example 'British Trade Unionism' Allen Hutt Chapter 2.
- (9) e.g. LENIN C.W. 22.219 'Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism':- 'Thirty years ago, businessmen, freely competing against one another, performed nine-tenths of the work connected with their business other than manual labour. At the present time, nine tenths of this 'brain-work' is performed by employees. Banking is at the forefront of this evolution.' Lenin quoting Schulze-Gaevernitz.
- (10) LENIN C.W. 5.481 'What is to be Done'.

Summarising the Webbs approvingly he wrote "the authors relate how the English workers, in the first period of the existence of their unions considered it an indispensable sign of democracy for all the members to do all the work of managing the unions; not only were all questions to be decided by the vote of all the members, but all official duties were fulfilled by the members in turn. A long period of historical experience was required for workers to realise the absurdity of such a conception of democracy and to make them understand the necessity of representative

institutions on the one hand, and for full-time officials on the other."

- (11) LENIN op.cit. p.383 where he specifically ridicules that idea.
- (12) See for example 'The History of Trade Unionism' - Webbs (1919 edition)p.469. Here the Webbs quote the experience of a craftsman unionist, written in 1893:- "The ordinary Trade Unionist . . . believes almost as a matter of principle that in any dispute the capitalist is always in the wrong and the workman in the right. But when as District Delegate (full-time official) it becomes his business to be perpetually investigating the exact circumstances of the men's quarrels, negotiating with employers and arranging compromises, he begins more and more to recognise that there is something to be urged on the other side. There is also an unconscious bias at work. Whilst the points at issue no longer affect his own earnings or conditions of employment, any dispute between his members and their employers increase his work and add to his worry . . . he begins more and more to regard all complaints as perverse and unreasonable." The rake's progress is fully described even including the official's propensity to drink.
- (13) HOBBSBAWM 'Industry and Empire' (Penguin 1969) p.135. The whole of the chapter - 'Britain in the World Economy' - is a very useful summary of Britain's external commercial relations.
- (14) M.DOBB 'Studies in the Development of Capitalism' (Routledge and Kegan Paul 1963 paperback edition)p.315.
- (15) DOBB Op.cit. p.317
- (16) LENIN 22.277;278/9.
- (17) Lenin on Britain pp. 142-144 'Debates in Britain on Liberal-Labour Policy'.
- (18) LENIN C.W. 5.371 'What is to be Done'.
" . . . the indifference towards theory which is one of the main reasons why the English working-class movement crawls along so slowly in spite of the splendid organisation of individual unions."
- (19) WEBBS 'Industrial Democracy' pp.578 et.seq.
- (20) ENGELS 1892 Preface to 'The Condition of the Working Class in 1844' (p.(xiii)Allen & Unwin).
- (21) 'The industrial workers cannot fulfill their world historical mission of emancipating mankind from the yoke of capital and from wars if these workers concern themselves exclusively with their narrow craft, narrow trade interests,

and smugly confine themselves to care and concern for improving their own sometimes tolerable petty bourgeois conditions. This is exactly what happens in many advanced countries to the labour aristocracy which serves as a base of the alleged Socialist parties of the Second International. (Preliminary Draft Theses on the Agrarian Question for the Second Congress of the Communist International.)

(22) Hence the importance of Marx's 'Wages, Price and Profit' and the attack within it on Citizen Weston. See Marx and Engels Selected Works Volume I p.361.

(23) LENIN C.W.23 116-117. See note (3) above.

(24) See for example Lenin C.W. 12.361 et. seq. 'Preface to Russian Translation of 'Letters by J.Ph.Becker, J. Dietzgen, F. Engels, K. Marx and others to F.A. Sorge and others!' Lenin here explained what an advance the Labour Party marked, with all its limitations. He also stresses again and again the failure of British socialists to work within the British Labour movement. The fact that there are still 'Marxist' sects who refuse to work within the Labour movement is a measure of how little has been learned since then.

APPENDIX

"Neither Marx nor Engels lived to see the imperialist epoch of world capitalism, which began not earlier than 1898-1900. But it has been a peculiar feature of England that even in the middle of the nineteenth century she already revealed at least two major distinguishing features of imperialism:(1) vast colonies, and (2) monopoly profit (due to her monopoly position in the world market). In both respects England at that time was an exception among capitalist countries, and Engels and Marx, analysing this exception, quite clearly and definitely indicated its connection with the (temporary) victory of opportunism in the English labour movement.

