

RED STAR



A MARXIST-LENINIST JOURNAL

50p

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NUMBER 4

OCTOBER 1980

EDITORIAL

When the Nottingham Communist Group first began to publish Red Star in July 1978 our aim was to reach out to those people who were moving towards a revolutionary outlook and were unsure as to just where they should place their political allegiance. We still have this aim but since 1978 we have become conscious of two crucial political events which have made us realise that Red Star must have another political function; that is to act as a political focus and arena for those genuine Marxist-Leninist who are still operating in Britain. The two events referred to are, of course, the counter-revolution in China and, as a result of it, the capitulation to revisionism of a large section of the British Marxist-Leninist movement. For this reason we say to those comrades who still hold to a revolutionary outlook - comrades, the pages of Red Star are open to you so that we can begin to regroup the genuine revolutionary forces, to attack the revisionist elements and to begin the task of really building the revolutionary party. We will now publish Red Star on a regular quarterly basis and we will distribute it much more widely than hitherto. It is essential that we locate those genuine Marxist-Leninists who are still around, even if they are at the moment only operating, as we are, at a local level. This will of course cost money and is the reason we will no longer supply Red Star free. In the circumstances we make no apology for this.

In this issue of Red Star we look at the history of the Marxist-Leninist movement in Britain. It is clear that the present revisionist element have as their ideological roots the revisionism that has always been strong in the Marxist-Leninist movement here. The main reason for this is that there was never a decisive break with bourgeois ideology. There was a formal allegiance to Marxism-Leninism but this was expressed in a dogmatic, non-dialectical way. Certainly Marxism was spoken of, for sure it was read about but never was it concretely

practised. For years Mao Tse Tung was lauded to the skies, we all thought a lot of him but obviously we did n't think enough of him because although we admired the achievements of Mao and the C.C.P. we never bothered to concretely analyse the nature of their achievements and the practical application of them to our own circumstances. The Marxist-Leninist Movement in Britain: Past, Present and Future, traces the history of the Marxist-Leninist movement here, its strengths and weaknesses and points out that we can never make any genuine advance until we begin to practise Marxism-Leninism in a dialectical way; that is the concrete analysis of concrete conditions.

In relation to this, Classes and Strata in Contemporary British Capitalism, begins an essential task, the analysis of class forces in Britain at present. It is impossible to develop a revolutionary strategy of even the broadest kind without having any idea of whom friends and enemies are. It might be thought that this was so obvious a component of Marxist practise that it hardly needs stating. Unfortunately this is not the case: there has never been any serious attempt to actually investigate class conditions in this country in this century. It is not enough to read what Marx and Engels wrote in the mid-nineteenth century about the conditions here; there have been many significant changes, particularly the emergence of a new strata of unproductive workers. We emphasise that our present analysis is incomplete and needs more detailed work and we would certainly wish to hear from any comrades who have done, or are doing, any work on this matter.

Finally, we review the book by P.Corrigan et al For Mao Essays in historical materialism. The Chinese revolution has been largely ignored by British academic Marxists and Corrigan and co are some of the very few who have tried to survey it from a Marxist perspective. Although we have serious criticisms of Corrigan, particularly his mistrust of the role of the revolutionary party, we think that the book contains some interesting material and certainly merits reading.

Events over the past two years have now shown that the Marxist-Leninist movement is split into two opposed camps. This is true of not only this country but throughout the world. On the one hand is the camp of revisionism, social-chauvinism and bourgeois capitulation; on the other hand is the camp of genuine revolutionary Marxism-Leninism. It is the view of the Nottingham Communist Group that the revisionist element are no longer part of the Marxist-Leninist movement and should not be treated as such. In their slavish adherence to the reactionary "Three Worlds Theory" the revisionists are prepared to betray the working class in the event of World War 3. Their advocacy of the slogan "Defence of the Fatherland" in the context of inter-imperialist war shows their true ideological heritage - Kautskyism not Marxism-Leninism. We will continually criticise and expose these shameful reactionaries and urge others to do the same.

We have been criticised by two groups for our denunciation of the new revisionist regime in China. Although both these groups agree that the regime is revisionist they tell us that this fact is not very important. We tell these comrades once again that this fact is of the utmost importance. The revisionist split has caused a great deal of confusion and demoralisation in our ranks. In order to clearly define the camp of reaction and the camp of revolution there is one clear line of demarcation. This is the upholding of Mao Tse Tung Thought, the gains of the Cultural Revolution and the rejection of the "Three Worlds Theory". In accepting these lines of demarcation one can see with the utmost clarity who are real friends and who implacable enemies. We urge the two groups concerned, who are, in our opinion, part of the genuine Marxist-Leninist movement to reconsider their position. It is impossible for any comrades to try to straddle both camps, one must firmly and publicly be committed to one or the other.

Finally, there is to be an international Marxist-Leninist conference later this autumn. This conference will be concerned in developing the international line for the Communist movement. Recent events, such as the Iran-Iraq

war shows that the inter-imperialist conflict is becoming more acute and the threat of war nearer and nearer. Correct strategy and tactics are now a matter of vital importance. The Nottingham Communist Group is sending a delegate to this conference and in the next issue of Red Star there will be a detailed account of the conference proceedings.

DEVELOP MARXISM IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST REVISIONISM!



THE MARXIST-LENINIST MOVEMENT IN BRITAIN: Past, Present and Future

"In November 1963 the Committee to Defeat Revisionism, for Communist Unity, was set up in Great Britain by Communists who had come to recognise, in the course of struggle against the policies of the Communist Party of Great Britain, that to transform this Party from within, by accepting rules operated by men such as Gollan, Dutt and Matthews, was an impossibility. This Committee is now organising a public campaign to expose revisionism, and win the militant industrial workers and intellectuals to understand that a genuine Communist Party must be established before advance can be made against monopoly-capital in Britain. We shall, before long, achieve this goal." 1

Thus wrote the late Michael McCreery, the comrade who led the first serious break with the revisionist Communist Party of Great Britain and the attempt to reconstitute the revolutionary party in Britain. Nearly seventeen years later the task of building a genuine revolutionary party has still not been achieved despite the fact that during this period the internal contradictions of British capitalism have greatly intensified, as indeed have those in the world as a whole. We are now entering a period when the only possible outcome of the sharpening of the contradictions of capitalism is either war or revolution. The only way forward for the working class is either to prevent the war by revolution or to turn the imperialist war into revolutionary civil war. More than ever, the working class needs its own vanguard revolutionary party to organise and lead it in the struggle to overthrow capitalism and build socialism. The building of a revolutionary party in Britain is a matter of the utmost urgency and supreme importance. There is not much time left.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

Since Comrade McCreery's untimely death in 1965 there have existed at various times around twenty or more organisations claiming to base themselves on the revolutionary outlook of Marxism-Leninism. Some of them, for example the Communist Party of England (M-L) and the Communist Party of Britain (M-L), have claimed to be proper revolutionary parties of the Leninist type. Yet after having existed for over a decade and more these organisations have made no discernible impact on the working class. Furthermore, while in terms of membership these organisations were never large - the CPB(M-L) had a maximum of around 300 members in the mid-1970's - they are now shrinking in size. On the criterion of political practice alone, it can only be concluded that these "parties" have been in no way vitally representative of the objective interests of workers in Britain, otherwise they would have been able to begin to build a base and following in the working class, as indeed the Marxist-Leninists in some of the other imperialist countries have succeeded in doing, e.g. in the U.S.A..

As for the other Marxist-Leninist groups and organisations, e.g. the Revolutionary Communist League of Britain, the Communist Workers League of Britain, while formally upholding as their primary aim the building of the revolutionary party, their continued existence as pre-party organisations does itself show their failure after many years to make any significant progress towards the foundation of the party. What is more, the confusion, splits and defections stimulated by the impact of the revisionist seizure of state power in China during the last few years means that whatever party-building potentialities some of these groups may have had are now greatly diminished. The elements left who are resolutely upholding the great Marxist-Leninist revolutionary tradition and exposing the new wave of revisionism emanating from China and Albania are very few in number. It has to be admitted that as a conscious, organised revolutionary movement Marxism-Leninism in Britain is in real danger of extinction.

If this deplorable state of affairs is to be reversed, if the very necessary rebuilding of the proletarian revolutionary movement in Britain is to proceed, we must grasp the essence of past failures so as not to be doomed to the farce of history repeating itself. In discussing the revisionist degeneration of the CPGB, McCreery wrote:

"... it never fully mastered dialectical materialism, the Marxist world view, in the sense that it never proved itself capable of applying the generally agreed principles of Marxism-Leninism to British conditions, of working out its own independent and correct policies in each historical period." (2)

The same general shortcoming has continued to be true of the Marxist-Leninists during the last fifteen years. However, for this criticism and self-criticism to be of any value it is necessary to be quite specific about what is meant by "applying the generally agreed principles of Marxism-Leninism to British conditions". Otherwise, we are left with little more than the tautological truism that the failure to grasp Marxism-Leninism accounts for the failure to build a revolutionary movement and party which gives us no positive guidance on how to rectify this deficiency.

