

RED STAR



A MARXIST-LENINIST JOURNAL

50p

EDITORIAL

1

DISCUSSION NOTES

Prospects for the Nuclear
Disarmament Movement

5

ARTICLE

The Soviet Cultural Revolution

12

BOOK REVIEW

The Stalin Question

25

BOOK ADVERTISEMENT

28

NUMBER 7

JULY 1981

EDITORIAL

As this issue of Red Star goes to press the inner city areas of Britain are the scene of violent uprisings against the forces of the capitalist state. Some of the most oppressed sections of the working class, especially black youth, have dealt a heavy blow against the bourgeoisie. It has been proven in practice that the insurrectionary potentialities of the proletariat in advanced capitalism are far from being exhausted. At the same time it is also important to recognise the spontaneous, largely unorganised character of the uprisings. Once again, the working masses are in advance of the conscious revolutionaries. Some sections of the working class have forcefully shown that they desire to overturn the system yet in Britain today there is still no genuine revolutionary movement and party to lead and develop the class struggle in a revolutionary direction. All Marxist-Leninists must redouble their efforts to overcome this lamentable state of affairs and in this respect we are pleased to inform our readers of two positive developments.

At the international Marxist-Leninist conference held last autumn it was resolved to publish an international journal as part of the struggle to rebuild the International Communist Movement. The Joint Communiqué issued by the conference has now been endorsed by Marxist-Leninist parties and organisations in at least nineteen countries and the first issue of the journal, A World to Win, is now available in English, French and Spanish. Issue Number 1 includes a refutation of Enver Hoxha's revisionism, an analysis of the class struggle in China and an underground document from comrades in Shanghai as well as other articles. Subscription details are given at the back of this issue of Red Star.

The Nottingham Communist Group has always asserted that the key to building a Marxist-Leninist revolutionary movement and party in Britain is to develop a proper revolutionary programme, one elaborating a definite strategy for the conduct of revolutionary struggle, this strategy being based on a thorough, scientific analysis of the major contradictions of contemporary British capitalism. Only a considered, developed programme can provide the political basis for the formation of a national Marxist-Leninist organisation that can wage class struggle at a qualitatively higher level than at present and then begin to win over sections of the working class to the revolutionary outlook. Together with the Stockport Communist Group the NCG is calling upon the remaining Marxist-Leninists in Britain to set up a programmatic commission to develop such a revolutionary strategy. Our two groups have produced a document, Build the Party setting out our proposals and appeal to all genuine Marxist-Leninists. Copies can be obtained by writing to this journal. This vital work must proceed at the greatest speed possible and we urge comrades to give very serious consideration to our joint proposal.

While the inter-imperialist rivalry between the U.S. and Soviet blocs continues to intensify the anti-war movement in Britain is beginning to falter. Although a large proportion of the population feel threatened by nuclear war the anti-war movement, CND, is under middle strata pacifist and social democratic leadership. It is completely failing to really confront the state and the bourgeois political parties. For example, if there had been a CND candidate standing on a nuclear disarmament platform in the recent Warrington by-election then the issue of war would have been at the centre of attention. As there was no such candidate the vital question did not figure in the campaign. In our article on 'Prospects for the Nuclear Disarmament'

ent' we make some suggestions on how the anti-war movement can become more effective.

In China the new revisionist regime have now published their definitive assessment of Comrade Mao Tse-Tung and the Chinese Revolution. What this boils down to is a complete rejection of all the steps towards socialist transformation which were taken from 1956 onwards. Ever since this new state bourgeoisie staged their military coup d'etat in 1976 they have been furiously smashing up the socialist new things in China - abolishing the revolutionary committees in the factories, dissolving the communes, putting profits in command, etc. There can be no doubt that Teng Hsiao-ping and co are intent on establishing a system of state monopoly capitalism of the social fascist kind in China. As the counter-revolution proceeds in China and as the international line of the Chinese state becomes more and more openly reactionary, some of their supporters in Britain and in many other countries are beginning to waver. This is an entirely good development, provided that these people make an honest self-criticism of their past errors in supporting the new revisionist line and come over to the revolutionary camp. However, we detect signs that some of the waverers are trying to opportunistically slide out of the untenable political position they find themselves in. They are beginning to admit that China is now on the capitalist road while at the same time trying to cling on to the reactionary Three Worlds Theory line and proclaiming that the Cultural Revolution was a big mistake. In particular, we are thinking of some elements in the RCLB. To these people we say: Make a clean and honest break with revisionist camp now and completely throw off all this reactionary rubbish.

The triumph of the counter-revolution in China means that it is incumbent upon Marxist-

Leninists to thoroughly investigate and grasp how it is that in a country undergoing socialist transformation capitalism can be restored. In China, the method used to try to defeat the rise of bourgeois elements was the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. What is not widely known is that there was a previous cultural revolution in the Soviet Union during 1928-32 at the time of the First Five Year Plan. The article on 'The Soviet Cultural Revolution' discusses the ideological struggle in the literary sphere during this period and is extracted from a full length work, written by a comrade from abroad, on the role of literature in the struggle for socialist transformation. Also, we review the volume on The Stalin Question, a compilation of key documents produced by a comrade in India. This book will soon be available from Red Star Publications. The International Conference held last year resolved to critically sum up the general experience of the International Communist Movement, especially the period of the Third International and the question of Stalin is clearly central to this necessary evaluation.

