

PRICE: TWO SHILLINGS AND SIXPENCE

# The MARXIST

A Discussion Journal

- The Wilson Screw on the Workers
- The Labour Party and Socialism
- The International Situation in 1966

Vol. 1 Number 1 November—December, 1966

**THE MARXIST**  
**A Discussion Journal**

The Marxist is published six times a year, in January, March, May, July, September and November. Contributions intended for publication should reach the editorial office by the first of the month preceding publication.

**EDITORIAL COMMITTEE**

Reg Birch	Ewan MacColl
Mike Faulkner	Sam Nelson
Jim Kean	Colin Penn
Tom Hill	Ted Roycraft

**Editorial address:**  
**Flat 4, 53 Shepherds Hill,**  
**London, N.6.**  
**Manager: Mike Faulkner**

**Price: 2s. 6d. (3s. post paid) Annual Subscription 17s. 6d. post paid in the United Kingdom.**

**Overseas rates:—**

**Europe: Annual Subscription, 25s. post paid. Single copies, 4s. 6d. post paid.**

**Rest of the World: 30s. post paid. Single copies, 5s. 6d. (U.S. Dollars 4.25) post paid.**

**Cheques and postal orders should be made out to the Oasis Publishing Company Ltd. and mailed to the editorial address.**

Vol. 1 No. 1 NOVEMBER—DECEMBER, 1966

**IN THIS ISSUE**

Our Purpose	this page
The Wilson Screw on the Workers by Reg Birch	5
The International Situation in 1966	9
The Labour Party and Socialism by Mike Faulkner	21

---

**OUR PURPOSE**

VAST CHANGES are taking place in the world, sweeping away old political landmarks. Among those most affected are the people of Britain. The United States no longer occupies the unchallenged position it held at the end of the second world war. NATO is no longer a cohesive alliance, and the divisions in the West grow more marked as France strengthens her leadership of the forces resisting the subordination of European capitalism to American.

Divisions within the socialist world raise issues which go to the very root of socialist principles and practice. Soviet policy increasingly emphasises the finding of common ground with the United States. Yet Vietnam demonstrates how over-extended and vulnerable the Americans have become in the face of the challenge of the national liberation movements.

The temporary successes of the counter-revolution in parts of Africa and Asia are a harsh reminder that imperialism has been able to maintain its hold over these countries. Meanwhile in China a quarter of the world's population has proved that a former semi-colonial people can carry through a social revolution and by their own efforts build a socialist society.

Britain, whose successive governments, Labour or Conservative, cling ever more closely to the United States, faces the certainty of abrupt changes with the accelerating decline of her world position.

Those who try to probe into what is going on around them are fobbed off by politicians with trivialities and meaningless phrases. Too often the reaction is to turn away from politics altogether. Those who avoid becoming completely cynical frequently feel powerless to affect the course of events and drift into passivity.

But there is no escape from the problems of our time. We cannot remain inactive about issues which affect our daily lives. British imperialism, notwithstanding all its changes in form, is increasingly under attack from those it oppresses. And the conditions within Britain inherited by our generation will disappear with the privileges British capitalism itself is in the process of losing.

The bastion of power which the British capitalists are most determined to retain is the lucrative financial role of the City of London. They fight obstinately to preserve the position of sterling as an international currency and the commercial empire which rests upon it. British forces are deployed at great cost on four continents to safeguard the overseas investments and special rights of British capitalists abroad. The 'East of Suez' policy makes sense only in the light of this.

The direct political links of Britain's empire have always been relaxed once they have ceased to serve their purpose and become an irritant. In any event the plundered areas cannot escape economic vassalhood unless they take the road of revolution.

It is against revolution that Britain has sought the backing of the chief imperialist power, the United States. With every further decline in strength the British imperialists find themselves more dependent on American support. If the Labour Government is more servile to the United States than its Conservative predecessor it is because Britain's ability to carry out an imperialist role has further diminished and the need for American reinforcement correspondingly increased.

### Making Capitalism Work

While there are differences among the British capitalists on the tactics to be employed, they are united in their central aim of maintaining Britain's imperialist role. The political parties through which their policy is expressed—Conservative, Liberal and Labour—accordingly follow a common line on the central issues.

The Labour Party is committed to an all-out effort to make capitalism work indefinitely and prevent the collapse of British imperialism. As a result all those on the left who seek their objective through a relationship with the Labour Party drift into tacit acceptance of imperialism.

This is shown in the British Communist Party's preoccupation with the Khrushchevian version of 'peaceful co-existence'—that is the renunciation of real struggle against imperialism headed by the United States. It is seen also in its slogan 'unity of the left'. What is glossed over is the vital question: unity of what forces and for what purpose? If the greatest threat to the interests of the working class as a whole comes from the collaboration between British and American imperialism, the workers

cannot find true allies among those who think it necessary to maintain a special relationship with America.

Certainly there is a left inside the Labour Party. It has differences with the Government over timing, methods and tactics. But this left does not by any means wholly reject the maintenance of British imperialism and political ties with America. It does not see a revolutionary transformation of society as the way to solve the problems capitalism has shown itself incapable of solving. It does not want power to pass from the existing state to a revolutionary state set up by the workers to dispossess the capitalist class and create a classless society.

Calls for unity of the left which ignore the fundamental conflict between social democracy and Marxism obscure the difference between reformist politics and class struggle. The quest by the Communist Party for a 'British Road' to socialism which avoids revolutionary struggle has led to abandonment of a Marxist standpoint as the price of winning recognition from the Labour left and becoming respectable.

Of course in the struggles on all manner of individual issues—'East of Suez', wages, housing—Marxists want the widest unity consistent with effective struggle. On this basis we seek common action with the Labour left. But unity in agreed actions against capitalism and imperialist policies must be accompanied by struggle against ideas which weaken the fight and limit its effectiveness. Without such struggle unity becomes a path to capitulation.

In fighting increasingly against ideas which gloss over the class struggle the workers increase their own understanding and become conscious that their class has the power to carry through the necessary revolutionary transformation of society.

### Marxist Thought and Practice

This journal has come into being because of the urgent need to bring Marxist thought and analysis back into the British political struggle. Little that is being published about the problems of Britain is based on a Marxist viewpoint, though a fair amount which claims to be appears in the left-wing press. The effectiveness of the contributions to *The Marxist* will be determined by how those writing in it apply Marxist principles in laying bare the facts, analysing their significance and drawing the correct conclusions for action. The success of this new journal will depend on the extent to which it can be useful to those who are politically active, particularly industrial workers.

In each issue there will be a survey of current politics. This will take some important features of the British and international situation and bring out their significance in relation to the main trends of development. There will also be articles on subjects of immediate and long-term interest. In this issue, for example, we take the Labour Government's record and policies and reach conclusions about social democracy. Our plans for future issues include articles on such subjects as the class structure in

Britain; the new economic trends and theories in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe; the Labour Government's unemployment policy; British Imperialism and Malaya. We shall also review significant books. We hope to receive a lively correspondence from our readers.

We shall not be satisfied if you simply read this journal. The aim we have set ourselves can be realised only with your active participation. We need your comment and criticism so that your experience may be reflected in our pages. We want articles and items of interest for publication. We want *The Marxist* to be a medium for the exchange of views among those engaged in the struggle for socialism.