APPLYING MARXISM-LENINISM

Applying the generally agreed principles of Marxism-Leninism to British conditions means something more than involvement in the day-to-day class struggle and the general assertion that the only way forward for the working class is the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. For the last decade and a half in Britain the Marxist-Leninists have participated in many aspects of the class struggle - trade union work, anti-racist campaigns, solidarity with national liberation struggles, etc.. Also, the Marxist-Leninists have upheld the concept of the revolutionary road to socialism against the pernicious reformism of the old revisionists, Trotskyists and social democrats. This is

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not to claim that we have for the most part been very effective in our attempts to carry out these tasks. But nonetheless it is true that many comrades have resolutely applied themselves to the revolutionary struggle and in many cases this has entailed significant personal sacrifices.

However, it should also be recognised that a strong subjective commitment to the cause of proletarian revolution and a dogged determination to persist with the struggle are by themselves insufficient for the building of a revolutionary movement and party. Marxism-Leninism claims to be scientific socialism which bases itself on the method of materialist dialectics. It asserts that only if the revolutionary forces have really grasped the concrete particularity of the society they wish to transform will they be able to develop a strategy and tactics capable of guiding the class struggle in such a way that the proletariat succeeds in overthrowing the bourgeoisie. In short, if you wish to make revolution then you must have a very clear conception of just how, by what means, you intend to achieve this goal; if you want to get somewhere then you must have a route planned at the outset of your journey. The whole historical experience of the international revolutionary movement confirms this fundamental principle. As Lenin discovered in Russia:

"In order to build the Party, it is not enough to be able to shout: 'Unity', it is necessary, in addition, to have some sort of political programme, a programme of political action." (3)

Similarly, in China the communist movement only began to make real progress when the particular concrete conditions they were faced with were concretely analysed. Mao was very clear on this matter:

"No political party can possibly lead a great revolutionary movement to victory unless it possesses revolutionary theory and a knowledge of history and has a profound grasp of the practical movement." (4)

THE EXAMPLE OF THE RCLB

Now, most of those calling themselves Marxist-Leninists in Britain today express formal agreement with the proposition that the key to party-building is to develop a proper revolutionary programme. For example, in their Manifesto the RCLB state that:

"... at the present stage in Britain theory must be primary over practice. The main theoretical tasks in Party building are to develop a programme, ...". (5)

Yet in reality it is not this vital task which the RCLB are primarily concerned with because in fact they place organisational unity before and above genuine political unity. They advocate bilateral struggle between Marxist-Leninist organisations so as to resolve differences and unite into larger, democratic centralist organisations. The RCLB specifies "small group mentality" as the factor hindering this unification process, an explanation which owes much to bourgeois social psychology but very little to materialist dialectics.

The experience of the RCLB's approach to party-building is very instructive. It was formed in 1977 out of a fusion of some of the local groups who had constituted the previous Communist Federation of Britain (M-L) and some of the members of a couple of other small groups, the Communist Unity Association and the East London Marxist-Leninist Association. The programme around which they united was little more than a general statement of Marxist-Leninist principles loosely and unscientifically applied to contemporary British capitalism. In fact, some of the formulations in this manifesto are not simply imprecise but actually reactionary. In particular, the Three Worlds line of the Chinese revisionists is uncritically reproduced. Even so, it must be admitted that this manifesto does not claim to be a developed party programme. The development of such a programme was a task the RCLB claimed it would eventually carry out.

Almost immediately after the formation of the RCLB, maj-

or differences arose within it as to the correctness of its international line. A leading member of the RCLB, the Secretary of its Central Committee, and other comrades attacked the social chauvinist policy contained in their manifesto. The outcome, only a year and a half after the formation of the RCLB, was the expulsion of these comrades and the disillusionment and defection of some others. This incident shows very clearly that the RCLB was not founded on a basis of genuine political unity at all. If the members had really scientifically investigated the present international contradictions and their bearing on the course of revolutionary struggle in Britain, instead of uncritically buying a package deal from Peking, then these differences would have become apparent at the time when they were drawing up their manifesto. This demonstrates just how seriously the RCLB took their manifesto in the first place; not as a scientific guide for political action but just as a bit of political icing on top of the organisational cake. However, those expelled from the RCLB have learnt some valuable lessons from this experience. As they said in their parting critique:

"... failure to grasp the truth that the correctness or incorrectness of the ideological and political line is the decisive factor in building the party and mobilising the masses for revolution, leads to the absurd elevation of organisational and petty matters to the position of highest principle." (6)

and:

"To seek unity for unity's sake and not to make the struggle for a principled policy the foremost consideration and the only firm basis for unity, leads to opportunist theories and practice." (7)

Subsequently, the RCLB has absorbed two other small groups, the Communist Workers Movement and the Birmingham Communist Association. The CWM was formed in 1976 by defectors from the hopelessly economist and chauvinist CPB(M-L). They too always placed organisational

considerations above political ones. As a direct result, the CWM was subject to continual internal feuding resulting in expulsions and defections and the few remaining members, of whom hardly any were the original members, threw in their lot with the RCLB earlier this year. A few years ago, the BCA showed some appreciation of the need to develop a proper programme as the basis for unity and it is to be regretted that the members have succumbed to the opportunism of the RCLB. Despite these amalgamations, the membership of the RCLB, which was never large at any time, has probably declined during the last two years. More significantly, it has never been very involved in the day-to-day class struggle, (its virtual lack of participation in the anti-racist campaigns of the last few years is one instance), and burdened as it is with the millstone of support for the Chinese revisionists around its neck, its future prospects are dismal.

THE ORIGINS OF THE MARXIST-LENINIST MOVEMENT IN BRITAIN

How can we explain the failure to make any real progress in building the revolutionary movement and party in Britain during the last fifteen years? Any explanation which simply claims that there has been a sheer lack of subjective determination and effort on the part of Marxist-Leninists is not a materialist one. In so far as comrades have been lapsadaisical and fallen by the wayside, this has to be explained in terms of the objective conditions of the continuing class struggle in this country. What we really have to pinpoint are the reasons which explain the failure of the Marxist-Leninists to effect a genuine unity of revolutionary theory and practice. The fundamental weakness which stands in need of explanation is an ideological one, that is, the persistence of empiricist practice and dogmatic theory and consequently the failure to bring about any qualitative transformation in the level of the class struggle.

It is well known that the revolutionary movement in Britain has always been very weak in every sense - ideologically, politically and organisationally. In general, this can be explained by the strength of bourgeois heg-

emony in Britain in the past, based as it was on the fact that industrial capitalism first arose in this country and that for a long period the position of Britain as the leading imperialist power secured comparative internal prosperity and stability, thus enabling the bourgeoisie to make many concessions to working class demands which, far from weakening the legitimacy of bourgeois rule, actually served to strengthen it. It has to be admitted that adherence to reformist trade unionism and the essentially bourgeois ideology of social democracy did result in the great mass of working people securing very considerable improvements in their general living standards.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

Given these material conditions, it is hardly surprising that the formation of the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1920-1 should have occurred on a very weak ideological basis. Under the influence of the Comintern, a small number of rather disparate and ideologically weak elements were hastily welded together into one body. In the course of this highly opportunistic process some of the most politically advanced proletarian leaders were excluded, e.g. John MacLean. Perhaps most significant is the fact that the formation of the CPGB was not so much a direct response to the state of the class struggle in Britain at that time but rather a response to the October Revolution and the subsequent upheavals in other European countries after World War I. However, despite these inauspicious beginnings the political work of the CPGB up until the mid-1930's was in the main of a positive kind. For example, its leadership of the struggles of unemployed workers was very successful, given the limitations imposed by the objective conditions then prevailing. Nonetheless, the ideological weakness of the CPGB was apparent at many levels and it leaned heavily on the Comintern for guidance, which in turn had to frequently criticise incorrect policies formulated by the CPGB.

The ideological turning point for the CPGB came during

the Popular Front period from 1935 onwards. The policy of uniting all who could be united against the growing menace of fascism, adopted by the Comintern at its 7th. World Congress, was essentially correct. However, it was a tactic the application of which could easily lead to opportunist errors on the part of the proletarian party. In entering a temporary, tactical alliance of this kind with social democrats and other bourgeois elements it was essential that the communist parties should not in any way abandon their revolutionary objectives so as to appease their bourgeois and petit bourgeois allies. But this is precisely what happened in the case of the CPGB. In its eagerness to build the anti-fascist front the Party threw open its doors to the ranks of the radical petit bourgeois intelligentsia. The differences between bourgeois democracy and proletarian revolution quickly became obscured. The coming together within the Party of elements of the labour aristocracy, represented by persons such as Harry Pollitt, and the radical intelligentsia resulted in the triumph of bourgeois ideology, of revisionism, in the CPGB. This development became clearly apparent with the confusion and vacillation of both the leadership and the membership as a whole upon the outbreak of World War II in 1939.

