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SOCIALIST STABILITY

EYEWITNESS IN PRAGUE

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THE MARXIST

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Comment by Ivor Evans and Tom Hill

AS THE CENTENARY of the birth of Lenin approaches it will undoubtedly be the occasion for further attempts to conceal or distort the revolutionary essence of his contribution to Marxist theory.

When one looks at some of his statements in the controversy with the revisionists of his day it is amazing how appropriate they still are some fifty years later.

In *Reformism in the Russian Social Democratic Movement* published in 1911, he wrote;

'Now Socialism has grown into a force and throughout the civilised world has already upheld its right to existence; it is now fighting for power; and the bourgeoisie, disintegrating as it is, and seeing the inevitability of its doom, is exerting every effort to defer the day of doom and to maintain its rule under the new conditions at the cost of partial and spurious concessions.

'The intensification of the struggle of reformism against revolutionary Social-Democracy within the working-class movement is an absolutely inevitable result of the mentioned changes in entire economic

and political situation in all the civilised countries of the world'.

In *Differences in the European Labour Movement* published in 1910, he wrote;

'Not infrequently, the bourgeoisie for a certain time achieves its object by a "liberal" policy, which, as Pennekoek justly remarks, is a "more crafty" policy. A section of the workers, of their representatives, at times allow themselves to be deceived by sham concessions. The revisionists declare the doctrine of the class struggle to be "antiquated", or begin to conduct a policy which in fact amounts to a renunciation of the class struggle. The zigzags of bourgeois tactics intensify revisionism within the labour movement and not infrequently exacerbate the differences within the labour movement to the point of a direct split'.

Lenin gives an example of this in *State and Revolution* in which he quotes Kautsky as saying;

'The aim of our political struggle remains as hitherto, the conquest of state power by winning a majority in parliament and by converting parliament into the master of government'.

Ho Chi Minh 1890-1969

'It is not only his genius, but also his rejection of luxury, his love for work, the purity of his private life, his unassuming ways; in short, the master's greatness and beauty exert a magnificent influence on the peoples of Asia and draw their hearts to him in an unsurpassable manner . . . Not only are they grateful to him, but they also love him deeply. Their veneration of him borders on filial devotion. One needed to have seen the tear-filled eyes of university students in the nations of the Orient; one needed to have seen those carefree young people burst into sobs . . . to understand their love for him. His death caused universal mourning.

The above words were written by Ho Chi Minh about Lenin when he died in 1924. We quote them because we think they apply so aptly to Ho himself. We do not wish to add to them.

The poem on the right is taken from Ho Chi Minh's 'Prison Diary'. The collection of poems from which it is taken were written between August 29, 1942, and September 10, 1943, during a journey which Ho described in these words: 'I have travelled the thirteen districts of Kwangsi Province, and tasted the pleasures of eighteen different prisons'.

A MILESTONE

**Neither high, nor very far,
Neither emperor, nor king,
You are only a little milestone,
Which stands at the edge of the
To people passing by [highway].
You point the right direction,
And stop them from getting lost.
You tell them of the distance
For which they still must journey.
Your service is not a small one.
And people will always remember
you.**

Comment (continued)

Lenin remarks; 'This is nothing but the purest and most vulgar opportunism; repudiating revolution in deeds, while accepting it in word . . . But we shall break with the opportunists; and the entire class conscious proletariat will be with us in the fight — not to shift the relation of forces, but to *overthrow the bourgeoisie, to destroy bourgeois parliamentarism*, for a democratic republic after the type of the Commune, or a republic of Soviets of Workers and Soldiers Deputies, for the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat'.

In *The British Road to Socialism* the CPGB make it quite clear that they follow the line of Kautsky — not of Lenin.

'In this way, using our traditional institutions and rights, we can transform Parliament into the effective instrument of the peoples will, through which the major legislative measures of the change to socialism will be carried through'.

Lenin, in his Report to the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920, said:

'Opportunism is our principle enemy. Opportunism in the upper ranks of the working class movement is not proletarian socialism, but bourgeois soc-

ialism. Practice has shown that the active people in the working-class movement who adhere to the opportunist trend are better defenders of the bourgeoisie, than the bourgeoisie itself. Without their leadership of the workers, the bourgeoisie could not have remained in power . . . This is where our principle enemy is; and we must conquer this enemy'.

The CPGB has not only ceased to fight the opportunists, it has joined them.

There appears to be a generally held view that the role of the reformists is simply one of trying to contain demands within limits acceptable to the capitalist class. This does not seem to be an adequate definition when we consider that at times they support demands which appear to be at variance with the interests of the capitalist class.

Two examples may serve to illustrate the point.

Nationalisation

Marxists are aware that the development of capitalism leads to the concentration of capital into fewer hands, and that state involvement in the running of industry and commerce becomes inevitable. Nationalisation of some basic industries and services is one aspect of this.

Those elements among the capitalist class who realise the inevitability of this development are for a time, in a minority, therefore allies are needed. What better way than to utilise the strength of the organised workers by substituting these demands for the genuine socialist demands for the socialisation of the means of production. This is made all the more easy by the prevalence of reformist ideas among the workers that socialism can be achieved by means of more and more reforms being pushed through parliament. The logical extension of this idea being that socialism can be achieved by gradually extending the area of nationalisation.

The reformists and revisionist agents of the capitalist class within the movement deliberately direct attention to the question of the *form* of capitalist ownership, i.e. state or private, and divert attention away from the really crucial question of which class wields political power.

The consequence of this is that the need for the capitalist class to create a state monopoly in some basic industries becomes more generally accepted by that class, the nationalisation of the mines, railways etc. are presented as a victory for the working class and a step on the gradual road to socialism.

Because of the acceptance of this distorted view of nationalisation the workers in these industries are all the more easily persuaded to agree to a worsening of their conditions in the belief that they are making "their" industry more efficient.

The ease with which miners are agreed to the closure of 'uneconomic' pits, and the railway workers to massive redundancies, are but two examples.

Workers Control

The current activity around this slogan is another example of how left slogans are being used to achieve right objectives.

It has long been recognised by many employers that the involvement of workers in production problems and the general running of the factory is a very sure method of increasing profits. Various methods have been tried, and many slogans coined in the attempt to achieve this objective. Slogans such as Workers Participation, and Co Partnership never got off the ground as far as class conscious workers were concerned, therefore new, left sounding slogans had to be found.

Workers Control is being advocated by a mixed bag of some middle class intellectuals out of touch with reality, trotskysts, and trade union leaders with leftist reputations, with the CPGB jumping on and off the bandwagon according to the strength of the prevailing wind.

As with nationalisation, the class aspect is played down and the theory advanced that workers control at the point of production obviates the need for the conquest of political power.

Once again the reformist theory of establishing

socialism by means of gradual changes of the existing system is paraded in a different form.

The obvious point is ignored, namely, that with such things as commercial credit, the supply of raw materials, and the State, in the hands of the capitalist class, 'workers control' could only be exercised within the limits determined by that class.

It is no accident that those leaders of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions who support The Institute for Workers Control are also in favour of long term agreements designed to prevent wages drift and assist the employers to 'plan' wage costs.

It can be seen that whenever the question of political power is ignored, any movement will inevitably drift into a means of giving support to the existing system.

The events in the Liverpool factories of English Electric are a case in point.

A struggle against redundancy is generally difficult, particularly so since the introduction of the Redundancy Payments Act whereby some workers with many years of employment with the same firm stand to receive several hundred pounds if they are content to be sitting ducks and wait for the employer to declare them redundant. It is also true to say that some employers have shown themselves willing to make additional payments in order to avoid trouble on this issue. Some workers are actually eager to accept such payments, whilst others are chary about taking part in any action that may prejudice their future rights in this matter.

The stewards at English Electric to their credit, took an attitude of militant opposition to the proposed redundancies, but with The Institute of Workers Control and the trotskysts moving in the struggle became diverted into an attempt to show that workers can run a factory.

A decision to occupy a factory for the purpose of preventing its use by the capitalist class, or in order to prevent management from moving out any machinery as a prelude to its closure, is a form of action for which support can be won, but to occupy a factory for the purpose of carrying on production is a very different kettle of fish which is of no practical use when it comes to hitting the employer where it hurts him most.

The attempt to involve a factory in this action, in which no redundancy was anticipated, provided the base around which the opposition to *any* form of action rallied.

In addition, the attempt at workers control was conceived in a legalistic way, so that when leading stewards were asked questions regarding detailed aspects of their plan, they could only reply that this would be a question for their legal advisers to decide.

A struggle conducted almost wholly on the basis of legal advice already contains within itself the seeds of its own defeat.

We wish the stewards every success in their continued efforts to oppose redundancy, and hope that the slogan of workers control will be seen for what it really is in capitalist society — a diversion.

Because of the nature of the problem many struggles against redundancy will meet with only partial success or even defeat, but, if during the course of the struggle the workers learn a few lessons about the nature of capitalist society and the capitalist state, then it will have been worthwhile.

The developing situation

One of the more important aspects of the present situation is that increasing numbers of people are coming to the conclusion that personal involvement in direct action is the only way likely to achieve results. This may only appear to be a trifling matter, but it strikes at one of the deep seated roots of social democracy in Britain.

Events such as mothers of small children taking action to force the implementation of safety measures at a dangerous road crossing may not seem revolutionary, but they are straws in the wind.

The people of Northern Ireland, after many years of oppression and discrimination, are beginning to move and create new difficulties for British imperialism.

Workers are increasingly refusing to end strikes on the old formula of 'allowing negotiations to continue'.

Lessons are being learned about the capitalist technique of alternately pillorying and flattering rank and file leaders, and as in the Blastfurnacemens' strike, are refusing to expose their leaders to this kind of treatment.

The miners, after many years of domination by the leadership have shown some of the spirit which traditionally put them in the front ranks of working class struggle.

Opposition to union instructions to return to work are on the increase, and distrust on the official leadership of many Unions has never been more pronounced.

Left Opportunism

In these circumstances it is to be expected that left opportunism will appear alongside of and complementary to that of the right, and although it is not the main danger at this stage it will continue to gain ground in the absence of Marxist leadership at local and factory level.

On whom are we to rely in the struggle against revisionism?

Lenin gives the answer in his article *Imperialism and the Split in the Socialist Movement*.

'Engels draws a distinction between the "bourgeois labour party" of the old trade unions — the privileged minority — and the "lowest mass", the real majority, and he appeals to the latter who are not infected by "bourgeois respectability". This is the essence of Marxist tactics'.

Socialist stability

THE FINANCIAL HISTORY of the People's Republic of China since Liberation in 1949, and of the Renminbi, or People's Currency, is one that any capitalist state might envy, though without any hope of equalling it. It is a telling demonstration of the strength that comes from implementing socialist policies under the dictatorship of the proletariat, a record unequalled by any other country in the world.

The following information is taken, in the main, from the Hsinhua News Agency bulletin of 10th July 1969, quoting an earlier article in the Peking People's Daily.

According to a report of the International Monetary Fund, retail prices, from 1949 to 1968, rose by 48.7 per cent in the US, by 110 per cent in Britain, and by 161 per cent in France. In the past year the speed of the rise has increased and is especially notable in such necessities as food, clothing and petrol.

Since 1945 the pound has been devalued twice and the franc six times.

