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Proletarian and bourgeois
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Northern Ireland:

The nature of the struggle

Discussion: The Origins of
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Editor's Note

In this issue we publish three articles. The first, 'Bourgeois and Proletarian Decision-making Processes', contributed by an Italian comrade, sets out to isolate the essential differences between proletarian and bourgeois society by examining the methods each adopts for handling internal contradictions. It effectively exposes the hollowness of allegedly value-free concepts like 'justice' and 'freedom' as they are employed in bourgeois society. There are also some valuable observations on the degeneration of the Italian Communist Party and the inadequacy of proletarian decision-making processes in the Soviet Union.

'Northern Ireland: The Nature of the Struggle' is the outcome of a long period of study on the Irish question in the London CFB. Written for MLO by a comrade in London, it does not represent CFB policy on Ireland. We intend to open discussion of the subject in MLO and we hope to publish another article in the next issue.

The discussion on Stalin and revisionism continues in our third article. This is not a reply to discussion; we hope to print more contributions on this subject also.

The sales of our last issue were well up on the first two. We are confident that they will continue to increase as more people see the value of the approach adopted by MLO and come to recognise its importance in the theoretical work needed as part of the ongoing task of building a communist party.

Bourgeois & proletarian decision making processes

The early part of the history of the CPC is characterized by a number of significant changes in the Party line and in its leadership. We shall give two examples:

Up to August 7th 1927 the Party's general secretary, Chen Tu-Hsiu, was not even a communist; he was a "radical democrat bourgeois", who preached the submission of the proletariat to the bourgeoisie--a Menshevik line. This erroneous line in fact led to the massacre of the Shanghai workers by Chiang Kai-Shek.

Another example of change in line: "Wang Ming usurped control of the Party's central organism at the 4th plenary session of the 5th CC in January 1931." Wang Ming preached an ultra-sectarian "left" deviation, and "behaved like the omnipotent emperor". As a result the Party lost 90% in the red areas and almost 100% in the white areas, and the red army was obliged to undertake the long march". Wang Ming's control was removed at the Tsun-Yi meeting in January 1935, when Mao's leadership was established once and for all. Wang Ming, a "false Marxist", was not however expelled at the time.

Here there are two observations to be made: 1) In the RSDLP, when Lenin was fighting the Menshevik line in a historical situation which was not so completely different from the Chinese one (in the sense that there too it was necessary to complete the democratic phase of the revolution), he split that party and created the Bolshevik Party. Mao, on the other hand, did not split the CPC, but fought his battle within the Party. 2) When the dominant bourgeois line was overthrown by the proletarian line at Tsun-Yi, the Chinese comrades do not say that the Party changed its nature and from black became red, as they say of the CPSU, that in 1956 that it changed from red to black. What they say is "it emerged from infancy to maturity". That is, notwithstanding the changes in line, they uphold the uninterrupted continuity of the CPC as a class organisation. In other words they maintain that it is possible for a proletarian party to temporarily follow a bourgeois line without necessarily becoming a bourgeois party. On the other hand, a proletarian party may also transform itself into its opposite, and become a revisionist, i.e. bourgeois party.

They say that the correctness or incorrectness of the line followed determines the success or failure of a Party. But evidently it does not determine the basic nature of a Party as such. There must be something else. What is this "something else"?

Let us see just what a "line" consists in. The line of a Party is a series of operative proposals which the Party makes to the masses. In this sense the proletarian line itself changes according to the historical context (from alliance with the Kuomintang against Japan, to attacking the Kuomintang as the main enemy). I.e. the phenomenological aspect of the line may change while its class essence remains the same, and it is determined by the class interest it serves.

The proletarian line does not just consist of words. It is a series of operative proposals for the transformation of the world. A proposal requires a decision (to accept or reject it?), which, once taken, must be carried out (otherwise it is not a real decision, but just a pious intention). Furthermore, in order for the proposal to be convincing, it must be backed up by an analysis, made with certain theoretical instruments.

The "struggle between the two lines" within the Party often assumes therefore the form of discussion over contrasting analyses, but the substance is that it is the different practical proposals which clash. So we see that the struggle between the two lines within the party becomes a question of fundamental importance, because that is where the proletarian or bourgeois line comes out.

How is this struggle conducted?

The basic problem is this: what is the relationship between the decision-making power and the economic structure? In the case of the "bourgeois" state, the decision-making power is concentrated in the hands of the bourgeoisie, and the economic structure is accordingly "bourgeois". In the case of the "proletarian" state, the decision-making power is concentrated in the hands of the proletariat, and the economic structure is accordingly "proletarian".

1. THE "BOURGEOIS" STATE--THE "BOURGEOIS" STATE.

The "bourgeois" state is a state in which the decision-making power is concentrated in the hands of the bourgeoisie. It is a state in which the economic structure is "bourgeois". The "bourgeois" state is a state in which the decision-making power is concentrated in the hands of the bourgeoisie. It is a state in which the economic structure is "bourgeois". The "bourgeois" state is a state in which the decision-making power is concentrated in the hands of the bourgeoisie. It is a state in which the economic structure is "bourgeois".

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For a decision to be real it must be carried out; a law which is not to remain ink on paper, must be applied. And here we see the usefulness of the "separation of powers". The fact is that even in the most democratic of bourgeois-democratic republics, even in countries where the elected representatives of the people "make the decisions", the carrying out of these decisions is always in the hands of a hierarchical structure, the state bureaucracy, over which there is not even formal control from below. It is there in fact that the real decisions are made; as Lenin puts it, "Consider any parliamentary nation...the real "State" business is done in the corridors; it is carried out by the departments, the chancelleries, the high commands. In parliament all they do is chatter, with the sole purpose of deceiving the "good people"."

Now the state bureaucracy includes naturally the army and the police; the last defence of any political power, and within those structures the lack of "democratic liberties" is complete and blatant, as any draftee can testify; all the power there is concentrated at the top.

In theory the Army high command is subordinated to the Ministry which is subject to Parliament which is elected by the people. Now, leaving aside for a moment the fact that the bourgeoisie controls the means of production of ideas and information, which makes it practically impossible for a revolutionary party to obtain a Parliamentary majority, let us consider what happens when the bourgeoisie thinks that the elected government, even though not revolutionary, no longer protects its interests sufficiently. In this case the bourgeois army rebels against the government (as in Spain and Greece), which is quite helpless against cannons.

All this goes to show how the bourgeois-democratic state is founded on deception, which is perpetrated by the artificial division between legislation and execution, and characterized by a continual discrepancy between words and deeds. And that is why the bourgeois decision-making process is structurally incapable of producing decisions which go against the interests of the bourgeoisie itself--indeed the proletariat cannot take over the bourgeois state, but must destroy it and substitute it with a proletarian state.

2. Proletarian Decision-Making Processes.

Historically, the first decision of a proletarian nature has been to struggle against the bosses e.g. to go on strike. The first difference which we see in the way in which this decision is made is this: bourgeois decisions are essentially individual, whereas proletarian decisions are collective. This fact reflects the conflicting interests within the bourgeoisie on the one hand, and the unity of the proletariat's class interests on the other.

The decision to go on strike is thus a collective decision, but it is not always unanimous. Usually there are a few workers who do not agree with the strike. And if they translate their ideas into action, then they become black-legs.

The blackleg is an individual who is justly hated and persecuted by the working class for the following reasons: he weakens the common struggle, and, though not paying the sacrifice which every struggle involves, he benefits from the fruits of victory just like the others. In other words he is an individualist, he has boss-mentality; from the proletarian point of view it may therefore be perfectly legitimate to repress blacklegs with physical force, whereas from the point of view of individual freedom it is not.

So here we have another characteristic of the proletarian decision-making process: decisions are taken collectively, and the minority is obliged to submit to the majority when it comes to putting them into effect, in the name of the unity of the interests of the class. Furthermore, those who decide and those who carry out are the same people--there is no "separation of powers" here. This means that if, for example, the Trade Union "decides" on a strike

(or other action) which is not "felt" by the workers, they do not do it: in other words, to the extent that they do not participate in the decision itself, they will not carry it out. For this very practical reason, decisions must be taken feely by the collective.

We have already mentioned the fact that, where the bourgeoisie controls the means of intellectual production, the subjective consciousness of the exploited masses does not correspond, or corresponds only in a more or less distorted way, to their objective interests. Therefore the majority of proletarians is not able to decide spontaneously to do what is in its own class interest. And yet, as we have seen, if the majority of proletarians does not decide to free itself, then the proletariat cannot be freed. The problem is to resolve the contradiction between the masses' objectively proletarian condition and their subjectively more or less bourgeois consciousness.

Let us examine the problem a little more closely: the cause of the lack of revolutionary consciousness in the proletariat is not only bourgeois propaganda. It is also to be found in the historical fact of the bourgeois division of labor. The proletariat does not appear phenomenologically as a class but as metal-workers, textile workers, dockers, etc.; that is, it appears as categories or trades. A trade strike is not by itself a revolutionary act; indeed it (frequently) is something that the bourgeois state can and has frequently accepted (i.e. it is not always necessarily illegal).

We have already described bourgeois society as an anarchy of individual decisions. Essentially this is true; however it is also true that the interests of certain individuals may coincide for a period of time (e.g. the shareholders in a company); these people associate to further their common interests. The existence therefore of conflicting interest-groups is not in itself in contradiction with bourgeois society, on the contrary, it is one of its basic characteristics. For this reason, workers' associations and strikes, as a means for bargaining over the price of labor, have been permitted by bourgeois-democratic states, precisely because, and as long as, they do not question the buy-and-sell relationship between capital and labour itself.

For this reason, as long as workers' struggles remain objectively and subjectively trade struggles, they cannot be class struggle.

3. Capitalist Crisis.

A All proletarian revolutions up to now have come about in periods of cyclical CRISIS of the capitalist economy.

These crises are characterized by a real fall in the average rate of profit, and this causes the capitalists to: (a) intensify competition among each other, (b) unload the costs of the crisis on to the proletariat (and in the imperialist stage, onto the oppressed peoples of the Third World). For this reason these crises usually end up in war or revolution.

From the proletariat's point of view, the main difference between a period of capitalist economic expansion and a period of crisis or depression is this: whereas in the first, economic strikes for the bettering of the conditions of sale of labour are more or less tolerated by the capitalist state, in the second they are less and less tolerated. And the trade unions (and political reformist parties) become consequently more and more openly reactionary.

The TRADE UNION, organized as it is along trade lines, has as its structural job that of bettering the conditions of sale of labour, within the overall buying-and-selling relationship between labour and capital: this relationship as such is not questioned, because this would mean taking an open political stand, and this is something that trade unions "exclude". That is to say the trade union accepts the capitalist basis of society.

But in a time of crisis the very survival of the capitalist system demands the compression of workers' real wages. And this is why it becomes impossible to really defend workers' living standards outside a revolutionary perspective. Room for manoeuvre narrows down to nothing: either you fight for the working class's complete liberation from the capitalist yoke, or you find yourself necessarily conniving with the squashing of workers' living standards.

4. The Socialist Revolution.

At this point the working class must get to grips with the problem of the SOCIALIST REVOLUTION. But the workers, from inside their different situations do not pose this problem spontaneously for a series of reasons: firstly for those already outlined above, and secondly also on account of the fact that the crisis does not develop uniformly and in the same way in each single situation, i.e. the companies do not all go bust simultaneously. The crisis harms everyone, yes, but in different ways according to trade, region and the strength of the individual companies. The hope of the bourgeoisie is to overcome workers' resistance factory by factory, attempting to ensure that the workers remain divided with a sectorial and not class consciousness, or even worse, that they retreat into corporatism and individualism.

Against this tactic the workers must on the contrary unify all their struggles, must overcome trade-unionist consciousness and become conscious of their class interests: they must defend themselves economically by attacking politically.

This, we repeat, they do not do spontaneously. These indications must be brought inside each single situation from outside the specific situations, that is from an overall point of view.

Owing to, amongst other things, the unequal development of the crisis, you get different levels of consciousness within the working class: some are closer to a political revolutionary consciousness, some are still bogged down in trade-unionism, and many hold a series of intermediate positions. It is clear that the workers with a vanguard political consciousness are a minority; they must get together on the basis of a plan for making revolution, they must begin to build the PARTY.

In capitalist society, socialist revolution is not a "real" thing, it is a theory. It is a theory which starts from a concrete analysis of the real essence of capitalism, but at the same time it is the overthrowing of the whole of capitalist logic: it must change from being a theoretical negation of capitalism into its practical negation.

What are the tasks of those who make up this vanguard with respect to the masses? Must they lower their political activity and level to that of the average worker? Or must they perhaps maintain an attitude of superiority and detachment with regard to the average worker? The first would mean denying themselves as a vanguard, effacing themselves as revolutionary consciousness,-- denying the revolution itself in other words; that would be deviating to the right. The second would mean admitting revolution in theory but denying it in practice, not lifting a finger to transform it from theory into practice (after all it is the masses who make the revolution); one could call that deviating to the "left"--dogmatism.

It is clear that on the one hand the vanguard must maintain itself as such; must try continually to raise its own political level, while on the other it must at the same time put down deep roots among the masses, trying to bring them up to its own level. It must guide them towards the revolution.

So the working class's political party, which this vanguard is building,

will be organized according to certain highly clear lines:

1/ Since the working class's political interests are one, the party must be centralized, must move, that is, in one direction, so as to reflect, not the phenomenological interests of the different grades, of this or that part, but the one and the same political interests of the whole class.