PROSPECTS FOR THE NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT MOVEMENT

Within the last year millions of people in Britain and around the world have become aware of the growing danger of the outbreak of a major nuclear war. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the crisis in Poland and the manoeuvrings of both superpowers in the Middle East have made it clear that both the U.S. and the Soviet Union are engaged in concerted efforts to 'shape up' their respective military blocs in preparation for an all out military confrontation, in the not too distant future. In Britain, growing awareness that this country would be a prime target in any nuclear war involving the two superpowers, together with the recent decisions to base U.S. Cruise missiles here and to commission the Trident programme, have brought about a sudden upsurge of protest against the nuclear policies of the British state.

Yet in spite of the enthusiasm and activism which has characterised the rebirth of CND there has been little discussion of the strategy and tactics which are needed for the anti-nuclear movement to achieve its aims. Certainly this is true of the local group in Nottingham, where attempts to initiate a general discussion of policy have been repeatedly ignored on the grounds that most people want to "do something" rather than talk about doing something. Some discussion of strategy and tactics is of vital importance if we are to prevent the present campaign from simply becoming a case of history repeating itself. The first requirement is to

sum up the experience of the first CND campaign of 1958-64, looking in particular at the reasons for the sudden collapse of that campaign and then to consider the similarities and differences between the present revived campaign and its predecessor.

In terms of strategy, the most noticeable similarity between the two CND campaigns is the clear division of opinion between those who look to the ballot box (and above all the Labour Party), and those who regard the struggle to abolish nuclear weapons as being nothing less than an important part of the struggle for socialist revolution. A brief review of the beginnings of CND will reveal the close links that have always existed between the Labour Party and CND and the importance of severing those links if a truly independent nuclear disarmament movement is to be created.

CND began as an organisation following the defeat of the unilateralists at the 1957 Labour Party conference. But despite this formal break with the Labour Party most of the self-appointed leadership of the new organisation were members of the Labour Party and remained firmly committed to achieving their aims through the Labour Party. This close link between the two organisations was formalised in a deal whereby the former Labour Party H-bomb Campaign became CND's Labour Advisory Committee, the ancestor of the present Labour CND, which had direct access to and influence over the decision making of the CND leadership which was independent of, and stronger than, the formal democracy of its policy voting annual conference. In this way differences between the Campaign's stated policy and the content of CND speeches began to emerge, most noticeably over the question of British withdrawal from NATO.

Thus the early CND leadership had neither the wish nor the possibility of taking up a position independent of the Labour Party. In particular CND's Labourite advisors were always quick to warn against any sort of electoral pressures, either through abstentions or through standing independent CND candidates. It was this electoral opportunism of the CND leadership, rather than the successful resolution of the 1962 Cuba missile crisis or the achievement of a partial test-ban treaty, which resulted in mass defections from CND. For when faced with a choice between upholding the aims of CND at elections by standing CND candidates and risking the possibility of denting the Labour vote, or capitulating to the Labour Party, the CND leaders, including Michael Foot, abandoned CND. The end result was that a few months after Labour's victory in the 1964 general election, Wilson tore up his party's pledge to scrap Polaris.

The significance of this collapse of the first CND campaign in the context of the present revival of interest in nuclear disarmament hardly needs to be spelt out. For at a time when there is a sharp decline in Labour Party membership and support from the working class, we are again seeing the hitching of the CND banwagon to the Labour Party, notwithstanding Foot's declaration that the next Labour Government will not be committed to unilateral nuclear disarmament. Where Foot falters, Benn does not hesitate to fill the gap. In particular, we are again seeing the electoral opportunism of Labour concerning British withdrawal from NATO, when at their last conference resolutions were passed both in favour of unilateral disarmament and continued membership of NATO.

While Marxist-Leninists must continue to expose both the record of the Labour Party over nuclear

disarmament and their electoral opportunism, we must go further than this and point out to people that even if a Labour government committed to unilateral nuclear disarmament were to be elected, it is extremely unlikely that it would be able to carry out its programme. We must point out that a ruling class which is prepared for the deaths of tens of millions in a nuclear war would not balk from inflicting the tens of thousands of deaths that a military coup would involve were the threat to abandon Britain's nuclear weapons ever to become a reality.

Many people, faced with the increasing threat of nuclear war and hostile to, or pessimistic over the prospect of revolutionary change in the foreseeable future, see some form of 'direct action' as the only means available of confronting the state. Strictly speaking, 'Direct Action' does imply confrontation with the forces of the state but in the pacifist tradition of CND such confrontations as have occurred have mainly taken a symbolic peaceful form. Most people in the Committee of 100 in the first year of the mass civil disobedience movement of 1961-3 followed Russell in seeing their activity as a kind of publicity making shock tactics aimed only at awakening public opinion. Direct Action as a means of confrontation with the state as an end in itself only began to occur in the autumn of 1961. By then the widespread demoralisation among the movement meant that many people were not prepared to make the major personal sacrifices which are necessary if direct action is undertaken. Now that the need for some form of direct action is much more widely recognised, careful consideration should be given towards planning such actions and preparing for the financial support of those arrested.

A more two-edged approach to taking 'direct action' which is now being advocated by people work-

9

ing within the trade-unions involves the preparation of 'alternative plans' for the armaments related industries along the lines of the plans for alternative products prepared by the Lucas shop stewards in the 1970's. The problem with 'alternative plans' is that in essence they amount to the workforce attempting to find more profitable outlets for capital than management are able to themselves. Such plans ignore the often unpalatable fact that military production invariably involves high profits for the firm and also high wages and relatively secure employment for the workforce. In the present economic climate it would take a very high degree of political commitment for workers to forgo a secure wage for the sake of an alternative plan which offers no comparable security of employment. In addition to problems of acceptance by the workforce and implementation by management, plans for alternative products are open to criticism from a political perspective. Because plans for alternative products are based on a narrow reformist conception of social change their danger is that they may only foster illusions that war is preventable simply by everybody being more sensible and turning their swords into ploughshares. Despite these difficulties plans for alternative products should not be dismissed out of hand since they do allow contact with the workforce in armaments industries and by raising the question of 'Who decides?' they also serve to raise the political consciousness of the workforce.