The important point to be grasped here is that the CPGB had become completely revisionist long before its formal adoption of a revisionist programme, The British Road to Socialism, in 1951. Of course, there were dissident elements who tried to oppose this ideological and political degeneration but they never did so in a concerted, organised way and consequently simply dropped out of the Party, were individually expelled or carried on as members while keeping their disquiet mostly to themselves. It must be admitted that the 1950's was a period of great confusion and disarray for communists, especially those in the imperialist countries, as a result of the triumph of revisionism in the Soviet Union and the revolt in Hungary in 1956. Nonetheless, it is important to note that none of the dissident Marxist-Leninist elements in Britain made any serious attempt to combat the revisionism of the CPGB, either within its ranks or from without.

THE SINO-SOVIET SPLIT

It was only with the public debate between the Communist Party of China and the revisionist Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the early 1960's that some of the dissidents in the CPGB found courage to attack its revisionist policies. This was a very positive development but it had a negative side to it. The stand taken by the CPC in attacking and opposing revisionism in the international communist movement was absolutely correct and it was inevitable that genuine communists throughout the world looked to the CPC for ideological and political leadership. However, many of these comrades, especially those in Britain, were in effect exchanging a Russian crutch for a Chinese one. Whereas hitherto they had uncritically adopted whatever lines emanated from Russia, they now adopted the same stance but with respect to China. Apart from a few of the most advanced comrades such as McCreery, the communists in Britain failed to grasp one of the most important lessons of the Chinese revolution. As Mao said to a delegation of Latin American comrades in 1956:

"I beg to advise you not to transplant Chinese experience mechanically. The experience of any foreign country can serve only for reference and must not be regarded as dogma. The universal truth of Marxism-Leninism and the concrete conditions of your own countries - the two must be integrated." (8)

The experience of the Chinese communists had been that only when they had ceased relying on Moscow for strategic and tactical guidance and actually applied materialist dialectics to the concrete analysis of their own concrete conditions did they begin to make advances in their revolutionary struggle. While many of the CPGB dissidents in the 1960's formally acknowledged this crucial proposition that the revolutionary forces in each country have to develop their own particular strategy and tactics in response to the particularity of their own material conditions, subsequent events show that they have been incapable of doing this in actual practice.

To sum up at this point, we can say that the originators of the present Marxist-Leninist current in Britain were dissidents from the CPGB who for the most part had, as a result of their political formation in the overwhelmingly revisionist CPGB, a somewhat insecure ideological grasp of Marxism-Leninism, however great their subjective hatred for capitalism was and however strong their desire to make proletarian revolution may have been.

What is more, some of the defectors from the CPGB departed for rather more empiricist reasons. People such as Reg Birch and the group around him were acutely aware of the failure of the CPGB to make any political advances in the post-war period. On the contrary, the CPGB was in a state of decline, both organisationally and in terms of political influence, and they realised that they were standing on a sinking ship.

THE STUDENT MOVEMENT

The dissidents who departed from the CPGB during the mid-1960's were of varied social composition, some of them workers and some from the middle strata, and very few in total numbers. Their ranks were augmented by rather larger contingents of young people, mostly students and former students, who had become radicalised in the course of the student revolt, beginning around 1966, and its close connection with the movement of solidarity with Vietnam. The initial dissent of these young people from bourgeois society was on the basis not of material deprivation but in reaction to the spiritual emptiness of late capitalism; they were experiencing a profound sense of subjective alienation. In searching for a reference point to give their revolt some coherence and guidance there were no adequate models to be found in Britain where, although cracks in the post-war boom were appearing, the working class was displaying no revolutionary tendencies. Instead, inspiration had to be found abroad and in the past. The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe had little appeal for these romantic revolutionaries. Even those who conceded that the Soviet bloc might be socialist in some sense found "goulash communism" to be a model lacking in appeal and thus not to be emulated. This was a factor which helped to deflect the

majority of radical students towards various species of Trotskyism, an important attraction of which is that it enables one to embrace socialism in the mind while at the same time rejecting the actual concrete achievements of socialist revolution which have occurred, however temporary and partial they may have been. However, a potent reference point for the young was the great strength of the national liberation struggles occurring in many regions, especially Indo-China. These apparently uncomplicated struggles, between the forces of Western imperialism and the oppressed nations, exerted a very strong emotional appeal. By supporting these struggles one was simultaneously opposing the ruling classes in the imperialist countries. At the same time, attention was drawn towards China because of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution which began in 1966. This also had great romantic appeal and the possibility and hope was raised that the reversal of the socialist revolution which had occurred in the Soviet bloc was not inevitable. Furthermore, those who investigated the history of the Chinese revolution realised that here was a general model whereby the national liberation struggles then raging could proceed further and at a later stage become socialist revolutions.

Such, very briefly, were the conditions which led to a very small section of the student radicals to become attracted towards Marxism-Leninism. Of course, for the great majority their dissent from the hegemony of bourgeois ideology was very temporary and they were quickly reabsorbed into the comfortable complacency of petit bourgeois life. Only a few managed to sustain their revolutionary zeal and it was inevitable that they should come into contact with the older CPGB dissidents and to look to them for political leadership. Thus it was, out of these elements, that the various Marxist-Leninist organisations set up in the late 1960's were formed. Now, we have already drawn attention to the ideological weakness of the dissidents from the CPGB whose political development had taken place in an organisation which had been dominated by revisionism for thirty years. At the same time, the comrades emerging from the student move-

ment were new to Marxism-Leninism, had limited experience of the class struggle and consequently also suffered from ideological weakness. Furthermore, just like the older CPGB dissidents, their political reference points were not so much concrete developments within British capitalism but rather international events. Given these origins, it was inevitable that they newly constituted Marxist-Leninist movement was doomed to a long and tortuous journey in the struggle to build a revolutionary party.

THE PERSISTENCE OF BOURGEOIS IDEOLOGY

At this point in our exposition it is necessary to be quite clear as to what we mean by the term "ideological weakness". Do we mean a reluctance to engage vigorously and persistently in the day-to-day struggles of the working class?. No, we do not: although it must be insisted that anyone who fails to do this cannot be considered a Marxist-Leninist revolutionary. Do we mean a disinclination to study the classic Marxist-Leninist writings and the historical experience of the revolutionary movement?. Again, no, although this too is essential to learn from the struggles of the past. What we mean by the term "ideological weakness" is the failure of the revolutionaries to throw off and overcome bourgeois habits of thought and action in the course of their political activity. We are all the products of bourgeois society and, regardless of which class or strata we emerge from or belong to, we are all deeply permeated by bourgeois consciousness. We have to face up to the fact that our habitual, spontaneous modes of behaving and thinking are those generated by capitalist relations of production. However subjectively committed we may be to the revolutionary cause still the contradiction between bourgeois ideology and proletarian ideology in our own consciousness will persist. For us, born and bred in the bourgeois era, both acting and thinking in a revolutionary way will always only be possible as a result of deliberate, conscious effort. It is inevitable that our habitual, spontaneous behaviour will tend to be of a bourgeois kind. The adoption of a revolutionary posture is not a once and for all transformation but a continuous struggle to

transform the world and ourselves. There are many workers who persist, year after year, in the most dogged and determined battle against capital and there are many academics who churn out the most detailed studies of the Marxist classics and revolutionary movements. But neither in reality makes any contribution to the development of the revolutionary movement.

The emergent Marxist-Leninist movement of the late 1960s had little in the way of ideological capital that could be drawn upon. As an ideological current Marxism-Leninism had always been weak in Britain and from the late 1930's had been virtually dead. Whether they knew it or not, The Marxist-Leninists had before them the task of recovering, grasping and developing revolutionary theory and practice in relation to their immediate concrete conditions. The writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao certainly needed to be seriously studied as did the experience of the class struggle throughout the world. But when all is said and done, while crucial lessons can be learnt in this way, it nonetheless will not provide adequate guidance for the conduct of revolutionary struggle in the rather different condition of contemporary British capitalism.