2/ Since the Party must not only reflect reality, but also transform it in practice, and since reality appears in a thousand phenomenologically different aspects, it must have many different corresponding branches, so as to put down roots in every single situation where the masses are present.

Organizationally therefore, there will have to be a central body and peripheral bodies.

On The Relationship Between The Party And The Masses, As Regards Decision-making.

It has already been said that with respect to the masses, the Party is a minority, and the masses outside the Party are the majority. What therefore must be the relationship?

The Party has learned that for the carrying-out of a decision by the workers, it must submit to the majority. This is also true of the relationship between the Party and the working masses. Until the majority of the working class has decided that it wants to make the revolution, revolution is not to be had. A Party with a minority worker following which attempted to seize power in the face of the majority's indifference or hostility would be nothing but defeat, and would be guilty of Adventurism and putchism. On the other hand, we must see that the masses only do what they themselves have decided. We must not wait until before taking power the Party must hold a formal vote, and the minute that a vote has been taken however is that the Party must have confidence in the majority's decision to know that the "average worker" at that moment has decided in favour of the Party and is prepared to take an active part in it.

The Party must direct the masses, but precisely because it represents their most advanced class (and not the antagonistic one) it cannot oblige them to march towards socialism (it's not that it ought not to--it cannot). On the other hand it must attempt with all the means at its disposal (agitation, propaganda, organization, etc.) to persuade them to do what is correct in any given material situation.

On The Party's Internal Decision-making Processes.

It is the Party's duty to decide what is correct, and to distinguish it from what is not.

Scientific theory defines as "correct" that which reflects scientifically the laws of development of reality, which explains phenomena in other words. Therefore we must conclude that only social practice can ultimately verify which theories are right and which are wrong.

But the Party cannot proceed empirically, groping in the dark, for by doing so it would deny its own role and function as a vanguard. It must, in other words, make its strategic and tactical proposals before being able to verify them, making use, naturally, of past experience.

To do this there are no infallible recipes. The Party can make mistakes. The important thing is to try to reduce them to a minimum, to have a system which will lead to their reduction to a minimum.

Correct ideas come from practice. This means that all the Party members must be engaged in social practice among the masses, there must not be a "division of labour" between "theoretical" comrades and "practical" comrades. But this is not enough, because personal experience does not by itself produce an

overall view of reality. After all every worker has personal experience of working class reality, without necessarily being a vanguard element; the Party members will therefore also have a capacity for theoretical synthesis. That is, they must all be effective vanguard elements.

Once these basic characteristics of the party members have been defined, then if there are different opinions within the Party over the line to be followed, active ideological struggle over these differences must be given a free rein. Then a decision is taken, by voting, and according to the proletarian custom, the minority must not only comply with the carrying out of the decision by the majority, but must actively participate in it, even if it doesn't agree. And the minority will do this, because it knows that if its position is correct, the facts will make the majority change its mind; and vice-versa if the majority position turns out to be the correct one. The results of the action must be followed by a self-criticism by those who were in the wrong; in this way the Party will reach a new unity at a higher level.

We have said that the Party is structured in central and peripheral bodies. Normally the tasks of the centre and the periphery are different-- that is, the centre has the job of synthesizing the material that comes in from the periphery and of defining the general line, and the periphery has that of applying the line situation by situation. Therefore if contradictions arise between central and peripheral bodies, these are usually on questions of general line, and in this case the peripheral body must submit to the decision of the centre. On the other hand the centre may be wrong and the peripheral body may be right, and this is why the members of the central bodies at all levels must be a democratically elected by those of the peripheral bodies, and must submit periodically to the collective control of the Party congresses. As a rule, the peripheral bodies must carry out the decisions of the centre. But they will carry them out really and truly only if they are convinced of them, and if they understand them thoroughly. Otherwise if they just accept the decisions passively and do not participate actively in the working out of them, and in the discussion on how to carry them out in practice, then we shall probably get the phenomenon of scarce militancy. To avoid this there must be maximum freedom in this phase of discussion, because only thus will it be possible to obtain maximum discipline in the carrying-out phase. Furthermore, obviously, here there must be no "separation of powers" between those who decide and those who carry out the decisions.

So to sum up the basic characteristics of a working-class Party's decision-making structure;

- (a): All members are (1) real vanguard militants
(2) effectively engaged in mass work.
- (b) The Party is structured in central and peripheral bodies, and has one central centre.
- (c) The individual is subordinated to the organization, the minority to the majority and the periphery to the centre as regards practical action. As regards internal discussion however, all members are free to uphold their opinions.
- (d) The members of the central bodies are elected by those of the periphery, and give regular account of their activity to the congresses.

This structure, known as democratic centralism, is a constant characteristic of all proletarian parties. The RSDLP did not have this structure (it was a mass party, not centralised) and this is why Lenin had to break it organisationally and create the Bolshevik Party.

The CPC on the other hand did have this structure, and that is why Mao stayed in it, and indeed the majority of its militants were able to understand that Chen Tu-Hsiu's and Wang Ming's lines were wrong, thanks to their practical negative results, and so could change direction at the Tsun Yi meeting. Mao, from being the exponent of a minority position was able to become leader of the majority.

7. The Proletarian State.

The proletarian state, like all states, is a repressive machine for ensuring the domination of the class in power.

However there are certain qualitative differences between the old states and the proletarian state.

Whereas the other states served to oppress the majority in the interests of a minority of the population, this one serves to oppress a minority, and not only, but a minority which is structurally destined to disappear, in the interests of a majority which will eventually include the whole of society. As a result its dictatorship can and must be explicit and honest, it has no need to hide behind lying phrases about "human equality" etc. It is what it says it is, a dictatorship over the bourgeoisie and a democracy for the proletariat.

Every political power disposes of armed forces. And here we see a second qualitative difference between the bourgeois and proletarian states: whereas the armed forces of the former consist in a special body which is separate from civil society, and the masses are not allowed to organize themselves militarily, in the latter the situation is reversed: "The Paris Commune suppressed the army and the police...and replaced them with the people in arms" (Lenin). In China today the PLA works in the fields and factories side by side with the working people who are in turn organized in people's militias. So in socialist society which is marching towards classless society they are already beginning to abolish one of the most ancient historical "divisions of labour", that between "warrior" and "worker".

A third characteristic of the proletarian state is the suppression of the false "separation of powers": "The Commune was to be, not a parliamentary body, but an acting body, executive and legislative at the same time." Even the magistrates and judges, like the members of the Commune, were elected and revocable at any time. Lastly the very characteristic of the state itself as a body separate from civil society gradually disappears as the masses become more and more involved in the running of public affairs (see the Revolutionary Committees in China for example).

Now before examining the process of restoration of capitalism in a proletarian state, let us see briefly how, within a bourgeois society, a proletarian Party can degenerate into a revisionist one.

8. Transformation Of A Proletarian Party Into Its Opposite.

Let us examine a concrete example, that of the Italian Communist Party. It can be said that the decisive transformation in this party took place in 1944, i.e. when Togliatti came back to Italy.

In that period there were in fact a number of basic changes in the party, both in its line and organization. Briefly, the changes in line were:

- Abandon of class struggle against the Italian bourgeoisie, in the name of "national reconstruction".
- Abandon of armed struggle (handing over the partisans' weapons) in favor of the "parliamentary road".
- Practical abandon of the objective of socialist revolution in favor of the goal of "structural reforms".

In other words the proletarian line was abandoned and replaced by a complete, thorough-going bourgeois line.

But how is it that this transformation became irreversible?

When Togliatti was pushing through these changes, he had to overcome a series of resistances within the party. Who were the resisters? Togliatti says they were "the old comrades, those who would tend to remain a small group, the group of those who have remained pure and faithful to the ideals and to the idea..." and he adds "we say to them:--You are making a mistake, you will be a leading nucleus according to your capacity to turn our party into a great mass

party, a large organization which will have in its own ranks all the elements necessary for establishing contact with all the categories of the Italian people, and for leading them all towards the objectives we intend to reach." (emphasis added)

In effect this meant a structural transformation of the party, of great importance: The vanguard party was turned into a mass party.

This was the natural consequence of the political decisions mentioned above: in particular of the parliamentary road (and the consequent importance of votes and of quantity rather than quality), and of the spontaneism, i.e. corporative economism, implicit in the reformist policy. The over-all picture is one of various corporate mass movements, joined together in parliamentary bargaining; this picture is backed up by an open theorization of social and political "pluralism". Togliatti in fact denied class unity and class struggle against the state.

The spontaneism in the line meant naturally exaltation of the lowest level of the masses' subjective consciousness: "You must become an organization which is in the midst of the people and which satisfies all the needs felt by the mass of the people"... "the mass of the people wishes for these problems to be resolved today and cannot content itself with a propaganda reply which prefers to postpone the satisfaction of its aspirations until such a time as all Italy and Europe can have a socialist regime." Let us translate: in view of the fact that the masses cannot have socialism today, or tomorrow, or the day after, (but who says so? the bosses say so.) and that they do not struggle spontaneously for socialism, then let us give them the illusion that their needs can be satisfied by capitalism. In fact it is not possible to answer the affirmation--Today the masses think like that, let us bow down--without making a break with spontaneist logic.

Instead these masses are admitted indiscriminately into the party ranks. The Statute (1970) says: "Those may be admitted to the Party who are eighteen or over and who, independently of their race, religious faith or philosophical convictions, accept the party's political programme and undertake: to work for its realization, to observe the Statute, to work in a party organization and to pay their dues and contribution to the party press."

The result of this is that in the party assemblies, the opinion of a Catholic petty-bourgeois with a metaphysical view of the world has the same weight as that of a Marxist-Leninist worker. And among a million and a half members it is clear that Marxist-Leninist workers are necessarily a minority. And this is what ensures the continuity of the bourgeois control over the whole party. It means precisely that the leading clique can tranquilly take its decisions which are passively rubber-stamped by the mass of members, for it is a constant fact of capitalist society that a spontaneist programme, adjusted to the average level of consciousness, will in normal times be spontaneously accepted by the masses, and especially by that portion of the masses who have already shown their predisposition to accept the programme by joining the party.

What practical commitment is required of the members? They are required to 'realize, in their own field of activity, that party's policy and the decisions of the leading bodies'. In practice this means carrying out the decisions of the leading clique as regards one's own corporate sector, and canvassing for the party in the elections. The individual member does not participate in working out the party's decision (even though the Statute gives him this right but not duty) for the simple reason that he is not capable of doing so. He lacks the political and ideological preparation to oppose what the party bosses say; they can thus manoeuvre the assemblies at their pleasure. So here we are again with the bourgeois 'separation of powers', between those who decide, and those who carry out the decisions.

This then is how revisionism was consolidated in the ICP: once the leading body had been conquered (and here the historical context was important - the

novelty of the Italian post-fascist situation and the lack of a clear international reference point made it difficult for an organic proletarian line to establish itself), then the struggle between the two lines was drowned in a sea of 'citizens'. The participation in bourgeois government (central and local) with the resultant corruption of many leaders completed the transformation, adding the final touch.

9. From Socialism To Capitalism: or how the bourgeoisie was able to make a come-back in the USSR and restore capitalism.

- The political decisions - At the XI Congress of the Bolshevik Party it was stated: 'The principal...job of the proletariat, after it has seized power... is to increase the volume of production and to augment...the productive forces of society.'

For the entire period from Lenin's death till the II World War this was in fact considered to be the proletariat's main, and almost only, job.

Now no-one can deny that this is one of the principal tasks of the proletariat in power. But today after the restoration of capitalism in the USSR and the Cultural Revolution in China, we know that it is not the principal task. We know today that it must never be separated from class struggle and indeed that 'revolution must command production'.

So once the reactionaries firing bullets had been overthrown, the basic decision was to industrialize. This was done, and it is a good thing it was; but let us look more closely at just how it was done.

- The philosophical basis - At the Third Trades Union Congress, Trotsky, in his defence of the militarization of labour, used the following argument: 'Man is lazy and has a right to be lazy.' We know that all work is socially obligatory. He must work or die. He does not want to work. But social organization obliges him to move in that direction.'

These statements reflect the following philosophical presuppositions:

- 1) Abstract human nature exists.
- 2) The individual is always in contradiction with society

Both these presuppositions elevate to the status of universal principle what is in reality only true of bourgeois man. As a matter of fact, man-in-the-abstract does not exist, there are only historically-determined-men.

It is true that in bourgeois society man-the-worker is lazy (the capitalist on the other hand is capable of spending sleepless nights so as to increase his profits); this is because, in the exchange which he makes with boss - labour against wages - he attempts - as does everyone when exchanging commodities - to give the minimum possible and to obtain the maximum possible. And the boss does too.

It is equally true that in bourgeois society the individual is in contradiction with society. Not only is the whole mass of workers in contradiction with the capitalist social set-up, but the individual capitalists themselves are in contradiction with each other (competition) and often each single capitalist is in contradiction with the system as a whole (eg. tax evasion). This is to say that bourgeois society is founded on individualism, and the bourgeoisie, attempting to set itself up as a universal class, invents the 'theory of human nature'. A popular expression of this theory is 'man is selfish by nature'.

Instead as we can see from recent history, this theory has been proved wrong by practice in China, where broad masses are coming to understand that, in socialist society, the interests of the individual and those of the collective are the same, and forms of revolutionary heroism - from the sacrifice of one's life to voluntary overtime work, are becoming more and more diffused.

In the USSR on the other hand, as we shall show, these affirmations of

Trotsky's were not sufficiently criticized, and they formed the philosophical basis upon which, in practice, the Russians attempted to build socialism.