While mass demonstrations and 'direct action' are important tactics in the campaign to mobilise people against nuclear weapons and nuclear war, these actions by themselves are unlikely to alter the nuclear policy of the British state. For nuclear disarmament to become a real possibility in the foreseeable future of 5-10 years - which may well be all the time we have left -

there must be a major crisis of confidence in the legitimacy of bourgeois democracy. One important way in which such a crisis could be actively nurtured would involve the anti-war movement taking an active role at both national and local elections since in the eyes of many people bourgeois democracy is legitimised at such times. Active intervention by local anti-war groups could involve challenging the candidates of all the major political parties concerning their personal position and that of their party to the main demands of the nuclear disarmament movement, and if necessary, standing candidates in opposition to those of the main parties. However, in canvassing support for any anti-nuclear candidates which local groups may decide to stand, it should be made clear that nuclear disarmament cannot come about by means of the ballot-box and that a vote for an anti-nuclear candidate means a protest vote only. In CND in Nottingham, the efforts of NCG members to persuade CND to use the occasion of the local county council elections to challenge the candidates of the main parties concerning the civil defence preparations of the state were narrowly defeated on the grounds that to go ahead with our plans would risk infringing of the law prohibiting canvassing during the 3 weeks preceding an election. While this was a setback, our initiative did reveal that there was widespread support for such an electoral challenge and we must ensure that similar opportunities in the future are not thrown away.

*

*

*

For the second time in the 35 years since the end of World War 2, thousands of people in Western Europe and Britain have demonstrated that they are actively opposed to the nuclear war preparations of the 2 superpowers and their junior partners. While many people do not have

a clear understanding of this rivalry between the US and USSR, the increasing tempo of the arms race has convinced many people that a nuclear war in Europe is a very real possibility and in this sense the objective conditions for the growth of a powerful anti-war movement are more favourable than at any time since the early 1960's.

However, the anti-war movement is still largely composed of middle strata people and dominated by the ideologies of reformism and pacifism. Many of the leaders of CND have actively sought to de-politicise the campaign and in so doing they continue to impart to the present campaign many of the features which were responsible for the failure of its predecessor. Marxist-Leninists must be active in countering the views of people such as E.P. Thompson by making clear to people, particularly the growing numbers of young non-affiliated people becoming involved, that it is inter-imperialist rivalry which is the underlying cause of war and that the only way to prevent war breaking out is to struggle for socialist revolution. The Nottingham Communist Group has put forward the tactical proposals contained in these discussion notes as a basis for building a powerful nuclear disarmament movement united around clear and firm principles.

THE SOVIET CULTURAL REVOLUTION

The wide intellectual debates that took place in the Soviet Union in the late twenties and which are at times referred to as the cultural revolution were a direct response to the rapid industrialisation and collectivisation introduced in the First Five Year Plan of 1928-1932 (1). They ranged over nearly all fields of cultural and scientific endeavour and left no academic discipline untouched by the heat of the controversy. Competing schools, factions and viewpoints freely debated and bitterly fought each other over the period of three years. Although the debate ended inconclusively in some cases, and was wound up perhaps too hastily in others, the conflict of views that it generated was an impetus towards the eventual socialist transformation of the various intellectual spheres and academic disciplines. That this transformation did not, in fact, take place in the Soviet Union which abandoned its program of a socialist cultural revolution by the late thirties, never to come back to it again, does not contradict our conclusion. If anything it points more emphatically to the necessity for such a transformation in line with the political and economic changes that occur in any socialist revolution. The failure, or the retreat from the cultural revolution was one of the main weaknesses of socialism in the USSR. Because it could not change culture and ideology in the way it changed the economy and the political system of the country, Soviet socialism transformed into Soviet revisionism and eventually into the Soviet social-imperialism of the contemporary era. There were certainly weaknesses and mistakes in the economic

and political spheres, but the cultural and ideological retreat was also a major and glaring sickness in the system.

The Chinese Revolution which is the second great socialist revolution of this century in the direct continuation of the October Revolution. Both have the same political content and both occurred in the same global conditions of the victory of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie and of socialism over imperialism. The Chinese Revolution is indebted to both the positive and negative aspects of the October Revolution and of Soviet socialism. The single most important lesson that China learned from the Soviet Union was the necessity of the cultural revolution. Chinese socialism from the start had been working towards such a cultural transformation, with the negative example of the Soviet Union providing an added impetus. The transformation when it did occur under the name of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in 1966 ushered in a new era in the history of world revolution. The decade over which it took place was the watershed separating the two stages and advancing Marxism-Leninism to the era of Mao Tse-tung Thought. Again, the fact that China retreated from this program and abandoned the socialist road completely does not invalidate this verdict. The future socialist transformation of any country must be a continuation of the Chinese Revolution, benefiting both from its positive as well as its negative aspects. It will only succeed if it accomplishes a simultaneous cultural transformation with a creative ideological application of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought.

One of the characteristics of the literature of the First Five Year Plan period was its emphasis on human transformation (2). It is full of examples of people transforming their outlook and their behaviour through participating in

socialist labour. Of these the transformation of the convict labourers who completed the White Sea-Baltic Canal project, and of the engineer Magnitov from a bourgeois expert to a socialist are the most famous.