We also need your support in other ways. Our main method of distribution is by post to subscribers. We ask you to recommend the journal to others and make them subscribers. We urge you to put its articles to practical use by discussing them collectively. This means forming discussion groups, using the articles in a planned way and letting us know your reactions and conclusions. Doing this will help to gather together the forces for advancing Marxist understanding in Britain.

The journal needs money for its maintenance and development. Apart from subscriptions, we ask for donations. Everything you give will add to the resources for carrying the work forward.

By strengthening the political content of the journal and building up its circulation and the organisation around it, your activity can enable *The Marxist* to play a more ambitious role than is within its present capacity.

### GAINING READERS

How many people do you know who might become regular readers of this journal?



Will you let us have their names and addresses so that we can send them a specimen copy.



*The Marxist* cannot afford expensive promotion campaigns but must rely on its readers to help increase circulation.



Getting *The Marxist* known among those who are searching for a way to advance the struggle for socialism is an important task.



Please help by sending in the names of potential readers to  
The Manager,  
Flat 4, 53, Shepherds Hill,  
London, N.6.

## THE WILSON SCREW ON THE WORKERS

By Reg Birch

THE BRITISH CAPITALISTS have always wanted to cut the people's living standards. Wilson's July measures were new in degree but not in kind.

Their background was the collapse of the Government's aim of a balance of payments equilibrium during 1966. Wilson blamed this on higher prices for imports and on the seamen's strike which 'blew us off course'. But import prices have not all gone up; some have fallen. And the exchange losses arising from the strike could comfortably have been met from reserves if the basic trends in the balance of payments had been sound. But they were not, since the Government has obstinately continued its extravagant overseas spending and continued to permit export of capital.

On private account, Britain had a positive balance in 1965 of £432 million. £159 million was invested abroad but this still left a favourable balance of £273 million. *It was Government overseas spending that changed this into an overall deficit of £354 million.*

It is true, of course, that Britain's favourable private account balance includes the tribute from imperialist exploitation and that there is an inter-connection between the receipt of the tribute and the defence of the imperialist privileges which give rise to it. It would be unreal to imply that if the Government overseas spending stopped, all the other factors would remain unchanged.

### Paying for Imperialism

But no conceivable interests of the British people are served by the Government's policies. The vast sums it expends to fit Britain into America's world design for preserving imperialism have necessitated borrowings that constitute the instrument for ensuring American control over our country. To repay these loans the British people are asked to accept severe sacrifices; in effect, to be squeezed for the benefit of their own class enemies. Certainly it is no new thing for the living standards, trade union rights and organisation of the British workers to be attacked by the capitalists. The novelty is in the representation of their attack as 'socialist planning' indispensable for our future progress.

What are the hard facts underlying and explaining the Government's July measures? The ruinous 1964 deficit of £745 million was halved in 1965, and 1966 may show a deficit of no more than £250 million. But these are all *deficits*. They are cumulative. They have necessitated continuous borrowing. The foreign lenders felt that the pitcher was coming too often to the well. By July the pressure against sterling was such that Wilson had to act dramatically. Will his measures save sterling from devaluation? What is their economic impact?

The official reserves held in London constitute no real defence of sterling because they are overwhelmingly *borrowed money*. They can be used to gain a little time for manoeuvre. But, starting in 1967, repayments become due. Unless by then the balance of payments is not merely in equilibrium but in substantial surplus, sterling will remain vulnerable. Even if there were agreement to delay the repayments, this would postpone not remove the difficulties. The Government is compelled to aim at achieving large surpluses, if its line of policy on sterling is to make sense.

Wilson's July measures divided into four categories:

- (a) specific measures with immediate effect.
- (b) specific measures for operation at stated future dates.
- (c) statements of intended cuts in Government spending without details of their nature or timing.
- (d) the 'voluntary-compulsory' prices and incomes policy.

### The Bite

The first two categories represented action with a 'bite'. They comprised increases in purchase tax, hire-purchase restrictions, higher Post Office charges, a surtax increase for 1964/66 and cuts in foreign travel allowances, representing, all told, a deflationary squeeze of about £500 million by the end of 1967. This squeeze has been reinforced by further limiting of bank lending.

The third category was talk rather than action. The absence of details left everything nebulous. But all the indications are that Government military spending overseas will not fall. Indeed, British imperialism's involvement in the areas where international tensions are increasing may well result in an increased expenditure.

The fourth category, the prices and incomes policy, hit the headlines—understandably so, since the regulation of wages by legal compulsion is an economic doctrine taking us back centuries. Moreover there are so many flagrant injustices in the application of the freeze that the scope for comment is endless.

Without in any way underestimating the significance of the prices and incomes legislation, we should recognise that the attention concentrated on it has to some extent been useful to the capitalists. Given this concentration, they have been able to operate, without much attention or opposition, the *actual and immediate* deflationary measures (tax increases, H.P. restrictions and credit squeeze) bringing unemployment and reducing living standards. *The capitalists look to unemployment as the effective means for weakening the resistance of the workers.* To some extent the 'incomes policy' legislation has been their conjuror's patter diverting attention from their actions to create unemployment. The workers take the correct stand in demanding work-sharing rather than accepting dismissals which disrupt their factory organisation and create an 'unemployed reserve army'; although work-sharing represents, of course, only a choice of evils and the workers' struggle has to be extended to challenge the basic policies which have created this situation.

In a political sense the incomes legislation is very important, revealing the true attitude to capitalism and the working class of labour and trade union leaders. Some want the workers to accommodate themselves to the necessities of capitalism, to limit their demands to what the capitalists say they can afford, to abandon the class struggle. Not merely have they no wish to replace capitalism by socialism: they side with the capitalists in the day to day workings of capitalism.

### Time to Fight

What is the economic significance of the July measures? They have quickly brought on a domestic recession. As this is what the foreign lenders wanted, some breathing space for sterling has been gained. But Wilson has made no change in the basic imperialist policies which have weakened sterling and which keep it weak. So his measures do not guarantee sterling against devaluation.

On the contrary, devaluation is now probably nearer. Reports suggest that international discussions have started regarding an agreed basis for sterling devaluation and a realignment of currencies. It was one thing for foreign bankers to support sterling previously, when its immediate forced devaluation could have caused great harm to the whole capitalist international monetary system. It is another for them to underwrite sterling indefinitely.

Such discussions may take time. They have to take into account the balance of payments difficulties of the dollar. The announcement in September of increased currency 'swap' facilities among the leading capitalist countries (with the significant exception of France) suggests that agreement is not imminent and that it is necessary to provide more time for the exchange of views to go on. But the prolongation of such discussions does not change the realities of the sterling situation.

Wilson's July policies will have two effects. In the first place, the workers will resist and a new phase of political struggle will open up in Britain. Secondly, maintaining the same fundamentals of British imperialist policy will mean that the decline and weakness in the British economy which they cause will continue.

The July measures were offered to the British people as a false bill of sale. The incomes policy was held out as an alternative to massive unemployment and the financial measures as an alternative to devaluation. But we are getting unemployment and are likely to have devaluation.

### The Lessons

What lessons can we learn from all this?