The first over-all economic decision was the New Economic Policy (State capitalism combined with private capitalism), and at that time it was a necessary decision. They had to begin building the new society with the bricks of the old, and at the historical moment the Russians had to overcome the obstacle constituted by the fact that:

-the democratic phase of the revolution still had to be completed, besides the contingent fact that:

- the working class had been to a large extent dispersed during the civil war and many workers had taken to buying and selling on the black market; the class had to be reconstituted and developed.

But in 1928 the NEP came to an end and they began the first five-year plan, and the process of collectivizing the countryside.

This too was a correct decision, but how was it carried out?

The Planned Economy - The fact of planning itself was a great step forward; it meant, at last, setting up socialism in the economic sphere, it meant producing for the needs of the country and not for profit. It was accompanied by the collectivization of the countryside, another correct and necessary decision.

For the first time in human history there was a serious attempt to set up a planned economy; it is not surprising that mistakes were made.

Let us see what these mistakes were. Essentially they were two:

- 1) On the one hand the CPSU neglected the continuance of class struggle, and in 1936 it was stated that classes and class struggle had been liquidated;
- 2) On the other hand there was a defect of spontaneism, in thinking that the masses would have understood spontaneously what socialist planning was all about and their own role within it.

We shall examine first the results of the second mistake:

The first result of spontaneism in carrying out the plans was that too much reliance was placed upon decrees and other administrative measures, and not enough on political work among the masses, on the mobilisation of their creativity.

The leaders, then in order to push the masses into fulfilling the tasks set by the plans, behaved as if working-class human nature were really and 'naturally' averse to work, almost completely neglecting the vast potential of enthusiasm for socialism which the Chinese have, on the contrary, been able to realise. As we shall demonstrate, they substantially forgot Lenin's warning "first to convince, and then to oblige".

We shall give three examples: the question of incentives; the Stakhanovist movement; and the question of the fluidity of labour

- 1) - Right from the start equalitarianism was combatted and a policy of wage differentials was applied. At the beginning this was undoubtedly a necessary decision, to the extent that material incentives were necessary to encourage the workers to acquire technical knowledge and to move into areas and industry of priority importance. But what was not understood was the need to accompany material incentives with political work of clarification, agitation and mass mobilisation, so that this second aspect might gradually become primary with respect to the first, leading to the eventual withering away of material incentives. We have an example of how an initially correct anti-"leftist" decision could become in time a right-wing decision, when we consider the fact that team piece-work was after a while no longer encouraged because the team members showed a "deplorable" tendency to equalitarianism in the way in which they distributed it among themselves. (Bolshaya Sovietskaya Enciklopediya p. 1115). This meant not going forwards when the masses wanted to go forwards.
- 2) - In 1935 the Stakhanovist movement was begun.

The decision to make exemplary heroes out of vanguard workers was not, in principle, incorrect. The Chinese also have their heroes of labour. But there is a basic difference between the Stakhanovists and the Chinese labour heroes. Whereas in the Stakhanovist propaganda the emphasis was laid mainly on the simple fact that they produced much more than the others, with the Chinese labour heroes it is their political spirit which is brought out - above all their spirit of indifference towards their private interests and whole-hearted dedication to community interests. In this way they serve as a directly political stimulus to the masses. The Stakhanovists on the other hand were not in the least encouraged to deny their private interests - on the contrary, they were stimulated by a whole series of purely economic incentives, amongst which were progressive piece-work rates. The relationship between the Stakhanovist and the mass of his work-mates thus went from bad to worse, partly because of individualistic envy, but also and mainly because the production record established by the Stakhanovist was used to raise everyone else's production norms without consulting the masses or even the trade-unions. These leadership methods led to the creation of a corporative mentality amongst many workers, and there were cases of obstruction, intimidation and even murder of the Stakhanovists. (Trud. Nove 3rd 1935).

The Party reacted to this not with a self-critical reflection on its own mistakes, but with repression:

"In some enterprises", declared Zhdanov in November 1935, "the Stakhanovist movement has been resisted...the party will not recoil from any measure which may help it to eliminate all those who oppose the victorious march of the Stakhanovist movement." (Pravda, Nov. 13, '35)

A resolution signed by Stalin and Molotov in April 1937 stated that previous instructions on Stakhanovism had not been observed, wage differentials had not been introduced and the trade unions and even the party committees had refused to unmask the saboteurs. The authorities finally introduced the widened repression of '37 and '38 (an error, according to the Chinese comrades).

3) - An indication of the working masses' spontaneous reaction to Stalin's management can be had from the phenomenon of "fluidity of labour" and of indiscipline on the shop-floor in general. Up to 1930 there was a certain amount of unemployment, which discouraged workers from changing jobs too often. But in 1930, thanks to socialist planning, unemployment was virtually eliminated. We can see the effects of this in a resolution signed by Molotov and Stalin on the 8th April 1933: "according to information received from the statistical offices, 423,000 workers and employees left the mines in 1932. In the same year 423,000 were taken on..... This means that considerable proportion of workers and employees, if not most of them, move ceaselessly from mine to mine, from the mine to the countryside and from the countryside to the mine, instead of working..... It goes without saying that with this amount of fluidity it is impossible to assimilate, even to a barely satisfactory extent, the new techniques and to learn how to use the new machines....." "The disorder mentioned would not have come about if the managers of the mines had applied the law against vagabonds and absenteeists and had deprived them of their ration cards and housing rights".

The attempt was made to remedy this situation with material incentives on the one hand and Draconian sanctions of the other (the carrot and the stick). Let us see for example a decree issued on December 28th 1938: "Any worker or employee guilty of coming to work late without valid reasons, of going out to lunch early or of coming back late, of leaving the factory or office before time, or of idling during working hours, is subject to administrative procedure: simple admonishment or admonishment with the threat of being sacked; transfer for three months to a worse paid post; or immediate transfer to a lower category. Any worker or employee guilty of three faults of this kind in one month, or of four in two consecutive months, is to be sacked as...a transgressor of the labour law and of labour discipline." Furthermore, the industrial managers who did not apply the prescribed punishments were themselves subject to the sack or to administrative procedure.

The fact that the managers themselves needed to be disciplined, ie. that they were evidently over-indulgent towards their own workers, derives from the circumstance that they had to compete against each other in order to get hold of scarce labour; they evidently held a sectarian attitude towards their work, an attitude which can be linked up with the following resolution passed at the XII Party Congress (April '23): "Attentiveness, energy and decision-making capacity are indispensable qualities of the Soviet manager. But the best evidence in his favour is the good state of the account-books of the enterprise." In China and Albania today the various enterprises help one another in a spirit of revolutionary brotherliness; this was evidently not the ideological climate prevailing in the Soviet Union, with the result that the interests of the managers gradually came into conflict with:

- a) those of the workers in their factories, and
- b) the over-all interests of the Plan.

The managers became a fundamental component of that "privileged bourgeois stratum" mentioned by the Chinese comrades ("Leninism or Social-Imperialism" 1970) whose interests were represented by Khrushchov, so that after 1956 it could turn into a thorough-going "bureaucratic monopolistic bourgeoisie of a new type" (ibid.) and its class interests got the better of socialist planning (with the economic "reforms" of the '50s), and capitalism was restored.

These mistakes, on their own, did not constitute capitalism in the USSR. They reflected partial victories of a bourgeois way of thinking, in the struggle between the two lines which was going on. The important thing is that they were not criticized or corrected.

To find out why these mistakes in political line were not corrected it will be useful to examine the effects of what we defined as the first mistake, that is the theoretical liquidation of class struggle in the USSR (which had its complete formulation in the project for a Constitution of 1936).

If classes have been eliminated and class struggle has come to an end, then it follows that the struggle between the two lines within the Party has no more reason to exist. And if, notwithstanding this, voices in opposition to the party line continue to arise, these cannot be justified as being the reflection of class contradictions in the country, but can only be agents of imperialism who have wormed their way in, or in any case people who are incurably "evil" and whose presence cannot be scientifically explained. If added to this there is the lack of a distinction made between antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions, then we have a situation in which there is no cause to give any space to internal discussion. Either the comrade agrees, or he is a renegade.

All the same the struggle between the two lines did go on, (and how). There were a whole series of struggles conducted by Stalin against Trotsky, Bukharin, Rykov, Kamenev etc. In each of these struggles Stalin was usually in the right. Where he went wrong was in the way in which he conducted the struggle - he relied rather too much on the revolutionary efficiency of administrative methods (trials, GPU etc.) and he did not bring the masses into the struggle; we can see, by way of contrast, the Chinese Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the Chinese practice of holding open-door party meetings etc.

In this climate bureaucratic centralism became the order of the day.

We should clarify briefly Trotsky's position on this. During the '25 - '27 period he criticized "bureaucratic centralism" and demanded a return to "proletarian democracy"; but according to his conception of "proletarian democracy" the trade unions ought to be free to defend their workers against management just like in bourgeois democracies: from this we can see that what he was really attacking was centralism itself - whether bureaucratic or democratic - and defending polycentrism or the lack of any centre - ie. what today is called "pluralism". Stalin correctly defended centralism against Trotsky's polycentrism, but unfortunately the terms of the discussion became confused and the struggle came to be viewed as being between "centralism" and "democracy".

What was not really understood was that to reach real centralism or unity of thought you must have ample opportunity for democratic discussion.

So, by applying in a bureaucratic manner the "decision" to build socialism a decision in the making of which the masses were not involved, socialism was not really constructed; certainly the factories etc. were built, but socialism was not constructed in men's minds.

It was not really understood that proletarian political leadership does not simply consist in "giving orders", but means involving the masses in taking and carrying out the decisions of proletarian political power.

Instead opponents, and sometimes even just the doubtful, were rudely silenced. Let us quote this speech from 1937:
"Our party will crush without mercy the band of traitors and renegades, it will eliminate from the face of the earth all the right-wing Trotskyite rabble.... Certainty of victory lies in the indomitable leadership of our Central Committee in the indomitable leadership of our leader, Comrade Stalin... we shall destroy all our enemies.. down to the last man, and shall scatter their ashes to the wind."

These words were spoken by Mr N. Khrushchev. As a contrast we can quote these words from Comrade Enver Hoxha's speech at the APL'S VI Congress:
"Socialism does not need bureaucrats and technocrats who only believe in their own "genius" in technique, in the omnipotence of the decree, but militants who will strike roots among the masses and who will live with them, who think and feel like the working class and the peasants of the co-operatives do."

The Chinese comrades say that under Stalin there was not "only a climate of fear, suspicion and uncertainty", but also that "a number of honest people were also condemned unjustly" and that "in the Party organizations and State bodies Stalin did not fully and wholly apply proletarian democratic centralism, or he went against it partially." So from this we must deduce that in effect there must have been a fair measure of the "climate of fear". And when there is a climate of fear, when the principle of democratic centralism is not wholly applied, when honest men run the risk of being unjustly condemned, then active ideological struggle dies out in the party, opportunism becomes prevalent, and careerism flourishes.

For all that we are not saying that Stalin was responsible for the restoration of capitalism in Russia. Stalin was subjectively, and to a large extent objectively, a revolutionary. The historical conditions in which he struggled were exceptionally difficult, and in particular he had no historical precedents to go by. And it is not fortuitous that Khrushchev's attack on the dictatorship of the proletariat was covered up as an attack on Stalin.

But the mistakes which comrades make objectively help the class enemy. For this reason they must be carefully studied so as to avoid repeating them.

Conclusions

We shall attempt, briefly, to draw some general conclusions about the relationship between organization and political line, or in other words between decision-making process and content of the decisions.

The capitalist must obtain from the proletarian the decision that he will work for him. The first thing he must do is to make him a proletarian, i.e. to separate him from the means of production. Once the proletarian's "individual freedom" has been thus assured ("freeing" him from the land, for example), and that of the capitalist (freeing himself from the limitations of feudal property relations), he can then carry out the decision desired.

We have seen moreover that the decision-making structure of the bourgeois state is by its very nature incapable of taking and carrying out decisions in

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the interests of the working class, and for this reason the workers cannot just take it over, but must destroy it and replace it with a state of a different type.

The proletariat, in order to carry out a certain decision, must give itself a certain organisational structure (be it a party or a state). If this structure changes, then so will the decisions produced by it.

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We thus see that the statement made by Lenin in "What is to be done?" is confirmed: "The structure of every organism is necessarily and inevitably determined by the content of its activity." In fact proletarian decisions, to be carried out, need determinate proletarian structures, just as bourgeois decisions need bourgeois structures. In the initial stages the content is the determining and principal aspect, and the form is the secondary one.

But we have also seen that in certain circumstances there can be a return influence of the organizational structure on the content of the decisions. The secondary aspect, that is, can become primary. And that is how a proletarian political body can change "peacefully" into its opposite. In the short run, what counts is the content of the decisions. But in the long run it is the decision-making process.

A.C.

Northern Ireland: The nature of the struggle

Some of us have come to believe that the line generally held by the British Left that a national struggle is necessary in Northern Ireland is incorrect, and that it should be replaced by a line recognising the importance of struggling for bourgeois democratic rights, and which bases the main struggle on the fight for socialism.