In 1968 the US budgetary deficit was \$25,200,000,000. By March 1959 the total of US government bonds (that is, government borrowing from private sources) had reached \$359,500,000,000. Since 1958 more than half the US gold reserves have been lost, and foreign holdings of dollars, claimable in gold at any time, are more than three times the US gold reserves.

From 1956 to 1965 the Soviet government sold gold to the value of £3,000,000,000. On July 1, 1967 prices of many industrial products were raised, the price of coal going up by 78 per cent. It is clear that deficits on the Soviet current account are the reason for such measures. The purchasing power of the rouble has fallen sharply and there are shortages of clothing, food and other commodities of daily use.

The devaluation of sterling in November 1967 signalled the beginning of the gravest financial crisis in the west for forty years. The plight of the currencies of the whole capitalist world is becoming increasingly desperate. In the Soviet Union and other countries of Eastern Europe the financial situation is deteriorating daily.

By contrast, the Chinese currency is one of the few stable currencies in the world. The Chinese government has no external or internal debts.

Ever since the foundation of the People's Republic retail prices have remained stable. Rents, postal rates and charges for water, electricity and public transport are low and have never risen. Prices of many manufactured goods, especially those used in the countryside, such as chemical fertiliser, insecticide, farm machinery, diesel oil, medicine, etc, have been reduced. At the same time the state has steadily increased the prices it pays for grain, cotton, edible oil, tea, pork and other agricultural products, without basically increasing the selling price. This is a policy aimed at strengthening the alliance of workers and peasants and eliminating unreasonable differences, inherited from the past, between the prices of industrial and agricultural goods.

During this period bank deposits have risen steadily. Since 1952 they have multiplied sevenfold in the towns, while in the countryside they have increased an hundredfold. Total bank deposits now surpass the amount of money in circulation.

The main source of China's revenue is the surplus from state-owned enterprises, state expenditure being mainly for the purpose of expanding the national economy. If revenue and expenditure become temporarily out of balance, the balance is restored by adjustments of the economic plan and by launching mass movements to increase production and practise economy, not by incurring debts, still less by printing currency.

During the years 1952-58 China did indeed resort to borrowing, both from abroad (mainly the Soviet Union) and at home (by means of internal bonds). The debts incurred to the Soviet Union were partly for the purpose of building up industry, but more important were the costs of war material supplied when the Chinese People's Volunteers came to the assistance of the Korean people during their war against the 'United Nations forces', supplies for which the Chinese had to pay in full.

However — and this too is perhaps without precedent — all these loans were eventually repaid, without borrowing more money to repay them, which is the normal procedure in the capitalist world. All external debts were liquidated by January 1965 and the last of the internal bonds was redeemed in 1968.

Taking the period since 1949 as a whole, revenue and expenditure have balanced, as have receipts and expenditure of foreign currency. In fact there has been a small surplus.

It is worth noticing that Liu Shao-chi opposed the policies which have proved so successful. He favoured budget deficits and inflation and in 1962,

when times were still difficult, called for a fifty per cent increase in commodity prices.

During the life of the People's Republic the Chinese currency has successfully withstood many tests. Today, when crises are sweeping the capitalist and revisionist worlds, it stands firm as a rock, an independent, unified and stable socialist currency. What an illustration of the truth of Mao Tse-tung's words: 'The enemy rots with every passing day while for us things are getting daily better.'

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The Marxist-Leninist Movement in Britain

Origins and perspectives

A STATEMENT BY THE JOINT COMMITTEE OF COMMUNISTS

THE MAIN AIM of this statement is to place the present situation in the Marxist-Leninist movement within its recent historical context. By doing this an explanation of the fragmentation which characterises it becomes possible. It is only by understanding this fragmentation that the correct policy for building a disciplined revolutionary Party can be constructed. The Joint Committee of Communists (JCC) was formed as this statement describes in April 1967 and by definition could only at that time represent the necessary initial stage of subjective unity. Recent lengthy discussions within the organisation led to the analysis which follows, and this, together with the joint work and struggle over the past two years or so now enables the growing objective unity that is developing within the JCC. To aid in the understanding of this process a previous statement on Party-building is appended.

We hope then that these two documents make clear that there are two significant lines on Party-building. One is that a centre has to be created first, self-defined and self-proclaimed. Around this centre it is argued that revolutionary cadres will gather and a policy and a correct method of work will emerge. Against this the JCC has posed the necessity of recognising the autonomous nature of the groups which exist and through joint work create an objective unity which will lead to the formation of a firmly based democratic centralist Communist Party. Thus in one, leadership and organisation precede ideological analysis, policy and methods of work. In the second politics is in command and it is understood that leadership and organisation can only develop from the practical experience of constructing a policy and applying the mass line.

THE ROOTS OF REVISIONISM lie deep in the past and have grown gradually, so that many comrades have become aware of its existence and dangers only over a long period in the light of experience. The intention here is to provide an explicit formulation as to the origin and development of the Marxist-Leninist movement in Britain.

Deep ideological battles have been waged from the days of Marx and Engels. As the Chinese comrades have made clear, these battles will continue throughout the era of Socialism, while classes and class struggle remain. In order to establish and consolidate Socialism and bring about Communism the proletariat must defend its interests against all anti-Socialist forces and classes. Since revisionism takes many forms, sometimes subtle, it is necessary to judge each situation, each ideological concept, strictly on the basis of what class interest it serves.

In 1956 at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, Khrushchev precipitated political conflicts that had long been simmering, and accelerated the development of revisionism which had led to the rapid deterioration of the socialist position in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. On the pretext of opposing the 'personality cult' Khrushchev launched

a full scale attack on Stalin, completely negating his role in the period of socialist construction and the fight against Fascism. This anti-Stalin platform was actually the cover for an offensive against many of the basic propositions of Marxism-Leninism. It was claimed that in the Soviet Union the dictatorship of the proletariat had outlived its usefulness. The usurpation of proletarian power by a new type of bourgeoisie was presented by the revisionists as the beginning of an era of socialism without class struggle or contradiction. Khrushchev proclaimed the establishment of a 'State of the Whole People' and claimed that the CPSU had become a party of the whole people.

With these fundamentally anti-Leninist concepts the renegades in the Soviet leadership sought to disguise their betrayal of Socialism. Reformist notions of 'peaceful transition to socialism' and a class-collaborationist version of 'peaceful co-existence' became enshrined as the main feature of the Soviet revisionists' general line for the international movement. The Twentieth and 22nd Congresses of the CPSU attempted to force these theories on all other Communist Parties. The 'unity' envisaged by the revisionists demanded unquestioning acceptance of Moscow's leadership, i.e. capitulation to revisionism, which was rightly seen by the CPC as the first step to capitulation to imperialism. Herein lie the

roots of the present-day social imperialism of the Soviet leaders with their theories of 'international dictatorship' and 'limited sovereignty'.

On Peaceful Co-existence

The hypocrisy of the revisionist distortion of Lenin's theory of peaceful co-existence became clear when the Soviet leaders supported the introduction of UN troops into the Congo, resulting in the murder of Patrice Lumumba. Revolutionaries were again shocked when the Soviet leadership pursued bourgeois adventurist power politics in Cuba. This was followed by humiliating withdrawal in the face of nuclear blackmail and by the agreement struck between Mikoyan and U Thant over the heads of the Cubans for the introduction into Cuba of UN 'observers'. Other examples from among many are the Soviet sale of MIG fighter planes to India at the time of that country's aggression against socialist China; the endorsement of the Evian agreements; the ideological, political and organisational disarmament of Iraqi Communists which led to the destruction of their Party; and the loans and other assistance given to the reactionary Indonesian regime at the very time it was massacring thousands of Communists. In Vietnam there has been the use of the cheap slogan, 'Peace in Vietnam', to hide the reality of betrayal.

The Lenin-Stalin concept of liquidating war through the liquidation of imperialism is turned on its head in the revisionist formulation of victory through economic competition with imperialism. All the exploited peoples of the world are to wait passively until the glorious day when Soviet wealth will convince everyone of the virtue of Socialism. In this way nuclear war will be averted, and in the meantime all 'little wars' of national liberation which could lead to bigger wars must be avoided. The CCP has earned the vilification of both the Soviet revisionists and the US imperialists by exposing such opportunism and pointing out that although tactically US imperialism is a 'real tiger', strategically it is a 'paper tiger'. Thus the more one fears the imperialists and their blackmail the more arrogant and dangerous they become: the surest guarantee of peace lies in the success of wars of national liberation.

On Peaceful Transition

'Peaceful transition' to Socialism based as it is on the revisionist theory of a neutral or malleable State was proclaimed in 'The British Road to Socialism'. It presupposes that, first, the enemy can be neutralised through elections; second, that the enemy will later accept defeat after 'unity of the Left' has ensured a parliamentary majority. This departure from Marxism-Leninism led for example in India's Kerala to the complete fiasco

of the elected Communist Government easily deposed by the reactionary Congress National Government. In Brazil and Greece the reactionary cliques who have seized control have been systematically persecuting and trying to wipe out all opposition. In France and Italy, where the Communist parties had grown in size and prestige during the anti-Fascist war, long years of revisionism have transformed these parties into social-democratic vote-seeking machines, today's equivalents of the bankrupt parties of the 2nd International so roundly condemned by Lenin.

On US—USSR Collusion

From the 20th Congress onwards the class-collaborationist, anti-revolutionary character of revisionism became more evident with the increasingly close relations between the USA and the USSR. Both struggled to ensure a balance which would enable them to control the world situation by a division of the world into spheres of influence: a policy undoubtedly agreed at the Camp David talks. The real import of the phoney line of peaceful co-existence could be seen in such instances as the partial test-ban treaty and the treaty of non-proliferation—both designed to enforce a US/USSR nuclear monopoly; in the revisionist overtures to the imperialists proposing mutual co-operation for the establishment of a 'peace zone' in Europe; and in the joint manoeuvres in the Middle East to protect oil interests and to quell the Palestinian liberation movement.

* * * *

Despite the continued use of Marxist terminology the line of the Soviet leadership should be seen as being no different from that churned out for years by the social democrats—socialism and peace in words—bourgeois dictatorship and imperialism in actions.

* * * *

However, a general understanding of modern revisionism was not constructed primarily in this country. Many comrades in Britain had been critical of what they regarded as mistakes in the policy of CPGB. The publication of 'The British Road to Socialism' heralded by Harry Pollitt's 'Looking Ahead' had been criticised. The closing of factory branches and the organisation of 'The Party' round electoral areas was seen as extremely dangerous. The attacks on Stalin and the consequent negation of the heroic struggles of the Soviet people to build Socialism against tremendous odds were external factors in the growing but fragmented opposition to the CPGB leadership.

But it was not until an international lead was given that conditions became subjectively conducive to an organisational grouping to fight against revisionism. The publication of 'Long live Leninism' by the Chinese comrades in 1960 and its rapid suppression here by the CPGB revisionists, the rabid, public attack by Khrushchev and his yes-men on Albania in 1961, and the publication in 1962 of a polemic against the French and Italian revisionists — a clear statement of policy on the part of the CPC — all of these were among the sparks which were to revitalise the international Communist movement. By re-establishing an ideological base, the Chinese and other comrades had given us the means to attain political clarity, and had thereby provided an organisational cement.