1. The arguments between Tories and Labour or between those who want a presence East of Suez and those who think we cannot afford it or between those who favour devaluation and those who do not, are all arguments about how to make British capitalism work.

2. Neither one course nor the other can prevent a major crisis from coming sooner or later. For British capitalism, as for world capitalism, there is no escape from crisis.

3. Even if devaluation could be prevented or deferred, the aim of the capitalists would still be to exploit the workers to the maximum. 'Co-operation' to increase productivity or refrain from wage claims will make no difference to this.

4. Therefore the workers should refuse to accept responsibility for solving the capitalists' problems. Deflation and devaluation are, so far as the people are concerned, merely alternative methods of achieving cuts in their standards.

5. The only salvation for the working-class lies in struggle. Today it is the struggle against the Labour Government policies which seek to shackle the working class, but one must always bear in mind that struggles will be continuous until capitalism is overthrown. The overthrow of capitalism should therefore be the purpose behind every action.

We would welcome letters from our readers as to how they think the struggle in industry should be conducted. Practical problems are crowding in on us as we seek to fight the Labour Government's anti-labour measures. How are we to solve them? Tell us what you think and we will do our utmost to publish your letter.

## Throwing Down the Gauntlet

The English factory workers were the champions not only of the English, but of the modern working class generally, as their theorists were the first to throw down the gauntlet to the theory of capital.

Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, 1859

We stand wholly on the basis of the Marxist theory: it was the first to transform Socialism from a utopia to a science . . . It made clear the real task of a revolutionary socialist party: not to invent plans for refashioning society, not to preach to the capitalists and their hangers-on about improving the lot of the workers, not to hatch conspiracies, but to *organise the class struggle of the proletariat and to lead this struggle*, the ultimate aim of which is the conquest of political power by the proletariat and the organisation of a socialist society. Lenin. *Our Programme*, 1899

## THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION IN 1966

*America's Aim to Dominate the World: Frustration of the Imperialist Offensive: The Counter-Offensive under Kennedy and Johnson: Contradictions Facing the Americans: How Revisionism Helps the Imperialists: Vietnam—the Sharpest Focus of the Struggle: Escalation and a Sino-American War: The Effects of the International Situation on Politics in Britain.*

AT THE END of the second war the United States had double the industrial production of all the other capitalist countries put together and a vast military machine including a monopoly of the atom bomb and stores of food and materials badly needed by others. The u.s. imperialists confidently expected to dominate the whole world. This was to be the 'American Century'.

But their ambitions were frustrated. Eastern Europe was lost. The Chinese Revolution triumphed. The colonial peoples rebelled. The Soviet Union rebuilt its economy and broke the u.s. atom-bomb monopoly. When the Americans resorted to force in the Korean War, they suffered a sharp reversal. They had to modify their tactics. Taking account of the developing revisionist trends in the Soviet Union, they worked to 'soften up' the Socialist camp, curb the national liberation movement through 'aid' and political-economic penetration and build a world-wide system of treaty organisations and military bases, enmeshing and subordinating the other capitalist countries and the newly-independent national states.

Nevertheless the anti-imperialist forces in Asia, Africa and Latin America continued to grow, as demonstrated in Indonesia, Algeria, the Congo and Cuba. China advanced rapidly and powerfully. Contradictions between the Americans and the other imperialist powers sharpened as the latter recovered from their post-war exhaustion. Once again America had to reconsider her tactics. Kennedy's election in 1960 signalled the beginning of a world-wide u.s. counter-offensive.

The Kennedy counter-offensive used dual tactics. Kennedy talked of the 'New Frontier', the 'Alliance for Progress', the importance of peace. Simultaneously he reorganised and greatly expanded America's military machine. u.s. military doctrines were modified, with increasing attention given to the fighting of 'special wars' against the national liberation movements. The C.I.A. was further developed as an interventionist force using violence, subversion, assassination and bribery to further American policy.

Kennedy's 'progressive' mask was designed to weaken resistance to American force. He received powerful assistance from Khrushchev, who talked of the u.s. leaders as 'reasonable men' with whom there could be

satisfactory agreements. The efforts of the revisionists to propagate this false estimation of the u.s. imperialists, to damp down national liberation struggles, to subdue within the international Communist movement the Marxists who opposed their policies, was an essential factor which Kennedy's strategy took into account. It is not surprising therefore that the key aspects of the controversy within the international Communist movement have been the questions of the struggle against imperialism, peaceful co-existence and the national liberation struggle.

Johnson sought election in 1964 as Kennedy's heir, opposing the adventurism of Goldwater. The revisionists all over the world took him at his face value and supported him. In the u.s. even some of those rating themselves anti-revisionists were inclined to favour Johnson as the 'lesser evil'. But once elected he practised Goldwaterism.

Increasing violence was used with less and less restraint and covering up. In February 1965 the bombing of North Vietnam started. In April, u.s. marines invaded the Dominican Republic. In July the Greek King, with u.s. backing, replaced Papandreou by right-wing puppets. In September Pakistan, which had been developing friendly relations with China, was attacked by India. In November American-inspired rioting in British Guiana led to London's dismissal of Dr. Jagan. In Indonesia the c.i.a. was involved in the savage right wing counter-revolution which has resulted in the massacre of hundreds of thousands.

This is only a selection from the catalogue of u.s. violence. Where violence has not been used, economic and political pressures have been intensified to promote American advances. The absorption of Canada has continued, as with the recent tariff agreements over automobile components and assembly. Australia and New Zealand have moved deeper into the American orbit with their switch to America for military supplies and their acceptance of demands for troops to be sent to Vietnam. India has become still more dependent, relying on handouts of 'aid'.

We should not disregard the successes achieved by the Americans in their counter-offensive. But its very sweep, momentum and intensity have sharpened a number of contradictions and stimulated the forces of opposition.

### Resistance to U.S. Imperialism

In 1946 in an interview with the American journalist, Anna Louise Strong, Mao Tse-tung forecast, in a way strikingly confirmed by events, the strategy of the American drive for world domination. The Cold War was in part seriously meant, as the American imperialists could not dominate the world unless they destroyed socialism. But it was also partly a cover for their attempts to subdue their own people, their allies, and the countries of the 'intermediate zone' which lay between America and the socialist states. The subjugation of all these elements was a necessary part of the American design. Their resistance was expressed in important contradictions.

Firstly, since 1946, the contradictions within the u.s. itself have grown strongly. The suppression of criticism and opposition was what

McCarthyism was about. But now there is ferment. The negroes are in revolt against intolerable conditions and as a cohesive minority of the population have rejected the accepted framework of American society. They are beginning to extend their struggle to opposition to the Vietnam war.

Opposition to the war is growing among white Americans. This movement, strong among students and intellectuals, is not yet widely supported by the American workers. But it has already gone far enough to be reflected in persistent Congressional criticism of Johnson. As yet the criticism is rather of the failure of Johnson's tactics than a repudiation of his aims but it contributes to the enlightenment of the American people and is a harassment to the Administration. Senate probings of the despatch of forty thousand troops to Thailand, for example, which reveal the Administration's aim of widening the Vietnam war, both stimulate opposition by the American public and push Johnson into declarations that the u.s. is the world's self-appointed policeman. Such declarations, because of their brazen provocation, cannot but harden resistance by the intended victims. Dean Rusk said recently: 'No would-be aggressor should suppose that the absence of a defence treaty, Congressional declaration or u.s. military presence, grants immunity to aggression.' This is an assertion that the Americans will interfere wherever they please. And again: 'I do not think we are over-committed. I think there are very great dangers in being under-committed.'