Writers were called upon to find ways of participating in the great tasks of socialist construction. In order to do this they had to remake themselves, just as nearly everything else in society was being remade and restructured. The whole institution of literature had to be redefined, and that entailed, primarily, the rejection of the bourgeois concept of literature as a specifically aesthetic activity, a product of individual genius, or an elitist activity for the use and pleasure only of the privileged.

Short stories and sketches depicting model workers and in the service of socialist construction were to replace long, polished works and deep, psychological analysis in the manner of the nineteenth century novel. The writers were asked to produce as fast as possible in order not to fall behind the pace of economic production. Full speed ahead was the call everywhere. The aim was to catch up with and surpass the capitalist world both economically and culturally. To transform the cultural and ideological outlook of the masses, to become in Stalin's celebrated phrase "engineers of the human soul" was the principal task of writers and artists.

The cultural revolution did not stop, however, at merely "elevating" the masses from the outside. It aimed also at bringing them into direct participation in literary and artistic activities. As one observer of that epoch puts it: "Overnight, as it seemed, the ranks of the profession were swelled by an influx of workers and peasants" (3). Literary circles began to

recruit new worker and peasant writers whose works were published immediately in wall-newspapers and broadsheets at their place of work, as well as later on in new journals, special anthologies and columns in the regular literary periodicals. The drive for mass literature and for the creation of worker-and-peasant writers was a key task of the cultural revolution in literature whose declared aim was to abolish the old bourgeois individualist literature and to transform the old professional writer.

Once we recognise the successful assault on the bourgeois concept of literature and the bourgeois concept of the writer as the central achievement of socialist literary theory during this period, we can turn to the errors and deviations that accompanied these literary experiments. There was, in fact, no lack of those - ranging from a cult of technology worship, to radical utopianism, to the vogue of emphasising so-called 'de-heroisation' in literature. By the end of 1930, however, there were conscious attempts to redress the balance and to correct the deviations. The literature of the First Five Year Plan period was criticised for denying the role of form and technique, for its cult of technology at the expense of the human and ideological factor and, finally, for its depiction of the masses as 'little men' rather than as heroes.

The standard bearer of the attack on the incorrect tendencies of the First Five Year Plan literature was Gorky, who summed it up in this way:

"The tempos of our life will not allow rushed work and writing tossed off anyhow in the hope of getting it done as soon as possible... Among the proletarians, you still find ideas which are harmful to their interests. For in-

stance, we came up with the doctrine of the necessity for an "organised lowering of culture". Echoes of this theory have not yet died in the noise of construction, and the impulse to simplify in literature is one such echoe of the anti-proletarian, anti-culture heresy...

The Soviet day sings out loudly and to the whole world of the gigantic, heroic and talented work of your class. It sings of the human hero, who gives birth to the collective heroism of the class. This grandiose work and this hero is still not being described in literature." (4)

Gorky's critique can also be exemplified by his attack on Ilenkov's novel The Driving Axle for its one-sided emphasis on the role of the machine, to the neglect of the leading role of what Gorky called the 'political axle'. This, together with technical faults and the attitude of anti-heroism, was the third major weakness of the First Five Year plan literary experiments - their failure to underline the crucial role of socialist ideology. Again, it was Gorky who, under the guidance of Stalin, was able to restore the balance and define the key task of Soviet literature as the 'education of the masses in the spirit of socialism'.

The First Five Year plan period has rightfully, then, been regarded as the era in which the foundations of socialist culture, together with socialist industry and collectivised agriculture, were laid in the Soviet Union, under the leadership of Stalin. The cultural transformations which took place in that period deserve the appellation of Cultural Revolution because, for the first time, they took the form of acute class struggle on a wide scale in which the proletariat directly attacked all the remnants of bourgeois thoughts, traditions and customs. The idea that socialist culture could be built through a peaceful process of "raising" of cult-

ural standards was strongly attacked and, it seemed at the time, forever buried. In all this the era strongly suggests the parallel comparison with the Chinese cultural revolution. It is important, however, for the clarification of our theme, which is the role of literature in the cultural revolution, to understand the historical circumstances that shaped the essential features of both the Chinese and Soviet cultural revolutions. Going back now to the debates that swept across the spectrum of cultural and scientific areas in that period of Soviet history one can detect certain common patterns:

1. Although the debates were a response to the Communist Party's attack on the bourgeois intelligentsia and its desire to bring about proletarian dominance in the various fields, the seeds of the conflicting views were in the disciplines themselves, and they utilised the Party policy in order to further "bloom and contend".

2. In most of the areas of debate, the cultural revolutionaries successfully demolished the prevailing bourgeois concepts and theories. This was a great achievement. They failed, however, to elaborate a complete and coherent program of their own. Their role can be described as positively destructive. Further empty-theorising, factionalism, petty-bourgeois utopianism as well as Trotskyism and leftist-deviationism were all common by-products in nearly all the fields.

3. The years 1928-1932 should be regarded as the culminating years in a general cultural transformation, an effort to build socialist culture, that began after the victory of the October socialist revolution.

4. There was a retreat from the cultural revolution in the mid-thirties, and a restoration of bourgeois ideas and bourgeois theories in most

fields.