* * * *

It was in this situation in Britain that many comrades with quite varying histories, were brought together. The basis for unity lay in the recognition of the revisionist nature of the various political viewpoints outlined above, and a partial understanding of the ideological springs that were their source. 'Anti-revisionist' rather than 'Marxist-Leninist', in the sense of agreement to a joint political platform would not be an unfair way of characterising the movement at that time. The ideological, political, organisational and tactical polemics that were to follow (although this was not clearly seen at the time) were the only means by which the qualitative change could be achieved.

Several years later many debates and discussions, which in their time were pursued in a rigorous polemical manner, now appear to be redundant. One of the most important of these concerned the possibilities or otherwise of changing the CPGB. The alternative was to work outside it, expose it, and build a new Marxist-Leninist Party. In this regard Michael McCreery among others played a positive role from 1961 onwards, and by taking a firm and clear stand on this issue helped to win many comrades to the correct ideological line.

However, a lesson by negative example should be learned from many of the organisational steps taken by McCreery and those who supported him. Overemphasising and indeed distorting the role and possibilities of leadership, McCreery and his followers concentrated on the creation of a framework for which it was hoped grass-roots support could be won. 'Central Committees' and absurd titles emerged and most anti-revisionists saw that these comrades were in this sense divorced from reality. Opportunists were attracted to these organisations and others genuinely seeking the political realities were repelled.

To some extent the disruption and splits that occurred in these organisations can be attributed to the low and inexperienced level of the movement. Subjectivism and the mistake of a wish for reality — a vice against which Lenin warned — played a very large part. By utilizing his own financial resources McCreery was able to prop up an organization and a journal which were in reality a sham. The danger of such a sham could be seen in the number of sincere people, both at home and abroad, who were deceived by it. That, however, does not lessen their fault which was in not investigating this situation more closely. Indeed it became apparent that McCreery and many of those working with him saw the process of building an organisation as being the provision of the framework, its acceptance at face-value, an influx of members, international recognition and thus a further strengthening. 'Recognition' came to play an increasingly important part, and is still a large factor, in opportunist calculations today.

McCreery consistently ignored the fundamental steps necessary to build a Marxist-Leninist Party. These were not in the first place organisational, but follow the principled sequence established by the history and experience of Marxism-Leninism. Ideological unity proceeds to political unity and in our situation requires a rigorous analysis of the international movement. From this, organisational unity proceeds to tactical unity, on the basis of an analysis of the British movement in far greater depth than the anti-revisionist position has yet produced.

This lesson has still not been learned by many, and the negative example of the 'Committee to Defeat Revisionism for Communist Unity' (CDRCU) has not yet been learned. Split has followed split, often on the basis of personality issues. The way was laid open for the infiltration of highly dubious and bourgeois elements.

* * * *

At the same time as the CDRCU was formed some comrades adopted a different method of approach. Instead of a centralised 'generals without soldiers' organisation, they sought to build the anti-revisionist movement on the basis of the formation of groups throughout the country engaged in local work and political struggle.

In contrast to many features of the CDRCU this was a healthy development. It was a recognition of the objective position with no inflated claims being made. These groups helped to overcome the passive non-creativity of many comrades: a product of the bureaucratic inner party life of the CPGB.

Further, instead of the 'take-over' mentality, an understanding emerged of the need to build co-operation between groups on the basis of mutual respect and adherence to principle.

But it must be recognised that negative factors also emerged. The great limitations and waste of working in isolation were often not recognised. Sometimes the desire to protect group organisation from opportunist interference and disruption, became an excuse to elevate autonomy to a level of sacred principle, inhibiting work and political development. Similarly, sectarianism found expression in inter-group conflicts which, although often based on genuine disagreements, sometimes resulted in exchanges of abuse and insults. Often the basis for real unity was ignored or undervalued.

More generally, sectarianism took the form of a refusal in practice to differentiate between the corrupt and anti-working class leadership and structure of organisations and their members. This can still be seen in relationship to the CPGB, the Labour Party, International Socialism etc . . . Another feature has been elevation of non-antagonistic contradictions to an antagonistic level: the continued inflation of minor tactical and organisational differences into issues of basic principle.

Sometimes this sectarianism springs from and is reinforced by grossly incorrect analyses of the political situation in Britain. One such has been the claim that the British proletariat no longer exists. This sees the super-exploitation of imperialism as having corrupted the whole of the British working class. Such views can and must be shown to be incorrect.

From bilateral contacts and arrangements the formal recognition of the need for groups to work together came to be formulated. Some early experience which went from the extreme of sectarianism to that of liberalism, by seeking unity through ignoring real differences, also taught valuable lessons. On the basis of such experiences and centred round comrades engaged in anti-revisionist struggle within and outside the YCL, the JCC was created.

The approach here was for the groups involved to combine theory with practice and gain experience in political work in their localities. Industrial, tenants' and students' work in the localities was combined with attempts to co-operate nationally in the Britain Vietnam Solidarity Front (BVSF) and Friends of China, among others.

The theory here was to engage in joint work and

study and the development of a programme which would lead through ideological, political, organisational and tactical unity to the formation of a Marxist-Leninist Party.

It is necessary to consider recent events in the JCC. These cannot just be ascribed to personality factors, for although this theory of Party-building was and is correct, it has recently been distorted. The prime example of this has been the attempt to turn the BVSF into a Party. The 'Revolutionary Marxist-Leninist League', for a short time a member group of the JCC, attempted to promote a strategy built solely around the issues of the national liberation struggle in Vietnam. Primarily because of its petty-bourgeois base it was (and is) unable to build up links with the working class or in any way develop the internal contradiction between Labour and Capital on which the proletarian revolution in Britain will be based. It also epitomised the 'leftist' error of which Lin Piao reminds us: that is, one-sidedly pursuing 'struggle' to the exclusion of 'unity'.

Two main lessons must be learned from the successful struggle against this sectarianism. Firstly we must be prepared to fight against both 'left' and right deviations, within and outside the JCC and must regard these as a normal and essential part of our political development. Secondly, while these struggles are necessary, great care must be taken to keep 'politics in command' and not, under whatever provocations, allow these to be conducted on the basis of the personalities involved. There was unfortunately in this recent struggle against sectarianism, an overemphasis on the style of work of the leftists which tended to obscure the main issue — that of their confusion between a policy for a united front and that for Party-building.

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Concurrent with the establishment and broadening of the JCC we have regrettably seen the failure to learn from past mistakes, and the experience of the CDRCU in particular, in the formation of the self-styled 'Communist Party of Britain (M-L)'. The consequences of the formation of this organisation are probably not so serious as they were in the earlier stages of development. Comrades are strengthened by experience and although a number of the central grouping of the CPB (M-L) are industrial workers this alters in no way the striking political and organisational similarities with the CDRCU which will find expression in a similar demise. However, while bearing in mind the above remarks relating to sectarianism, and seeking to distinguish genuine from disruptive elements, the JCC must continuously struggle against the in-

correct political line and organisational methods of this organisation. Not to do so would be to take a serious risk of further grave subjective setbacks.

For many months now the JCC has been actively seeking the next step forward. This has been generally seen as the formation of a body that would introduce a new type of relationship between the component groups, and between the groups as a whole and the working-class. The formulation has been in terms of a federation of British Communists. Such a federation must see as its prime task the development of conditions for the formation of a genuine Marxist-Leninist Party. This needs to be accomplished by gaining unity on the levels mentioned above — ideological, political, organisational and tactical.

In creating such a federation and developing from it a democratic centralist structure we must always bear in mind the concrete problems facing the constituent groups in their mutual relationships. All of the groups have different individual histories, class compositions, organisational structures and fields of work. These must be closely considered in building a unified organisation. Nor can we ignore the obvious problems of geographical separation.

Ideological work for unity will take various forms. Basing ourselves on self-reliance and seeking to integrate theory with concrete conditions, planned Marxist-Leninist education must take place with particular attention to the development of Marxism-Leninism by Mao Tse-tung. This education must centre around the production of a programme. We will analyse and seek to make clear the roots of revisionism: this is a basic political duty to the working-class who have suffered for so long from its betrayals and false signposting. In this work we will recognise that this is the greater danger to the Marxist-Leninist movement in Britain. We will also expose dogmatism and left-opportunism, particularly through a concrete examination of events in the last decade in the anti-revisionist movement. In combatting both of these deviations we must stress that internationalism is a key component of our policy.

We still need to examine the British State much more closely. Here we must develop and build upon Lenin's analysis and enquire in a detailed and concrete manner into its present economic and political structure. In doing this we must avoid that form of scholasticism which strangles Marxism by confining it within narrow textual and semantic channels. Similarly, a close analysis is needed of the

Labour Party, the Labour movement and the CPGB. Urgent recognition and attention must be paid to the rapidly emergent corporate State.

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At an organisational level we will of course be motivated and informed by the need for a vanguard Party. To promote unity, aid progress, and build support we must engage in inter-group projects. These will include the production of leaflets, pamphlets and other material for joint campaigns.

The question of democratic centralism must be studied and the lessons correctly applied within the federation. This is a key point and an area of sensitivity and will need to be dealt with thoroughly and responsibly. At the same time we will have to recognise and apply the Leninist position on leadership.

In general while working in a planned and disciplined manner within our realistically assessed limitations we must increase our participation nationally in such areas as industrial, tenants' and Vietnam work. At all times opportunism and adventurism must be combatted by a consistent development in our own platforms.

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Attention must be paid to a vital area of organisational work, upon which so much else depends, the provision of a journal or journals. In the first instance we will concentrate on providing a theoretical journal, but as conditions become more favourable a more frequent educational and agitational paper will be published aiming to attain a wider circulation especially among industrial workers.

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Various tactical considerations immediately confront us and have to be investigated concurrent with the above. We must speedily explore the issues immediately confronting the British working class. We need to decide which political groups we can work with and should formulate the minimum points for such unity. In the light of past experience we must seek to establish the best form and working style for united front organisations.

An important tactical question arises in the consideration of the role of leadership in broad movements. The matter of rank and file work, seeking to win people to a principled stand, must be set against the tactic of capturing offices and ignoring

rank and file work. In this regard we must remember our origin in the CPGB and bear in mind that its methods are often still stamped upon us.

The federation for which we are working is only a step towards a Party. That must be a basic premise of its existence, if it is not to develop into an impediment to further progress. Nevertheless premature time scales should not be constructed. Many groups who are not yet members of the JCC must not be dismissed and we will continue to work for unity with them in a principled way. We must guard against sloppy work and liberalism in this area and not seek size for its own sake in any way. In those areas where individual comrades are working to establish groups the JCC must give generous help to the best of its ability.

All comrades must avoid the 'club' mentality and strive to realise the great and formidable duty that we owe the working-class. With all modesty, recognition must be given to our vital role in times which are fraught with danger for the working-class and yet which feel the strength of the masses aroused. The corporate State is at once a threat and an admission of this strength.

We are not uniquely cursed or blessed in Britain. The history of all Parties has been difficult. Any despondency which may exist should be replaced by a confidence which, while it recognises the size of our task, derives its basis from History, the people, and the world revolutionary situation.

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JCC STATEMENT ON THE QUESTION OF PARTY BUILDING

1 The signatories of this statement believe that the formation of a Marxist-Leninist party is the top priority for all British Marxist-Leninists today.