Let us examine the vulgar, undialectical way in which the great majority of the Marxist-Leninists have conceived of the relationship between revolutionary theory and revolutionary practice. "Yes", they say, "theory arises out of practice and is in turn a guide to practice. Also, in general, in the contradiction between theory and practice it is practice which is the principal aspect and theory is the secondary aspect". Quite so, this is a universal truth of Marxism-Leninism. However, the way in which this relationship is actually conceived and put into operation is quite undialectical. Typically, what happens is that comrades spontaneously become involved in some aspect of the class struggle, e.g. economic struggle. They imagine that simply because they are actively participating in this work that in some mysterious way a correct revolutionary orientation, theoretical guidance will emerge of its own accord. In reality this is not the way things happen. These comrades are confusing dialectical mater-

ialism with empiricism. Correct theoretical conclusions, which can guide a struggle in a revolutionary direction, can only be arrived at if the struggle in question is analysed in a conscious, reflective manner by using the method of dialectical analysis. Indeed, some attempt should be made to gain a provisional theoretical orientation before one enters into a particular struggle. Instead, what typically occurs is unreflective involvement of an entirely reformist kind, undistinguishable from that of Trotskyists, revisionists and social democrats. This "theory" is then justified by searching for and finding some crude analogy between the struggle at hand and judiciously selected extracts from the classical Marxist writings - that is, dogmatism.

An example of this sort of vulgar Marxism is Reg Birch's theory of trade unionism as "guerrilla warfare" (9). Birch attempts to justify his advocacy of making the most conventional, reformist trade union activity the focus of the class struggle by drawing a crude and false analogy between the daily conflict between workers and capitalists and the guerrilla warfare waged in China by the Red Army against the Kuamintang and the Japanese imperialists. This is a most blatant example of dressing up economism as revolutionary struggle by decking it out with a few quotations from Mao. Another example, taken from an article in the RCLB's journal Revolution (10), is an attempt at political economy which tries to explain the inflation which has occurred in Britain in recent years. What we are in fact presented with is a monetarist explanation exactly of the kind put forward by Keith Joseph and Margaret Thatcher, claiming that the fundamental cause of inflation is the government "printing money". Where, of course, the article differs from the bourgeois theorising of Joseph and Thatcher is that it contains the obligatory, copious quotations from Marx's Capital. A third example of this sort of dogmatism concerns the line of capitulation to British imperialism but forward by the Workers' Party of Scotland (M-L) and their associates. They try to justify their contention that the task of the working class in Britain is to support the bourgeoisie in the struggle for "national independence" against the threat of Soviet

social imperialism by drawing a fallacious parallel between the situation in imperialist Britain and imperialistically oppressed China during the late 1930's. Again, we have the phenomenon of quotations, of dishing out a few quotes from Mao quite regardless of their specific historical context, and doing so in support of the most outrageous, reactionary policy.

These are just a few of many examples of the failure to effect any real dialectical unity of revolutionary theory and practice. This failure to integrate the "universal truth of Marxism-Leninism and the concrete conditions of your own countries" (to use Mao's expression), does not simply result in failure to build the revolutionary party but, worse, it allows the most commonplace, bourgeois platitudes to be presented as revolutionary Marxism-Leninism and thus brings the proletarian revolutionary tradition into disrepute. Workers and others, who, as a result of their own day to day experiences of capitalism, are moving towards a revolutionary outlook are repelled by this reactionary trash. Furthermore, since such "theory" can only be a guide to failure to achieve any advances in the class struggle, comrades eventually tire of their fruitless activities and fall by the wayside. Latterly, during the last four years, this lamentable ideological weakness, this failure to really apply materialist dialectics to the concrete conditions of the contemporary world, accounts for the ease with which the Hua-Teng revisionist leadership in China have been able to secure the support and allegiance of many Marxist-Leninists in Britain.

PARTY-BUILDING PROPOSALS

Having dwelt at length on the ideological shortcomings of most Marxist-Leninists in Britain, we should emphasise that this is not entirely the case. A few comrades have risen to a level of ideological clarity whereby they recognise the shortcomings of the movement and have specified how a qualitative advance can be achieved. Most notable in this respect are the proposals put forward in 1976 by the CWLBML in their pamphlet Hey! It's up to us.

The method adopted in this exposition is to survey the course taken by the revolutionary struggles in those countries where the dictatorship of the proletariat was established and socialist construction begun: Russian, China, Korea, Albania and Vietnam. On this basis they reach the conclusion that "... the actual practice of successful modern revolutions and the parties that led them, ... reveal to us that a genuine revolutionary communist party is one that, in a living way... (11):

"Knows well the conditions in its own country because it has made a scientific class analysis of those conditions and knows therefore, the existence, characteristics and development of all classes and important intra-class strata, and thus the friends and foes of the revolution; and has, based on this analysis, a programme of mass work;"

"Knows well the conditions in the world because it has made a scientific analysis of those conditions and knows therefore its friends and foes in the international arena, those who it can rely on for support, those who side with the enemy of its own revolution and who might intervene on that enemy's behalf;"

"Knows how to solve its national question because it has investigated this question with a spirit of being scientific and being just and can thus prove the way for self-determination for those who are entitled to it, and for the unity of nations based on consent and proletarian principles;"

"Knows, really comprehends down to its very roots, that the working class, especially the industrial proletariat, is, and can be, the only vanguard of the struggle for revolution, and knows, has worked out in a very concrete way how to educate, agitate and organise the proletariat and put it, under its leadership, on the high road to revolution, and has actually won workers to its ranks and leadership;"

"Knows, because it has conducted a scientific analysis of class forces and their continuing development, how

to scientifically characterise each and every major turn of events and every distinct stage of the tortuous battle for class supremacy and has a clear view of what strategy and tactics are correct at each stage." (11)

On the basis on this thoroughgoing, scientifically formulated characterisation of genuine communist parties the CWLB(M-L) then examine the existing Marxist-Leninist organisations in Britain to establish whether or not any of them satisfy these criteria. Having then arrived at the conclusion that none of these organisations fit the bill, a proposal is then put forward to remedy the deficiency. They state:

"The movement that at present calls itself Marxist-Leninist must formally be split in a most clear cut and profound way - it must be split into two camps: the camp of science and the camp of anti-science." (12)

The manner in which the split between Marxism-Leninism and revisionism is to be achieved is by means of setting up a Working Commission on Party Building, consisting of Marxist-Leninist organisations willing to participate. The task of the Commission is, in a systematic and disciplined way, to undertake a scientific analysis of the main contradictions of contemporary British capitalism; (class, international, national etc) and then, on the basis of objective knowledge, to draft a strategy and tactics for the conduct of class struggle. This work should be done according to a definite timetable and would result in the formulation of a programme which would be the basis for the establishment of a pre-party communist organisation.

In our view the Hey! its up to us! proposals were essentially correct. However, the response from the other Marxist-Leninist organisations was disappointing. A few small groups expressed agreement but, in the main, the proposals were ignored or dismissed out of hand. The CWLB(ML) and two other small local groups tried to set up the party building commission but, for reasons not entirely clear to us, it never really got off the ground and quickly collapsed. Subsequently the CWLB(ML)

claimed that their mistake in putting forward their proposals at that time was to have overestimated the political maturity of the Marxist-Leninists in Britain. Unfortunately this observation was only too true. The Nottingham Communist Group was only formed in 1976 and we did not learn about the Hey! Its up to us! proposals until after the collapse of the party building commission. We did suggest to the CWLB(ML) that a further try to set up the commission should be made but they felt that favourable conditions did not exist. It is a sad comment of the correctness of the CWLB(ML)'s proposals that they themselves have subsequently capitulated to the revisionist international line being propagated from Peking. This shows very clearly that unless comrades persist with the struggle to build the revolutionary movement, none of us are immune from falling back into revisionism.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

So where does all this get us?. What conclusions are we to draw?. What is the way forward in the revolutionary struggle?. The analysis we have presented of the failure of the Marxist-Leninists in Britain, during the last fifteen years, to build a revolutionary party should not be taken on any account as a cause for despair. Given the origins of the present Marxist-Leninist movement, given its unavoidable ideological weakness, it can be seen in retrospect that a long process of struggle for clarity was and is inevitable. A decisive break with bourgeois ideology could and can only come about as a result of the disappointments and setbacks of opportunist practices. It should also be noted that the objective material conditions of British capitalism during the past fifteen years have only been partially favourable for the development of revolutionary struggle and consciousness. During this period the post-war boom of Western imperialism has been gradually collapsing but in a rather slow way. This has meant that the bourgeoisie has not found it too difficult to contain the sharpening of class contradictions. Such conditions determine that even if the revolutionary forces had been more advanced, their progress in developing a revolutionary consciousness-

ss would have been slow and limited. Also, these years of stagnation, these conditions of only a slow growth of instability, mean that it has not been too difficult for comrades who tire of the struggle to make their peace with the bourgeoisie and settle down to a not altogether intolerable existence.