The bourgeois intelligentsia and the technical specialists who came under such heavy attack in the First Five Year Plan period were rehabilitated - never to be threatened in the same manner again. This is the crucial point to make about the course of the Soviet cultural revolution. Paradoxical as it may appear, it was during the revolutionary thirties that the Soviet intellectuals and cultural elite firmly established their commanding positions in society. Their work was acclaimed and rewarded by the regime under the banner of the sponsorship of the "cultural and scientific achievement" of the Soviet Union. The generation of intellectuals promoted during the cultural revolution was also the main beneficiary of the second social upheaval of the late thirties. Unlike the generation that grew up during the NEP period and became the militants of the cultural revolution, this one was particularly bureaucratic, technocratic and conservative in outlook. By the late fifties this "Brezhnev generation" so-called had captured nearly all of the Soviet state apparatus and provided the instrument for Khrushchev's revisionism and betrayal of socialism. In the sixties and seventies, they held the state tightly in their hands transforming it rapidly into a social-imperialist, fascist state. The Great Retreat, as it has been called, of the thirties in the Soviet Union has been discussed often, and accounts of it can be found in most works on Soviet history (5). To go into it in detail, even in the literary field, is beyond the field of this work. We will, however, discuss only one example of the phenomenon in literature, that is readily available to English readers.

In the late thirties, a literary critical debate took place among Soviet critics that helps to reveal the strategies of revisionist tendencies

in the field. Participating in the debate, Mikhail Lifshitz, a collaborator of the revisionist Hungarian critic Lukacs, attempts to convert Lenin's articles on Tolstoy into an instrument for denying the class-nature of art and literature (6). Lenin, we are told, did not base his studies on Marxist class analysis, but 'on social existence in the broad historical sense'. And what this 'social existence' turns out to be is something very kin to the bourgeois 'spirit of the times' concept and has nothing to do with Marxist class analysis.

Having denied the objective existence of the class struggle, Lifshitz then proceeds to deny the subjective role of consciousness of the author. Art and literature, we are told, 'are a reflection of external reality, or a mirror of objective all-sided human practice'. The formative role of the writer's class consciousness, as determined by his class affiliation, is completely denied. All great art, we are told, is the truthful representation of reality. The artist's own will, intention, feelings, thoughts and prejudices - in sum, his consciousness - have nothing to do with it. As it turns out these examples of 'great art' are invariably produced by bourgeois artists, but that is another matter. The issue here is that such a position of denial of artistic consciousness leads to a mechanical kind of materialism that is essentially anti-Leninist. One might also point out how close it comes to the positions held by the bourgeois American school of so-called "new criticism" that flourished in the fifties.

Lifshitz, in fact, becomes the victim of that same 'vulgar sociology' that he attributes to Plekhanov. Instead of equating art mechanically with class, which he accuses Plekhanov of doing, he just as mechanically equates art with what he calls 'objective, all-sided human practice'. Both schemes lead to mechanism, because in both

consciousness, and specifically class consciousness, plays no role.

To get himself out of the entanglement that this position leads to, and to bring his theory in line with the Leninist division of national culture into reactionary and revolutionary parts, Lifshitz has to postulate a third kind of consciousness. This he calls, amusingly enough, the confused consciousness which, stangely enough, he describes as a characteristic of 'the great writers, artists and humanists of the past' and which, consequently, prevents revolutionary ideals from being reflected directly in literature. This is the crux of Lifshitz's theory:

"Conscious revolutionary thought, as well as conscious or unconscious defense of obscurantism and falsehood, is to be found in all ages. But besides this simple and clear class opposition, there are always millions of people who, having already risen to indignation against their oppressors, have not yet reached the stage of conscious and systematic struggle. This objective class confusion, this inadequate destruction of classes (as in Russia between 1861 and 1905, and in France and Germany between 1789 and 1848), and the consequent vacillations on the part of the masses, best explain the contradictions of the great writers, artists and humanists of the past. The confusion of revolutionary and reactionary tendencies in the consciousness of the great representatives of the old culture is an established historical fact. Revolutionary ideals have seldom been reflected directly and immediately in literature." (7)

The last sentence sums up very well the reactionary core of this, and other similar, critical theories. Since all great writers were neither revolutionary nor reactionary, literature becomes a more elevated domain than politics and art a more complex whole than mere 'revolutionary

ideals'. From here, it is very easy to say that the works of the great writers - Tolstoy, Balzac, Shakespeare, etc. all the well-known bourgeois writers, in fact - cannot be described within the characteristics and aspirations of any particular social class. In fact, they cannot even be called revolutionary or reactionary. These works, curiously enough, being the products of a confused consciousness rise above the merely revolutionary consciousness of any social class. In this process they reflect a more truthful and a more complete picture of society than can be obtained, Lifshitz implies, in any works that are the product merely of 'immediate and direct revolutionary ideals'.

It is clear then that the kind of literary criticism advocated by Lifshitz and his like was part of a general strategy to propagate bourgeois literature, particularly the classics of bourgeois literature, which had the most adverse effect on the development of socialist literature and on the Soviet cultural revolution.

Another article in the same volume, for example, comes out quite openly in defense of the bourgeois idealist standpoint on literature. Under the pretext again of fighting "vulgar sociology", it claims that literature, in fact, does transcend historical and class limits:

"In the great works of world poetry, painting, music, and so forth, there is something which is not confined to the narrow class practice of the ruling strata, or to the temporal period in which these works of art were created. And this "something" is so imbued with enduring life that precisely because of its presence the tragedies of Shakespeare, the statues of Phidias, the symphonies of Beethoven survive hundreds and thousands of years and enter as a reserve fund into the development of proletarian, socialist culture." (8)

Moreover, the undefinable "something" is not related to matters of artistic technique or literary form that do transcend class societies and can be put to different uses by different classes. It is related to the very content of literature, thus leading to a kind of transcendental humanism that is the hallmark of so many bourgeois theories of literature:

"Directly or indirectly, to greater or lesser degree, in spite of all the historical and national individuality of such writers, their works are fundamentally "of the people", regardless of whether their authors were nobles or aristocrats, or whether their criticism ended with conservative, utopian conclusions... (9)

The art of Tolstoy is acutely social in its concern and yet at the same time profoundly human... Indeed, it could not be otherwise, for the works of Tolstoy, as well as those of Shakespeare, step out beyond the frame of their own time and class and take their place on the stage of universal art, and to no small degree prepare the way for the universal classless art." (10)

For all its lip-service to 'universal classless art', this is diametrically opposed to Marxism and to socialist literary theory. We might just recall, in this context, Gorky's report to the 1934 Congress of Soviet Writers in which European bourgeois literature is regarded in its proper perspective (11). Gorky as a socialist writer found very little use in that old literature which he described as a limited advance even within a historical context. The only 'universality' to be found in it is the 'universality' of exploitation and oppression characteristic of all class societies. In terms of content, it is, in fact, the very opposite of 'universal classless art'.