2 We hold that the main characteristic of the Marxist-Leninist Movement in Britain today is the existence of individual autonomous groups. The nature of these groups is determined by the fact that they are making serious attempts to integrate Marxist-Leninist theory with practice in the concrete working conditions of their own locality or industry. Such groups in various parts of the country must increasingly co-ordinate their efforts in joint work and ideological struggle with the declared aim of forming together a Marxist-Leninist party.

3 Such an organisation of groups must strive to attain a level where the following conditions for the formation of a party are achieved:

a a politically advanced cadre force, with a good grasp of the ideology of Marxism-Leninism gained from a combination of theory and practice.

b a full analysis of the national and international political situation including the historical experience of the British anti-revisionist movement to date.

c a draft programme that would need to be fully discussed to ensure that it was fully understood by all the constituent parts of the organisation and would stand the test of time; furthermore in the production of such a draft programme it would be necessary for a number of publications, statements, etc. to be brought out.

d to have carried out as an organisation practical work upon which concrete evaluation could be made and practical conclusions drawn.

e to have proceeded in accordance with democratic centralism utilising fully the methods of criticism and self-criticism.

4 Clearly no organisation in Britain, including those claiming national status, has fulfilled these essential conditions.

5 Progress toward the above conditions will be directly related to the degree of principled unity achieved amongst Marxist-Leninist organisations in Britain. We intend to take all necessary steps to build this unity.

AT A MEETING on September 28, 1969 the Joint Committee of Communists adopted a constitution under which it the JCC became the Communist Federation of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist). Its political position is stated in the above statement. The decision to form itself into a federation strengthens centralism by making the policy-making body for the Federation a general meeting; by making the powers of the Federation Committee greater than the JCC monthly meeting; and by defining a number of political and organisational criteria which will govern the operation of the component groups. The CFB is confident that its stronger organisational form will enable it to be more effective in its political struggles for working class power. It continues the policy of the JCC in seeing itself as a

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Ireland

This article is based on one which originally appeared in the *Progressive Worker (Canada)* in January-February 1969 and on notes supplied by Jack Scott, the author, to bring it up to date. Not everyone will agree with the conclusions of the article. The Marxist will welcome contributions to continue the discussion on the 'Irish Question'.

IF ONE WERE TO BELIEVE the daily press, the entire issue of the struggle in Ireland would appear to centre on the fact that Protestants do not like Catholics and vice versa. Arch reactionaries and religious fanatics like Ian Paisley lend strength to this line of thought. Politically, Paisley is a fascist, theologically — for all his fanatic Protestantism — he is a direct descendent of the Inquisition, and just as ready to burn his victims at the stake.

The so-called 'religious issue' in Ireland is rooted in English policy toward Ireland, and her attempts to fully conquer that land. The church in Ireland was independent until Henry VIII compelled allegiance to Rome, and Protestantism was imported with the plantation of Ulster at the start of the seventeenth century. It was not concern about saving the souls of the Irish people that caused the English to introduce alien churches into Ireland. The real objective was to use the church and religious superstition as a means to make at least a portion of the people amenable to English rule.

There are two erroneous views about the Irish situation that need to be corrected.

One popular idea is that all Catholics in Ireland are progressive and that all progressives are Catholics, and that all Protestants, on the other hand, are confirmed reactionaries and religious fanatics. The distorted way in which the 'news' is written helps to spread these errors. The true fact is, of course, that while religion and the church are used for political purposes, a person's politics is not automatically determined by his religion. In Ireland reactionaries and revolutionaries can be found in both church organisations, and in no church at all. In every period of political and economic crisis Catholics and Protestants have joined hands to fight for the independence of the nation. The most outstanding instance of this political unity of Catholic and Protestant was

during the period of the United Irishmen during the rising of 1798. It is true, of course, that most of the Irish people who are affiliated to a Church are of the Catholic persuasion. It is not surprising, therefore, that any political movement organised to advance the interests of the nation should be made up mostly of Catholics. But people will adhere to such organisations because they are Irish and aiming at the realisation of the independence of Ireland — not because they belong to one or another church. Rome has always defended English rule in Ireland, and Irish Catholics have always had to defy the hierarchy in order to fight for the true interests of the Irish nation.

A second erroneous view holds that all Ulster Protestants are ever faithful in their defence of English rule in Ireland. Even the reactionary, bigoted, flag-waving leaders of the Ulster Covenanters offer no blind loyalty to the English, despite what reporters may write. These people are motivated solely by what they consider are their own bourgeois and petty-bourgeois class interests. In 1913 they considered it necessary to take up arms against England in defence of their interests. (Lenin referred to them as acting like 'revolutionaries from the right'), Carson, for the Protestant Unionists, declared preference for a German ruler rather than an English King and government that would 'coerce' Ulster. Ulster leaders resisted conscription and impeded recruitment into the army during the first world war. Paisley, Craig and others in Ulster are repeating Carson's stand of 1913 and denying England's right to intervene.

The Ulster Government on the other hand, is looking to England for help in maintaining 'law and order'. They are convinced that certain political disabilities placed on the Catholic minority in Ulster must be at least partially relieved before the situation gets completely out of hand. O'Neill considered it necessary to have English support against his own political base in the Unionist Party because, as a representative of bourgeois and alien

rule, he was incapable of mobilising the people knowing that would mean, first of all, taking up the struggle for the real independence of the nation.

The situation tends to become confused because the main political support for bigots and fanatics like Craig and Paisley comes from the Ulster proletariat. The fact is that the proletarian Protestants have been badly corrupted. When James Craig declared fifty years ago: 'We will create a Protestant people,' he knew very well what he meant. The Unionist Party had devised a scheme whereby they would ruthlessly exploit workers, both Protestant and Catholic, but give to the Protestant a minute advantage over Catholics in employment and social benefits, thus ensuring that Protestant workers would, in the main, adhere to the Unionist Party in fear of losing their position of advantage. This is how the reactionary Unionist gang in Ulster was able to build, and has so far maintained, a mass base among Protestant workers. But what happens if the Protestant worker no longer enjoys an 'advantage', or even the illusion of one, over the Catholic worker. With the loss of the 'advantage' they also lose all reason for giving political support to the Unionist Party, consequently the Unionist junta loses its mass base and the supporters of yesterday are transformed into the enemies of today. Alice Stopford Green in her pamphlet 'Ourselves Alone in Ulster' published in 1918, put the matter into brief but correct terms when she remarked:

'... once Home Rule and Rome Rule were settled these Protestant workers would turn anti-capitalist and renounce the "natural leaders of democracy".'

And that is the nightmare vision which continues to haunt the dreams and disturb the restless sleep of Ulster Unionist, British imperialist and Irish Nationalist bourgeois, all in equal measure. All alike are in mortal dread of realising a formidable force which they are certain would be turned against them in a furious battle for supremacy, for the workers of Ireland know, out of the experience of centuries of struggle, that political force does indeed 'grow out of the barrel of a gun'. Once stripped of their illusions and released from ideological captivity these workers who have fought so fiercely in a cause that is not theirs, will fight a thousand times more effectively when inspired by a cause that is just and wholly theirs.

Ireland under English rule has always been a depressed area, a supplier of produce for the dinner tables of England and deliberately held back from developing economically. Under English rule, Ire-

land's foremost business was the export of her children to be used as cheap labour by exploiters in foreign lands.

The real need for Ireland — and the development which English rulers and Irish traitors fear most — was the unity of the Irish people, Catholic and Protestant, to fight for the freedom of the land.

The most important — but not the only — line of division was between Catholic and Protestant. To achieve this division, the Unionist agents of English imperialism in times of crisis instigated Ulster Protestants to drive Catholics from the plants and hold the declining number of jobs for themselves. This was, and is, the main source of corruption of Protestant workers in Ulster. It is not fundamentally different from the attitude of certain organised workers in the United States who consider their own interests best served by preventing black workers from entering employment. They cannot see that they are being used as tools by their own oppressors, and that in doing so, they are co-operating in their own ultimate enslavement.

In line with their policy of keeping the people and the nation divided, the Ulster government has inflicted special disabilities on the Catholic population, who are a majority in Ireland but a minority in the six Northern Counties. Municipal housing is almost completely denied the Catholic workers who are condemned to living in cellars and sub-standard houses. Electoral districts are gerrymandered in the most outrageous fashion so as to ensure a Protestant majority even where the Catholics outnumber them. Businessmen, both large and small, can vote up to 20 times in municipal districts while many workers are denied the right to vote at all.

The economy of Ireland, and especially that of Ulster, is closely tied to and dominated by the economy of England. At a time such as now, when England's economy (itself now dominated by US capital) is seriously undermined and in a state of permanent crisis, the effect on the subject economy in Ireland is devastating. The cost of this crisis the Ulster traitors seek to place on the shoulders of the working people and, in the first place, in line with traditional policy, on the Catholic minority.

'Law enforcement' agencies — courts and police — are almost exclusively Protestant and, especially the police, predominantly followers of Paisley and Craig. Paisley is particularly strong among the 20,000-man force of 'B' special armed police, which

is exclusively Protestant, made up mainly of petty landowners and small businessmen, and fascist oriented. In conditions such as this, the Catholic worker in Ulster has very little hope of ever receiving 'justice' in the courts.

In the 'Civil Rights Movement', the wishy-washy Communist Party of Northern Ireland (a section of the CP of England) and their middle class friends see these events as a simple 'denial of civil rights' to a section of the Irish people. They try to insist on 'no politics' in the movement, which seriously restricts its activities. Betty Sinclair for the Communist Party of Northern Ireland, Gerry Fitt for the Labour Party and their liberal-reformist allies, try to keep the movement within 'acceptable' limits, urge their followers to abide by the rules laid down by the reactionary Ulster Unionist ruling junta and work frantically to maintain 'non-violent' methods of struggle, even in the face of the unrestricted violence of the ruling class and their fascist gangs.

It would be wrong to conclude from this that revolutionaries have no role to play in such a movement:

'Communists fight on behalf of the immediate aims and interests of the working class, but in the present movement they are also defending the future of that movement.'

(Communist Manifesto).

Whilst the Civil Rights struggle is not of itself a revolutionary one, in Ulster, pushed to a decisive conclusion, it cannot fail to have revolutionary consequences. For this reason it is of prime importance that revolutionaries fully participate in the movement, exerting every effort to carry it to victory. The demands for equality in electoral rights, housing, employment and, most important, the demand for the disarming and disbandment of the armed fascist gangs in the 'B' specials and the Ulster Volunteers — fascist hoodlums who taught Hitler lessons years before he founded the Storm Troopers — must be fought to a conclusion and won, so that the forces for progress and social emancipation can be liberated from the prison in which they have been confined for more than half a century.

The ruling classes are well aware of the revolutionary implications of the Civil Rights struggle. Therefore every means will be used to defeat the movement. Only revolutionary methods of struggle can provide any guarantee of victory and when people like Sinclair and Fitt oppose such methods they are serving the interests of the ruling class; they are advocating methods that can only lead to defeat.