### Further Contradictions

Secondly, contradictions among the imperialist powers are sharpening. The dynamics of the American economy generate an increasing need for overseas expansion and exploitation. The u.s. imperialists penetrate into both the developed industrial countries and the areas of national liberation struggle. u.s. investment has increased in Western Europe, Canada, Australia, Japan, India, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. But the post-war recovery of the other imperialist powers and the rising national liberation struggle has strengthened opposition to this penetration. France resists by converting her dollar holdings into gold, thus depleting u.s. gold reserves. She has disrupted NATO, the instrument of u.s. military control over Western Europe, through the expulsion of u.s. forces from French soil and withdrawal from the integrated NATO command. West Germany drags her feet on meeting the foreign exchange cost of the u.s. forces stationed on her territory and plays an ambivalent role in the Franco-American conflict over the future of the Common Market, the proposed 'Kennedy Round' of tariff cuts, and the problems of international finance and liquidity. Japan ostensibly accepts American policy but quietly pursues trade with China, tries to keep out of direct involvement in the Vietnam war and competes strongly with America over trade and investment in Asia.

America is still overwhelmingly the strongest of the imperialist powers but her relative strength, whether measured by industrial production, trade or financial reserves, has declined appreciably from what it was in 1945. She cannot now get her way so easily. Trying to do so by more forceful diplomatic, political and military pressures stiffens opposition to her.

Thirdly, contradictions intensify between the U.S. imperialists and the forces of national liberation. It is true that in a number of countries during the last couple of years the U.S., exploiting the equivocal position of the ruling circles which vacillate in the anti-imperialist struggle, and taking advantage of the efforts of the revisionists to curb the national liberation movement, has succeeded in installing more pliable governments. But these governments are all very narrowly based politically. In Argentina, for example, the new military dictatorship is opposed even by important sections of the bourgeoisie. Installing these unpopular stooge governments does not calm the sea but rather lashes the waves of struggle.

### Role of Revisionism

What makes the revisionists assist the U.S. counter-offensive?

All the eighty-one Communist Parties at the 1960 Moscow Conference endorsed its Declaration that U.S. imperialism was the main enemy of the peoples of the world, that imperialism could not change its inherent tendencies to aggression and war, that only widespread popular struggles could curb these tendencies. But events after the Conference showed that different people meant different things by the Declaration. The revisionists knocked together an interpretation which falsified its intent.

Their position amounted to this. The socialist camp was strong enough militarily to deter the imperialists from a major attack on it. Therefore there should be negotiations with the imperialists to compromise on differences which otherwise might fester and cause conflict. The socialist countries should make the development of their economies their main task. Explicit prophecies were made that they would outstrip the capitalist countries in a short time (for example, Gollan, echoing Khrushchev, said that by 1980 the industrial production of the socialist countries would be twice that of the capitalist). As living standards in the socialist countries were raised, people in the non-socialist countries, seeing this, would want to adopt socialism. The imperialists, facing both the power of the socialist countries abroad and pressure from their own people at home, would be unable to use force to resist and there could be a peaceful transition to socialism. Even if some imperialists were inclined to fight, the 'reasonable statesmen' who led them would be conscious of the horrors of nuclear war and would avoid it.

The revisionists could not ignore that many people in colonial countries wanted to struggle immediately for liberation, without waiting until the socialist camp acted as their benevolent uncle. They took care therefore to talk of their support for the national liberation struggle. But they invented a curious theory that this struggle must not be 'counterposed' to class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. How can such struggles against a common enemy be 'counterposed' when it is obvious that each, waged seriously, can only help the other? They said that small wars could lead to world war, thus suggesting that national liberation wars were dangerous. The propagation of such ideas clearly reveals the revisionists' true position.

Khrushchev, before his fall in October 1964, was trying to reduce the Soviet Union's involvement with national liberation struggles. At an early stage in the Congo conflict the Soviet Union pulled out and supported U.S. intervention under the U.N. banner. In the summer of 1964, at the very time when the issues were sharpening in Vietnam, Khrushchev was talking of abandoning the co-chairmanship of the Geneva Conference. His successors have retained the co-chairmanship but it is taken as self-evident in the West that their motives remain the same as Khrushchev's and that their purpose in keeping the post and giving limited material assistance to Vietnam is to develop leverage on the Vietnamese for compromise with the U.S.

Cuba offers another example of the consequences of revisionism in the national liberation struggle. Castro's recent speeches, Cuba's current dependence on sugar production, and her modified attitude towards the U.S. all show that in 1965 a deal was done; the Soviet Union extended economic support in return for changes in the Cuban government (the dropping of Che Guevara and the return of Blas Roca), the adoption of an economic policy which weakened Cuba's self-reliance, and an easier Cuban attitude towards the U.S. together with a damping-down of Cuban support for the national liberation struggles in Latin America. The Americans, seeing this, now seem prepared to wait for the effects of economic difficulties, internal discord and the loss of revolutionary spirit to bring Cuba to heel. They leave Castro for the time being to stew in his own juice. How much he has changed is shown by his attack on China over the Sino-Cuban 1966 Trade Agreement. His alleged grievance over the volume of Chinese rice supplies was absurd and arrogant. His own figures showed that in 1965 Chinese rice shipments provided the entire Cuban ration. There was no explanation why Cuba, well able to grow rice on her own soil, had to depend on China. Instead Castro demanded that China should continue supplies at what was, apart from the single exceptional year of 1965, double the usual level. If Castro had simply wanted more rice from China he would have negotiated suitably for this. His actions demonstrated not so much a desire for rice as a pretext for attacking China, an attack serving his Soviet patrons.

World-wide experience shows that the revisionists have used their influence to damp down as far as possible the national liberation struggle and weaken resistance to U.S. imperialism. This policy does not reduce but increases the danger of major war since the aggressors are encouraged and their appetites sharpen with eating.

### Unstable International Situation

The U.S. counter-offensive on one side and the growing opposition to it on the other make the international situation very fluid. Its instability is intensified by the growing economic and financial difficulties of the capitalist countries. After the second world war there was economic advance in the capitalist world albeit unevenly and with ups and downs based on the pent-up demand left over from the war; the vast military



expenditures accompanying the Cold War; capital investment required by major technological innovations; needs arising from a considerable population growth; the use of Keynesian financial techniques; and investment accompanying the political changes in a number of the colonial countries. But all these factors had their inherent limits. Pent-up post-war demand was satisfied. Military expenditures reached a level where, without a major war to use up the accumulated material, further increases in their *rate of growth* became difficult (although of course the expenditures are being *maintained* at a high level). Investment slows down because of the limited capacity of the market to absorb the resulting production. Keynesian finance has been accompanied by a continuous inflation causing increasing anxieties. Investment in the under-developed countries is limited because their capacity to repay from their export earnings is more and more pre-empted by obligations on the previous investments.