Why has the national liberation line been so widely accepted in the British Left? One reason is undoubtedly that as the contradictions sharpened in Northern Ireland from 1969 onwards the sympathy of progressive people increasingly saw its position in terms of the only ideology to hand, Irish nationalist ideology. The Left groups in Britain, instead of undertaking a careful and scientific analysis of the problem, rapidly started to import concepts from this bourgeois nationalist ideology and even regarded it as a token of political virtue to use the exact nationalist terminology. Thus although the state of Northern Ireland has now existed for over 50 years and needs cold scientific evaluation if it is to be successfully overthrown, many left groups considered it a point of honor, like members of the Provisionals when on trial, to refuse to recognise the existence of such a state and to refer to it by means of terms such as the Six Counties, North East Ulster, and even North East Ireland. Some groups carefully presented statistics that also ignored the existence of the border and conscientiously muddled up information from Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic so that it was impossible to make use of the data for analysing the specific states.

Another factor in the allegiance shown by much of the British Left to the idea of a national struggle in Ulster was more commendable--the long-established and important Communist principle that the proletariat of the imperialist countries must give unconditional support to an oppressed people struggling for freedom from imperialism. As far back as the days of Marx the Irish nationalist movement has broadly-speaking been supported by Communists not only because it severely weakened the British ruling class.

That this struggle did not succeed in drawing into its ranks the protestant community of Ulster is undoubtedly something to be regretted by Marxists: had it done so the working class in Ireland would almost certainly be less preoccupied with national instead of social questions, the Irish Republic would have had a better chance of establishing economic independence from Britain, and the British ruling class would have been that bit weaker as a result of the loss of the population and territory of Northern Ireland.

Although we regret the fact that the Ulster protestants were not brought into the Irish nationalist movement what is important now is whether this development can or cannot be reversed. Was it an accidental defect of history which we can put right with a bit of extra determination, or perhaps the result of the machinations of evil men stirring up sectarianism for their own ends, as is implied in the Nationalist version of Irish history? Or was this the reflection of objective developments in Irish society which Communists recognize it to be futile and idealist to attempt to reverse however much we may dislike them?

As Marx stated the principle in the Communist Manifesto, the conclusions of Communists

"merely express in general terms actual relations springing from an existing class struggle"

--whatever those actual relations may be. Historical materialism teaches that all societies are heading inevitably for communism. Our task then is to identify accurately what stage a particular society is at and proceed concretely from that point: it is not to hold the telescope to our blind eye when a society appears to be at a different stage of social development to that which we had first believed.

How we analyse the question of Northern Ireland may have the most serious consequences for the future. If antagonistic national contradictions really do still exist between the people of Northern Ireland and the British ruling class, with these contradictions having been merely papered over and concealed by that ruling class during the past decades, then a national liberation struggle is a progressive task and one that will certainly crown what some call Ireland's fight for freedom. But if such antagonistic national contradictions do not ex-

ist we will have led the working class in Northern Ireland up a blind path, run the risks of exacerbating sectarianism there, and leaving it a bastion of reaction that could, in critical circumstances, result in setbacks to the working class of the entire British Isles.

This article then will be a criticism of the Nationalist analysis of the struggle in Northern Ireland and will present an analysis that requires a socialist struggle in that province. It may be necessary to say that although in certain points it is similar to the line put forward by the British and Irish Communist Organisation it differs in other respects. (1) The argument presented here is intended to stand or fall on its own merits alone.

What Are Nations?

Put at its bluntest the nationalist line on Northern Ireland declares that the million protestants of Ulster (who have claimed for 50 years to be British and part of the British state) have got themselves into the wrong nation and must be persuaded to change their minds. This line does not stand up to examination either in practice or in theory. The enormous practical problems of telling a million people that they are not what they believe themselves to be are inescapable to any comrade doing the hard job of carrying on the struggle in Northern Ireland at this moment, and much confusion would be removed from the debate at once merely by studying seriously the stark practicalities of this question. But here in this article it is the theoretical background to the question that I want to tackle, although I hope in a way that is also consistent with a practical understanding of this matter.

Because of the complexity of the national question within the British Isles it is important for communists to have an accurate understanding of national history in this region, where four, perhaps five, nations or nationalities co-exist: it is necessary to understand by concrete analysis whether national struggle by any one of them is or has been progressive at any particular time or, on the other hand, diversionary and reactionary. We need an understanding of what constitutes a nation based not on wishful thinking or on the subjective and mystical concepts of the bourgeoisie but based in the dialectical materialist theory of the development of human society. (2) It is necessary not just to know the surface characteristics of a nation as listed by Stalin in "Marxism and the National Question" but to treat these as ushers at the threshold which lead, provided we think deeply, to an all round understanding of what is the essence of a nation. Much of the confusion among British Marxists on the question of Northern Ireland derives from the fact that the scientific socialist concept of nations has not been grasped in depth.

Engels' statement at the beginning of the third section of "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific" defines the historical materialist approach on this as on other questions:

"The materialist conception of history starts from the proposition that the production of the means to support human life and, next to production, the exchange of things produced, is the basis of all social structure." --including nations.

The bourgeoisie presents the concept of the nation as something abstract and mystical, often reading this interpretation back into their history of pre-feudal and semi-communist tribes: the vaguer the concept the more heroic it becomes. And for good reason, because the banner of nationalism was that banner which the bourgeoisie used to seize the leadership of society from the feudal strata or form domination by other bourgeoisies. In doing this, in pursuing the bourgeois revolution, for all the vagueness and heroism of their ideology, the bourgeoisie were in practice resolutely pursuing their class interest and fighting for a revolution in the social order already dictated by factors arising from the development of the means of production.

These factors were of course the need for a large and united market for the unimpeded circulation of an increasing volume of commodities associated with capitalist production. As Lenin puts it in a passage near the beginning of the first section of "The Right of Nations to Self Determination" (3):

"Throughout the world, the period of the final victory of capitalism over feudalism has been linked up with national movements. For the complete victory of commodity production, the bourgeoisie must capture the home market, and there must be politically united territories whose population

and a single language, with all obstacles to the development of that language and its consolidation in literature eliminated. Therein is the economic foundation of national movements."

In the struggle to "capture the home market", the bourgeoisie quickly comes up against the problem of state power, and national movements inevitably become movements for the formation of that type of society which best serves the interests of the bourgeoisie in the era when its power is rising, the nation state. Lenin goes on just after the previous passage to write:

"the tendency of every national movement is towards the formation of national states, under which these requirements of modern capitalism are best satisfied. The most profound economic factors drive towards this goal, and, therefore, for the whole of Western Europe, nay, for the entire civilized world, the national state is typical and normal for the capitalist period."

Thus the concept of the market and of the bourgeois state are key ideas in understanding what nations are and how everywhere in pursuit of its class interests the emerging bourgeoisie remodelled society on national lines.

The National Question In The British Isles.

Only by approaching the question in this historical materialist way, understanding above all the interests of the rising bourgeoisie in different geographical areas, is it possible to untangle the pattern of national development in the British Isles.

By the 17th century commodity production had advanced to the point where nations can be said to have existed in both England and the Lowlands of Scotland; concurrently with this came the development of the nation state in both these areas. Wales by contrast never in this sense became a nation in its own right (4), while in Ireland the rising bourgeoisie had a complicated history, which will be examined in more detail later, of both resistance to the exploiting and oppressing English and Scottish bourgeoisies and cooperation with them.

In the eighteenth century under the Act of Union of 1707 the English and Scottish bourgeoisies formed a common market, and to some extent shared state power, thereby creating what came to be known as the British nation. The idea of the British nation is a key to understanding nationalism in the British Isles. British nationalism, although, like all nationalist ideology, semi-mystical and rhetorical (attempts were made to rename Scotland and Ireland as North and West Britain respectively), nevertheless represented the real and hard class interest of the bourgeoisie. It was under this banner that they attempted to draw all regions of the British Isles into a single nation state and to go out to dominate and exploit the rest of the world. "British" imperialism is a precise description of what happened.

National Developments In Ireland.

Just as it was said that Mexico's misfortune lay in being so near to the United States, so it was Ireland's misfortune to lie so close to England. The relationship between Ireland and England is one of the most shameful of the many shameful pages in the history of the English and British bourgeoisies, exposing vividly the unacceptability of the claim of the capitalist class to speak in the name of the whole people.

Although Ireland was originally invaded by England during the feudal era, the period of most intense oppression started with the rise of the English bourgeoisie: that vigorous emerging class confronted in Ireland a people whose society was still at a pre-feudal level. In many cases the policy was one of plunder and systematic depopulation while, most importantly for the future, large numbers of settlers at times were landed from the metropolitan country to garrison the land against the native population. The strategy of pitting settlers against natives, followed in many parts of the world (for example America, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Algeria), was a general feature of imperialism in the rising era of capitalism. The colony of settlers in Ireland which was to become the most important for the future was of course that consisting of English and Scottish migrants established in the reign of James I in Ulster.

The contradiction between the two populations in Ireland that existed from

the time of the settlement was used repeatedly by the bourgeoisie and the British imperialists for their own interests. The Catholic native population for a long time were severely discriminated against and denied basic democratic rights while the protestant settlers were maintained in the ascendancy.

In the 18th century British oppression of Ireland became less openly violent than previously and a local bourgeoisie started to emerge in its own right on the basis of the protestant community. Subsequently the contradictions of interest between this local bourgeoisie and the British bourgeoisie sharpened in a similar way to the way they did in a number of other British colonies, such as those in America, on the basis of the privileges given to British merchants for example by the Navigation Acts. In the second half of the 18th century the local Irish bourgeoisie fought back vigorously and the British ruling class, stimulated by the experience of losing the American colonies, conceded many of their economic demands. Thus by the last two decades of the century Ireland was a country which in theory was in a position to develop towards becoming an independent dominion of the British crown much as Canada did in the 19th century. Its national problems however were the sharpness of the contradiction between the two sections of its population, fed by the oppression of the Catholics, and its proximity to England.

In the 1790's, basing itself on the most politically advanced section of the people, the rising presbyterian capitalists of Ulster, and strongly influenced by the French Revolution, Wolfe Tone attempted to complete the Irish bourgeois national revolution. He specifically and consciously set out to unite the different communities in Ireland under the banner of the "United Irishmen", but because the antagonisms were too strong and the British too near he did not succeed. The Act of Union of 1801 that followed the failure of the United Irishmen forced Ireland on a different course, binding her to Britain in a single state with a single legislature and market. Over the next twenty years tariffs were completely removed between the two countries.

In assessing this development it is important to be sure that the two populations of Ireland were affected differently according to their different concrete circumstances. In general the protestant community of Northern Ireland adapted to the situation well; their privileged position in relation to the Catholics assured by being in the same state as their English and Scottish cousins. On the basis of their relatively strong small scale economy, large scale linen and shipbuilding works arose capable of standing their own against competition from any other part of the new British free trade area, and prospering within it.

By contrast the Catholic population continued to be driven to wage struggles against religious oppression. They were especially oppressed by the landlords, and their agricultural struggle constituted the main force in Irish politics in the second half of the 19th century. Meanwhile in the predominately Catholic parts of Ireland the economy was too weak for the local bourgeoisie to be able to increase its strength in open competition with the British bourgeoisie: for these a protected home market became imperative, and this provided the objective basis for a new Irish national struggle.

Thus whereas in the 18th century the protestant population had been the basis for nationalist agitation, in the 19th century it was the Catholic population instead. The characteristics of the struggles were very different. Furthermore the process of uneven development between the two communities in Ireland meant that the national struggle was once again aborted. It could be said in fact that the United Irishmen movement came too early for the Catholics, Sinn Fein too late for the Protestants. Thus Ireland never achieved national unity and independence.

By the time the southern Irish Nationalist movement was in sight of achieving independence, or at least Home Rule, the capitalists of Ulster were firmly and inextricably dependent on the British imperial market: it had now become their "home market". They deeply distrusted all steps leading towards control of the Irish economy by Irish Nationalists. The position is illustrated well in this report written in indirect speech in an Ulster newspaper of the time of the remarks of Thomas Sinclair at a special meeting of the Presbyterian Church in March 1886:

"The leader of the Nationalists had declared that it was his intention to make Ireland a nation. They did not know what he meant by that, but probably it was that he intended to reorganise its industries...It was es-

pecially stated that a policy of Protection would be gone into, a policy which if adopted would empty their mills, clear their rivers and ship-yards, would stop their looms, would make the voice of their spindles to be silent, and would cause a complete destruction of the industry that had made the province so prosperous." (5)

Accordingly when the Irish Nationalists appeared to be possible victors in the struggle for Home Rule, the capitalists of Northern Ireland resolutely launched a specifically anti-nationalist Unionist movement. Connolly described their political line concisely in an article in the Irish Worker of 1914 when he said the Unionist...

"programme is summed up in the expression which forms the dominant note of all their speeches, sermons and literature: 'We are loyal British subjects. We hold this country for England. England cannot desert us.'" (6)

The different economic attitudes of the two parts of Ireland towards the Union with Britain were put by William Paul, the first editor of the Communist Review, the theoretical journal of the C.P.G.B. in the issue of August 1921 (7):

"It is in the North where there is the greatest opposition against the policy of separation, in any form, from Britain. Economically the North is dominated by an imperialistic group made up of great landowners and industrial magnates, who have enlisted the political services of legal luminaries whose careers have been conspicuous only in their venal vassalage to the propertied interests. The linen and engineering products of the North are not sold in any quantity in the Irish market. These are, in the main, exported to those markets which are under the protection of the Union Jack. Thus, the economic interests of the capitalists of Ulster are inseparably entwined with the imperialist interests of Great Britain. The economic needs of the predominating groups of the North are identical with the needs of British finance-capital. Finance-capital can only expand its control and extend its interest by means of the State power of the Empire. Finance-capital thus demands the support of a large Empire State to advance its influence, and, likewise, every Empire State demands the support of finance-capital to maintain its power. It is this indispensable and mutual relationship between finance-capital and modern Empire States which explains why the wealthy political elements in the North of Ireland enthusiastically proclaim their loyal devotion and adhesion to the union with imperialistic Britain."