As an example of the retreat from socialist lit-

erary theory, the writers we have discussed reveal a total abandonment of Marxism and an open advocacy of revisionist (i.e. bourgeois masquerading as Marxist) ideas. From the late thirties onwards, a strong revisionist tendency became a visible current, and, at times, a dominating current, in Soviet literature. Throughout the forties and early fifties there were, however, regular resurgences of the socialist position which regarded the combatting of the revisionist and reactionary tendencies as its major task. Revisionism, however, totally triumphed by the late fifties, rapidly changing the colour of Soviet literature, into a black reactionary literature.

FOOTNOTES

- (1) See FITZPATRICK, Sheila, ed., The Cultural Revolution in Russia 1928-1931, London, 1978.
- (2) For detailed information on this topic see Katerina Clark, 'Little Heroes and Big Deeds: Literature Responds to the First Five-Year Plan', in Fitzpatrick, op. cit., pp. 189-206.
- (3) Ibid., p. 196.
- (4) Ibid., p. 205.
- (5) See references, for example, in Jerry F. Hough, 'The Cultural Revolution and Western Understanding of the Soviet System', in Fitzpatrick, *ibid.*, pp. 242-3.
- (6) FLORES, Angel, ed., Literature and Marxism, New York, 1938.
- (7) Ibid., p. 31.
- (8) 'The Shakespeare Decriers' by V. Kamenov, pp. 16-23.

(9) Ibid., p. 18.

(10) Ibid., p. 18.

BOOK REVIEW

The Stalin Question

THE STALIN QUESTION. Edited by Banbehari Chakrabarty. Kathashilpa Press. Calcutta. 1979 £4.95.

This book makes a very timely appearance: the assessment of Stalin and the policies of the Comintern are once again the subject of debate within the International Communist Movement. This volume concerns itself with material up to the post-Twentieth Congress of the C.P.S.U.

Comrade Chakrabarty wisely confines the scope of the book to the documents of the major protagonists and in the main does not rely on secondary critiques. This is a very good approach, as it allows the interested reader to get to the heart of the original debates, rather than just receiving the opinions of others second hand. So this book is not just concerned with praise of Stalin; indeed more than half of it is taken up with fierce attacks from such adversaries as Trotsky, Kamenev and the infamous Kruschev. It is worthy of mention that Kruschev's "secret speech" at the Twentieth Party Congress is reproduced in full. The editor suggests that this approach will assist the reader to come to their own conclusions and indeed it provides an excellent framework for the close study of this very important figure.

The compilation of the texts for inclusion has been made with some care and covers every major aspect of Stalin's life. The period prior to the death of Lenin, the debate between Lenin and Stalin on the National Question, the period of struggle with the Left Opposition, the Civil War the Second World War, the treason trials and the post-Twentieth Party Congress are all here with

representative documentation. In bringing together such widely scattered material in one volume the editor has performed an undisputed service to Marxism-Leninism. Stalin has been reviled by the bourgeoisie and by revisionists world wide, he has been uncritically lauded by some Marxist-Leninists and more objectively analysed by others. All these views are within "The Stalin Question" and thus it makes a valuable and much needed contribution.

Of course to cover all the questions that Stalin poses for the International Communist Movement is a difficult task and to cover them comprehensively would take many thousands of pages. Despite this, some sections of the book, bearing in mind the importance of the matters discussed, are too short. Particularly the section on Stalin's activities during the Civil War, only four pages, but perhaps more importantly the assessment of his leadership of the Comintern and the period of the Comintern and the period of World War Two. This is the period where Stalin tends to come in for the sharpest criticism by certain Marxist-Leninists. The section on this in the book uses documents which are generally very favourable and it might be useful to have this section extended in any future editions to include some objective criticism of both Stalin and the Comintern during this period.

Certain other articles could perhaps be omitted especially Garaudy on Stalin's philosophical errors. This is the worst sort of windy intellectualising and is more concerned to prove how clever Garaudy is than to make any positive contribution to an assessment of Stalin. Of course Garaudy has now deserted the Communist camp for Christianity which says a lot about his comprehension of Marxist dialectics!

I hope that "The Stalin Question" will be read with careful consideration as there has not yet been a fully objective assessment of him by the International Communist movement. If, however, some readers are only prepared to dip into certain sections, I would suggest that they must not omit to read the Chinese Communist Party text "On the question of Stalin". This is one of the best analyses we have so far and provides a good basis for the current re-evaluation of Stalin within the International Communist movement.

In conclusion, despite the few minor criticisms I have made, I warmly recommend "The Stalin Question", which should find a place on the bookshelves of every Marxist-Leninist. This book will shortly be available from Red Star Publications.

BOOK ADVERTISEMENT

The Communist Movement

PRINCIPLES OF PARTY ORGANIZATION

Thesis on the organization and structure of the Communist Parties adopted at the 3rd. Congress of the Communist International in 1921 together with the Statutes of the Communist International.