Similarly, those who look to British troops to tip the balance in favour of a fundamental change in the relationship of political forces in Ulster are ignoring the lessons of history and failing to take account of the class interests of the English bourgeoisie. The 'British' ruling class know for certain that a social revolution could not be confined to Ireland alone, but would quickly spread to Britain and possibly even to Western Europe. To safeguard their own class interests, therefore, Britain's ruling class will do everything possible to avoid the development of a situation where Protestant workers will become a force for social revolution, rather than continuing as pawns in the control of reaction. That means that the British ruling class will try to come up with a scheme that will divide the Civil Rights movement, render it ineffective, and stop short of conceding the just demands of the minority for equal rights, thus making it possible for the Ulster ruling class to continue bribing Protestant workers and so maintaining at least an important part of their main base. In these endeavours, the reactionaries will undoubtedly receive assistance from reformists, revisionists and middle-class conciliators who will urge compromise. Only the working class element in the movement can be counted upon to remain loyal to the principles and objectives of the struggle, and then only if there is present a revolutionary leadership to guide them towards victory. In the last months the Civil Rights movement has swept dramatically beyond the liberal-reformist leaders who are now frantically working to get it back under control. The presence of a well-organised, disciplined and revolutionary cadre force could ensure their defeat and push the struggle to a decisive conclusion.

National Unity

It was in Ireland that the British imperialists perfected their very efficient policy of divide and rule. With the plantation of Ulster in the seventeenth Century, they divided the people along Catholic-Protestant lines and then divided the island nation into two separate states. The question of the re-unification of the nation is central to the solution of the basic problems that confront the people of Ireland, and the class or party that fails to accord it a place of prominence on the agenda cannot be considered revolutionary. But by what means that can be achieved is a question demanding serious consideration. After almost fifty years of partition, and in the light of recent events, one is compelled to come to the conclusion that there are no simple solutions, or short cuts to national unity. The lessons of the past few months indicate that any attempt to apply simple solutions would create more problems than it would solve.

A few years ago progressive comrades in Ireland held the opinion that the precipitation of a crisis in Ulster would immediately result in massive support coming from the Republic, possibly in co-operation with the Republican bourgeoisie; if necessary over their heads. The crisis that did develop has shown that estimation to be incorrect. The Republican bourgeoisie not only do not want to act; they give every indication that they would prefer that Ulster and its problems, both political and economic, stay out of the Republic and keep the British connection.

All the sabre-rattling on the border and the useless fanfare at the United Nations is so much window-dressing designed to impress the gullible and cover up the real act of national betrayal being hatched by the Irish bourgeoisie. That the barricaders in Ulster were fully aware of the real intentions of the bourgeoisie is evident from the demand they addressed to Lynch: 'Give us guns, not promises!' Bandages and drugs there were in plenty for the wounded on the border, but not a single rifle or cartridge from the Republican Government was passed across the border for the use of the men and women on the barricades who had to fight armed mainly with the most primitive of weapons.

It is possible that sections of the left in Ireland may have become disorganised and disoriented by the development. Until now it was always thought that a first major step towards a solution of the 'Irish question' would be the attachment of the six counties to the Republic. But now it becomes clear that the Republican bourgeoisie do not want such a solution, even if it becomes possible in the near future. Fianna Fail have not been any too enthusiastic about national unity for some years, bringing up the subject mainly as an election stunt. They will give the subject even less attention in the future in dread of someone challenging them actually to do something about it.

Revolutionaries will certainly not lower the banners of national unity and independence. But they will need to analyse the position in the light of recent experience and from this determine how their objectives should be reached. It seems evident that the first conclusion to be agreed upon is that both parts of the nation are governed by reactionary traitor class between whom there is no real choice. Supporting the one in preference to the other is obviously no solution to Ireland's problems. It is becoming clearer day by day that national unity will probably not be realised short of a Workers' Republic.

It is probably necessary that revolutionaries will have to adopt the approach of a temporary acceptance of the fact of partition and see Ireland as a

nation divided, advancing along parallel but separate lines towards the ultimate goal of national unity in a land not only nationally independent but socially emancipated. This does not mean accepting the organisational policy of the revisionists who accommodate themselves to the imperialist partition of the nation, organising two separate parties each of which is nothing more than a section of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

A real revolutionary party must be one that represents the whole nation and all sections of the oppressed within its boundaries. It must be a party that has one programme for the nation and openly declares its ultimate objective of national unity and national independence for all the people of Ireland. The way in which the struggle for the realisation of these aims is conducted, the tactics to be adopted, must be determined by the conditions that prevail in Ireland and the present relationship of forces there.

It seems clear that the Ulster Unionist Party, the most reactionary force in Ireland, has been shaken to its very foundations and can no longer rule in the old way. That is a most important political advance for Ireland bringing in its train changes that will compel the Protestant workers of Ulster to adopt new attitudes that can only bring them into conflict with the ruling force they have hitherto supported. When that happens we are on the threshold of great changes in Ireland. There are therefore reasons to be optimistic about the situation.

Ireland and England

Engels, who visited Ireland twice and knew the country and its problems well, advised the workers of England to insist on the separation of Ireland not for the freedom of Ireland alone but as a step in the direction of the emancipation of England itself. He pointed out at that time that England's workers could not be free so long as Ireland was held in bondage. This is as true today as it was in the nineteenth century. Lenin, referring to the advice given by Marx and Engels to the British workers, commented:

'Alas! Owing to a number of special historical causes, the British workers of the last third of the nineteenth century proved dependent upon the Liberals, impregnated with the spirit of liberal-labour policy. They proved to be, not at the head of nations and classes fighting for liberty, but in the wake of the contemptible lackeys of the money-bags, the British liberals.'

(British Liberals and Ireland. Collected Works Vol. 20, p 149.)

(Continued on back of cover)

Twenty years of People's China

by Colin Penn

LAST OCTOBER 1st the People's Republic of China celebrated its twentieth anniversary. China's international standing makes this an event of importance for the whole world, but it is especially militant socialists who can appreciate how China reached her present position and profit by the lessons she teaches.

To understand the transformation brought about in twenty years one must remember that before Liberation the Chinese people were among the most downtrodden and oppressed in the world, and that their country was a prey for the greedy British, French, Belgian, Japanese, German and other imperialisms.

The great majority of Chinese — the peasants — were crushed by debt, near starvation for a part of every year, and could see no way out. No advance in agriculture was possible under the feudal landlord system and every year flood or drought ravaged some part of the country. Basically China had always depended on its agriculture, and in some provinces thirty or forty per cent of the arable land lay waste.

Women were little better than slaves; they could be bought and sold at will. Health services were non-existent; infantile mortality was very high. Illiteracy was about eighty per cent.

Inflation was soaring. In Shanghai, immediately before Liberation, in about ten years before 1948, prices had increased three-million-fold. Wages could become worthless before they were spent. Unemployment was very high. At the beginning of 1949 over eighty per cent of Shanghai's machine factories (and Shanghai was the most highly industrialised city) had closed down.

The whole of China was in the grip of a crisis that had been growing ever since, over a century earlier, imperialism made its first entry into the land, ruthlessly smashing the old society and milking the country of its wealth.

Emergency Measures

This is no place to speak of the brilliant military campaigns that swept away Chiang Kai-shek with

his US supplies and advisers. They showed, to the amazement of bourgeois 'experts', that the Chinese were awakening and uniting.

At Liberation, the People's Government had to take urgent steps to remedy the most pressing ills. Here, fortunately, experience in areas liberated earlier was helpful. No government or party has ever made such a serious study of past mistakes as the Chinese; the result is that mistakes made once have not been repeated.

Prices were at once stabilised and inflation checked. And, one may add, prices of basic commodities in the shops have remained remarkably stable ever since. What other country can say as much?

Bribery, opium-smoking, gambling and prostitution were abolished — not by a stroke of the pen but by a campaign of education, by enlisting the co-operation of the people, very ready to hate the habits which symbolised their former oppression and had helped to maintain that oppression. Now, all who have had personal experience of People's China agree that there is no opium, no gambling, no bribery, no prostitution — not because there are laws against them but because the people have rejected them.

These great achievements, however, could not in themselves prevent flood and famine or provide food for the millions near starvation. The much greater problem of land ownership had to be tackled; landlordism had to be wiped out.

Taking over the Land

Once again, this was not attempted by mere legal enactment. The peasants had to liberate themselves. Work teams went out from the cities to explain the new China and to stimulate the peasants to action. It was difficult. The country people found it hard to believe that the bad old days had gone, that Chiang Kai-shek would never return. Feudal tradition taught that the landlords ruled by a sort of divine right and that no good would come of trying to overthrow them. Such ideas had to be met by patient and repeated explanation.

Sometimes, when landlords were accused at public meetings by those who had suffered at their hands, passions were so inflamed that, contrary to the law, landlords were beaten up or even killed. Communists tried to prevent such excesses, but they did not forget that it was the landlords themselves who had roused such savage hatred. Under the dictatorship of the proletariat, when the working class and peasantry were beginning to build a close alliance, such 'wrongdoing' was met with reproof and education rather than punishment. Justice is a class matter.

The peasant take-over of the land by no means solved the problems of agriculture. Nature was as hostile as ever; tools and animals were lacking; many remnants of feudal, individualistic habits still held sway. Some peasants thought they now had a chance to become well-off and so gave full play to the money-grabbing, acquisitive ways that had been part of the former society and that the landlords had practised with such success.

But starting with 'mutual aid teams' and then going on to form co-operatives, the peasants began to see the advantages of working together. At first they retained their private ownership of the land, animals and implements for which they had longed and fought. Later, in the 'higher-stage' co-operatives, they gave up this private ownership and agreed that their livelihood should depend solely on their work. Such a decision could not have been taken without a great advance in political maturity, an understanding of the road they were taking.

Over the whole of China these stages took the first eight or nine years after Liberation. Coercion was not used to bring about this progress. The Chinese Communist Party believes, and events in their own country and in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have proved it, that no political advance can be secured by administrative means alone, but only by conviction and conscious action on the part of the masses.

It was a telling demonstration, on a huge scale, of the truth of Mao Tse-tung's belief in the masses, that 'the people, and the people alone, are the motive force in the making of world history.'

The People's Communes

Still more was to come, a striking proof of another of Mao's sayings:

The masses have boundless creative power. They can organise themselves and concentrate on places and branches of work where they

can give full play to their energy; they can concentrate on production in breadth and depth and create more and more undertakings for their own well-being.

Even the co-operatives had disadvantages: land distribution was irrational, the land of another co-operative might obstruct schemes for improved irrigation and, most important, the co-operatives had insufficient manpower to take on really big works of irrigation and flood prevention.

When the first moves were made to form larger units, of perhaps 30,000 people, the advantages were at once apparent and the idea spread like wildfire. There are absolutely no grounds for saying, as is so often said in the West, that the peasants were 'forced into the Communes.' In fact it would be truer to say that the speed of the movement took the Party to some extent by surprise. The peasants insisted on forming the larger units called People's Communes, and by the end of 1958 practically the whole of the vast countryside was enthusiastically taking up a new way of life.

The Communes took over the local government of their area and organised the People's Militia to defend it. They set up schools and hospitals, built roads. They threw themselves into the work of water conservation and flood prevention, undertaking huge dams and canals unimaginable in old China. For some schemes several Communes might get together and during the winter months (time of enforced idleness in the old days) hundreds of thousands of peasants might work on a single scheme. The change was highly successful.

All kinds of experiments were made in ploughing, sowing, reaping, administration. Some were successful others were not, but the main point was that the peasants, so long downtrodden, were using their initiative and striking out in quite new directions.