By contrast, William Paul writes:

"In the South of Ireland capitalism is relatively weak, while large financial magnates are scarce, small businessmen are prolific, particularly the small farmer. These middle-class elements have a traditional hatred for England."

In pursuing their anti-nationalist campaign the Northern Irish bourgeoisie blatantly used religion to keep at least Ulster within the British national state and the British market (differences of language or color of skin not being available for exploitation as reasons for taking a different path to that of the Catholic Irish Nationalists). As Paul wrote in the same article, "The purely economic basis of the political attitude of the North has been obscured by religious fanaticism....It is there that the propertied interests have used religion as a political factor in blinding the working class."

It is therefore important to see that religion came to have a national significance in Ireland. While we must obviously criticise religious sectarianism this contradiction is not one that can be simply removed by such a policy. Nor can the apparently religious divisions be shown to be insignificant by pointing to the number of idealistic protestant individuals who nevertheless took up the Irish Nationalist cause. Connolly wrote bluntly in 1911 in reply to William Walker who had referred to a number of protestant national leaders of the past:

"We do not care so much what a few men did, as what the vast mass of their co-religionists do. The vast mass of the Protestants in Ulster, except during the period of 1798, were bitter enemies of the men he has named." (8)

The Present Struggle In Northern Ireland.

The result of the national struggles of the different sections of the bour-

geoisie in the British Isles during the era of rising capitalism may be broadly assessed as follows. The British bourgeoisie, based on the older English and Scottish bourgeoisies, had succeeded in consolidating Wales and Northern Ireland as part of the British market and British state, but the Southern Irish bourgeoisie succeeded at least for a time in breaking free. That section of the bourgeoisie in Ireland based on the protestant community successfully resisted imperialist exploitation in the 18th century but were incorporated into the British state in the 19th century on relatively equal terms with the British bourgeoisie, of which it became a component part.

The Irish Nationalist movement did not accept Northern Ireland's reluctance to take part in the struggle, and committed itself to separating Ulster from the rest of the United Kingdom despite the province's prolonged and often violent resistance to doing so. Yet although there remains a serious problem of Catholic oppression within Northern Ireland to be solved, we have now to accept that the national status of the territory has essentially been decided by history. Although we may think it better if history had turned out differently, it is not for us to attempt to reverse it: on the contrary, our task as Communists is to accelerate it by starting from the actually existing level of struggle.

As R. Mac-Lennan, a Scottish Communist, wrote in the Communist Review in October 1932, combatting the diversionary effects of a spurious Scottish national movement (led by Compton Mackenzie):

"How do we as Communists, treat the national question? In determining what a nation is the main factors to be considered are 1. That in a given country there is a distinct economy and a bourgeois democratic movement, both of which are being hindered and suppressed by an oppressing nation. 2. There is a definite national culture--songs, poetry, music, dancing, etc. 3. There is a separate language. It is not our job to create national movements where there is no basis for this, because 'the masses understand the advantages of big states, big markets, and will only agree to separation if the national yoke imposed upon them makes joint existence impossible' (Lenin). 'Our programme on the national question only exists where a bourgeois democratic movement exists' (Lenin)."

There is then no basis for a national movement in Northern Ireland now because the bourgeois democratic revolution has basically been completed--as part of the British nation and British state. Apart from the struggle against Catholic oppression there, the stage reached in Northern Ireland is the same as it is in the rest of the United Kingdom state, that is, the stage of socialist revolution.

At the second congress of the Communist International in 1920, the congress at which Lenin presented the important "Report of the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions", Speaker 'Y' from Ireland described even then the similarities between Northern Ireland and the rest of Britain in the basic political situation and political tasks to be faced:

"The situation in Ulster, or at least the north-east portion of that province, differs from that in the rest of the country. In many respects it presents to Communists a less complicated problem than do the other parts of Ireland. The majority of the population of this section are anti-nationalist and antagonistic to the rest of the country. While this is itself a complication, the class issue is clearer cut; political oppression is not here confused in the mind of the workers with economic oppression. The fact that Ulster is the industrial centre of Ireland, that the nationalist issue is subordinated, and that it considers itself an integral part of the British Empire, makes the problem similar to that presented by any large industrial centre in England."

The working class in Northern Ireland must be rallied to overcome sectarianism and join with the working class in the rest of the United Kingdom in a common fight for socialist revolution against the British bourgeoisie.

"Ireland One Nation."

This essentially completes what I hope is a condensed but coherent account based on factual research and historical materialism, of the national status of Northern Ireland and the implications this has for policy today. Yet it would probably be unwise to stop at this point without dealing with a number of seri-

ous theoretical traps scattered through the Irish question in which much time can be wasted by those who are not aware of the problems they entail. Perhaps the most serious of these lies in the slogan, *Ireland One Nation*.

I have already shown that by the end of the 19th century the bourgeoisie of the two parts of Ireland were pursuing two completely different "home markets", and that this alone is enough to disqualify them from leading a single nation in the scientific Marxist sense of the word. Furthermore, bearing in mind the importance of the unified nation state for a national movement, it is quite impossible to argue that two communities actively striving to be part of two different nation states can be regarded as one nation.

In fact the slogan *Ireland one nation* does not describe what is, but what the speaker considers should be. It is once again an attempt arbitrarily to reverse the history of Northern Ireland; at the same time it is a significant admission that *Ireland* is **not** yet one nation. This point is dramatically emphasised by the way the Officials still hold up in 1973 as an uncompleted task, the programme of the revolutionary bourgeois nationalist of 1798, Wolfe Tone, to "form for the future but one people" with the common name of Irishmen.

A "United Ireland"

The call for a "United Ireland" is another slogan that obscures and confuses more than it reveals. It is particularly dangerous because it can be taken two completely different ways, by the nationalists and the imperialists.

In the mouths of the Nationalists it conceals the daunting demand that the million protestants should be persuaded to separate from the United Kingdom. We need only consider briefly how fiercely and at times violently the protestants have, throughout the last 50 years, been led to defend their determination to be part of the British state, and on the other hand what few attractions there are from a bourgeois nationalist point of view to persuade them to prefer the Irish Republic to the United Kingdom. And if the protestants cannot be **persuaded** of this the implications of such a line are very serious, the implications being those carried out in practice by the Provisions in their terrorist campaign.

But by contrast, for the British rulingclass, a "United Ireland" should come about by the Irish Republic being induced to move nearer the United Kingdom, i.e. by accepting and rationalising British domination of its economy. For the British government this was the intention behind the provisions for a "Council of Ireland" in the Government of Ireland Act of 1920: the possibility of unity with the North was to be the bait to prevent the Irish Nationalist movement in the South from moving too far in an anti-imperialist direction. Correspondingly, Ulster was to be (and still is) the possible Trojan horse for the interests of the British ruling class in Ireland.

Of these two types of "United Ireland" it is important to see clearly that nowadays it is the second type that is the likelier outcome (9). For this reason all those who would oppose an extension and rationalisation of the power of the British bourgeoisie throughout the British Isles should avoid this ambiguous slogan.

Trotskyists believe they get round this problem by calling for a United **Socialist** Ireland, thereby illustrating their characteristic belief in revolutionary flames leaping swiftly and almost simultaneously across national boundaries regardless of the precise objective and subjective conditions in any particular state. But a simultaneous revolution in the two parts of Ireland is not to be expected: it is therefore essential to make clear to the masses what stage of the revolution is the main one to be accomplished; socialist or national. The Trotskyist slogan sounds very revolutionary but fatally confuses the masses about the immediate concrete tasks that confront them.

British Imperialism

The loose use of the term 'British Imperialism' in connection with Northern Ireland is another example of the type of approach that conceals more than it reveals. In a situation where it is essential to distinguish whether the principal contradiction is a national one or a class one, many left organisations in Britain have taken advantage of the ambiguity involved in the idea of imperialism ever since Lenin defined it not only as a form of oppression between coun-

tries but also as the monopoly stage of capitalism. Thus many articles have been written denouncing the evil of British imperialism in Northern Ireland without making it clear whether the oppression is like that in Aden a few years ago, or like that in Sheffield today, i.e. national or class in character.

Who Votes on Northern Ireland

Some Irish nationalist sources try in yet another way to turn a blind eye to the repeatedly expressed determination of the million protestants of Ulster to remain part of the United Kingdom. They argue that Northern Ireland has no right to vote on its own in this matter: the voting body should be the whole of Ireland.

In fact, such an argument is inconsistent with the Leninist view of how the working class should fight for the solution of national problems on the basis of "consistent democracy" (10). In section 9 of "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination" Lenin criticises the Menshevik, Semkovsky, for raising a spurious question about how members of the Russian Diet should vote on the question of Polish secession from the Russian Empire. He writes:

"From this it is evident that Mr. Semkovsky does not even understand the point at issue! It did not occur to him that the right to secession presupposes the settlement of the question by a parliament (Diet, referendum, etc.) of the seceding region, not by a central parliament."

(Lenin's emphasis)

This makes it clear that in pursuing the settlement of the national question on the basis of the most consistent democracy, the people of Northern Ireland would for Marxist-Leninists always have the right (11) not to join the southern state. It is true that Lenin never had occasion to argue that a particular region has a right to **remain** part of a given state if it wishes, but it seems certain that his approach on this point too would have been similar. In general (at least for the complicated national problems of Europe) his policy was to encourage the settlement of national conflicts by the most peaceable methods possible and to preserve popular energy for the class war.

All this of course is different from saying that the boundary that was drawn between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic took the most democratic route, but in the absence of popular pressure for redrawing the boundary it would be politically diversionary to push this issue forward now.

Northern Ireland as a Colony

As some of the previous points suggest, the Nationalist analysis in the main rests on ambiguity and wishful-thinking. It is at its **most** scientific when it formally argues that the Irish Republic is a neo-colony of Britain and that Northern Ireland is a colony of Britain. Thus the 'Worker' (1st October 1972) writes: *We in the C.P.B.M.L. have consistently stated that the problems of Northern Ireland stem from its colonial status, from the fact that it is under the heel of an occupation force doing British monopoly capitalism's dirty work.*

The argument that the Irish Republic is a neo-colony is certainly one to be studied carefully; but on the other hand the claim that Northern Ireland is a colony is not supported by any serious Marxist analysis that I have been able to find. The problem is intensified by the surprising lack of precise information of what a colony is.

In modern Marxist usage, a colony is usually understood to be that form of organisation by which an imperialist power directly controls and exploits an oppressed people. A C.P.G.B. pamphlet of 1930 (12) gives a fuller and useful description of a colonial country:

In a colonial country, whether the territory has actually been annexed by one of the imperialist powers or not, the following general conditions are found: (a) The development of productive forces is at a low level, and agrarian and mineral products are the most important. (b) There are survivals of social and economic relations belonging to pre-capitalist systems (tribal and feudal). (c) The state machine within the colony is controlled by a foreign power.

Thus it is clear that Northern Ireland is excluded from being a colony on each of these three counts. As for the C.P.B.M.-L.'s statement about an occupation force, this of course also seriously mis-states the voluntary position

which the majority of people in Northern Ireland have within the British state. "Colony" is however occasionally used in another sense to mean a settler or emigrant colony of nationals from a metropolitan country who have migrated to another country (13). In this sense Marx described the United States as a colony even in the 19th century, and from this point of view it is true that Northern Ireland was once a colony of Britain. However to use the term now would seriously mislead people about the voluntary nature of its participation in the UK economy and state.

Northern Ireland shares with other parts of the United Kingdom certain economic disadvantages common to regions on the periphery of a large monopoly capitalist market. There is a tendency for local industry to decline, which can only be counteracted by subsidising capitalist investment, wages are characteristically lower and unemployment is higher than in South-East England. All this however can only be called "regional" oppression, and is found in parts of England too: it does not amount specifically to a **national** form of oppression.

Where for example the Officials actually give evidence in support of their claim that Northern Ireland is a colony, it is to show the large number of businesses owned by British firms there. Whether this argument is significant or not can be tested in only one way, and that is to compare business ownership in Northern Ireland with that of a comparable region in England. Accordingly research was undertaken to test this point.

The area chosen for comparison was the County of Durham. This has a similar population to Northern Ireland (i.e. 1,400,000), has a number of older industries now in decline like Northern Ireland and, also like that province, receives regional subsidies for investment. Using identical methods of sampling and analysis for each area, and taking a sample of businesses employing a total of about 100,000 workers in each region, it emerged that on the basis of this survey the proportion of these workers employed by firms based outside the region was 46% in the case of Northern Ireland and in fact 51% for the County of Durham. (14)

This at the very least this research must show that argument based on the number of Northern Irish businesses owned in Britain cannot in itself prove that Northern Ireland is a colony (and if so would imply that there is an even greater case for calling the County of Durham a colony!) But reviewing the evidence and lack of evidence overall, it is clear that a rising proportion of businesses not owned locally is a feature of the increasing monopolisation of capitalism within a single market and nothing more. Northern Ireland is not a colony but a part of the United Kingdom economy and state.