But now, conditions are changing very rapidly. Within the capitalist countries, especially Britain, economic stagnation is rapidly being supplanted by a major economic depression. Internationally and related to the growing economic crisis, the major inter-imperialist contradiction between the U.S. and Soviet imperialist blocs is intensifying. In the coming period the working class really will be presented with a very clear choice: war or revolution. So the objective conditions for an upsurge in revolutionary consciousness are becoming more favourable. But it cannot be emphasised too strongly that unless conscious revolutionary elements carry out their vital party-building tasks, there will be no growth of revolutionary forces but rather an upsurge of extreme reaction: fascism.

From the time of our inception in 1976 the NCG has always emphasised the key role of the development of a programme in the task of party-building. Other, for example the CWM, have criticised us along the lines that if we consider this to be so important then why have we publicly not made any detailed contributions to such a programme. Part of the reason we have refrained from so doing is that we had hoped to carry out this work jointly and systematically together with other comrades in the form of a party-building commission. For around three years we sought to persuade other Marxist-Leninist organisations of the correctness of this approach, but without success. Also, for the last two years we have found it necessary to pay considerable attention to the counter-revolution in China and the influence of the reactionary line emanating from China. In Britain we have found ourselves to be practically alone in our struggle to combat the new wave of revisionism which has swept through the Marxist-Leninist movement. Latterly we have made contact with the anti-revisionist element in

other countries and assisted by their valuable ideological and political support, have begun to work with the remaining anti-revisionist elements in Britain. In addition to these tasks we have necessarily persisted with our participation in the day-to-day class struggle in our area: trade union work, anti-racist work and anti-war work.

In fact over the last four years, we of the NCG have tried to carry out our own scientific investigation into the major contradictions of British capitalism. In particular we have carried out work on the economic and class contradictions and some of this work will appear in future editions of Red Star. But we do not flatter ourselves into thinking one small group is capable of developing a correct revolutionary programme. We do not have the necessary experience, time or knowledge to carry out the task by ourselves. Only the combined efforts of at least a number of Marxist-Leninist groups will be adequate for this vital task.

To draw matters to a conclusion, we say to fellow Marxist-Leninists and to those other people moving towards a revolutionary outlook, that now is not the time for either complacency or despair. The objective conditions favouring the development of a really effective revolutionary movement in Britain have never been better. Join with us in criticising and exposing the new revisionism which is rampant among the Marxist-Leninists, join with us in the struggle to develop the programme for revolution in Britain!

NOTES

- (1) McCREERY, M., The Way Forward, in his The Way Forward: A Marxist-Leninist Analysis of the British State, the CPGB and the Tasks for Revolutionaries, Working Peoples Party of England, London, n.d., p. 39

- (2) *Ibid.*, p. 28.

(Continued on page 42)

CLASSES AND STRATA IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH CAPITALISM (PART I)

In this article we give a presentation of the investigations made by the Nottingham Communist Group into the class structure of contemporary British capitalism. This is not claimed to be a definitive analysis but rather a report on some preliminary investigations. We hope that these notes will stimulate others to criticise and thus deepen this very necessary aspect of the programmatic task of grasping contemporary capitalism in its concrete particularity.

WHY DO WE NEED A CLASS ANALYSIS?

Some comrades of an empiricist inclination think that altogether too much fuss is made about the need for a proper class analysis. In their view, it is blatantly obvious that there is a bourgeoisie and a proletariat in contemporary Britain and all that needs to be done is to develop the class struggle along revolutionary lines. These people tend to ignore the fact that the two classes are by no means homogeneous monoliths and that in addition there exist various intermediate strata as well. There are other comrades who consider that all the necessary class analysis for Britain was done long ago by Marx, Engels and Lenin. They imagine that an attentive reading of the classical Marxist writings will provide a clear conception of British class structure and all the guidance necessary for the conduct of the class struggle today. This overlooks the fact that British capitalism has changed and developed very considerably during the last hundred years and that part of this process has been some very significant changes in class structure.

Both of these erroneous views ignore a crucial lesson drawn from revolutionary struggles in other countries,

e.g. Russia and China. This is that only if the revolutionaries have grasped the precise character of each class, its sections, and the various non-class strata, will they be able to propagate policies of a kind and in a way such that the maximum forces are engaged in the struggle to overthrow the ruling class. As Mao put the matter:

"Who are our enemies? Who are our friends? This is a question of the first importance for the revolution. The basic reason why all previous revolutionary struggles in China achieved so little was their failure to unite with real friends in order to attack real enemies....To distinguish real friends from real enemies, we must make a general analysis of the economic status of the various classes in Chinese society and of their respective attitudes towards the revolution." (1)

Such analysis is just as vital in Britain. The failure to carry out such an analysis inevitably leads to errors of two broad kinds. There are those, most notoriously the Communist Party of Britain(M-L), with its absurd "two class line", who gloss over the very real differences both within the working class and between the working class and the middle strata. This leads to Right opportunist errors whereby the middle strata, i.e. people such as managers, public administrators, doctors, teachers, etc., are approached as if they were members of the industrial proletariat. One result of this can be seen within the CPB(M-L) itself where the petit bourgeois ideology of the "intellectual workers" has been triumphant. Just as erroneous is the "Left" opportunist line which regards only the most sorely oppressed sections of the masses as having any revolutionary potentialities at all. This type of thinking tends towards the position whereby only if you are a black, unemployed, homeless, un-married mother are you eligible for the revolutionary movement. Clearly this is a line for isolation and defeat. Only if the most precise and concrete class analysis is carried out will it be possible to know how to unite all who can be united in the struggle for socialism.

THE NATURE OF CLASSES AND STRATA

For Marx, the term class was a key analytical concept and

had a very precise scientific meaning. A very general definition is that class is an aggregate of people who have in common the same relationship to the means of production of a society. Marx distinguished between three successive stages of the development of class society - slavery, feudalism, capitalism - according to the different types of predominant relations of production existing between a ruling class and a subordinate class. The class which effectively owns and controls the means of production in any society is in a position to oppress and exploit those who do not own means of production i.e. the subordinate class. Thus there is a dialectical relationship between a ruling class and a subordinate class whereby the existence of one is dependant on the other even though their material interests are fundamentally opposed. Marx's distinction between different types of society rests on specifying the existence of different types of means of production which give rise to different types of relations of production and thus to different types of ruling and subordinate classes. In slave society the two classes are masters and slaves, in feudal society they are lords and serfs and in capitalist society bourgeoisie and proletariat.

It is very rarely, if ever, that in reality we find existing a "pure" example of one or another of these types of class society. Typically, although for any particular society it is possible to distinguish a predominant type of relation of production, others may exist as well. For example, in the Latin American countries today predominant relations of production are capitalist but feudal relations of production are still widespread in the rural areas. At a given point of time, the concrete reality of many societies is that they are complex social formations consisting of a combination of two or more different types of modes of production and thus their class structure is rather more complex than the simple two class model might lead one to expect. For any class analysis to be a true reflection of reality it is important not to overlook this complexity and artificially to reduce everything to a few simple categories. Furthermore, in any given society there usually are various distinct strata apart from the various classes. These may be

the remnants of previously existing classes, for example the peasantry in many European countries today, or a section of one or the other of the two main classes which has become detached, e.g. the petit bourgeoisie in contemporary Britain. The mode of existence of these strata is determined by their dialectical relationship to the two main classes and it is important to specify the precise nature of these relationships.

We have said that a 'class is an aggregate of people who have in common the same relationship to the means of production of a society'. At this point it is necessary to clarify the meaning of the phrase 'relationship to the means of production'. If this is taken simply to mean the effective ownership (or lack of it) of the means of production, then the whole of any society necessarily divides into just two classes. Clearly, contemporary capitalism is rather more complex and the concise definition of class given by Lenin can aid clarification here:

"Classes are large groups of persons, differing according to their place in the historically established system of social production according to their relations (mostly fixed and formulated in laws) to the means of production, according to their roles in the social organisation of labour and consequently according to their methods of obtaining and the size of the share of social wealth over which they dispose. Classes are groups of persons, of which one group is able to appropriate the labour of another, owing to a difference in their respective positions in a definite order of social economy" 2

Lenin was drawing a distinction between two aspects of relationships to the means of production;

- (a) The amount and source of a persons income and wealth
- (b) The social position of a person in the organisation of production.

The latter aspect is particularly important for the analysis of the intermediate strata; for example, an industrial manager and a teacher have significantly different positions in the social division of labour, and this determines that there are differences in their charact-

eristic outlook and patterns of behavior. Also, this distinction is important for making divisions within a class as in the case of a factory foreman who stands in a supervisory role with respect to the ordinary workers.