The threat of drought began to lift. Electric pumps made their appearance and thousands of new wells were dug. Electricity began to be used for the thousand tasks of farm life that had previously exacted a heavy toll of manual labour.

The worth of the Communes was to be tested immediately. In 1959, 1960 and 1961 unprecedented 'natural calamities' — drought in many places but floods in others — struck China. In the old days millions would have died. As it was there was hardship and stringent but completely fair rationing. Supplies never failed to meet the ration tickets. The Communes and the state came triumphantly through the crisis. In 1962, when the weather

improved, I well remember how the Communes flooded the Peking markets with fruit and vegetables, convincing the city-dwellers that the worst was past. From then on things improved every year.

Industrial Build-up

At Liberation the state took over the property of the big capitalists who had controlled the government and who had, of course, left the country. The state and the municipalities began to play a new part in the economic life of the nation, undertaking trading and manufacturing activities they had never touched previously.

Since exploitation was now forbidden even the smaller, friendly employers could not be allowed to carry on as before. Under a system of joint state-private ownership those who were willing to co-operate with the People's Government were credited with shares equivalent in value to their ownership in the enterprise, bearing interest of five per cent a year. This was to continue for only a limited period, but the period was later extended and the payments came to an end only with the Cultural Revolution.

With Soviet assistance a big development programme for heavy and light industry was begun. Much machinery and transport equipment came from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Hundreds of technical experts, mainly Soviet, were housed in considerable luxury, special hotels being built for them in the main cities. That in Peking, Friendship Hotel, consists of over 1,000 suites of rooms, with restaurants, theatre, gymnasium, swimming pool and shops where throughout the most difficult years goods were available which could not be bought by any Chinese.

Sino-Soviet differences

But, unknown to most people, difficulties had begun to arise between the Soviet Union and China. The Chinese Party and state were determined to pursue a firmly socialist course of uncompromising opposition to imperialism, especially to the leading imperialist, the US, which occupied China's territory of Taiwan and supported anti-China activities all over the world. The Soviet Party and government, on the other hand, departing from Marxism-Leninism, developed afresh old revisionist theories (criticised by Lenin in 'The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky' and other works) of 'peaceful transition' to socialism by parliamentary means and of 'peaceful co-existence' between socialism and capitalism. The Soviet leaders, including the managerial and Party elite, became, as the years went on, increasingly separated from the Soviet people. With a very

much higher personal standard of living, they feared class struggle and did not want the dictatorship of the proletariat. Seeking agreement with the US, they thought everything else, including the struggles of those still oppressed by imperialism, should be subordinated to this end. Finally they became a class with interests opposed to those of the the Soviet masses.

The 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, in 1956, marked the first step along the road of revisionism taken by the Soviet leaders. The year 1958—the year of the Great Leap Forward—was perhaps the parting of the ways, showing as it did that China was determined to achieve economic independence through self-reliance. The People's Communes were a 'deviation' from the path followed by the Soviet Union and they certainly angered Khrushchev, who closed his eyes to their success. Differences came into the open, in spite of Chinese efforts, at international meetings of Communist Parties, where the Albanian Party too stood up to Soviet bullying.

The break came in July 1960, when all the Soviet experts were suddenly recalled and hundreds of contracts and agreements for construction were torn up. This took place at a time when owing to the natural calamities China's economic difficulties were very great. Khrushchev thought this would bring the Chinese to heel but, as on many other occasions, he miscalculated. They refused to sacrifice socialist principle for expediency.

All over China one saw half-completed factories, power stations without turbines, dams unfinished. The foreign specialists had taken all their plans with them, though it is known that some lent them to their Chinese friends for copying. Such acts of comradeship could do little to soften the blow to the economy. Work on new buildings had to stop and for several years no capital construction was undertaken.

Self-reliance

But the correct leadership of Mao Tse-tung and the Communist Party ensured that out of this evil came good. The people's genius for improvisation bridged many gaps and a new look was taken at the quality of Soviet assistance. It had not always suited Chinese conditions; machinery tended to be heavy and expensive. Ordinary workers now proved themselves capable, on the basis of their practical knowledge, of designing machines that would do the job better.

Many great successes were registered. One of the most spectacular was in the field of oil production. Almost nothing had been done when the Soviet technicians left, but by putting technique

under the command of politics, refusing to follow beaten paths and, inspired by the thought of Mao Tse-tung, determining to succeed, the job was done. Not only were oil wells drilled at increasing speed until world records were broken, but all the complex tasks of starting a petro-chemical industry from scratch were accomplished at almost incredible speed. This success, and others like it, were not achieved by technique alone but by solving political problems first, after which 'practical' problems yielded more readily.

Similar things happened in other fields. One may mention the great road and rail bridge across the Yangtse at Wuhan, involving technical problems never solved before but now surpassed by the bridge at Nanking. One may mention, too, the construction of new railways and roads and great public buildings at almost incredible speed. China showed there was little she could not do in the sphere of technique and finally proved it to the world by testing an atomic bomb in 1964 and a hydrogen bomb in 1966, long before it had been thought possible. Especially startled were the Soviet government, for they had broken their promise to provide China with an atomic bomb and were attempting, by means of the partial test-ban treaty, to assure a nuclear monopoly for themselves and the USA.

After each successful test the Chinese government have solemnly stated that they develop nuclear weapons in order to eliminate them and that they will never be the first to use them in war. No other governments have made a similar promise.

At first the Chinese government kept quiet about the Soviet betrayal. But when it became clear that the Soviet leaders felt no similar restraint, Peking began to issue a series of important political documents which tore to shreds the Soviet claim to be Marxist-Leninist, laid a whole theoretical foundation for revolutionary policy in the conditions of today, and constitute a priceless arsenal for anti-revisionists throughout the world.

The Cultural Revolution

The struggle within the international Communist movement was paralleled by a struggle within the Chinese Party.

On the eve of liberation Chairman Mao Tse-tung had said:

With victory, certain moods may grow within the Party — arrogance, the airs of a self-styled hero, inertia and unwillingness to make progress, love of pleasure and distaste for continued hard living . . . The Chinese revo-

lution is great, but the road after the revolution will be longer, the work greater and more arduous. This must be made clear now in the Party. The comrades must be helped to remain modest, prudent and free from arrogance and rashness in their style of work. The comrades must be helped to preserve the style of plain living and hard struggle.

In some fields, and with some comrades, what Mao had warned against was beginning to come true. There was a revisionist trend within the Party itself; class enemies were profiting from the improvement in living conditions and a certain relaxation of vigilance to gain positions of authority from which they were able to put out propaganda subtly opposing the dictatorship of the proletariat and Chairman Mao's revolutionary line.

They concentrated on the 'superstructure' — the field of ideas, where old bourgeois or feudal habits and methods of thought had become ingrained and were very hard to change. Important positions in the press, radio, the theatre and the cinema gave them many opportunities to influence public opinion and to lead it in the wrong direction — to prepare it for a return to capitalism. They had high positions too in industry and in the economic organs, where they encouraged material incentives, rather than the desire to serve the people, as a stimulus to greater production.

Anti-socialist ideas were clearly seen in education. In many schools and universities only lip service was paid to the principles of education being for the workers and peasants. The proportion of students from worker and peasant families stayed low and they were often discriminated against.

But there was opposition from many students with revolutionary ideals. In spite of great efforts by the university authorities to suppress the 'rebels', dissatisfaction burst its bounds at Peking University in the spring of 1966. Mao ensured that their demands got publicity and at once support came from all over China. All the 'basic' ideas of education were called into question. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was in full flood.

Once it began it was not confined to education. Basically it was, as Mao said:

A great political revolution carried out by the proletariat against the bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes . . . a continuation of the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

Starting in the schools and universities, the

revolution swept into every corner of Chinese life. It was proved, as a result of painstaking research among old records and the recollections of participants in the early struggles, that China's President, Liu Shao-chi, had been the undercover leader of the counter-revolutionary faction that was seeking to set China on the road back to capitalism. He had opposed the formation of agricultural co-operatives and succeeded in getting thousands of them dissolved; he had wanted an extension of private plots and individual peasant enterprise; he had opposed the communes; he held that China should not try to progress too rapidly but should rely on foreign experts, foreign machinery and foreign methods; he had said that further development of capitalism would be a good thing for the country; he had tried to teach Party members to strive for personal honour and advancement. In short, he and his supporters had sought to instil into the people their own philosophy of renunciation of class struggle, of the creation of an elite to run the country, and of betrayal of Marxism-Leninism and all that the Chinese revolution and Chairman Mao stood for.

Battles against such ideas had taken place many times in the past, but the victories won had been only partial. As Mao said in February 1967:

In the past we waged struggles in rural areas, in factories, in the cultural field, and we carried out the socialist education movement. But all this failed to solve the problem because we did not find a form, a method, to arouse the broad masses to expose our dark aspect openly, in an all-round way and from below.

The Cultural Revolution did arouse the masses. Had it not done so it could not have been successful, for it was a bitter struggle in which the reactionaries put up a desperate resistance, shrinking from nothing — neither demagogy, bribes nor violence — in their efforts to deceive the masses. Sometimes they succeeded, but not for long. So thorough was the examination of all accepted ideas that deception could not last.

The bourgeois press and the revisionists rejoiced at the chaos into which they fancied China had fallen, but they laughed too soon. The seeming chaos showed the depth of the upheaval in the consciousness of the masses. They would never be the same again.

Socialist theory too has been enriched. The Cultural Revolution has shown how to fight the loss of revolutionary ardour to be seen in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as well as in the West. It has shown how degeneration takes place among Communists, that none is immune to it,

and that the only way to prevent it is by a continuous process of criticism and self-criticism and by mass supervision of all aspects of life.

Some of the issues of the Cultural Revolution had been fought out in the People's Liberation Army at an earlier date. The question here was whether military technique should take precedence over politics. Mao said: 'Our principle is that the Party commands the gun, and that the gun must never be allowed to command the Party.' Later the slogan 'politics in command', which expresses a universal truth in a simple way, began to be applied to all aspects of Chinese life. It struck a deadly blow at the idea of an informed elite leading a mass of lower-grade people whose job was to do what they were told, not to make their own decisions but to trust their leaders and not to question or even seek to understand all they did.

Because political education had always played a great part in the PLA, and had become part of its very life, the army had an important role in the Cultural Revolution. Its task was one of persuasion — suggestion might be a better word — and showing the honest people on both sides of a discussion how they could unite on important issues, leaving less important ones aside for later solution. In this way unity was eventually built and traitors exposed. The PLA did not then, and never will, use force against the people.

The struggle was a long one, and before unity emerged many lessons had to be learned. Never before had a whole nation, let alone one of 750 million people, been so saturated in political discussion. They had to choose for themselves between right and wrong policies — a difficult process but one that gave priceless political education to all who took part. The decision to arouse the masses was bold; it could not have been taken without profound faith in the masses, and it paid dividends.

Revolutionary Committees

During this struggle, with the lively, alert atmosphere it engendered, it was natural that new forms should appear. One such was the Revolutionary Committee, formed first of all in factories but then recognised as suitable for general use. It brought together workers, PLA or militia, and revolutionary administrators. There had been a tendency to make a clean sweep of all managerial staff, to remove them from their positions, as tarred with the brush of elitism. Later it was realised that they had valuable experience and if they were willing to admit mistakes and remould themselves under the guidance of the workers, they could take part in the running of affairs on a basis of equality.