Past Marxist Analysis of Northern Ireland

Marx and Engels in their contemporary writings on Ireland wrote mainly about the agrarian struggle and its political effects, and said little about Ulster. Lenin, as he himself said, did not make a systematic investigation of Irish history, and under-estimated the strength of the Unionist movement, appearing in 1914 to describe it as a landlords' revolt or a "Black Hundred gang". He called their threatened rebellion against the Liberal government "an empty threat" because "there can be no question of a rebellion by a handful of hooligans". (15)

With hindsight now we can see that this is the sort of mistake that a great Marxist-Leninist leader, working on inadequate information, can make from time to time and does not detract from his stature or the importance of his ideas. But we now at any rate have a duty to make an overall analysis of Irish history and understand why certain events have happened.

When it first became clear in 1914 that there was a real and immediate danger of the protestant counties of Ulster not taking part in the planned Irish Nationalist state, Connolly insisted that strong efforts should be made to include Ulster. Certainly there was much to be gained if this could be achieved: the British imperialist state would be that much weaker, the Irish nation state would have had that much greater a chance of pursuing a successful policy independent of British imperialism, and the possibility of a long and divisive struggle between the two communities in Ireland over the position of the border and the treatment of minorities within the two parts might have been avoided. Thus at the time Connolly's policy was essentially a correct one (although it should be said he was wrong in denying the **right** of the protestant community to

a separate vote on their national status and he was wrong in saying that should be compelled to take part in the Irish nation state.) (16). But what was a correct policy in 1914 before the situation had become crystallised is by no means necessarily a correct policy today if it involves attempting to reverse a national decision that has lasted for over fifty year.

After Connolly's time the Communist International, perhaps influenced by the generally-held expectation of eventual Irish unity, nurtured for quite different reasons by both the imperialists and the nationalists after 1920, encouraged the formation of one Communist Party for the whole of Ireland; which unfortunately had only patchy success. Where serious Marxist analysis on Ireland is available in the inter-war years it is mainly confined to the need for the Communists in the Republic to join in the national liberation struggle from a position of complete political independence from the bourgeois and petty bourgeois nationalists. Little was written giving Communists in the North a serious and unmistakable anti-imperialist orientation. In fact by 1945 the Communist Party of Northern Ireland was able to declare without embarrassment:

"The Communist Party definitely states that it will not advocate any change in Northern Ireland's constitutional position. We are convinced that within the present framework, and under the provision of the Government of Ireland Act, 1920, the people of Northern Ireland have sufficient scope to develop along democratic lines..." (17)

From the Communist literature it has been possible to survey, in retrospect the most significant passage seems to be that of Speaker 'Y' at the Second Congress of the Communist International when he said that in Northern Ireland "the class issue is clearer cut", "the nationalist issue is subordinated" and the problem is "similar to that presented by any large industrial centre in England". The implications arising from these points have still to be carried through by the Communist movement.

The precise tactics necessary for struggle in Northern Ireland in the present complex situation can only be decided in the light of the experience of comrades working there and have not been examined in this article. But the general line of strategy can definitely be spelled out. While combatting sectarianism and suppression of the democratic rights of the Catholics, we need an organisation that will basically lead the working class of Northern Ireland in the struggle for socialism. Together with the working class in the rest of the United Kingdom, they must bring about the overthrow of the bourgeoisie throughout the entire British state.

D.B.

Notes

1. Among the errors that the B&ICO make are the following:
 - (i) They do not recognise the progressive nature of the historical Irish Nationalist struggle as being a just struggle against oppression and one that also significantly weakened the British imperialist ruling class close to its heartland.
 - (ii) They do not actively support the present struggle of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland against oppression.
 - (iii) By their presentation of the situation in Northern Ireland, in which they reserve most of their criticism for the Catholic bourgeois and make little or no criticism of the Protestant bourgeoisie, they actually fan protestant chauvinism.
 - (iv) They deny that the Northern Ireland bourgeoisie intensified divisions on religious lines among working class people for its own purposes.
2. It is fair to say that without consciously employing a dialectical materialist approach it is impossible to analyse the Irish question coherently. Both systematic materialism and the dialectical method of analysing contradictions are essential to avoid confusion. Conversely careful study of the complexity of the Irish question provides extremely valuable practice in the dialectical method.
3. 1914. A very valuable article on the national question, where mere asides and half sentences strikingly illuminate the Marxist theory of national movements and illustrate the whole Marxist approach to concrete problems in general.
4. A study of Welsh history has not been made as part of the preparation for this article; nevertheless in the sense that no specifically Welsh bourgeoisie appears ever to have existed, the comment here about Wales seems to be a correct starting position. This does not deny the continuing problem of democratic

rights for Welsh-speakers.

5. Quoted in the 3rd edition of the E and LCC's pamphlet, "The Economics of Partition" (1970), but not in the 4th edition (1972). The paper was "The Witness" 12th March 1886. The predictions are undoubtedly generally true: if investment in the industries of Ulster had been frightened away by the possibility of their being cut off from their markets by a trade war between Britain and Ireland, then Ulster industry would in time have fallen in the face of competition from rival capitalists who were capable of attracting investment to continue to revolutionise the means of production. There was no state policy for large firms.

6. August 8th 1914. In "Ireland Upon the Dissecting Table: Connolly on Ulster and Partition". This is a valuable collection of passages from articles by Connolly between 1911 and 1916 and illustrates his response to changing problems. He is a sharp critic of idealist bourgeois nationalists. Published by the Cork Workers Club, 9 St Nicholas Church Place, Cove St., Cork, with a nationalist introduction on Northern Ireland.

7. This article was published with a few additions as a pamphlet by the CPGB in 1974. Like a number of later references, it is in the Marx Memorial Library, 21, Kenwood Green, London EC1.

8. "Ireland", 10th June 1911. Also in "Ireland Upon the Dissecting Table". It is sometimes alleged that there was continuity of the struggle between the United Irishmen and the movement to repeal the Act of Union in 1843. Although Thomas Davis, editor of "The Nation", tried strenuously to preserve in the Repeal Movement the policies of Wolfe Tone designed to embrace both the Catholic and Protestant communities, significantly he lost out in this to O'Connell, the Catholic nationalist. That protestant support there was for Repeal was conditioned on it not going too far, and was counterbalanced by strong declarations of opposition from the Orange Order. The movement, and all subsequent nationalist movements were basically Catholic and did not draw the mass of Protestants into their ranks.

T.A. Jackson's book, "Ireland Her Own", published in 1947, rather gives the impression of continuity, but the work should be treated with caution as a scientific Marxist analysis. For one thing there are no references, and no serious discussion of Communist theory on Ireland.

9. The railways in Northern Ireland are being modified on an all-Ireland basis. In June 1977 the Dublin Stock Exchange voted to amalgamate with the other stock exchanges in the British Isles, including Belfast.

10. Section 1 of Lenin's "Critical Remarks on the National Question" (1913).

11. Marxist-Leninists agree for a careful distinction between the rights of a nation and what a nation should actually do in the concrete circumstances, or what decision Leninist should lead it to take in exercising those rights.

12. "The National Question: A Study Syllabus for Workers". The date is approximate. There is probably a lot to be learned from the early work of the CPGB.

13. "The Thesis on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-Colonies" from the report of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International, July-August 1928, is probably the best thing available on colonialism. It not only brings out this interesting and very significant distinction between two types of colonies but also explains in a precise and all-round way the different features of colonialism.

It seems correct to see aspects of both types of colony in the history of Ireland: features of the imperialist type of colony in connection with the Catholic population, and features of the emigrant colony in connection with the Protestant population.

14. The samples taken were all the businesses listed in the Kompass trade directory, 1971 edition, under the two regions which stated the number of their employees. Each firm was then looked up in "The Owns Whom", 1971 edition, and if recorded there as a subsidiary or an associate of a company based outside the region in question, the business was noted as such. If not it was listed as being locally owned.

For a number of reasons the figures probably understate the proportion of business activity basically controlled from outside the region, and there are other variables too; but as these should be the same for both regions, the

value of the survey as a **comparison** still stands. Exactly the same methods were used for each region.

Concerning the absolute value of the figures, in a 'Financial Times' survey of 12th April 1972, out of a total of employees in manufacturing in Northern Ireland of 185,000, 100,000 (i.e. 54%) were given as being employed by companies with headquarters outside the province. The comparable figures in our survey were 42,947 employees out of a total of 93,444 (46%).

15. See "The British Liberals and Ireland" and "Constitutional Crisis in Britain" in numbers 34 and 57 of "Put Pravdy", March 12th and April 10th 1914.

16. "The Irish Worker", 4th April 1914; in "Ireland upon the Dissecting Table".

17. The Communist Party had disbanded in the Republic as a result of its inability to follow the Comintern call for an anti-fascist united front in the war. The rapid degeneration of the Communist Party of Northern Ireland into revisionism as a result of not following an independent policy within that united front is suggested even in this brief extract from W.H. McCullough's speech to the Party Congress held in Belfast on March 3rd and 4th, 1945.

Discussion: The Origins of Revisionism in the USSR

NR's criticism of my article *The Origins and Development of Revisionism in the USSR* is welcome for several reasons. First, it argues a defence of Stalin which, although accepted by only a relative handful of Marxists in Britain, nevertheless has an inner consistency and seriousness that cannot be ignored. Secondly, the approach adopted in the article calls attention to the important problem of method in Marxist analysis of the transition between capitalism and socialism. And finally, it is welcome because it takes up the cudgels in a hard-hitting way in defence of the old, traditionalist position on the Soviet Union.

I want to start by saying that I reject **all** the specific criticisms made of my article and **all** the explanations offered by NR. But there is one respect in which my article and his reply must both be severely criticised: neither approaches its subject on the basis of a sufficiently sound Marxist method.

To treat the development of modern revisionism in a Marxist-Leninist way it is necessary to be clear about some of the vulgar-Marxist approaches that have been adopted. In particular there are two such approaches that must concern us, both of which in different ways fail to make a concrete dialectical materialist analysis of social and political reality in the Soviet Union.

The first, common to most bourgeois critics, revisionists and Trotskyists, is an empirical approach. Data are treated in a random manner, facts are considered outside any convincing theoretical framework and conclusions (particularly concerning the Stalin period) are drawn about the 'corruption of power', the 'cult of personality' or 'bureaucratic deformation'. The conclusions serve mainly to reinforce feelings of moral indignation about what are considered to be gross abuses of 'justice' (abstract or 'socialist'), but they do little or nothing to explain developments in the Soviet Union and are not real contributions to Marxism as a science of society. The other erroneous approach is that of vulgar-Marxism-Leninism and NR's article is a good example of it. Ostensibly more 'objective' in that such arguments make use of the phraseology of Marxism-Leninism (the appeal to consider 'objective circumstances', the 'intensification of class struggle under the dictatorship of the proletariat', the differentiation of social contradictions, etc.) this approach fails seriously to consider (let alone account for) the concrete particularity of its subject, but instead paints a canvas of broad generalisations. Whenever difficulties are encountered (such as the purges of the 1930's or the East European trials of the post-war period) resort is made to the official Soviet accounts of the time, and that is the end of the matter.

Neither of these approaches is genuinely Marxist because at one point or another each substitutes a speculative sociological or philosophical approach for dialectical materialism. A truly scientific socialist investigation of Soviet history must eschew all metaphysics. It is not good enough to fit subjectively interpreted facts into a pre-established pattern of generalisations about the course and development of Soviet society. That is idealism. The substitution of idealism or dialectical materialism at any point in any analysis of social reality is to relinquish a consistently **proletarian** approach. An investigation into the origins and development of revisionism which is not in its method consistently dialectical materialist, is itself a **revisionist** investigation.

Such an approach is evident in the very manner in which NR treats revisionism. He treats it in a metaphysical manner, as something abstracted from social reality. We read about the struggle between good 'Marxist-Leninists' and 'revisionists' without actually learning what is meant by revisionism in that context. In his polemic with Kautsky, Lenin subjected the latter's work to a careful criticism in minute detail exposing at each stage of his argument the bourgeois character of Kautsky's political theories. What emerged was not just an 'attack on revisionism' but a clarification of what was meant by 'revisionism'. Vulgar Marxism-Leninism abandons the method of analysis developed by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Gramsci, Mao and others and substitutes a mechanical metaphysics of frozen categories.

Thus 'revisionism' and 'Marxism-Leninism' and other

definitive terms become stripped of meaning as living descriptions assisting our understanding of the movement of society and transformed into the terminology of sectarian dogma. Vulgar Marxism-Leninism is quite unable to examine **its own** method and practice as an expression of the struggle within the material-social world because it has already, in the process of becoming vulgarised, severed the connection between theory and practice and established itself as yet another form of idealist interpretation of the world. In NR's article this approach shows through on every page. Thus, for example, the effect (on P.53) of describing *On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat* as 'this revisionist document' is to damn it from the start. The alleged revisionism of the document is supposed to be manifest in the criticism it contains of Stalin and of the Cominform's expulsion of Yugoslavia in 1948. The whole approach rests upon an a priori acceptance of the staunchness of Stalin's Marxism. Revisionism ceases to be a practice and theory of bourgeois politics reflecting bourgeois class positions and interests carried through in the name of Marxism and the proletariat. It becomes an abstraction. This feature is also evident in the way NR treats my criticism of Stalin's clearly stated belief that a classless, communist society could be built in the Soviet Union while the state continued to exist and within an imperialist encirclement. 'Whilst this idea is **obviously not in accord with reality**' he writes, 'it is **in no way** a contributory factor to the rise of revisionism as Stalin never allowed the **idea** to prevent class struggle' (emphasis added). My whole point was that the theory itself was revisionist—a simple point—but one that NR seems to be incapable of understanding. Theories which are not in accord with reality are not Marxist theories—and if they purport to be, they are revisionist. NR accuses me of adopting a metaphysical approach, but it is difficult to imagine anything more metaphysical than his view, contained in the passage just quoted, that the existence or non-existence of class struggle can be determined by **ideas**—he never allowed the **idea** to prevent class struggle!