One further point needs to be emphasised. Marx and Engels wrote:

" The separate individuals form a class only in so far as they have to carry on a common battle against another class; otherwise they are on hostile terms with each other as competitors. On the other hand, the class in its turn achieves an independent existence over against the individuals, so that the latter find their conditions of existence predestined, and hence have their personal development assigned to them by their class, become subsumed under it" (3)

Marx was postulating that a class is not a fixed, static thing but part of a changing, dynamic process. The typical thoughts and actions of the members of a class are determined in the course of their struggle with another class and maybe various strata as well. In particular, any adequate class analysis must describe and analyse the ideologies of the different classes and strata. Furthermore, the types of organisations developed by the different classes and strata to defend and advance their interests, for example trade unions and employers associations must be taken into account.

Thus, in attempting a class analysis of contemporary British capitalism we have tried to distinguish various classes and strata on the basis of their amounts and sources of income and wealth, their social positions in the organisation of production and their relationships to each other. We have then given some consideration to their differing ideologies and modes of organisation.

CLASSES AND STRATA IN CONTEMPORARY BRITAIN

Our basic source of empirical data was the information gathered in the 1971 Census of Great Britain on the occupations of the working population. People in employment or seeking employment at the time of the Census were enumerated according to the following two criteria:

1. Occupation Orders- a scheme of 27 occupational divisi-

ons e.g. Farmers, foresters, fishermen; Professional, technical workers, artists.

2. Occupational Status- the divisions are:

- (a) Self-employed
 - (i) With employees
 - (ii) Without employees
- (b) Managers
- (c) foremen and supervisors
- (d) Other employees

The working population classified according to these divisions come to a total of 23.84 millions--sons out of a total population of 53.98millions. Thus this data does not take into account the majority of the population who are not in employment, housewives, the long term sick and disabled, retired people and those living solely on unearned incomes. Nevertheless, given that most of these people are dependents of occupied persons, an analysis of the working population should yield a broadly correct picture of the proportional sizes of the various classes and strata. It should be kept in mind that all the figures we present refer to the working population in 1971.

THE CAPITALIST CLASS

A capitalist is a person whose ownership of means of production enables him or her to exploit wage labourers by means of the expropriation of surplus value. All employers of wage labour are capitalists but not all capitalists are direct employers of wage labour. However, it is no longer fashionable for owners of large amounts of capital to lead a life of complete idleness and most of them have seats on boards of directors, even though their actual participation in the affairs of their firm is in some cases purely nominal. Our data gives figures for the 'self-employed with employees' and while this category may exclude some capitalists it probably includes most of them for the reason given above.

In 1971 there were a total of 724,000 persons classified as self + employed with employees. However, this is a very heterogenous category including as it does all individual employers ranging from multi-millionaire indus-

rialists and financiers down to a shopkeeper who employs a part-time assistant. Clearly some division must be made here both on the grounds of the enormous differences in the amounts of income and wealth and the rather different positions occupied in the social organisation of production. That is, it is necessary to distinguish between that section of the bourgeoisie who really do own and control the chief means of production (the haute bourgeoisie) and those whose capital is of a comparatively minor kind and who thus cannot be considered to be part of the ruling class (the petit bourgeoisie). All that the census data enables us to do is distinguish the numbers of employers with 25 or more employees, of whom there were only 14,000, from employers with less than 25 employees, who totalled 710,000. In our analysis we decided to include only the 14,000 larger scale employers as members of the capitalist class proper. This may seem a somewhat arbitrary judgment but data from another source, which will be presented below, offers support for this procedural decision.

Another problem involved in delineating the bourgeoisie concerns the class position of top managers in industry and commerce and top officials in the state apparatus. While in fact there is a very heavy overlap between persons who are top managers and large-scale owners of British firms, it is true that there are some top managers who possess no substantial capital holdings in the firms they actually run. This is obviously the case with the state sector of the economy. However, the salaries received by these top officials are very high, very often being in the £50-100,000 per year range, and it would be absurd to claim that payments of this magnitude are commensurate with the value of the labour power exerted by these employees. In reality, the great part of their salaries derives from the surplus-value extracted from the workers in those firms. Furthermore, the roles played by such persons in the organisation is essentially identical with that of capitalists who both own and manage their enterprises. Both are equally subject to the law of capital accumulation. Given these considerations, it is necessary to include some of those categorised by the census as 'managers' in the bourgeoisie. A further rea-

son for doing so is that some of those persons who appear classified as 'managers' are additionally owners of substantial amounts of capital. A total of 1,671,000 people were classified as 'managers' by the census but as with the 'self-employed with employees' category, this category is very homogenous, its members ranging from the chairman of nationalised industries down to shop managers. Somewhat arbitrarily, we decided to divide the 'managers' category in the same proportions as the 'self-employed with employees' category had been divided so as to yield an estimate of the numbers of managers who are really part of the bourgeoisie, the resulting figure being 31,000. In fact, the 'managers' category in the census includes high state officials such as government ministers, top civil servants, senior police officers and judges. Since the state is just as much a part of the bourgeoisie's apparatus of domination as are the economic organisations, these top state officials should also be considered as part of the bourgeoisie, even though their salaries are only indirectly derived from surplus value.

If we add together the large scale employers and top managers the total comes to 45,000. This is the monopoly capitalist class (haute bourgeoisie) of contemporary British capitalism and they constitute only 0.2% of the occupied population. In our view, these are the people who really do exercise enormous power, whose decisions have consequences on a societal scale and who thus are the ruling class. Some evidence in support of consider-

DISTRIBUTION OF SOME PERSONAL ASSET HOLDINGS G.B. 1973

Range Shares of various types of assets	Ranges of total number of wealth owners (19.7m)	
	Top 0.2%	Top 0.6%
Land	42	58
Quoted company shares	37	55
Other company securities	39	54
Quoted U.K. government securities	31	45
Net wealth	12	18
Number of wealth holders	38,000	115,000

ing the ruling class to be roughly of this magnitude is provided by data presented in the Report of the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth. The table shows the massive concentration of the various types of capital- land, company shares, government bonds - in the hands of only 0.2% of those persons who have any wealth of any kind. These people number only around 38,000 individuals and more than one third of all share capital in Britain is owned by them. True, the next most wealthy 0.4% of wealth holders are not exactly paupers but even so their holdings of capital are rather less substantial. The percentage of wealth owned by the top 0.2% is only 12% but this includes various other assets which do not function as capital, e.g. owner-occupied houses and private cars. The point to be taken here is that ownership of capital, the means for expropriating surplus value from the proletariat, is concentrated in the hands of only a few tens of thousands of people.

So, to conclude this section of our discussion, we think that we have specified the general characteristics and size of the monopoly capitalist ruling class in contemporary Britain. More detailed investigations might result in the line of demarcation between this class and the various intermediate strata being shifted slightly so as to increase its size. However, such an analytical revision is not likely to push the size of this class much beyond 100,000. The main point to be grasped is that in Britain today there is indeed an extremely small minority of people who exercise and control a massive concentration of capital.

THE WORKING CLASS

The terms "working class", "proletariat" and "industrial proletariat" have tended to be used rather vaguely and imprecisely. In a note to the Manifesto of the Communist Party Engels defines the proletariat as being

"...the class of modern wage-labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour power in order to live" (4)

As we have already pointed out, such a simple conception

is inadequate because it does not in fact give a full expression of the analysis of class which is actually found in the writings of Marx and Engels and the other great revolutionary leaders. Indeed, taken at face value, this definition of class leads directly to the erroneous and opportunist "two class" line of the CPB(ML). They point out that most managers, administrators and professionals own no means of production, sell their labour power for money payments and therefore, it is argued, these people are members of the working class. Of course, the vital factor left out by this type of analysis is consideration of positions in the social organisation of production, the different types of work carried out by different types of employees.

We conceive the working class as being those people who own no significant means of production, sell their labour power for wages, have no control or only minimal control over the organisation of labour power and who are directly engaged in the production and realisation of surplus value. Such a definition excludes managers and administrators, because they do exercise some control over the organisation of labour power and are not directly engaged in the production and realisation of labour power. It also excludes professionals and technicians because, while they do not exercise significant control over the organisation of labour, they are not directly engaged in the production and realisation of surplus value.

A further distinction within the working class needs to be made, and this concerns the difference between the industrial proletariat and the semi-proletariat. Marxist political economy makes a distinction between productive labour power and unproductive labour power. The term "productive" is used in the sense of "productive of surplus value". Productive labourers are those directly engaged in the production of commodities and from whom surplus value is directly expropriated by capitalists, e.g. car production workers. Unproductive labourers, such as clerical and sales workers, are engaged in the administration, distribution and sales organisation of the economy as well as various public services, e.g. sun-

itation, necessary for the functioning of the capitalist economy and social system as a whole. These workers are certainly socially necessary and indispensable but, even so, while they are oppressed by the bourgeoisie, they are not directly exploited. This distinction is not a purely technical one but has direct consequences for the character of the class struggle. In general, the most intense class conflict occurs between productive workers and the monopoly capitalists because the rate of profit on capital received is directly dependent on the rate of surplus value at which productive labourers are being exploited. Thus the main axis of the class struggle is between the monopoly capitalist class and the industrial proletariat and it is for this reason that this section of the working class is the one with the greatest latent revolutionary potential.