Books & Publications, 1977, 48p £0.30

ON ORGANIZATION, by Joseph Stalin

A discussion of the basic principles of party organization together with articles by Dimitrov and Kaganovich.

Books & Publications, 1976, 48p £0.20

THE ROTTEN ELEMENTS, by Edward Upward

A fictionalised account of the triumph of revisionism in the Communist Party of Great Britain during the late nineteen forties.

Quartet Books, 1979, 224p £1.00

THE WAY FORWARD: A Marxist-Leninist Analysis of the British State, the CPGB and the Tasks for Revolutionaries, by Michael McCreery

Articles by the leader of the original Marxist-Leninist split from the CPGB in 1963.

Workers Newsletter Group, 40p £0.30

IMPORTANT STRUGGLES IN BUILDING THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY, USA, by Bill Klingel and Joanne Psihountas

The main strategic task of the Marxist-Leninist movement in Britain is party-building and there is much to learn from comrades in other countries who have already reached the stage of party formation.

RCP Publications, 1978, 55p

£0.75

NEW PROGRAMME AND NEW CONSTITUTION OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY, USA: Drafts for Discussion, 1980

A draft programme for the conduct of revolutionary struggle in a major imperialist country.

RCP Publications, 1980, 109p

£1.40

TO THE MARXIST-LENINISTS, THE WORKERS, AND THE OPPRESSED OF ALL COUNTRIES

The Joint Communique of the international conference of Marxist-Leninists held to oppose the capitulationist international line of the Chinese revisionists and their followers.

1981, 15p

£0.25

BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR THE UNITY OF MARXIST-LENINISTS AND FOR THE LINE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST MOVEMENT: A Draft Position Paper for Discussion Prepared by the Revolutionary Communist Party of Chile and the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA

The main document discussed at the international Marxist-Leninist conference in Autumn 1980. It includes the text of the Joint Communique.

RCP Publications, 1981, 50p

£1.00

Marxism and Revolution

DIALECTICAL AND HISTORICAL MATERIALISM, by Joseph Stalin

This is still the best, short introduction to the proletarian revolutionary outlook of Marxism-Leninism.

Books & Publications, 1978, 36p £0.25

ANARCHISM OR SOCIALISM?, by Joseph Stalin

Petit bourgeois anarchism is subjected to a devastating critique by means of comparison and contrast with dialectical and historical materialism.

Books & Publications, 1977, 72p £0.50

REVOLUTION REPRINTS: Articles from Revolution, the organ of the Central Committee of the RCP, USA

Classes and Class Struggle, 7p
Proletarian Dictatorship Vs. Bourgeois "Democracy", 12p

How Socialism Wipes Out Exploitation, 11p

RCP Publications, 1978 The set £0.60

THE SCIENCE OF REVOLUTION, by the RCP, USA

A clear and concise introduction to the world outlook of Marxism-Leninism with sections on materialist dialectics, political economy, the dictatorship of the proletariat and the line of the RCP, USA. The text is in both English and Spanish.

RCP Publications, 1980, 84p £1.10

FROM MARX TO MAO TSE-TUNG: A Study in Revolutionary Dialectics, by George Thomson

A clear exposition of the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary outlook as expressed in the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao.

China Policy Study Group, 1975, 182p £0.90

CAPITALISM AND AFTER: The Rise and Fall of Commodity Production, by George Thomson

An introduction to Marxist political economy as applied to the transition from capitalism to communism.

China Policy Study Group, 1976, 148p £0.80

THE HUMAN ESSENCE: The Sources of Science and Art, by George Thomson

A Marxist analysis of the origins and development of science and art.

China Policy Study Group, 1974, 116p £0.75

WORK - A FOUR LETTER WORD?

A popular analysis and discussion of alienation.

Nottingham Communist Group, 12p £0.15

POLITICAL ECONOMY, Marxist Study Courses (1931-32)

Originally published by the pre-revisionist CPGB as a series of study booklets, this book provides a detailed introduction to Marxist political economy.

Banner Press, 1976, 548p £3.85

A CRITIQUE OF SOVIET ECONOMICS, by Mao Tse-tung

His discussion on the Soviet line on socialist construction in which he exposes and attacks the revisionist theory of the productive forces.

Monthly Review Press, 1977, 157p £2.35

ON COMMUNIST EDUCATION, by Mikhail Kalinin

Speeches and articles in which the first Chairman of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee discusses the communist education of the working masses.

Books & Publications, 1976, 240p £2.00

ON OCTOBER REVOLUTION, by Joseph Stalin

Articles on the Russian Revolution of 1917 including a critique of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution.

Mass Publications, 1976, 112p £0.80

ON THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR OF THE SOVIET UNION,
by Joseph Stalin

His speeches and reports during World War II.

Mass Publications, 1975, 204p £0.85

MARXISM AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION, by Joseph Stalin

A presentation of this vital question with respect to the national minorities in the Tsarist Empire. It includes criticism of the position of Otto Bauer and other members of the Austrian school.

Books & Periodicals, 1977, 88p £0.40

THE NATIONAL QUESTION AND LENINISM, by Joseph Stalin

Further discussion of the national question.

Mass Publications, 1976, 56p £0.35

SELECTED INTERVIEWS, by Joseph Stalin

Includes interviews with German workers, Emil Ludwig and H.G. Wells.

Mass Publications, 1976, 132p £0.80

ZIONISM: A Political Critique, by Tabitha Petran

An exposure of the imperialist, racist character of Zionism by an American Jewish writer.