To understand revisionism in the Soviet Union is to understand how and why the workers' power established in 1917 came to be overthrown. No understanding is possible unless it is recognised that the period of transition to the classless society is, in the world-historic sense and in the case of each particular country, a period of intense Class struggle. The nature of proletarian dictatorship as a period of transition involving acute class conflict was stressed by Lenin—particularly in his polemic with Kautsky. The idea of a 'socialist establishment'—of socialism as a complete system as distinct from a transitional society—became widely accepted from the early 1930's, and although there was no explicit disjunction between the two concepts, the objective reality of Soviet society was theorised by Stalin in a confused and contractory way. Our main concern is not to establish whether he recognised the existence of classes and contradictions between classes (at times he wrote as though he did; at other times as though he didn't), but whether the policies pursued by Stalin and the Soviet leadership were consistently proletarian policies pursued by a proletarian leadership in struggle against the class enemy. We cannot be concerned with questions of policy disjoined from the realities of class power. How real was the political power of the working class in the Soviet Union between the death of Lenin and the death of Stalin?

The State

Central to Lenin's concept of the 'state of the dictatorship of the proletariat' is its negation not merely of the bourgeois state but of the 'state as a state'. He follows Engels and Marx in emphasising that the proletarian 'state' is a '**semi-state**', i.e. it is **no longer** a state in the previously accepted sense of the term. It is separated from all previous class states not simply in the **quantitative** sense that it organises the majority of the exploited against the minority of exploiters, but also in the **qualitative** sense that it is the means of its own necessary destruction. The proletarian state is from its inception in the process of withering away. Unless the post-revolutionary organisation and exercise of power is such that the masses of workers, poor peasants and intermediate strata are drawn increasingly into the administration of affairs, there must develop a widening gulf between the masses and those who exercise power on their behalf. For Lenin **soviet** power meant that 'democracy', introduced as fully and consistently as it is at all conceivable, is transformed from bourgeois democracy into proletarian democracy; from the state (= a special force for the suppression of a particular class) into some-

thing which is **no longer really the state.** (*State and Revolution*, P.242).

In the tradition of vulgar-Marxism, what Marx, Engels and Lenin had to say about the '**semi-state**' character of proletarian dictatorship/democracy has been largely ignored. The 'proletarian state' is treated precisely as a 'special force', emphasis is laid exclusively on the continuation of class struggle and the 'state's withering away' is seen as an eventuality in the distant future rather than as a continuing dialectical process intrinsically related to the character of proletarian dictatorship/democracy as a 'semi-state'.

And in the Soviet Union itself, the State was treated in the same way during the Stalin era. It actually was a 'special force' whose functions were separated from the Soviet masses. The security organs, the armed forces and other administrative bodies came to function in a manner similar to the way their counterparts functioned in bourgeois states. To the extent that this was the case, the proletariat had failed to establish its political control as a class over its representative organs. Only if the conditions are created in which bureaucratic control can be eliminated can the proletarian dictatorship complete its historic role—the elimination of class society. In the Soviet Union the proletariat did not succeed in firmly establishing its political power.

NR recognises this in what he says about the serious weakening of the proletariat during the wars of intervention and the civil war. But he is led to the fatalistic conclusion that possibly *given the objective circumstances of the period of socialist reconstruction, such a counter-revolution* (i.e. Khrushchev's take-over after Stalin's death — MF) *was inevitable.* In spite of NR's denial that his view bears relation to Trotskyism, there are, it seems to be, respects in which it is similar.

It is a view according to what a continued forward progress in socialist construction is rendered impossible because of **objective circumstances.** By 'objective circumstances' is clearly meant circumstances over which the masses and their political representative organs can exercise **no decisive control.** Thus real proletarian dictatorship/democracy is rendered **impossible** (not just extremely difficult, but **impossible**) because of the crushing weight of Russian backwardness. According to such a perspective Stalin and the policies he pursued can either be interpreted as the **inevitable** bureaucratic outgrowth of those overwhelmingly hostile 'objective' conditions and seen as a grotesque deformation upon an economically sound set of production relations, **or** they can be regarded as representing a desperate proletarian political struggle (**within** a bureaucratic apparatus inevitably thrown up by Russian backwardness!) **against** myriad counter-revolutionary odds that must inevitably triumph. Both conclusions share the same premises; both regard Stalinism as **necessary**, i.e. **inevitably** produced by certain objective conditions.

But if we consider whether or not at any given stage of Soviet development alternative policies could have been adopted, we are brought to recognise the crude determinism involved in adopting the above position. There is little doubt, I think, that many, if not most, of the errors referred to in my original article could have been avoided, and that the gross injustices against countless innocent during the Stalin period need not have taken place.

In dealing with some of the points referred to in NR's article, I hope to show that the overall approach he has adopted does not help us to understand the period in question. The unsystematic way in which NR treats the subject of revisionism is evident in what he says about Soviet policy in the immediate post-war period. He says that the agreements at Teheran, Yalta and Potsdam were 'bourgeois practices' in which were reflected the increased power the bourgeois had accumulated in the Soviet State during the war, but, in treating them thus he tries, by a wave of the magic wand, to spirit Stalin out of the picture. Didn't Stalin lead the Soviet negotiating teams at Teheran, Yalta and Potsdam? But, says NR, *at the same time the Marxist-Leninists in the Party headed by Stalin, Zhdanov, Beria and Vyshinsky were able to prevent them (the bourgeois elements) from seizing complete control and were able to defend the socialist economic base of the Soviet Union.*

Stalin and Peaceful Transition

This abstract theory according to which, after the war, the struggle against overwhelming revisionist odds was waged by Stalin and a faithful band of

loyal revolutionaries, serves only as a convenient ex post facto rationale to explain certain awkward aspects of Soviet policy at the end of World War II. The fact is that between 1945 and 1947 the revisionism that NR and others are prepared to admit characterised Soviet policy was, according to the available evidence, supported by Stalin. Let us take one example.

From 1944 the view prevailed in Moscow and throughout the W European CP's that the defeat of fascism by the Red Army had created new possibilities for the establishment of socialism in a number of countries (including Great Britain) without armed struggle and **without the dictatorship of the proletariat**. The particular conjuncture in which such a view came to prevail needs to be carefully considered in more detail than is possible here. Given the tremendous significance of the Soviet victory in the East and the collapse of reaction throughout Europe in 1945, it is not altogether surprising that such a course might have seemed possible to communists. But this does not alter the fact that the perspective of 'People's Democratic' advance to socialism which prevailed between 1945 and 1947 was essentially revisionist. It is **precisely such theories**—i.e. the claim that a peaceful, parliamentary transition to socialism is possible and that it can be accomplished without the dictatorship of the proletariat, that constitute the essence of revisionism. Such was the perspective held out by Stalin in 1946.

It is interesting that NR does not mention in his article my reference to Stalin's talk with the British Labour Party delegation in 1946. It is worth recalling the views he expressed on that occasion. The British Communist Party's paper, *The Daily Worker*, in an editorial on August 24th 1946 entitled *The Road to Socialism* (devoted largely to arguing the CP's importance in helping solve the Labour Government's fuel problem) says: *Stalin told Morgan Phillips that there are two roads to socialism—the Russian and the British. He emphasised the historical differences between the two countries and said that Britain could advance along the road to socialism by the parliamentary method.* In case it may be thought either that Stalin only expressed such a view to Phillips in order to gain some political advantage, it should also be recalled that he expressed the same view to the Czech Communist leader, Klement Gottwald, at more or less the same time. At a meeting of the Czech CP's Central Committee in September 1946, Gottwald declared: *Very likely you have read in the press the news of Comrade Stalin's talk with a delegation of British Labour Party members. It was a discussion with officials of the Labour Party the main subject of which was summed up in the 'Daily Herald' by one of the participants, M. Phillips. He says, inter alia: there are two roads to socialism, one is the Russian, the other the British, and it is clear that each in its own way intends to achieve its socialist goals. The Russian path is shorter and more difficult and has brought with it bloodshed. Nevertheless it is necessary to keep in mind that the followers of Marx and Lenin do not regard this as the only path to socialism. The parliamentary path is not one of bloodletting but it is a longer one.*

*This was a conversation in which Comrade Stalin touched on the different paths to socialism. During my last visit to Moscow I had a similar conversation with Stalin. Comrade Stalin said that as experience has shown and as the classics of Marxism-Leninism teach us, there does not exist only one path leading through Soviets and the dictatorship of the proletariat, but under a given constellation there can be other paths. And Comrade Stalin said: Right now, following the defeat of Hitlerite Germany in the Second World War which, on the one hand cost so many lives, and on the other hand exposed the ruling class in so many countries, the awareness of the national masses has grown. Given such historical opportunities we can see many possibilities and paths for the socialist movement. For instance, take Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Poland, and he particularly named our country, saying that here a special road to socialism is possible which need not lead through the Soviet system and through the dictatorship of the proletariat but which can move along other paths, as we now see in practice in other countries. (Quoted in *Some Problems Regarding the Czechoslovak Road to Socialism* by Joseph Belda, *History of Socialism Year Book* 1968, Prague).*

NR's belief that Stalin had no part in framing the revisionist policies that prevailed in the European Communist parties after the war is without foundation. Similarly, his interpretation of the campaign against Yugoslavia in 1948, which he cites as evidence of Stalin's determined struggle against revisionism, is a crude

over-simplification of the facts. There is no evidence that Stalin opposed the theory of 'people's democracy' growing peacefully into socialism in Eastern Europe-- indeed, there is little doubt that he initiated the theory. Likewise, there is no evidence that he disapproved of the blatantly class-collaborationist policies pursued by the Communist Parties of Western Europe (most notably by the CPGB) between 1945 and 1947. Certainly the Soviet line changed in 1947, but it is quite incorrect to interpret the re-evaluation of policy that emerged at the inaugural meeting of the Cominform as an attempt to check revisionism. There is a much simpler, and more accurate, explanation.

The Cominform Conference of September 1947

At the end of the war one of the major objectives of Stalin's foreign policy was to prevent the capitalist states from turning on the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was at once stronger and weaker than at any time since the end of the civil war. Its international prestige was tremendous. It ranked with the USA as one of the two greatest powers in the world. But the Soviet Union had suffered enormous war losses. Its people were exhausted. To proceed successfully with the huge tasks of reconstruction peace was essential. Thus, there was a genuine desire to preserve the war-time alliance, and as far as possible to ensure that the Soviet Union would not become embroiled in any commitments that might bring her into armed conflict with Britain or the USA. In the Conferences of 1944 and 1945, bargains were struck that would, as far as possible from the Soviet point of view, facilitate a progressive, democratic development in those parts of Europe where the Soviet Union was to have influence. It is difficult to know to what extent the Soviet leaders really believed in the possibility of continuing the war-time alliance in 1945. What is clear is that they were not prepared in the countries assigned by the war-time conferences to the Western allied sphere of influence, to encourage or support or directly challenge the capitalist system itself. The strength of the Communist Parties in such countries as Italy and France was such that the prospect of social revolution was very real. Such was also the case in Greece. The line followed by the two most powerful Communist Parties in Europe -- the French and the Italian -- was one of seeking (and achieving) positions in bourgeois governments. This line met with no disapproval from the CPSU until 1947, although the armed uprising in Greece (which was supposed to fall within the British sphere of influence) was treated very coolly by Stalin and was considered to have no prospects of success.

The blatant revisionism of the European Communist Parties went unchecked until September 1947. By that time it had become clear that the hopes held out for a continuation of the war-time co-operation between the USSR and the capitalist countries had been naive in the extreme. US Marshall Aid was designed to stabilise and strengthen the capitalist order throughout Europe, to prevent revolution wherever it was likely to occur, and to turn it back where it already had. The 'Cold War' had started.

At the founding conference of the Cominform it was recognised that imperialism was on the offensive and that a new counter-offensive strategy would need to be developed by the Communist Parties. The conference was attended by representatives of nine Communist Parties -- seven in Eastern Europe and two (the Italian and the French) in Western Europe. The Cominform was thus to be a purely European organisation. It is interesting to note that neither the Albanians (who had waged a successful liberation struggle and taken power in 1944) nor the Greeks (who were in 1947 in the middle of a heroic liberation war) were invited to attend the conference.