Today Revolutionary Committees run China's affairs at all levels, from provinces to schools, communes and small handicraft co-operatives. An essential feature is that all members, unless physically incapacitated, take a regular part in physical labour, whether in factory or field. This helps them to remain a part of the masses.

As soon as the Revolutionary Committees got to work they proved able to make a clean sweep of many old bureaucratic practices and regulations. Office staffs were cut drastically, often by as much as two-thirds, and the life-long experience of the workers suggested many short cuts in administration and production.

Workers and peasants even take charge of schools, similarly clearing away outworn ideas, maintaining a firm class outlook in education, ensuring that education serves the needs of the masses, and preventing the growth of elitism among young people. Those who complete their schooling are encouraged to go into the countryside, to learn from the peasants and bring to the rural areas the benefits of science and education.

The causes of China's success

The Cultural Revolution is a thorough, deep-seated change such as has never been seen before. It will have a permanent effect on the Chinese people and make their country infinitely stronger.

This is realised by China's enemies. Now the leaders of the US and the USSR are united in their hatred and fear of China. The Chinese accusation that Soviet 'communists' had forsaken the path of socialism for the path of collaboration with imperialism has been shown to be true. China is often said to be isolated, but actually it is the imperialists and revisionists who are isolated. Standing against them, at the side of China, is the great majority of the people of the world — even though many of them do not yet know it. Such 'isolation' is a great testimonial to China and is one of the secrets of her strength.

Within China agriculture is prospering. The People's Communes span the country with a network of self-sufficient units, able to produce food for themselves and the cities, with reserves to spare, able to produce many industrial goods, and able to defend themselves.

Industry and technology are enjoying a spring-time. Everywhere new ideas are budding and coming to flower. Unhampered by outworn traditions, China's workers and scientists know there are no heights they cannot scale.

The army and people are one. They well know they may have to suffer military attack, whether from the USSR, the US or both, and that nuclear weapons may be used. But they have confidence in their leaders, in themselves, and in the people of the whole world.

What is the reason for this remarkable progress after a mere twenty years? Trying to compress it into a sentence one may perhaps say that the application of Marxism-Leninism to the problems of the Chinese revolution enabled them to be solved and released the creative energies of the people.

This could only have been done under correct leadership, and when we think of leadership we think above all of the genius of Mao Tse-tung. For over forty years he has both inspired the masses and gained inspiration from them. Ever since the Hunan peasant rising of 1926 he has seized on the important features of every struggle and used them to show the way forward. He has taken part in all the struggles, sharing hardship in the Ching-kang Mountains and on the Long March, cultivating a plot of land like everyone else in Yen-an, still, as an old man, travelling the country to see for himself. Under his leadership the Chinese Communist Party and people have won one victory after another.

In this lifetime of devotion to the revolution, Chairman Mao has not only applied Marxism-Leninism, he has deepened and extended it, carrying it beyond anything that could have been envisaged by earlier men and thus providing guidance to revolutionaries all over the world. Wherever people are struggling for freedom, there the name of Mao Tse-tung is revered. Just as he applied lessons learned from the October Revolution in Russia to conditions in China, so it is now possible and essential to use the experience of China and the teachings of Mao in the heartlands of capitalism just as among the exploited peoples of Asia, Africa and South America.

That is why one now speaks of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought; his name will always stand beside those of Marx and Lenin.

Marxism consists of thousands of truths, but they all boil down to the one sentence, 'It is right to rebel'. For thousands of years, it had been said that it was right to oppress, it was right to exploit, and it was wrong to rebel. This old verdict was only reversed with the appearance of Marxism. This is a great contribution. It was through struggle that the proletariat learned this truth, and Marx drew the conclusion. And from this truth there follows resistance, struggle, the fight for socialism.

Speech by Mao Tse-tung at the Rally Celebrating Stalin's 60th Birthday Held by All Circles in Yen-an (December 21, 1939)

The national question and the struggle for socialism in Britain

A statement by the Glasgow Communist Movement

In the final analysis, national struggle is a matter of class-struggle.

— Mao Tse-tung.¹

ABOUT TWO YEARS ago a group in Edinburgh, originally a constituent part of the 'Committee To Defeat Revisionism For Communist Unity' declared the formation of the 'Workers Party of Scotland (M-L)'. Following this, the CDRCU, in a statement² deplored this move and accused the Edinburgh group of acting arbitrarily before fully debating the national question within the parent organisation.

The WPS, after thus being formed unilaterally, issued a statement³ on party building in Britain in which it proposed the following as one of the criteria for unity with other organisations:

'that they recognise the principle of a Federal Communist Party of Wales, Ireland, Scotland and England and conciliators (at the moment those who hold the chauvinist view on the National Question) as the immediate enemy.'

The same document also declares that the national question has become the 'touchstone' separating 'true revolutionaries' in Britain from the 'sham pretenders'. In our turn, we shall employ Marxism-Leninism as the touchstone to examine the national question as presented by the WPS.

Place of nations in history

A nation is a historically constituted stable community of people who possess in common four major attributes, namely language, economic life, territory and culture. This set of characteristics, which provides the basis on which nations are formed, also distinguishes one nation from the other.

The world's first nations arose in the epoch of rising capitalism. Nations cannot be formed under feudalism as disunity in almost all spheres of life is the characteristic of this period.

The above theories of historical materialism about the origins and development of nations were formulated by Stalin in his celebrated work,

'Marxism and the National Question' (1913). In it regarding the formation of nations in Western Europe he wrote:

'The process of elimination of feudalism and development of capitalism is at the same time a process of the constitution of people into nations. Such, for instance, was the case in Western Europe. The British, French, Germans, Italians and others were formed into nations at the time of the victorious advance of capitalism and its triumph over feudal disunity.'⁴

Nations have their beginnings and their end. They rise and develop in the period of the democratic revolution, and as the whole of humanity approaches a communist society all nations will begin to fade away.

Nations in Britain to-day and the question of their self-determination

As early as the days of the 'Communist Manifesto' Marx observed that national differences and antagonisms between the peoples were vanishing more and more. Over the long period from post-feudalism to present-day declining capitalism the different nations in the British Isles have been forced to live together and have intercourse within the same socio-economic system. As a result of this, they have largely lost the characteristics which identified them as distinct nations in the past. Thus in Britain to-day the separate existence of the English, Scottish or Welsh nations is more subjective than objective.

Such is the concrete historical condition in which the nations in Britain find themselves to-day. It is only in this historical context that Marxist-Leninists can examine the question of self-determination of these nations.

Lenin⁵ observed (1916) three types of countries in relation to the self-determination of nations:

1 The advanced capitalist countries of Western

Europe and the USA. In these countries the bourgeois, progressive, national movements came to an end long ago.

- 2 Eastern Europe. Austria, the Balkans and particularly Russia. Here it was the twentieth century that particularly developed the bourgeois-democratic national movement and intensified the national struggle.
- 3 The semi-colonial countries like China, Persia, Turkey and all the colonies. In these countries the bourgeois democratic movements have either hardly begun or are far from having been completed.

The basis of the above classification, i.e. the stage of the democratic revolution, is the basis upon which to examine the national question in a given country at a particular time.

Britain is the world's oldest capitalist country. The bourgeois democratic revolution, as Lenin pointed out, was completed here ages ago and thus the democratic development of nations in Britain has long since ceased. Bourgeois democracy in this country is now in process of rapid decay and a corporate state is developing instead. All that can be achieved through bourgeois democracy has been achieved in Britain. So to proceed towards socialism there is no intermediate stage of 'People's Democracy' or 'National Democracy' for Britain — here all problems of revolution are those of direct transition to socialism.

This of course does not mean that there is no problem in Britain in connection with the national question.

Regional economy and culture

Since any system based on the profit motive cannot but have heterogeneous economic development, capitalism has not uniformly developed all over Britain. Though it is still debatable whether these irregularities in economic development also reflect 'discriminations' against certain regions, i.e. Scotland and Wales, the table opposite presented by Professor Keith Buchanan⁶ of the University of Wellington (New Zealand) should not be ignored.

A planned economy which takes into account regional requirements is the safeguard against the type of irregularities shown there, but this is only possible in a socialist economy. As an interim measure, the establishment of regional administrative bodies should be demanded.

As well as regional economic development another important question for the socialist movement is

the protection of regional cultures. This is not a matter of principle, but an intermediate development towards an international socialist culture.

In the early stages of capitalism the proletariat and the bourgeoisie had, more or less, a common culture, which can be called a 'national culture'. With large-scale industrialisation the class-struggle became more and more acute and this 'national culture' began to 'melt away' giving rise to 'class-cultures'. Today, the dominant culture in Britain is that of the British bourgeoisie (and also of US imperialism). It is the task of the socialists in Britain to develop and consolidate the proletarian culture.

The chauvinist attack on the Scottish and Welsh cultures is part of the development of capitalism in Britain. Capitalism, in the world arena, has brought different nations closer together culturally and economically, but in the process one nation has been subordinated to the other. However, there is no point in retreating from internationalist motivations; what is needed is to replace bourgeois internationalism with proletarian internationalism. To develop a proletarian culture, nationally and internationally, further development of regional cultures is a necessary step.

The above points out some of the problems involved in the solution of the national question in Britain. These problems are the sources of petty-bourgeois nationalism of various kinds represented by the Scottish Nationalist Party, the Welsh Nationalist Party and the WPS. The question involved should not be one of separatism, but of proper resolution of the contradictions amongst the people which arise from national differences, on the basis of mutual respect and recognition of the right to self-determination.

	England	Scotland	Wales
Percent unemployed (March 1967)	2.3	4.0	4.0
Percent workforce receiving industrial injury benefits (1965-1966)	0.3	0.5	0.9
Expenditure on roads per mile (1964-1965)	£1,667	£1,145	£1,089
Motorways planned (miles per million population)	15.1	11.5	8.9
Expenditure on railways electrification (1965-1966)	£197 m.	£15 m.	Nil
Percent of households with telephones (1966)	25.6	23.0	15.0
Expenditure on defence industry (percent UK total 1965-1966)	74	6	3

The theory of national separatism

Separatism cannot be the Marxist-Leninist standpoint of the national question. Lenin⁷ pointed out:

'This demand' (for self-determination) 'is by no means identical with the demand for secession, for partition, for the formation of small states. It is merely the logical expression of the struggle against national oppression in every form. The more closely the democratic system of states approximates to complete freedom of secession, the rarer and weaker will the striving for secession be in practice; for the advantages of large states, both from the point of view of economic progress and from the point of view of the interests of the masses, are beyond doubt, and these advantages increase with the growth of capitalism. The recognition of self-determination is not the same as making federation a principle.'

Lenin developed his thesis from Marx's famous dictum on Ireland: federation if possible, secession if inevitable. So, it follows that one should not confuse the rights of nations with the duties of Marxists. Every nation has the right to secede but this does not mean that it should exercise its right under all circumstances, for separation is not always advantageous. It is the duty of all Marxists not to encourage separatism if it is not beneficial to the proletariat and if it goes against the course of revolution.