In a letter to Marx, dated October 7, 1858, Engels wrote: "...The English proletariat is actually becoming more and more bourgeois, so that this most bourgeois of all nations is apparently aiming ultimately at the possession of a bourgeois aristocracy and a bourgeois proletariat alongside the bourgeoisie. For a nation which exploits the whole world this is of course to a certain extent justifiable." In a letter to Sorge, dated September 21, 1872, Engels informs him that Hales kicked up a big row in the Federal Council of the International and secured a vote of censure on Marx for saying that 'the English labour leaders had sold themselves.' Marx wrote to Sorge on August 4, 1874: 'As to

the urban workers here (in England), it is a pity that the whole pack of leaders did not get into Parliament. This would be the surest way of getting rid of the whole lot.' In a letter to Marx, dated August 11, 1881, Engels speaks about 'those very worst English trade unions which allow themselves to be led by men sold to, or at least paid by, the bourgeoisie.' In a letter to Kautsky, dated September 12, 1882, Engels wrote: 'You ask me what the English workers think about colonial policy. Well, exactly the same as they think about politics in general. There is no workers' party here, there are only Conservatives and Liberal-Radicals, and the workers gaily share the feast of England's monopoly of the world market and the colonies'.

On December 7, 1889, Engels wrote to Sorge: 'The most repulsive thing here (in England) is the bourgeois 'respectability', which has grown deep into the bones of the workers... Even Tom Mann, whom I regard as the best of the lot, is fond of mentioning that he will be lunching with the Lord Mayor. If one compares this with the French, one realises what a revolution is good for, after all.' In a letter, dated April 19, 1890: 'But under the surface the movement (of the working class in England) is going on, is embracing ever wider sections and mostly just among the hitherto stagnant lowest strata. The day is no longer far off when this mass will suddenly find itself, when it will dawn upon it that it itself is this colossal mass in motion.' On March 4, 1891: 'The failure of the collapsed Dockers' Union; the 'old' conservative trade unions, rich and therefore cowardly, remain lone on the field....' September 14, 1891: at the Newcastle Trade Union Congress the old unionists, opponents of the eight-hour day, were defeated 'and the bourgeois papers recognise the defeat of the bourgeois labour party'.

That these ideas, which were repeated by Engels over the course of decades, were also expressed by him publicly, in the press, is proved by his preface to the Second edition of 'The Condition of the Working Class in England', 1892. Here he speaks of an 'aristocracy among the working class', of a 'privileged minority of the workers', in a contradistinction to the 'great mass of working people'. 'A small, privileged, protected minority' of the working class alone was 'permanently benefited' by the privileged position of England in 1848-68, whereas 'the great bulk of them experienced at best but a temporary improvement'.... 'With the break-down of that (England's industrial) monopoly, the English working class will lose that privileged position....' The members of the 'new' unions, the unions of the unskilled workers, 'had this immense advantage, that their minds were virgin soil, entirely free from the inherited 'respectable' bourgeois prejudices which hampered the brains of the better situated "old unionists"'. '.....' 'The so-called workers' representatives' in England are people 'who are forgiven their being members of the working class because they themselves would like to drown their quality of being workers in the ocean of their liberalism'.....

We have deliberately quoted the direct statements of Marx and Engels at rather great length in order that the reader may study them as a whole. And they should be studied, they are worth carefully pondering over. For they are the pivot of the tactics of the labour movement that are dictated by the objective conditions of the imperialist era."

(Imperialism And The Split in Socialism.
Lenin. 23. iii - 4.)

BOOK REVIEWS

A GUNBOAT UP THE MERSEY?

Brigadier Frank Kitson has been described by the I.R.A. as the British Army's expert on brutality and torture, a man who on the basis of his service in Aden and Cyprus perfected the methods of torture now used on suspects in the North of Ireland. The Sunday Times recently hailed him as 'The guru of the new model army'. His book, Low Intensity Operations, was published at the end of last year (Faber and Faber, under the official imprint of Her Majesty's Stationary Office) and merits some attention from all those involved today in revolutionary politics.

Kitson's central theme is that internal subversion and civil anarchy represent, for the status quo, the dangers of the future, rather than orthodox international war. According to the press no less a person than the Prime Minister is supposed to share Kitson's view. The Brigadier does not really wonder overmuch why subversives should now represent a main danger - though he does briefly mention 'a changing attitude to authority', new ways of communicating views, and the development of nuclear weapons as factors which, in combination may have produced the new situation. Nuclear weapons, incidentally, prevent the communist menace invading directly. Subversives are basically defined as out of power political forces, who have the attainment of power in and for itself as their main motivation. Government is defined as the retention of power, and his book is a guide to doing just that.

On the basis of his colonial experience, Kitson argues that success in counter-insurgency requires that intelligence gathering and command of military forces must be integrated in one function, and in fighting subversion representatives of the armed forces should be brought into the game by the civil authorities from the very beginning - and that means now. "There is no danger", he says, "of political repercussions to this course of action, because consultation can be carried out in strictest secrecy."

In urging his case for immediate training and preparation, he says that even if the situation in N. Ireland is resolved within the next five years, "There are potential trouble spots within the United Kingdom which might involve the army in operations of a sort against political extremists who are prepared to resort to a considerable degree of violence to achieve their ends." As he sees subversives as being behind even non-violent campaigns - tricking the silly majority of participants, of course, it is quite obvious that a very wide range of political and industrial actions will come within the army's sphere of influence, in his view.