In struggling with these problems, the capitalist countries compete more intensely against one another, clash over their shares in the exploitation of the under-developed countries and meet growing resistance from the people being exploited in the under-developed countries themselves.

These economic and financial problems are more serious than any previously experienced since the war. Britain is particularly affected by them. They are reflected in such questions as the exchange-value of the dollar and of sterling, international liquidity, the competitive fight for exports, tariffs, the role of economic groups such as the Common Market and E.F.T.A. and the future of Commonwealth trade relations. As all these questions involve conflicts of interest; they will not be solved by 'reason' or 'logic' but on the basis of a power struggle underlying and exacerbating the political struggle taking place.

### Shift to Asia

The contradictions in the world are focussed at their sharpest in the Vietnam War, which reflects the relations between U.S. imperialism and the national liberation movement, between the U.S. and other imperialists, between the U.S. and the revisionists, between the U.S. and the Marxists in the Communist movement.

The U.S. started the bombing of North Vietnam in February 1965 when the war was going very badly for its puppet regime, whose early collapse was prevented only by massive support. Today there are over three hundred thousand U.S. troops in Vietnam and up to forty thousand in Thailand, using air-bases there for attacks on the North. There has been a major redeployment of U.S. military strength, its centre of gravity having been moved from Europe to Asia. Out of American ground forces of twenty-one divisions and ten brigades, seven divisions and four brigades are now in Asia and the Pacific. Over five hundred of the nine hundred and thirty-eight vessels in the U.S. Navy are now in the Pacific Fleet, including fourteen out of twenty-three aircraft-carriers. There are five thousand planes in Asia and the Pacific as against about three thousand in Europe, Africa, the Middle East and the Atlantic.

With this concentration of force the U.S. has changed its military aim from preventing the imminent collapse of the South Vietnam puppets to the winning of a victory. Johnson of course continues the Kennedy dual tactic of deceptive talk about peace as the cover for policies of force but few believe his talk on Vietnam. It is clear that the Americans aim to subdue Vietnam and stay there.

Why have the Americans felt safe in making this big shift of their forces from Europe? The Soviet leaders have frequently expressed support for Vietnam and have sent some assistance. But they have not put pressure on the Americans in the West to deter them from switching their forces to Asia. On the contrary, the Russians have encouraged the Americans to feel safe in doing this. When they suddenly made their request for an urgent reconvening of the Geneva Disarmament Conference and when they entered into a range of cultural and political agreements with the Americans, they must have known that these moves would be interpreted by the Americans as making safe a transfer of their forces from Europe. These Soviet political acts were more important than Soviet minatory words and gestures over Vietnam. Similarly, Soviet pleas for 'united action' by Communists over Vietnam count for less than their action in insisting on the Conference of Parties in March 1965 which, by its nature, could be nothing other than a demonstration of hostility against China.

However, the Americans, despite their concentration of force in Vietnam, have not improved the military situation. The National Liberation Front controls no less territory than a year ago. The bombing of the 'infiltration routes' from the North has not prevented the national liberation forces in the South from being larger. What then is the outlook?

The purpose of the Americans is to *stay* in Vietnam. They talk of accepting the Geneva Agreements. The essence of the Agreements, however, is that foreign forces should leave Vietnam. If the Americans wish to uphold the Agreements, they have merely to order their troops out. But they want to stay. They would prefer, of course, that their troops should stay without the people fighting against them, and they have an interest in ending the fighting—*so long as their troops stay*.

To accept American occupation would be for the Vietnamese an acceptance of defeat. The whole point of their fight has been the expulsion of the foreign invaders. They will not accept American occupation and so the war will go on. Recognising this, the Americans are now planning further escalation with two purposes in view. First, they rely on escalation to intimidate the revisionists, making them press the Vietnamese harder to accept a compromise. Second, and in any event, escalation creates conditions making more feasible an American attack on China.

### American Attack on China

Why should the Americans, who are capable of 'reason' and 'logic', add to their opponents by attacking China when they have been unable to defeat the Vietnamese? The invocation of reason and logic ignores the nature of imperialism. The drive for domination and conquest is not a 'policy' of imperialism. It is its inner essence. Imperialism and aggression

are synonymous. Of course, the imperialists calculate their tactics for any particular act of aggression and the strength of the anti-imperialist forces can deter a given would-be attack. It would be foolish to underestimate the inherent aggressive nature of imperialism in its drive for domination of the whole world. The idea of an American attack on China has to be taken seriously.

Since MacNamara made his speech to the NATO meeting last November designating China as 'enemy number one', the Americans have been moving in this direction. The tactical successes of their counter-offensive in various parts of the world during the past five years makes them feel that force can be rewarding. They seek to take advantage of the disruption of the anti-imperialist struggle caused by revisionism. They recognise that the world revolutionaries, with China in the lead, are their irreconcilable opponents. They feel that time is not on their side and that, despite their temporary tactical successes, the broad current of anti-imperialist struggle is swelling against them. These fears over the future are manifest in their concern over China's growing nuclear strength and hence the desirability of 'taking out' (to use their own elegant phrase) her nuclear installations now rather than fighting her in five or ten years' time.

For these reasons U.S. policy is moving towards war with China. But there are hesitations and uncertainties. Some American leaders appreciate that military considerations are not adequate for deciding such a fateful question. There are paramount political factors. America's counter-offensive, which is a reaction to the political offensive of the peoples, makes her power increasingly overstretched. America is increasingly isolated politically. An attack on China is a gamble with unlimited stakes.

How to prepare such a war requires careful consideration. It is this stage we are in today—the stage of preparation for a Sino-American war. This involves the creation of certain conditions as a pre requisite.

### Political and Military Prerequisites

As a military prerequisite U.S. forces have to be suitably enlarged, trained, equipped and deployed, and the build-up in Asia extended. Beyond the talk of five hundred thousand men in Vietnam by the end of 1966, now we begin to hear of six hundred thousand or seven hundred and fifty thousand men as the target. The U.S. elections due in November are producing some deceptive talk by politicians about the draft and call-up of reservists but there can be little doubt about the intention to enlarge the forces. The Americans also seek to involve the forces of others. Wilson, praised by Johnson as a latter-day Churchill, pledges that, whatever the cost, Britain can be relied on 'East of Suez'. Australia and New Zealand increase their commitments in Vietnam. The West Germans are said to be sending 'aid' and specialists. America fastens her grip on India and the Indian Ocean, with Britain collaborating in the development of island bases.

There are also political prerequisites for attack: to isolate China internationally and to turn opinion against her by representing her as

unreasonable, bellicose and fanatical, and undeserving of support if she gets into trouble.

The aim of turning opinion against China colours the reporting of her policies, internal and external, in the Western press. The serious problems of socialist advance involved in the Cultural Revolution are garbled as a sordid power-struggle, as the attempt by an ageing, dictatorial Mao Tse-tung to impose his will on future generations. The theme of 'politics in command' is mocked as fanaticism and obstinacy. There are allegations of Chinese subversion and aggression, and there is gloating over Chinese 'set backs' in Africa, Indonesia and Cuba. With unfailing coincidence, whenever the Indians press for Western and Soviet 'aid', they report Chinese troops massing on the frontier.