The theory of national separatism has led the WPS to demand segregation in party structure. This is nothing new in the history of the working-class movement. The once united Austrian party began to break up after the 1899 party congress, which adopted national autonomy as part of its programme. By 1913, there existed six national parties in Austria, and the Czech party had nothing to do with the German party! In Russia, 'The Bund' demanded 'the reorganisation of Russian Social-Democracy on a federal basis' (1902). To this demand Stalin replied:

'We know where the demarcation of workers according to nationalities leads to. The disintegration of a united workers' party, the splitting of trade unions according to nationalities, aggravation of national friction, national strike breaking, complete demoralisation within the ranks of social-democracy — such are the results of organisational federalism. This is eloquently borne out by the history of Social Democracy in Austria and the activities of the Bund in Russia.'

The only cure for this is organisation on the basis of internationalism.

To unite locally the workers of all nationalities of Russia into single, integral collective bodies, to unite these collective bodies into a single party — such is the task.

It goes without saying that a party structure of this kind does not preclude, but on the contrary presumes, wide autonomy for the regions within the single integral party.⁸

Stalin.

The objections to a federal party structure are thus fundamental. In a given state, formation of parties according to nationalities leads to the destruction of class-solidarity of workers in the face of their common enemy.

The WPS makes federation a principle, but while calling for a 'Socialist Republic of Scotland' it does not advocate at the same time, socialist republics for England and Wales! It is willing to see a 'Provisional Sovereign Government of Scotland' before 1970. And to carry out this great revolutionary task it looks to no other force but the SNP! 'Scottish Vanguard'⁹ journal of the WPS, writes:

'a great National Convention . . . for the purpose of constituting a provisional sovereign government of Scotland . . . would certainly inspire enormous support and redound to the credit of the SNP.'

Even the ultra-revisionist CPGB has not gone so far in tailing behind the Labour Party.

Class-struggle and revolution

The most important problem, however, is to relate the national question to the question of class-struggle and revolution. In an extensive article entitled 'National Question and Class-struggle', Liu Chun¹⁰ has clearly shown how the solution of the national question is dependent on the completion of the revolution. He firmly states that those who think that the national question can be solved without carrying out class-struggle within the national minorities are in fact unwilling to solve the question and opposed to its solution. Thus the national question is not an independent question but is intimately connected and subordinate to the question of socialist revolution.

The prime question in any revolution is the recognition of enemy and friend and the identification of the nature of the existing state machinery. For the strategy of the revolution can only be based on objective reality and not on one's own subjective emotions, but the WPS wishes to do the opposite:

'The Scottish Nation is a grossly underprivileged part of the imperialist state, known as 'Great Britain' whose dominant power and authority is the English capitalist establishment.'

The above Marxist gem is from the Manifesto of the WPS! The reference to 'English Imperialism' in earlier publications has now been replaced by 'British' Imperialism' — making the concept mystical by using quotation marks!

But this is not all. Its Secretary, in answering the question as to why the WPS supports the movement for Scottish independence, says:

'once having achieved independence it will be for the Scottish working class to overthrow the national bourgeoisie and ruling class and establish Worker's Power.'¹¹

So we have a national bourgeoisie in Scotland! And our task is to win 'a thorough victory in the national democratic revolution and win the socialist revolution',¹² A national democratic revolution in one of the homelands of monopoly capital! Even considering the socio-economic set up of Scotland in isolation, none can suggest, without being ridiculous, that Scotland is a semi-feudal country.

The reality is that the enemy of the Scottish working class is British monopoly capital, allied with US imperialism, and not English imperialism, which does not exist. The friends of the Scottish workers are the English and the Welsh working class, who are oppressed in common with them and live under the same political system. It will be suicidal for the Scottish and the Welsh workers to fight the British state machinery in isolation.

Hence it follows that it is the task of the Scottish and the Welsh workers to unite with their English counterparts in a revolutionary organisation based on democratic centralism. A federated organisation is not the type which is capable of carrying out the objective task — to overthrow the rule of the British bourgeoisie by smashing the British state. It is only through this that the Scottish and the Welsh workers can acquire the right to self-determination. Monopolists have no interest in self-determination other than encouraging diversion from real issues. The petty-bourgeoisie does not and cannot lead a socialist revolution. So the right to self-determination cannot be acquired through any struggle other than that for socialism. It is only under socialism that the acquired right can be exercised, if necessary.

The standpoint of the Marxist-Leninists on the national question has been correctly laid down in our policy document¹³ which says:

'The Movement recognises that the working people of the whole of the British Isles are oppressed in common by British Imperialism. It also recognises that the degree of exploitation is different in England, Scotland and Wales. These places also have cultural differences and aspirations for independent development. Therefore the Movement, while standing for immediate separate administrative bodies for each of these places and proclaiming their right to secede, will not advocate separate working class organisations for these places at present. For, national aspirations for independence can only be satisfied after the replacement of the present system by a socialist one through unified struggle against the common enemy constituting a single class.

The struggles for liberation in Russia and China, where the problems of nationality were more acute than is the case in Britain, were led successfully by one united party acting on behalf of all nationalities within the then existing state structure. Representing as they did all nationalities, these parties recognised the right of any nationality to independence. Likewise the struggle against the British capitalist state must be waged by a single party, which recognises the right of nations to secede.'

In the days when monopoly capital is waging renewed attacks against the workers in a vain attempt to survive another acute crisis, any struggle which is not a part of class-struggle is a dangerous distraction from real issues and, therefore, has to be vigorously opposed. The struggle against the 'Workers Party of Scotland' cannot be avoided without damaging the Marxist-Leninist movement in Scotland and indeed in the whole of Britain.

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Eye witness

in

Prague

ONE DOES NOT NEED to be a revolutionary to realise that many people, particularly young people, discount pretty heavily what they read in the press about conditions in Eastern Europe. Even if the events in Czechoslovakia were not entirely a bourgeois plot, they reason, it is only natural that the bourgeois press should play them up to the maximum. Why not wait awhile and let the whole thing fall into perspective? It may turn out to be one of those periodical pictures to which all systems are liable as they develop, with right and wrong on both sides.

Such a verdict might be correct as regards the political leaders. Even a year ago hitherto loyal but disillusioned officials were saying quite freely that it was impossible to believe anything they were told any more as it was obvious that ministers and their top advisers had known the invasion was coming and facilitated it. But from the point of view of the people, and particularly of the workers, the verdict would be wide of the mark. They may not be revolutionary but they are unanimously against the collaborationist regime, which has become a symbol of their loss not only of self-determination but of equality. 'We don't know how many will demonstrate in the Wenceslas Place' they were saying in August 'but of course all of us will stay out of the shops and places of entertainment and not use public transport'.

In the event the general protest went further than this, with the concerted blowing of motor-horns at mid-day and innumerable open and concealed work stoppages. The impression on the visitor, wandering the streets of Prague and talking to Czechs in their homes, was scarcely of a last desperate fling, to be followed by silent resignation. Over and above the sense of affront and betrayal there was a consciousness of solidarity and of the real conflict of interest between the people and their rulers.

The sporadic street demonstrations by students and young workers in Prague and other cities had an effect here out of all proportion to what they achieved in physical terms. For it was transparently clear that everyone, whatever they might say for the record, supported the demonstrators and wished them luck.

Without proper organisation, and faced by a concentration of tanks and armoured cars, the demonstrators were doomed from the start to be dispersed piecemeal, though this was not achieved before the whole centre of Prague had been thrown into turmoil. A constant succession of confrontations and scuffles had one common feature, the look of intelligent defiance and refusal to surrender their pride on the faces of all the younger generation, in contrast with the confused, frightened and often brutal police. Thousands of arrests and trials cannot wipe out that glimpse of the superior morale of the Czech people confronting the agents of their oppressors.

The Czechs are greater realists than almost any other people in Europe and accept that under the leadership they will be able to produce in this generation there is little prospect of altering Czechoslovakia's colonial status. But their will is not yet broken. The Western press is premature when it talks of loss of identity. Generally speaking the government are despised as lackeys and the universal respect for Dubcek remains, however clouded and compromised his record may have become, because for the Czechs he is a symbol. He is the leader who would not be a lackey. Homage is still done to his name in every corner of the country: it can be seen painted on farm tractors, in alleyways known only to the locals, as well as in the public thoroughfares.

Neither proletarian revolutionaries nor even resolute national revolutionaries, the Czech reformers failed their people. When it came to the point they tried to disarm them, both physically and politically. In this they were only partially successful and the Czechs have now savoured the beginnings of national liberation struggle against another in the succession of their imperialist oppressors. As the struggle develops over the years they, like the workers of other countries, will come up against the contradiction of their own imperialist prejudices, manifested in — among other things — hostility to China and other exponents of the need for people's war.

THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE welcome comment, criticism and suggestions for future articles. We also welcome letters and communications for publication. Please write to Tom Hill, 11 Barratt Avenue, Wood Green, N22.

FROM THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

The financial problems of *The Marxist* are the common experience of all publications in any capitalist society which advocates revolutionary change in that society and seeks to build the necessary forces to carry out that task. An initial period of limited circulation makes it necessary to appeal for financial support to meet the gap between production/circulation cost and income from sales. If you share our view that this journal has and can continue to serve the interests of the revolutionary forces in Britain and play a part in the development of a Marxist-Leninist Party will you assist in the following ways.

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JCC Statement

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part of the Marxist-Leninist movement in Britain and therefore welcomes any opportunity of working with any other Marxist Communist organisation or individuals.

The meeting elected as officers to the Federation a secretary, a treasurer and a chairman. Anyone wishing copies of the Constitution or other information should write to the Secretary: Sam Mauger, 65 Sisters Avenue, London SW11.

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Ireland

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It must be clear that whereas today British troops are being used against Irish workers, the process could work the other way. It would be naive to believe that the armed units maintained by the Ulster Government — as thoroughly fascist and experienced in attacks on the people as anything Hitler created — could not extend their activities beyond the six counties. In the event of serious labour struggles in Britain, the ruling class could be counted on to look to Ulster for aid. Together with the Enoch Powell and similar groups in Britain, the Ulster groups could be a considerable force to be reckoned with in any labour battle. (Powell's demand that the Southern Irish in Britain be declared 'foreigners' is a move in solidarity with the Ulster fascists). As in Engels' time it is essential that the English workers, in defence of their own class interests, demand that Ireland, all of it, be separated from England.

Events of the recent past demonstrate clearly the fact that England is unquestionably responsible for everything that occurs in Northern Ireland. English troops and civil servants are installed in

Ulster with full authority over the head of the Stormont Government. It is English guns and English money that keeps the fascist Unionist Party in power and if English working people do not take definite and effective steps to put an end to the Ulster-Britain relationship they will live to regret it.

Get the British troops out of Ulster, end Britain's financial assistance to the Ulster fascist ruling class, help the Irish revolutionaries get guns into the hands of the Irish workers. In that way the workers of Ireland will be allies and not enemies of the workers of England.

Let us remember the words of Wolfe Tone, spoken in 1798:

'To subvert the tyranny of our execrable government, to break the connection with England, the never-failing source of all our political evils, and to assert the independence of my country. These were my objects. To unite the whole people of Ireland. To abolish the memory of all past dissensions and to substitute the common name of Irishman in place of the denominations Protestant, Catholic, and Dissenter — these my means.'