Turning to the 1971 census data, we found that a total of 19,230,000 people were classified as 'other employees'. However, out of these, a total of 2,361,000 were in the 'Professional, technical workers, artists' occupational order and thus, on the basis of the criteria outlined above, were excluded from the working class. The armed forces and police, the direct means of physical force whereby the capitalist state enforces its rule, can hardly be considered part of the working class and were also excluded. On the other hand 'foremen and supervisors' as opposed to 'managers' have, apart from those in the professional and technical category, been included in the working class. Their inclusion is on the grounds that their control of labour power is very minimal and that such persons often do directly participate in the work process of producing and realising surplus value. Furthermore, their relationship with the bourgeoisie is very similar to that of ordinary workers, usually being of a primarily antagonistic kind, unlike that typically found between the bourgeoisie and managers and administrators. However, the contradiction within the working class between foremen and supervisors and other workers should not be overlooked. More contentious perhaps, is our inclusion in the working class of 'self-employed without employees' persons, apart from those in professional and technical occupations. The reason for

this is that many of these people are only 'self-employed in a technical sense, e.g. building workers, and in reality their position is actually that of wage-labourers. However some of them are genuinely self-employed, that is, working for themselves and by themselves with no employees, e.g. shop keepers, small farmers, taxi drivers. Again, the apparent independence of these people from capitalist relations of production is often illusory. Very often, they work on a regular basis for capitalist organisations and are totally dependent on those organisations for contract work. Furthermore, their ownership of means of production is minimal and persons in this category often slip back into employee status. Nonetheless, we do conclude that a case can be made for assigning these people to an intermediate stratum "independent artisans", but we have included them in the working class. To sum up here, we found that a total of 18,544,000 persons fell within these criteria for delineating the working class and they constituted 77.8% of the working population.

Having delineated the working class, we then had to divide it into the industrial proletariat directly engaged in the production of surplus value and the semi-proletariat engaged only in the process of realising surplus value. Again, the census data only permits a somewhat rough and ready division along these lines. The industrial proletariat was taken as consisting of all those 'other employees' and 'foremen and supervisors' employed in the primary and secondary sectors of the economy, that is in the extraction of raw materials, e.g. coal miners, and the manufacturing of commodities, e.g. engineering workers. These came to a total of 10,234,000 which was 42.9% of the working population. The remainder of the working class, that is those employed in the tertiary sector and the 'self-employed without employees', the semi-proletariat, numbered 8,310,000, 34.9% of the working population.

THE INTERMEDIATE STRATA

Over-simplified presentations of the marxian theory of class in capitalist society postulate that the whole of

society will gradually polarise into two classes as the trend towards monopoly grows. As Marx himself pointed out, the petit-bourgeoisie and independent artisans would gradually be absorbed into the ranks of the proletariat as a result of their economic ruin brought about by the advance of monopoly capitalism. However, it is also true that Marx and Engels postulated the growth of other intermediate strata brought about precisely because of the rise of capitalist monopolies and the related growth of the capitalist state apparatus. For example, Marx commented upon ;

"...the constantly growing number of the middle classes which, situated between the workers on the one side and the capitalists and landlords on the other side, live mainly and directly on revenuepress like a heavy burden on the labouring class, enlarging the social security and power of the upper ten thousand" (5)

There is no point in trying to wish away the sizeable intermediate strata existing in contemporary British capitalism. Rather, they have to be accurately analysed in terms of their concrete particularities so that a scientific assessment can be made of the extent to which these strata can be friends or enemies of the revolution

First of all, we should note the continued existence of a petit bourgeoisie of small-scale capitalists. These are easily delineated because in the census data they appear as the 'self-employed with employees' who were not included in the monopoly capitalist class. In 1971 they numbered only 710,000, 3.0% of the working population. Their income does derive from the ownership of capital and they do exercise control over labour power although, given the comparatively small-scale of their activities, their economic and political power is very limited. Secondly, there are the large and growing numbers of managers and administrators, the manageriat, brought into existence by the growth of large-scale monopoly enterprises and the enormous expansion of the state apparatus. These people possess no significant amounts of capital but they do play a vital part in the social organisation of production by exercising control

over labour power, either directly in industry and commerce or indirectly as state functionaries, e.g. administering social services. The managerial are, so to speak, the officer corps who issue commands to the proletariat on behalf of the general staff of the monopoly capitalist class. In the census data they appear as 'managers' and, minus those few top managers who are part of the monopoly capitalist class, they numbered 1,632,000, 6.8% of the working population. Thirdly, there is the large number of people in professional and technical occupations. They do not possess significant capital and neither do they exercise control over labour power. However, they play a vital role in the functioning of advanced monopoly capitalism as the producers and distributors of knowledge and ideology. With the advance of the forces of production scientists and technologists have become increasingly necessary for the functioning of modern industry and commerce. They play a critical role in developing production processes which have the aims of both raising the rate of surplus value and more effectively controlling the proletariat. Also, large numbers of journalists, teachers, social workers, lawyers etc are necessary to exercise ideological control over the proletariat. For the most part, this intelligentsia is employed by large firms and the state, although a small number are self-employed e.g. doctors and lawyers, and some are even employers. However, the self-employed element are little more than appendages of monopoly firms and the state. The intelligentsia are fairly easily identifiable in the census data where they appear as the 'Professional, technical workers, artists' occupational order. We included the 'self-employed without employees' 'foremen and supervisors' and 'other employees' in this category as comprising the intelligentsia. They numbered a total of 2,541,000, 10.7% of the working population. Lastly, we had to take into account the police and armed forces. The most senior of their commanding officers perhaps belong to the monopoly capitalist class, as already suggested, but the census data does not specify their numbers, which anyway are extremely small. The police and armed forces, the military, who are the direct physical agents whereby the capitalist state defends the interests of the monopoly capitalist class, are

obviously not part of the working class. Also, given their special role in the social organisation of production, they are not part of the manageriat or intelligentsia. Thus the military constitute an intermediate stratum numbering 366,000, 1.5% of the occupied population.

It can be seen that, even in terms of sheer numbers, the intermediate strata cannot be ignored, constituting as they do a total of 5,250,000 people, 22.0% of the working population. These are in fact the people who subjectively regard themselves as "middle class" and are seen as such by the working class. This perceived difference is not a mere ideological illusion but has a very definite material basis in terms of distinct relations to the means of production.

The Class Structure of Great Britain, 1971

Our analysis of the classes and strata of contemporary British capitalism is summed up in the following table and diagram:

	Numbers (millions)	% of the occupied pop't'n
RULING CLASS		
Monopoly capitalists(haute bourgeoisie)	0.05	0.2%
INTERMEDIATE STRATA		
Competitive capitalists(petit " ")	0.71	3.0%
Managers & Administrators(manageriat)	1.63	6.3%
Professionals & technicians(intelligentsia)	2.54	10.7%
Police & armed forces (military)	0.37	1.5%
WORKING CLASS		
Semi - proletariat(unproductive workers)	8.31	34.9%
Industrial proletariat(productive " ")	10.23	42.9%
TOTALS	23.84	100.0%

MONOPOLY CAPITALISTS 0.2%

COMPETITIVE CAPITALISTS 3.0%	MANAGERS & ADMINISTRATORS 6.8%	PROFESSIONALS & TECHNICIANS 10.7%	POLICE & ARMED FORCES 1.5%
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WORKING CLASS 77.8%	
Semi- proletariat 34.9%	Industrial proletariat 42.9%

The rest of the population, the 30.14 millions not occupied in 1971, were retired members of these classes and strata or the dependents of occupied persons. Thus, it can reasonably be supposed that their membership of classes and strata was in roughly the same proportions as that of the occupied population.

* * *

So far, our analysis has simply delineated the various classes and strata existing in contemporary British capitalism. The next step is to specify the characteristic modes of economic and political organisation and the ideological outlook of each class and stratum. This must be done in terms of the contradictory dialectical relationships existing between the two main classes and the intermediate strata as well. Only then can an attempt be made to specify a correct approach to the handling of these contradictions in the course of the revolutionary class struggle and Part II of this article will take up these questions.

NOTES

1. MAO TSE-TUNG, Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society, in his Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tse-tung, Peking, 1971, p. II.