This caricature of Chinese policy has not yet been sold to the world. People are aware of China's economic progress and her sober and responsible foreign policy. It is difficult to brand China as aggressive when the contrast is so sharp between her restraint and the brutal barbarities perpetrated by the Americans thousands of miles from their own soil. It is difficult to represent the Chinese people as oppressed and exploited when, in contrast to India, they have food, consumer goods, an expanding industry and agriculture, a rising standard of literacy and education.

The propagandists have not yet succeeded, but they are unremitting in their work of turning reality upside down. The Americans bomb Vietnam; so Wilson urges those who demand that he protest to transfer their attentions to the Chinese Embassy. The U.N. excludes China; so China is represented as refusing diplomatic contacts and being in consequence so 'ignorant' of the world that she commits all manner of follies.

### Revisionist Propaganda

The revisionists, since the meeting of Parties in March 1965, have changed their propaganda tactics towards China. They found no joy in the public polemic, so they withdrew. Instead they spread smears against China, often hypocritically citing as sources the bourgeois press in which they themselves have planted reports. They have alleged that the Chinese have held up the transport of Soviet supplies to Vietnam. Several times this charge has been made and although disproved, repeated after a short interval. The Russians ostentatiously made a military agreement with Mongolia, meaningless except for the purpose of imputing aggressive intentions to China. Arms are lavished on the Indians, implying that they are threatened by China. In the Communist Parties all over the world, professions of regard for China are used as the cover for attacks on her. The British Party issued a September statement, expressing 'concern' over the situation, in which it alleged Mao Tse-tung was 'deified', that the Cultural Revolution represented hooligan excesses, and that the Chinese Party leadership flouted democracy. Few bourgeois commentators have gone so far.

A Sino-American war is not inevitable but, given the continuation of the present trends, it is not only a serious possibility but perhaps a not too

distant one. The Chinese, with the greatest interest in judging the question realistically, consider the possibility of attack very seriously. For some time they have been preparing, in all aspects of their national life, to meet it. Their 1966 Plan has been drawn up to provide for both the case of China at peace and China being attacked.

### Perspective

To summarise, the following are the important features in the perspective:-

- (a) The Vietnam war will continue.
- (b) The Americans will expand their forces there.
- (c) Preparations are being made to widen the war.
- (d) The revisionists and imperialists are attempting to isolate China.
- (e) Systematic attempts are being made in the Western countries and elsewhere to prepare public opinion for an attack on China.

What would be the character of a Sino-American war? The Americans think about this one-sidedly, in terms of what they will do to China and not what China may do to them. Many of them think of an attack on China as a smooth exercise of naval and air-power in which they will give and China receive the blows. But the Chinese will fight the war in their own way. Undoubtedly they will receive support throughout Asia—from the South East and India and from the Middle East—reflecting the tremendous anti-imperialist feeling under the thin crust of surface stability. An attack on China will set Asia ablaze. If the Americans attack China, the end will be their defeat.

### Key Issues in Britain

The British imperialists are strongly affected by all the mounting pressures—military, political, economic and financial—in the international situation. This is the background to the sterling crisis and to Wilson's unprecedented measures to curb the trade unions.

Britain's crisis is too acute to allow the British imperialists to go on in the old way. They are using up political capital freely in setting the Labour Government to fetter the trade unions. The discrediting of the Labour and trade union leaders which this entails will in due course bring severe political difficulties for the British ruling class as the workers develop their opposition. But the defence of sterling and the financial role of London are vital interests for which the British imperialists are prepared to take exceptional measures. The line of the dominant elements in British imperialism is clear: to defend their imperialist exploitation to the maximum extent possible, to seek American support for this, and to pay the necessary price for this support by acceptance of American leadership on all major questions. Their acceptance of American leadership does not reflect mere servility as the outcome of a deal. On the contrary, the British imperialists welcome America's efforts to maintain imperialism as a world system. They too aspire to play a 'world role', with their interests spread over all the continents. They may have differences with the U.S. over particular tactics, but are united with them over the basic aim of preserving exploitation.

Politics in Britain today are at two levels. At one level are the questions raised in the press and by the established political parties, such as whether the people's standards should be cut by 'voluntary' or compulsory methods; whether there should be some reshaping of Britain's military role, with less emphasis 'East of Suez' and more in Europe. These are superficial questions, questions of tactics, questions which do not involve the basic direction of British policy. They are not questions to be ignored, particularly since struggles over them can give us the opportunity of deepening our political understanding and experience. But we should mislead ourselves if we saw them as the fundamental issues of politics.

Underlying such questions are political issues of a different order. Who is the main enemy of the British people? Is it U.S. imperialism and the dominant sections of British imperialism who stand shoulder to shoulder with their American counterparts? Is the relationship with America the principal factor shaping British politics? These questions have vital implications for future alignments and aims in British politics.

## MONEY

This journal needs money.



We know that readers will appreciate that we need more income than circulation increases can bring if *The Marxist* is to make real headway.



Will you help by sending a donation?



Please send us what you can spare and urge others to do the same.



Single donations or the promise of a regular sum monthly will be gratefully acknowledged by:-

The Manager,  
Flat 4, 53, Shepherds Hill,  
London, N.6.

## LETTER BOX

Dear Reader,

*The Marxist* cannot achieve its aims unless it establishes a relationship with its readers.

We want your views and experiences, your comments and criticisms.

We want your suggestions for articles in future issues.

We want letters for publication and we shall devote as much space as possible to them. If your letters express criticism we shall welcome them as we believe that argument is the responsibility of a Marxist journal.

Even if you do not wish your letter to be published we shall welcome hearing from you. Letters or criticism or those making suggestions for improving our journal will be carefully studied and acknowledged.

Perhaps you will wish to become a contributor to our pages. We shall be happy to consider either outlines or articles.

We cannot deal with anonymous letters or contributions but if you indicate that you do not wish your name to be published we shall respect this.

We want to build a partnership with our readers. We shall do our part. Will you do yours?

Address your letters to:  
The Marxist,  
Flat 4, 53, Shepherds Hill,  
London, N.6.

## THE LABOUR PARTY AND SOCIALISM

By Mike Faulkner

THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT has been in office for nearly two years. Its record has disabused many of their initial hopes that Wilson might bring Britain a small step nearer to socialism. However, while criticism abounds, what real lessons have been learned?

At first there were a few measures of social reform—the abolition of Health Service prescription charges; a small increase in old age pensions; and a new Rent Act. But inheriting a £750 million balance of payments deficit, the Government accepted the defence of sterling as its major task. It took loans from the foreign central banks and the International Monetary Fund to replenish the reserves. Taxes and prices were increased and a credit squeeze imposed. Arms spending has been increased by £122 million to £2,120 million annually under the Labour Government although Wilson has tried, with perverted figures, to spread the idea that it has been cut. Wilson's handling of the seamen's strike was in accord with the Government's general attitude towards the trade unions and the principle of collective bargaining. The denunciation of the unions and the attack upon them, with impending legislation designed to shackle them altogether, has gone hand in hand with the high-sounding rhetoric about an 'incomes policy' and reveals the latter for what it is—the continuation of capitalist wage restraint. More recently all talk of a 'fair distribution of incomes' has been replaced by an open wage freeze imposed with the blessing of the T.U.C. and the Labour Party Conference. The Labour Government's measures amount to squeezing the workers for the benefit of British imperialism and to meet the requirements of the foreign lenders to whom they have put themselves in pawn.