New England Free Press, 20p £0.45

CUBA: The Evaporation of a Myth, by the RCP, USA

How Cuba has been transformed into a neo-colony and pawn of Soviet social imperialism.

RCP Publications, 1976, 40p £0.50

CHILE: An Attempt at "Historic Compromise", by Jorge Palacios

The true story of the events leading up to the overthrow of the Allende government, including a thoroughly documented exposure of the pro-Soviet Chilean CP, and the bloody triumph of the Pinochet military dictatorship.

Norman Bethune Institute, 1979, 512p £2.95

Contemporary China

A HISTORY OF THE MODERN CHINESE REVOLUTION
(1919-1956), by Ho Kan-chih

This very detailed account is a reprint of the edition first published in Peking in 1959.

Books & Periodicals, 1977, 320p £2.50

ON CHINESE REVOLUTION, by Joseph Stalin

Speeches and articles from the critical years of 1926-7.

Books & Periodicals, 1977, 148p £0.80

MAO TSETUNG'S IMMORTAL CONTRIBUTIONS, by Bob Avakian

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

RCP Publications, 1979, 342p £3.30

SOCIALIST UPSURGE IN CHINA'S COUNTRYSIDE

Forty four case studies of the struggle to socialise Chinese agriculture during 1954-5. The Preface and Editor's Notes were written by Mao.

Foreign Languages Press, 1978, 547p £1.40

ON EXERCISING ALL-ROUND DICTATORSHIP OVER THE BOURGEOISIE, by Chang Chun-chiao and ON THE SOCIAL BASIS OF THE LIN PIAO ANTI-PARTY CLIQUE, by Yao Wen-yuan

These key articles were written in 1975 by two members of the so-called "Gang of Four" during a critical phase of the struggle against revisionism during the latter part of the Cultural Revolution.

Liberation Books, 1978, 26p £0.55

THE LOSS IN CHINA AND THE REVOLUTIONARY LEGACY OF MAO TSE-TUNG, by Bob Avakian

The Chairman of the RCP, USA presents a concise survey of the class struggles in China from the period since 1949 leading up to the coup d'etat in October 1976.

RCP Publications, 1978, 151p £1.35

AND MAO MAKES FIVE: Mao Tsetung's Last Great Battle, edited with an introduction by Raymond Lotta

A collection of articles and documents from Chinese sources covering the critical period between the 10th. Congress of the CPC in 1973 and the arrest of the Four in 1976.

Banner Press, 1978, 522p £4.40

REVOLUTION AND COUNTER-REVOLUTION: The Revisionist Coup in China and the Struggle in the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA

A very detailed polemical exchange between American Marxist-Leninists on the character of the post-Mao regime in China.

RCP Publications, 1978, 501p £3.65

The Philippines

VICTORY TO OUR PEOPLE'S WAR! Anti-Revisionist Essays, by Amado Guerrero

The Chairman of the Communist Party of the Philippines discusses the revolutionary war being waged in that country and exposes the revisionist apologist William J. Pomeroy.

RFP Publications, 1980, 162p £3.45

JOSE MARÍA SISON: Filipino Revolutionary Fighter

This revolutionary poet is held in jail by the Marcos dictatorship who allege that he is in fact Amado Guerrero. As well as articles about him, this booklet contains poems by Sison and the Ten Point Program of the National Democratic Front, Philippines.

Ugnayan, 34p £0.85

THE MORO PEOPLE'S STRUGGLE

Documents from the Moro National Liberation Front together with illustrations.

Ugnayan, 12p £0.40

ONLY BY STRUGGLE: Literature and Revolution in the Philippines, by E. San Juan

In the context of an account of the development of the revolutionary struggle in the Philippines, the role of literature is documented and discussed.

Philippines Research Center, 1980, 38p £0.85

MAKIBAKA! Revolutionary Literature from the
Philippines, edited by E. San Juan

Poems and critical discussion of the revolution-
ary role of literature.

Philippines Research Center, 35p £0.80

THE POWER OF THE PEOPLE, by Carlos Bulosan

A novel based on the Huk rebellion, linking the
Filippino experience in the USA with the guer-
illa resistance.

Tabloid Books £1.00

Prices are inclusive of postal charges.

One tenth discount to libraries and one third
discount to bookshops.

Send payment with individual orders and make
out cheques, etc. to "RED STAR PUBLICATIONS".

Send orders to:

RSP,
c/o Flat 2,
10, Villa Road,
Nottingham,
NG3 4GG.

A WORLD TO WIN

At the international Marxist-Leninist conference held in Autumn 1980 it was resolved to publish an international journal as part of the struggle to rebuild the international communist movement.

Issue Number One is now available. It includes the joint Communiqué of the international conference, a refutation of Enver Hoxha's dogmatism, notes on the Spanish Marxist-Leninist movement, articles on revisionism past and present, an analysis of the class struggle in China and an underground document from comrades in Shanghai.

Make sure you are informed on the ideological dimension of the fight against revisionism and for revolution in the international arena by subscribing to A WORLD TO WIN.

SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY SUBSCRIPTION FOR FIRST FOUR ISSUES:

UNITED KINGDOM: £4.00

REST OF EUROPE: £5.60

Make out cheques, etc, payable to "RED STAR PUBLICATIONS".

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Make sure that you receive your copy by taking out a subscription.

SUBSCRIPTION FOR ONE YEAR (FOUR ISSUES):

UNITED KINGDOM: £2.00

REST OF EUROPE: £3.60

Make out cheques, etc. payable to "Red Star Publications".

Send orders to:

RSP

c/o Flat 2,

10, Villa Road,

Nottingham,

NG3 4GG,

U.K.



**NOTTINGHAM
COMMUNIST GROUP**