As regards methods of intelligence-gathering, he recommends

a change from the present emphasis on a few high-grade contacts (spies) to much material from low-grade sources. In urban terms this would presumably mean keeping a close watch on demonstrations, publications, letters in papers, petitions (obligingly collected by many do-gooders for the intelligence services) and the like, instead of 'nobbling' committee members and officials of organisations. Immediate training in this activity should be instituted, and a strong Special Unit established in the army. This could gain extra practice abroad in the meantime, as it were. Part of the Special Unit would be a Special Methods Group, engaging, one supposes, in a selection of tried and tested Special Methods from N. Ireland.

At this moment in time there are a number of intelligence agencies carrying out activities against progressives and revolutionaries in Britain. The army (MI6, etc.), is already closely involved, in addition to the Special Branch and other civil bodies. Kitson would have integration of information from these sources with contingency plans for military action against the left.

Marxists and others have said for years, with varying degrees of conviction, that as imperialism was squeezed out of its colonial and neo-colonial positions abroad, violence would come nearer and nearer home. Ireland now is a diluted form of what can be expected as a challenge to the power of imperialism is increasingly made in Britain itself.

There is no space here to detail all of Kitson's recommendations, but they do deserve serious attention from all revolutionaries as one variation, at least, of the shape of things to come. Kitson guru is a rising star in the British army. The foreword to his book was contributed by no less a brasshat than the Chief of General Staff, General Sir Michael Carter. And the general staff, as all should know, is concerned with problems of forward planning and strategy. That Kitson's recommendations are already being put into operation is shown by his appointment, hot from Belfast, as Commandant of the School of Infantry at Warminster. Every infantry officer in the British army passes through the School at least once in his career.

Finally, and incidentally, Kitson's acknowledgements in the first few pages of his book serve to underline another point having a bearing on the operation of the forces of reaction and repression in Britain. He very sincerely thanks the hierarchy at University College, Oxford, for the year which he spent amongst them writing his book. His thanks should re-emphasize for the naïve and ignorant the close and continuing links between certain Oxbridge and London colleges and departments and the military - the intelligence services in particular.

F.E.A.

WOMAN'S ESTATE - JULIET MITCHELL (PENGUIN)

Juliet Mitchell considers the existing Marxist analysis concerning women's oppression to be totally inadequate. She argues that it is necessary to develop a revolutionary strategy for women by using the methods of scientific socialism in order to analyse and solve the conflicting ideas existing between 'Radical Feminism' and 'Abstract Socialism', claiming that these positions are possibly right together, but that both are certainly wrong apart. Theories developed by Marx and Engels are criticised for limiting the question of women's oppression to the social relationships which developed along with the changing modes in production, and the emergence of private property. Marxists are criticised for being 'overly economical'. Mitchell refers to the ideological and psychological oppression of women as being completely separate aspects, and apparently rejects the Marxist viewpoint that they are part of the super-structure, and the result of the primary contradiction in society, i.e. Capital and Labour.

Current policies of left-wing caucuses are criticised for their concentration on equal pay and their emphasis on raising the political understanding of women in industry. Refuting Engels' view that the 'first premise of the emancipation of women is the reintroduction of the entire female sex into public industry....' and 'the emancipation of women and their equality with men are impossible and must remain so long as women are excluded from socially productive work and restricted to housework, which is private,' Mitchell states that all women are subjected to the same oppression in the home and therefore this is the area in which to raise feminine consciousness and formulate a theory of revolutionary strategy. Thus she deviates again from a class analysis, and sees the primary contradiction as being the oppression of the sex.

Whilst severely criticising her political analysis, it would be unfair not to mention the useful contribution she makes when dealing most effectively with the historical development and emergence of the women's liberation movement in the late sixties. Detailed information is given on its composition and links with the struggles of other oppressed groups, such as Blacks, Students and Youth, and the Movement to end the war in Vietnam.

In another section she deals with what she claims to be the 'key structures', of women's position in society. Which are listed as: Production, Re-production, Sexuality and the Socialisation of Children. Some of her comments on the changes, complexities and problems which occur are useful and thought-provoking.

Juliet Mitchell's book has its positive as well as its negative aspects and is of value and interest because of its

breadth of information. But her attempt to make a political contribution to aid the development of revolutionary theory and perspective on the question of women cannot be accepted by Marxist-Leninists. In spite of her liberal use of Marxist terminology, the essence of her argument is a negation of Marxism. Whilst there is certainly no room for complacency on the part of Marxist-Leninists about their attention and application of Marxist analysis to the present problem of womens' oppression, Juliet Mietchell's 'Marxism-Feminism', only adds confusion to a complex problem, and if acted upon could prove to be a serious deviation from the principles governing the advancement of the class-struggle.

M.J.



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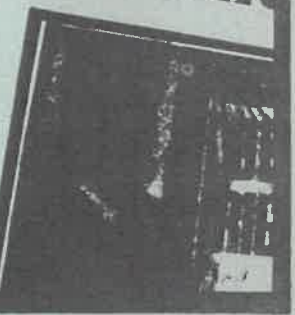
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