In its foreign policy the Government has been even more subservient to the U.S. than its Tory predecessors. In the Vietnam war, patently a war of justified national resistance to foreign domination, Wilson has consistently supported the U.S. aggressors. In Malaya, British imperialist interests continue to be vigorously pursued, and the Government's appeasement of the Rhodesian settlers leaves no doubt about its attitude towards the African liberation movement. The Government is completely identified with reaction against the progressive forces throughout the world. Nothing in its record is remotely 'progressive'. Everything is plainly in pursuance of the defence of monopoly capitalism and all its actions reveal the Government's imperialist character.

Why has a Labour Government acted in this way? Is it, as some suggest, because the right wing holds the reins of power? Or is Wilson the prisoner of the international bankers and the White House and unable to behave otherwise? In fact there are much deeper causes for the Government's performance.

To understand them we need to go beneath the surface of parliamentary politics and look closely at the kind of society we live in. How does capitalist rule operate in Britain today?

The British bourgeoisie describes our 'democracy' as the highest form of human achievement in government, a form guaranteeing full rights to everyone with the state standing aloof as a beneficent arbiter watching over the affairs of the community in the interests of all. Our parliamentary system is characterised as the repository of the only true freedom through which all social ills can be eradicated, guaranteeing to the people the opportunity of re-shaping society as they choose.

The question of class power is not raised in this characterisation. Yet the question of class power is the crux. So long as illusions continue about the nature of our democracy, which is bourgeois democracy, real progress towards socialism in Britain is impossible. We need to examine the class realities behind the bourgeois democratic facade.

In all class societies there is one class that rules (dictates) over others. Capitalism is no exception whatever particular state-form may embody the rule (dictatorship) of the capitalists. In the highly developed industrial capitalist countries, the types of institution the bourgeoisie adopts depend on a number of factors—historical development, the balance of class forces, the level of consciousness and degree of organisation of the working class, the economic and political situation both national and international. In Britain bourgeois democracy has a long history. Parliament as an important political institution superseding the feudal monarchy was achieved in the seventeenth century. The bourgeoisie had gained considerable experience in the use of Parliament so that when the industrial revolution gave rise to the modern working class they were in a strong position to divert the workers' struggles into 'safe' channels.

### Democratic Facade

So long as the working class movement was relatively weak, Parliament mainly reflected conflict between the landowning and the manufacturing sections of the ruling class. Later it became necessary to give Parliament a 'democratic' facade in order to enmesh the workers within the capitalist state. Successive reforms of the franchise gave the vote to skilled workers (1867) and to semi-skilled workers (1884) but these concessions were made with the knowledge that the working class had lost the fervour of the Chartist days. Moreover, from 1870 onwards, state education was provided, partly to give the workers the literacy needed in an advanced industrial society but also to influence their ideology and turn them from any ideas inimical to capitalist rule. In the subsequent extensions of the franchise in the twentieth century one can see a similar approach. The bourgeoisie were not prepared to extend the franchise until they felt they were able to exercise ideological control over the workers. The modern British working class has grown up in this tradition of 'parliamentary democracy' and its outlook reflects all the conditioning the bourgeoisie have taken so much trouble to implant.

Why do we regard bourgeois democracy as a form of capitalist rule? Because all the important elements of the state machine—the police and armed forces, the judiciary, Parliament, the organs for controlling financial and economic policy, the organs for exercising ideological influence—are shaped and dominated by the representatives of the capitalists. In bourgeois democracy the capitalists, in exercising their rule over the people, prefer to do so by persuasion and deception but are always ready, if these become ineffective, to resort to repression and force.

So long as challenge from the working class does not seriously put into question the stability of the system, bourgeois democracy is a form of government with considerable advantages to the capitalists compared with more openly dictatorial forms of rule. The relatively free and open exchange of information among sections of the ruling class which goes on through the press and public discussion and through the representative organs of government affords them the opportunity of selecting policies in their best interests after weighing facts and taking account of opinions.

### Ins and Outs

Of course, side by side with the 'quality' media which serve the bourgeoisie in this way are the 'mass' media intended to bemuse the people. The existence of competing political parties (superficially offering different policies but identical in their acceptance of capitalism) creates the basis for the parliamentary game of 'ins' and 'outs' in which the people are kept quiet by being given the illusion but not the reality of choice. When they are disappointed with the performance of the 'ins', they are consoled by promises from the 'outs'—who, of course, perform quite differently from the way they promised once they themselves come to office. Thus Wilson, elected to end the 'stop-go' of the Tories, himself enacts the most drastic version of this policy. So long as the workers can be involved in this 'in and out' game and can be made to feel that this is all that politics is about, they are diverted from any fundamental challenge to the continued existence of the capitalist system and the state institutions through which the capitalist class rules.

To keep the thinking of the people in this mould, a vast ideological effort is carried on by the capitalists. The educational system, the press, cinema, radio, television, religion, a host of voluntary societies and all manner of social activities perpetuate a belief in bourgeois democracy; that is, promote faith in the democratic facade and conceal from the people the realities of capitalist rule behind it. Education in Britain is class education, and the system reflects the class structure of British society. The working class, in the main, receives an education inferior to that received by those destined for positions in the ruling class apparatus. The workers are 'educated' to accept the ideas of imperialism with a view to turning them from class struggle and persuading them that their interests are identical with those of their own capitalists engaged in the exploitation of other peoples.

Bourgeois democracy contains a fundamental contradiction. As Lenin pointed out, while on the one hand it is the 'best' form of rule for the

capitalists, on the other it is the 'best' form of bourgeois state within which the working class can marshal its forces for the overthrow of capitalism. The capitalists themselves recognise that bourgeois democracy contains dangers to their continued rule. Given a strong working class challenge, the capitalists have always in the past torn up their own legality and employed all measures necessary for preserving their power. There is no reason to suppose that they will not attempt to do the same in future. Thus, while appearing to offer the possibility of a 'legal' transformation of society, the bourgeois democratic system is, in fact, designed to prevent this. Of course, the capitalists prefer to avoid resorting to open force. It is therefore important for them to ensure that the organisations of the working class are prevented from posing a threat to the continued existence of the system. They try to control the workers' organisations directly and from within. Social democracy is a means to this end.

### Class Collaboration or Class Struggle

Social democratic parties constitute a main line of defence for the ruling class. The forms such parties take differ from one country to another, but what is common in most advanced capitalist countries is the necessity to use social democratic parties for the continued functioning of bourgeois democracy. The main ideological characteristic of all social democratic parties is their commitment to bourgeois democracy and the parliamentary system, and their advocacy of class collaboration not class struggle. Social democrats, both right and left, deny the class character of the bourgeois democratic state.

Lenin, while arguing the need for the newly-formed Communist Party to affiliate to the Labour Party—for tactical reasons while preserving its own identity—was perfectly clear in his characterisation of the Labour Party. At the second Congress of the Comintern in 1920 he said:

Of course, for the most part the Labour Party consists of workers, but it does not logically follow from this that every workers' party which consists of workers is at the same time a 'political workers party'. That depends on who leads it, upon the content of its activities and of its political tactics. Only the latter determines whether it is a political proletarian party. From this point of view, which is the only correct point of view, the Labour Party is not a political workers' party but a thoroughly bourgeois party, because, although it consists of workers, it is led by reactionaries and the worst reactionaries at that, who lead it in the spirit of the bourgeoisie . . . they systematically deceive the workers.