At the conference the Yugoslav delegates, Djilas and Kardelj, were asked by the Soviet representative, Zhdanov, to open an attack on the parliamentary policies of the French and Italian Parties. The Yugoslav Party had long been critical of the parliamentary cretinism of the French and the Italians, and subjected their policies to a scathing criticism. The episode is significant in a number of respects. Firstly, it should be noted that in September 1947 the Yugoslav CP was still regarded as the most prestigious and the most militant in Eastern Europe. The Yugoslavs appeared to be closer to the CPSU than any other party. Secondly much of the criticism levelled against the French and Italian Parties was of policies which had previously been approved by the Soviet Party. Luigi Longo pointed out that the war-time policy of the PCI (severely criticised by the Yugoslavs with Zhdanov's backing at this conference) had been carried

out on Moscow's instructions. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the Soviets instructed the Jugoslavs to lead the attack on Longo and Duclos. The significance of what may seem to be a trifle can best be seen in the context of the re-shaping of Soviet policy towards the Peoples' Democracies in the shadow of the Cold War. Until 1947 Stalin supported the theory of independent 'National' roads to socialism. The communists in coalition governments in the various East European countries took this seriously. Second to Stalin himself the Communist leader whose prestige stood higher than any other in Europe was Tito. Before 1948 the internal situation in Yugoslavia was economically and politically no worse (and in many respects it was better) than in other states of Eastern Europe. With the exceptions of Yugoslavia and Albania, the Communist Parties in Eastern Europe depended very heavily on Soviet support for the key roles they were playing in their respective countries. From the time it became clear that the Soviet Union was dangerously threatened by imperialism, Soviet policy was directed towards eliminating the 'national independence' it had previously sanctioned and encouraged in the neighbouring states, and replacing it with a 'monolithic' unity. Tito and the Yugoslav Party leadership were neither more nor less revisionist than the Czechs, the Poles and the Hungarians. They were simply stronger and less dependent on the Soviet Union. In the changed circumstances of 1947-1948, what had two years before been considered a virtue was now regarded as a vice. This is not to say that the Eastern European Communist Parties were not following revisionist policies. They were. But as we have seen, the theory of 'peaceful transition' through 'people's democracy' without the dictatorship of the proletariat was expounded by Stalin himself. Gottwald, Slansky, Gomulka, Minc, Dimitrov, Tito and others were acting in accord with it. And, of course, the theory was thoroughly revisionist.

Stalin had probably already decided by late 1947 that the Yugoslav Party constituted the biggest obstacle to the successful reversal of the 'specific roads to socialism' line that had prevailed up to that time, and he was faced with the prospect of an independent and possibly divergent Yugoslavia acting as a powerful attraction to other neighbouring people's democracies. The bitterness that developed in the relations between the Jugoslavs and the Communist Parties of France and Italy as a result of the Yugoslav attack on their post-war policies, certainly helped to isolate Yugoslavia from the two most powerful Western Parties. After the publication of the Cominform resolution, on July 5th 1948, Duclos, in an *Humanité* article wrote that the Jugoslavs had not dared to publish in their own press the text of the resolution condemning their policies. In fact it had been published in *Borba* a week earlier, but in spite of the Jugoslavs' demand for a correction, Duclos ignored them. Needless to say, the Yugoslav reply to the charges in the resolution was **not** published in the Soviet Union or any of the People's Democracies.

Whether the Yugoslav Party was pursuing revisionist policies prior to 1948 is not the real point. Following the resolution, 'revisionism' was not the main charge brought against Tito: he was accused of being an **imperialist spy**. The charge was first made by Zhdanov at the Bucharest conference that pronounced the final anathema on Yugoslavia. There was some opposition to accepting the resolution the Russians were proposing, and the 'imperialist spy' charge was brought up in that context. No serious evidence was ever presented to substantiate this charge and, in the light of what followed later in almost all the People's Democracies, it can be said that it was a complete fabrication cooked up to serve the national chauvinist aims of Soviet foreign policy in its determination to bend all the Eastern European states to the Soviet will.

Jugoslavia's decisive swing towards imperialism can be seen largely as a **consequence** of Stalin's treatment of their case in 1948 and **not**, as was argued at that time, a **cause** of that treatment. Stalin and the Soviet leadership were guilty of the most blatant interference in the internal affairs of another country. Both in the appeal to Yugoslav citizens to repudiate their government if it refused to comply with Soviet dictated demands, and in numerous other instances prior to and following the Cominform resolution, the Soviet Union violated the sovereignty of another state in **open contradiction** of its declared policy of respect for the independence and sovereignty of other countries. The Chinese reference in *On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat* to the bad treatment the Jugoslavs had received at Stalin's hands, was a **perfectly justified comment**, and, in my view, certainly cannot be construed as a sign of Chinese revisionism.

The Slansky Trial

Within the same context we may examine the Slansky Trial in Czechoslovakia, briefly referred to in my original article.

NR says that my charge that the trial was a frame-up would be more appropriate 'gracing the pages of the *Guardian* rather than *MLQ*. All I can say to that is that if the charges are true we must face them, regardless of how they are treated by the bourgeois press. And I have no doubt that the charges are true.

It would take too long to detail all the evidence in support of this claim, but some mention can be made of sources. However, it is necessary to say at the outset that I do not expect to convince those whose minds are already firmly made up to the contrary without even having examined the evidence. It is very easy to reject all the sources I shall mention as 'bourgeois' sources and therefore unreliable. This is what NR does. In his opinion, because the evidence comes from 'Czech emigre bourgeois and Zionist sources and from ultra-revisionists like Dubcek and Sik and from common-or-garden revisionists like Husak, it is to be rejected. I think that it is more profitable to examine all the evidence available, from whichever source, in an attempt to get to the truth about what really happened. Otherwise we shall find ourselves in the blind-alley of mechanical 'Marxist' dogmatism according to which we accept the Court records and the account of the Prague Public Prosecutor because we 'trust' comrade Stalin, and reject the accounts given by the survivors of the Trial and by the Commission of Enquiry set up in Czechoslovakia later, because we 'distrust' revisionists.

What is the evidence: fourteen leading members of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and Government were convicted in the main 'Slansky' Trial of 1952 on charges of treason, economic sabotage, murder etc. They were accused of being 'Trotskyite, Titoite, Zionist bourgeois nationalist traitors' who had formed 'in the service of the American imperialists and directed by western spy-groups, an anti-state conspiratorial centre.' They were also supposed to have aimed at 'liquidating the people's democratic regime in Czechoslovakia, reintroducing capitalism, dragging our republic once again into the camp of imperialism, and destroying its sovereignty and independence.' Eleven of the fourteen defendants were Jews and their 'Jewish origin' was in each case stressed in the indictment. All fourteen were found guilty and eleven of them were executed. The remaining three were sentenced to life imprisonment. The evidence proving that the defendants were **not guilty** of the crime with which they were charged is contained principally in the detailed accounts given of the methods for extracting false confessions in the following publications: (1) *Czechoslovak Political Trials 1950-1954* edited by Jiri Pelikan. (This is the report of the Commission established by CC of the CPCz. in 1968 presided over by **Piller**, which had the task of investigating all the facts concerning the trials.) (2) *Sentenced and Tried* by Eugen Loebel. (3) *On Trial* by Artur London. (4) *Report on My Husband* by Josefa Slanska. Loebel and London were respectively Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade and Deputy Foreign Minister in Gottwald's government. They were both sentenced to life imprisonment in 1952 and later re-habilitated. Slanska is Rudolf Slansky's widow.

What emerges from these accounts is that the defendants were convicted on the basis of false confessions of guilt extracted during long periods of solitary confinement and brutal methods of interrogation preceding the trial. They were then made to learn their confessions by heart and the trial itself was rehearsed to word-perfection. A reading of the accounts mentioned leaves no possible doubt concerning the frame-up, fraudulent nature of the Slansky Trial. The most detailed account available is that contained in the Piller Report.

While there is no doubt about the innocence of those convicted, there remains considerable doubt as to **why** leading communists should have been framed on trumped-up charges. The East European Trials reflected, though in a very indirect way or distorted form, the intensification of international conflict between the socialist camp and imperialism. It is certain that espionage operations were directed against the Soviet Union and People's Democracies. The failure in 1948 to bring about Tito's downfall and the **subsequent** movement of Jugo-

slavia into an accommodation with imperialism, produced an even greater determination on Stalin's part to eliminate any independent national tendencies elsewhere. Such tendencies were presented as inevitably anti-socialist and anti-Soviet. The Kostov and Rajk Trials in Bulgaria and Hungary in 1949 came in the aftermath of the break with Yugoslavia and the main charges were explicitly with Tito to betray their countries to imperialism. Kostov in Bulgaria attempted to retract his confession in court but the microphone's were turned off and he was sentenced and executed anyway.

The big Czech trial came later, and the theme of connection of some of the defendants with Yugoslavia was not so strongly stressed. One of the main charges was 'Zionism'. All the defendants in the Slansky Trial fell into one or another of three categories. (1) They had spent the war years in the West, (2) they were Jews, (3) They had fought in the Spanish Civil War. Some of the defendants were in all three categories. The emphasis on Zionism can be best understood in terms of the change in Soviet policy towards Israel between 1947 and 1952. In 1947-1948 the Soviet Union had staunchly supported the establishment of a Jewish State in the Middle East—possibly as a counter-weight to British imperialism's domination of the area through its client states in the Arab world. The newly formed Jewish State had received the bulk of its arms in the early days from the Skoda plant in Czechoslovakia, with the blessing of the Soviet Union. The favourable view taken of Israel in Prague in 1948 elsewhere in Eastern Europe in 1948 was simply a reflection of the views taken in Moscow. However, with Israel's rapid alignment with US imperialism by 1950-51, any actual, or potential Jewish sympathy for Israel within Socialist countries was considered extremely dangerous. In fact there is no sign that the Jews in the leadership of the Czech Party were in any way sympathetic to Zionism. Slansky himself was on all appearances a faithful follower of Stalin. But anti-Semitism (thinly disguised as anti-Zionism) was cynically exploited in the Slansky Trial in order to paint the defendants as insidious 'cosmopolitan' element who owed their allegiance to foreign interests—connection with imperialism. It was claimed during the trial that the fact that some of the defendants (notably London) had survived Nazi concentration camps showed that they must have been collaborators who bargained for their lives. Fabricated 'evidence' was presented to establish this case. It was said for example that London had actually been working for the enemy during his period in the French resistance organisation, the MUI (directed by the French CP) said that he was responsible for betraying communists to the Gestapo. Auguste Laccour, who was the National Organizer of the PCF in the early '50s has revealed that at the time of the trial Maurice Thorez sent a message to Stalin containing conclusive proof that the charges against London could not possibly have been true. It was ignored.

The Czech Party was not the final arbiter of the fates of the accused. Their guilt was 'established' in Moscow and the proceedings against them were directed by the Soviet Security forces—or 'instructors' as they were called, who worked with the Czech Security Forces, supervising all the most important stages up to and including the frame-up trial itself. The responsibility rested ultimately with Stalin and Beria. The Puffer Report makes plain that Gottwald was persuaded to arrest Slansky following a visit to Prague by Mikoyan undertaken to convince him that it was necessary.

The argument about the exact motives for staging these frame-ups will continue. Because there does not appear to be any obvious reason why Stalin should want to liquidate people who were not enemies and to accuse them of preposterous crimes that they did not commit, some people have concluded that the official explanations must be accepted as genuine. But they cannot be accepted because they are contrary to the facts. The evidence against the official accounts is so overwhelming that those who continue to accept them can only be regarded as performing a feat of self-deception comparable to a rejection of the theory of evolution in favour of the Book of Genesis.

The interpretation of the trials as an expression of intensified class struggle within the countries concerned is entirely unconvincing. To treat them as such it would be necessary to accept that the defendants were class enemies and that their accusers were representatives of the proletariat. Actually there is no evidence to show that those convicted in the Kostov, Rajk and Slansky trials differed in any way politically from those against whom they were alleged to have plotted. In Czechoslovakia, Gottwald was—if anything—more closely identified with the liberal 'peaceful transition' theory than was Slansky.

Apart from the 'evidence' presented at the trials, which was completely fraudulent, there is nothing to substantiate the class struggle explanation. And, as a matter of fact, the allegations about 'conspiratorial centres' and 'spy rings' to which the accused were supposed to belong, in themselves detract from rather than lend credence to a class struggle interpretation. The 'conspirators' were all supposed to have been recruited by the class enemy many years before, to have spent their whole lives enduring the hardships of illegal work, imprisonment and internment in fascist concentration camps, **in the interests of imperialism!** They are supposed to have put themselves on the line over many years better to serve their bourgeois masters as hidden traitors and scabs inside the communist parties. Not exactly a plausible story.

Those who support the schematic theory according to which the dictatorship of the proletariat prevailed intact up to Stalin's death after which there occurred a counter-revolutionary coup which transferred power to the hands of the bourgeoisie, need to represent the Moscow Trials, the East European Trials, the 'Doctors' Plot' etc. as expressions of intense class struggle in which Stalin and his supports represented the 'proletarian' line and the victims of the various purges were all 'bourgeois elements' intent on seizing power and restoring capitalism. It can be safely said that **If the facts concerning these various 'struggles' are shown to be radically different from the picture presented in this simplistic schema, the whole theory falls to the ground.**

During Stalin's lifetime there was some excuse for believing that the accounts given to the world communist movement of these events were accurate. The evidence to the contrary was scanty and the whole structure of international movement was conducive to the uncritical acceptance of everything that came out of Moscow. But today, in the light of overwhelming evidence that has accumulated subsequently, there is no longer any **rational** basis for continuing to accept the crude distortions and fabrications that were produced to disguise the realities in Stalin's practice. A theory that ignores or distorts facts is not a Marxist theory.

Marxist-Leninists have a responsibility to the working class to approach history scientifically and honestly. A Marxist approach to Soviet history is not merely a matter of constructing convenient formulas and then trying to make the facts fit them.

We are engaged in the task of building a Marxist-Leninist party. Karl Marx once wrote that history repeats itself, the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce. The mistakes made by the communist movement in the past were tragic mistakes. If we fail to learn from them, but proceed instead to repeat precisely the incorrect theories, methods of work and 'explanations' that led to the revisionist degeneration of communism, then we run the serious risk of participating in a farce. But there is every reason to believe that we shall avoid that, because there is ample indication that the bad habits and attitudes of the past, the theory and practice of revisionism, **are** being rejected by Marxist-Leninists.

M.F.

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