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Maoist Groups

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EROL note: The pamphlet mentions anarchists and Maoists but mainly provides a jaundiced overview on British Trotskyism. It includes a section on attitudes to solidarity with Vietnam. This extract was, as originally entitled about the maoist groups. Pages 36-39

Maoist Groups

When we speak of the line of the Communist Party of China we mean here the main lines of argument which developed in the early sixties, first revealed in an exchange of letters with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and subsequently expounded in documents outlining a certain general strategy on questions of war, peace and revolution.*

In recent years since the development of the 'cultural revolution' and the decimation of the Communist Party of China it is not possible to refer to any specific general line, since the contradictory and chaotic conditions clearly existing in China do not allow for any norms of party life to be observed, nor any genuine collective statements to be issued.

* These themes have been dealt with continuously in *Comment* and *Marxism Today* and readers are referred to these journals for a more detailed treatment. See also *Whither China*. Communist Party pamphlet by R. P. Dutt.

Reflecting this chaos is the situation amongst their supporters in Britain, where it is impossible to discern clear lines of division in terms of policy, between the dozen or more competing organisations and groups. Not only have these groups proliferated, but their members spend a great deal of time attacking one another, working inside rival groupings and so on. In particular they are fond of accusing one another of Trotskyist sympathies, which they regard as the ultimate insult.

The majority of world Communist Parties see the struggle for peace and the prevention of the extermination of mankind in a third world war as the central struggle of our time, and the most important condition for the expansion of the revolutionary struggle in the capitalist countries, the development of the liberation movement in countries oppressed by imperialism, and the successful development of socialism in the socialist countries.

Even before socialism is triumphant throughout the world a world war can be averted, not because the forces of imperialism have become more peace loving, but because the growing forces of socialism, the international working class movement, the peace forces in the capitalist world, and the liberation movements against imperialism are strong enough, if united and determined to pursue policies based on the principle of peaceful co-existence of countries with different social systems, to force the imperialist powers to take into account the consequences of military and nuclear adventure, and to recognise the change in the balance of forces existing in the world today.

Caricature of Peaceful Co-existence

The Communist Party of China has always sought to present a caricature of this policy, and to characterise it as capitulation to imperialism. Thus it has denounced the policy of peaceful co-existence between countries with different social systems, accused those concerned to avert a third world war as bowing to imperialist blackmail and grossly exaggerating the effect of such a war, and has taken this further to accuse the Soviet Union and those who support this policy as in fact consciously collaborating with imperialism. It sees the main storm centres of world revolution in the vast areas of Asia, Africa and Latin America, and the working classes in the capitalist countries as corrupted. Therefore in the west it will be necessary to wait for imperialism to become weakened from defeats at the hands of the liberation movements and thus produce worsening

economic conditions in the capitalist countries, which will once again create conditions for revolutionary movements to develop there.

It is true that in Lin Piao's report to the Ninth Congress of the Communist Party of China in 1969 there is a sentence professing support for peaceful co-existence with countries having different social systems. This is immediately contradicted, however, by the tone and content of the rest of the report which also charges the Soviet Union with the restoration of capitalism, and calls for the overthrow of the socialist governments and the disruption of their Communist Parties. A characteristic explanation of this position is to be found in the article written by one of the theoreticians of this movement in Britain, William Ash. Writing in *Monthly Review** of May 1966 on "Marxism and the Negro Revolt" he says: "Marxism accounts for the present negative role of the metropolitan proletariat of western Europe and the United States in terms of the objective changes in material conditions which have for the time being diverted it from a revolutionary perspective."

"These so-called Marxists have failed, often quite deliberately, to expose the connection between the better living standards of the urban proletariat and the intensified exploitation of the colonial people, and they have argued that further concessions might be wrung from the ruling class by forms of agitation which that very class permitted. They have thus substituted a gradualist, legalistic approach for class war and have even concluded that socialism itself might come about peacefully and "legalistically" through such an approach."

An unsigned article in *Monthly Review*, May 1963, puts it even more clearly:

"Marxism-Leninism is in its essence, as the Chinese correctly insist, a revolutionary doctrine addressed to the oppressed and exploited of the world. How can it be expected to appeal to people who are not oppressed and exploited and who have no need of revolution?"

As for the Communist Parties in the advanced capitalist countries, they represent or seek to represent working classes which, objectively speaking, do share as junior partners in the exploitation of dependent empires. . . ."

**Monthly Review*, a long-established American journal which has in recent years largely given support to the Chinese position.

In other words the only hope is to go into training for the day when "imperialism in decline once again creates the conditions for vigorous revolutionary movements even in the richest capitalist countries."

Supporters of this line in Britain therefore attack the whole strategy of peaceful co-existence between countries of different social systems, attack the strategy of The British Road to Socialism as "revisionist" and as a capitulation to the ruling class. Marxists should therefore start now to prepare for the day when the working class has been jerked into a more receptive mood by painful experience. They campaign for the separation of the trade union and political movement by unions with- drawing from payment of the political levy, and continuously attack all other sections of the labour movement, especially the Communist Party, as treacherous and advocating class collaboration.

There is a loose federation of groups around a journal called *Marxist*. They are opposed to the formation of a Marxist Leninist party at this stage, since no one group is advanced enough to command the necessary authority.

There is the organisation set up by Reg Birch, which has no such reservations and calls itself the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist- Leninist) and publishes a monthly paper *The Worker*.

The Working People's Party of England publishes the *Workers' Broadsheet* which calls for "a massive occupation of factories with the taking over of control by the working staff" and says that "working people must be prepared to fight batons with batons and with guns", and calls for a "people's army" so that "guns can be met with guns".

There is now even a maverick group which calls itself the Marxist-Leninist Organisation of Great Britain, with a journal *Red Front*. This attacks Mao as counter revolutionary and supports Liu Shao-Chi!

Space does not allow a full recital of all the other similar tiny groupings. The tactics and attitudes cultivated by these organisations, and the chanting of slogans from the little red book which some of them indulge in, have a certain mindless, sectarian simplicity which it appears has an appeal to some students and young people. They are bent on obeying the behest of Mao "to make the revolution" without having had the opportunity to learn, as James

Klugmann said recently in *the Morning Star* that "revolution is not a shout of anger, nor a gesture of despair. It is not a game to play, nor a riot, nor a coup, nor a bloodbath. It is a product of the struggle of the working class and its allies, who extend their struggles for living standards and democracy beyond the framework of capitalism and imperialism, to win political power and build a socialist society."

For this objective it is necessary to win the support of the majority of the working people. The actions of those who genuinely want to aid that process must be directed towards winning allies rather than demonstrating their total hostility to all who do not share their viewpoint, thus providing the caricature of the revolutionary so beloved of the mass media, which lose no opportunity to give it publicity.

Whatever the differences between the groups they are united in one main objective, and that is to introduce into every meeting, every demonstration, every activity a direct attack upon the Soviet Union. This they regard as far more important than any other consideration.