The development of the Labour Party during the first two decades of the century occurred at a time of mounting class struggles, nationally and internationally, and its appearance on the political scene reflected the needs of British imperialism.

The Labour Party has had its militants and left wing but they have never been revolutionary. They have been wedded to reformism and democratic constitutionalism. If the implications of this have not always

been understood by militants they certainly have been grasped by the ruling class.

Aneurin Bevan, in his book *In Place of Fear*, relates an account, given to him by miners' leader Robert Smillie, of an interview between the leaders of the Triple Alliance and Lloyd George in 1919 to discuss the demands that the big three unions were making on the employers. He recounts how Lloyd George cautioned them against using strike action and asked them if they had weighed the consequences:

The strike will be in defiance against the Government of the country and by its very success will precipitate a crisis of the first importance. For, if a force arises in the state that is stronger than the state itself then it must be ready to take on the functions of the state, or withdraw and accept the authority of the state. 'Gentlemen,' asked the Prime Minister quietly, 'Have you considered, and, if you have, are you ready?' 'From that moment on,' said Robert Smillie, 'we were beaten, and we knew we were.'

Bevan used this incident to illustrate what he considered 'the subjective attitude of the people to the existence of the franchise and all that flows from it'.

This commitment to bourgeois democracy has been and remains a characteristic of Labour's left wing no less than of the right. Even a prominent present-day representative of the left like Konni Zilliacus remains essentially a gradualist, believing that capitalism will eventually be superseded by introducing 'more socialism into our democracy'. He told the Russians in 1956 that 'the process of socialising our economy would go on through a combined action, reaction and interaction of the Government and the Opposition' (K. Zilliacus, *A New Birth of Freedom*, 1958).

### From Left to Right

The careers of many notable left-wingers in the Labour Party hold some important lessons if we are to understand how social democracy works. From the beginning there have always been those who, starting their political life on the left, became prominent as severe critics of the Labour Party and Labour Governments. However, they moved steadily to the right as they climbed from the lower rungs to the higher positions in the hierarchy. Ramsay MacDonald himself was once the great hope of the left, and Shinwell came into Parliament from the Clyde full of fighting spirit. In the thirties prominent politicians such as Cripps and Strachey (the latter for a long time a self-proclaimed Marxist) made criticisms of official Labour policy which seemed quite fundamental. But in the 1945 Government they both emerged as loyal Ministers of the Crown and played their parts operating the most reactionary policies.

Wilson, as a member of the Bevanite group, was a leader of the left. Bevan himself moved from his earlier radical stance to become a staunch Gaitskell man in line for the Foreign Secretaryship. More recently we have seen the rapid *volte face* of former left-wingers such as Barbara Castle and Anthony Greenwood. Greenwood, a former Treasurer of the Movement for Colonial Freedom, as Labour Colonial Secretary, amended the

The question arises of whether a real revolutionary leadership exists in Britain today. Because this is a question of increasing concern to all militant workers and to all those who are beginning to understand the need for a Marxist alternative to social democracy we must, in conclusion, turn our attention to it.

Despite the claims by the Communist Party leadership since 1951 for the Party's programme *The British Road to Socialism*, this document does not contain a Marxist analysis of British capitalism. It signally fails to make any attempt to analyse the Labour Party and social democracy in Britain. Instead, the Labour Party is presented in much the same light by the Communist leaders as it has always been by Labour's left wing propagandists. 'A general election,' says *The British Road to Socialism*, 'could return to Parliament a socialist Labour and Communist majority which, with the backing of the people, would begin to carry through a fundamental social change'. In a key passage the document goes on to say:

'using our traditional institutions and rights, we can transform Parliament into an effective instrument of the people's will, through which the major legislative measures of the change to socialism will be carried. Using the rights already won in the Labour movement's historic struggle for democracy, we can change capitalist democracy, dominated by wealth and privilege, into socialist democracy where only the interests of the people count.'

The Communist Party has consistently argued that its belief in the possibility of electing a socialist government and transforming Parliament in no way represents an abandonment of Marxist teachings on the state and revolution. Such a 'transformation', it is claimed, would be a peaceful revolution; this perspective is based upon the 'creative' application of Marxism to changed conditions in Britain. But analysis of the nature of British 'democracy' and of the Labour Party show the unreality of all this. The Communist Party has abandoned Marxist theory on the vital question of the state. *The British Road to Socialism* is a detailed tactical blueprint for a hypothetical future situation. This is not Marxism. Marxism works out tactics only when they can be related to the existing real situation. This un-Marxist blueprinting by the British revisionists is aimed at turning the workers away from the principles and strategy of Marxism in the class struggle for the wresting of power by the workers from the capitalists.

In spite of all their attempts to defend *The British Road to Socialism* against the charge of revisionism, the leaders of the Communist Party, in producing this document, have joined those who have preached constitutional action through Parliament, with the Labour Party as a vehicle, as the way the workers can achieve their goal. The position of the Communist Party differs in no essential from that of the left wing of social democracy and contains the same erroneous assumptions about the nature of the capitalist state and the role of Parliament.

A Communist Party committed to the line of the *British Road* and the policy statements which have followed it, becomes nothing more than a left auxiliary of the Labour Party. Communist policy, instead of being based on Marxism, becomes another variety of social democracy.

What must be done in Britain? There must be continuous Marxist explanation and education. British politics and the nature of imperialism must be laid bare. All illusions about easy short cuts to socialism must be exposed. This is not a call for mere political talk. Theorising divorced from action is sterile. A revolutionary leadership cannot emerge without involvement in the struggles over, for example Vietnam and wages, that are taking place now. But Marxist theory there has to be if the best and most militant forces are to avoid dissipating their strength in disconnected and ultimately ineffective activities.

### DISCUSSION GROUPS

DO YOU THINK that the articles in this issue deserve more than a single reading?

If you do one of the best ways of exploring what is in them is to discuss them with other people. Each person brings to the reading of an article his own experience and knowledge. Different readers will see different aspects of the subjects treated in the articles and can share their ideas in discussion.



Many important questions of British politics have so far received little or no examination from a Marxist standpoint. On these questions discussion is a necessary means for developing a Marxist position.



If you would like to form a group to discuss articles in this journal or to be put in touch with one when it is formed, send in your name and we will do our best to help you.

Write to  
The Marxist,  
Flat 4, 53, Shepherds Hill,  
London, N.6.

## **HELP WANTED**

**THIS IS** the first issue of a new magazine which aims at bringing Marxist thought and analysis back into the British political struggle.

If you agree with these aims you can help by

- \* **Becoming a regular subscriber**

(see inside front cover)

- \* **Making a donation either in one lump sum or regularly each month.**

(see page 4)

- \* **Sending us a list of names of people who would be interested to see a specimen copy**

(see page 19)

- \* **Discussing the articles in this issue with your friends and workmates.**

(see inside back cover)