2. V.I.LENIN, A Great Beginning, in his Selected Works Moscow, 1968, pp.481-2.
 3. MARX, K & ENGELS, F, The German Ideology, in their Collected Works, Vol. 5, London, 1976, p77
 4. MARX, K & ENGELS, F, Manifesto of the Communist Party, in their Collected Works, Vol.6, London, 1976 p.482.
 5. MARX, K, Theories of Surplus Value, Part II, London, 1972, p.573
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(Continued from page 25)

- (4) MAO TSE-TUNG, The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War, in his Selected Works, Vol. II, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1966, p. 208.
- (5) Manifesto of the Revolutionary Communist League of Britain, Revolution, 2, No. 1, 1977, p. 25.
- (6) Communist Unity, Exposure and Defeat of the R.C.L. B.'s Social Chauvinism is a Major Task in Party Building, London, 1979, p. 1.
- (7) Ibid., p. 1.
- (8) MAO TSE-TUNG, Some Experiences in Our Party's History, in his Selected Works, Vol. V, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1977, p. 326.
- (9) BIRCH, R., Guerrilla Struggle and the Working Class, Communist Party of Britain (M-L), London, n.d..
- (10) Inflation is Caused by the Capitalist System, Revolution, 3, No. 2, 1978, 25-32.
- (11) Communist Workers League of Britain (M-L), Hey! It's Up To Us: The Draft Theses, Conclusions and Proposals of the Communist Workers League of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) on the Central Question of Party Building, London, 1976, pp. 37-8.
- (12) Ibid., p. 46.

FOR MAO : Essays in Historical Materialism

P. Corrigan, H. Ramsay, D. Sayer. Macmillan. 1979. £12.00.

This book is based on the critique of Bolshevism put forward in the authors' previous work "Socialist Construction and Marxist Theory" (I) and while this critique has not been developed in this volume, many of the arguments of the previous work can be found in "For Mao". As the subtitle indicates, the authors have not attempted to write a comprehensive account of Mao, but have tried to present his work through "attempts, angles, representations and glimpses".

The first part of the book deals at some length with Mao's overall Marxist strategy and mass line understanding of socialist politics and draws attention to those areas of Mao's thought (e.g. emphasis on correct ideas coming from social practise, being good at learning from mistakes, reliance on the people), which constitute a real advance in historical materialism. The authors make clear at the outset however, that they do not regard Mao as having completely transformed or overcome Bolshevism, and they regard some of his formulations as having provided ammunition for Teng Hsiao-ping and the theory of the productive forces. This, they argue, is because there are "elements of a speculative metaphysic" within Mao's thought, which resulted in his retention of certain forms of "absolutist thinking". The concept of 'contradiction' is given as an example of this tendency, which they say "has been rendered mystical... and been used for the most crude apologetics in relation to the analysis of imperialism and hegemony" (p9). In particular Mao's method of identifying the principal contradiction is criticised for being responsible for the 'theory of the three worlds', but they fail to make clear that the so-called theory of the three worlds is a wholly revisionist strategy which was first put forward by Teng Hsiao-ping in 1974.

and it was never presented as a strategy, and still less attributed to Mao during his lifetime.

The second part of the book presents a series of four outline studies, three of which are of different historical periods, which aim to provide a context for the development of some of Mao's major theoretical and practical advances. The first study is concerned with the period after the Long March and before the complete victory of the Communist forces, when Yanan was the capital of People's China. This was the period when Mao developed the principle of voluntary participation and mutual benefit to establish the cooperative movement, and in his writings on the army and party, Mao stressed how increasing production was part of good communist work and inseparable from winning the war against the Japanese and the Kuomintang. The extracts from Mao's writings and from writers on China during the period capture the essence of these principles in his strategy for defeating the enemies of the revolution while simultaneously laying the basis for socialist construction. The second study shows, by referring to the struggles over agricultural cooperation in the mid 1950's, how false is the orthodox picture of Mao as an idealist, utopian and extremist. For example, the view that Mao was anti-heavy industry is discounted, and they describe his view, echoing Marx, that cooperation and the class struggle to achieve it constitutes a productive force in its own right.

The third study offers an appreciation of Mao's part in the Cultural Revolution. This section suffers from the authors' failure to make clear that the overriding reason for Mao launching the Cultural Revolution was to initiate struggle against the revisionists in party leadership by relying on the masses. This basic weakness is apparent in the discussion of "ultra-leftism" in the Cultural Revolution, where for example, it is claimed that it was Mao's opposition to ultra-leftism which led him to abandon the moves in Shanghai and elsewhere to reconstruct government on the model of the Paris Commune.

There was one basic reason why Mao opposed the formation of the Shanghai commune and instead argued for the establishment of a revolutionary committee; as Mao himself put it: "Communes are too weak when it comes to suppressing counter-revolution". (3)

The fourth study is written with the aim of showing that Mao should be taken just as seriously as a Marxist theorist and practitioner as e.g. Lukacs or Gramsci. The authors point out that both Mao and Gramsci shared the demand "that historical materialism be understood as practise, that Marxism is a guide to action and not dogma, that we should learn it through applying it to the resolution of problems for the transformation of circumstances" (p96). On the other hand, both Mao and Gramsci are criticised for their 'bolshevik' view of capturing the state, which the authors maintain "diverts attention away from the real resources which practical materialists should assist in making conscious and simultaneously unleashing. Those real resources are the productive powers and energies of the creators of wealth which are currently constrained and hampered by the crippling restrictions of the division of labour, socially, technically, and culturally" (3). Although this criticism of the Bolshevik view of the state as being simply a set of institutions which need to be captured is essentially justified, (a criticism which is more clearly elaborated in their previous work), the implication of the above passage seems to question the need for revolution and therefore the primary duty of communists in preparing for this necessity.

The last part of the book, "On Contradiction", synthesises the previous two sections and draws on their former work in "Socialist Construction and Marxist Theory" to explicate the relevance of Mao's marxism to various historical questions in the International Communist movement. Much of the discussion is concerned with the polemic between the C.P.C. and the C.P.S.U. over the 'Stalin question', and with the struggle against revisionist elements within the C.P.C. However the discussion of how a new bourgeoisie can arise within a socialist society is inad-

equate, as is shown by their emphasis on foreign trade and diplomacy forming a fertile breeding ground of capitalist roaders, since this emphasis on access to the external world negates the importance of the new bourgeoisie arising from within the ranks of the Chinese Communist Party. In addition, the authors state their disbelief that 'full capitalist restoration by external means, even with internal assistance is probable; it has not taken place in the U.S.S.R. as any simple inspection of the condition of working peoples lives will demonstrate'(4) This, and other facile "evidence" for the continuance of socialism in the U.S.S.R. is all the more surprising in view of the authors constant reiteration that 'Bolshevism including the 'thought of Mao-Tse-tung', has failed to break completely from an analysis that doesn't penetrate beyond phenomena. Mao is particularly severely chastised as "ceasing to be a marxist (however briefly)", for his remark that the U.S.S.R. was "a fascist state of the Hitler type".

The final part of the book deals very briefly with events in China since the death of Mao. While they do regard the programme of Teng as a fundamental reversal of Mao's policies which are likely to lead to a restoration of capitalism, they maintain (without offering any supporting evidence), that the 'gang of four' were as guilty as Teng of obscuring and negating Mao's teaching.

Despite the inconsistencies of the book and the differences of position which we have with the authors on fundamental issues, both "FOR MAO" and "Socialist Construction and Marxist Theory" deserve serious attention, particularly as they represent one of the few attempts to initiate a debate in Britain on Bolshevism from within a marxist perspective.

FOOTNOTES

(1) CORRIGAN, P., RAMSAY, E., & SAYER, D., Socialist Construction and Marxist Theory, 1978, Macmillan.

- (2) See 'The Communist', Journal of the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Party, U. S. A. No. 5, May 1979. p. 184.
- (3) For Mao p. 110.
- (4) For Mao p. 122.
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You ask me what the word
 alienation means:
 from birth you start dying
 in order to live through a master

who sells you out; start consigning
 what you have - power, love, hatred -
 so that you may obtain
 sex, wine, heartbreak.

It means you are beside yourself
 but you think that you are
 just your own self, because
 the wind undermines you, and you yield.

You may resist, but a day
 seems a century, which consumes you,
 what you give away does not return
 from where it leaves.

Waiting is another life,
 but there isn't another time:
 you are time that disappears,
 and that which remains is not you.

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edited with an introduction by Raymond Lotta

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Banner Press, 1978, 522p £4.35

READINGS FROM BEFORE AND AFTER THE DEATH OF MAO TSETUNG

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A penetrating presentation from a Marxist-Leninist point of view of Mao's revolutionary theory and practice.

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A BASIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA
(1974)

Written in Shanghai as part of a study programme in the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tse-tung Thought for educated youth going to settle in the countryside, this book is a succinct presentation of the line of the revolutionary forces in China. Thus it has now been banned inside China.

Norman Bethune Institute, 1976, 222p £2.90

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