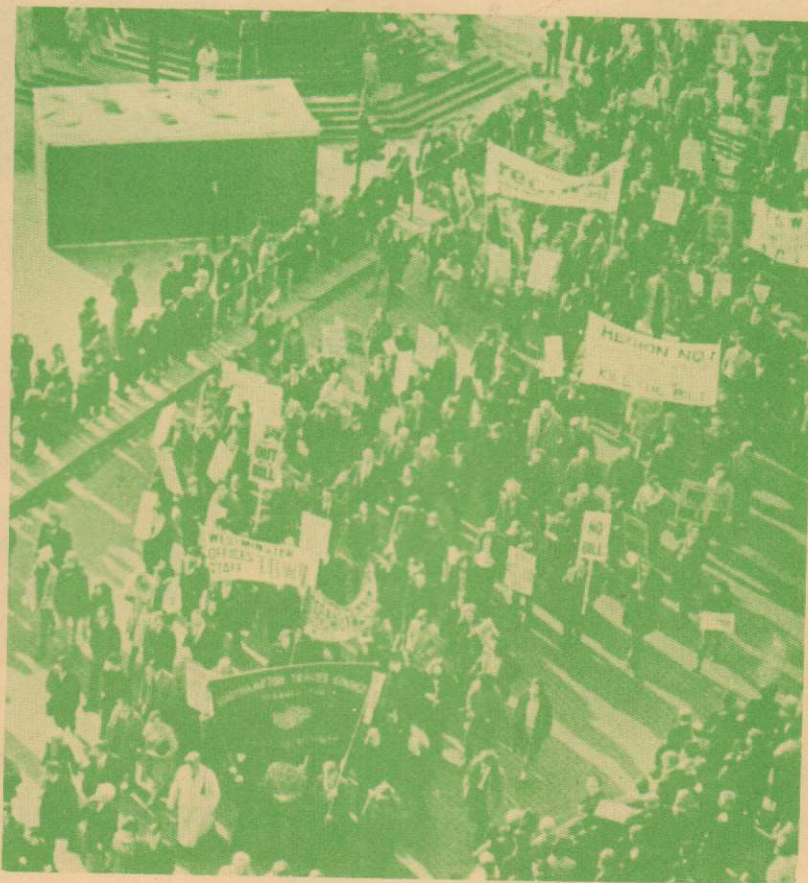


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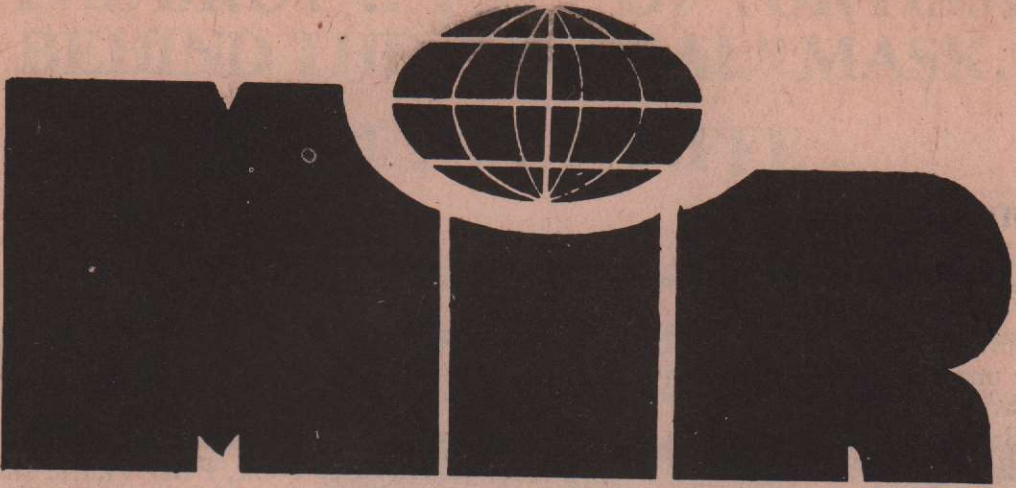
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INSIDE:

**The Colonial
Revolution and
the Workers'
States**

**The Brutal Face
of Toryism
behind the
'Liberal' mask**

REVIEW



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MILITANT INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

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INTRODUCTION

We devote this issue of the **MILITANT INTERNATIONAL REVIEW** to two important articles; one deals with Britain while the other is an analysis of the processes at work in the "third world".

The first article is a review of a recently published book "Inside Right". The author of this book is Ian Gilmour, Tory MP. In his analysis of this book, Peter Taaffe shows the need for the Labour Movement to take account of the ideas which Gilmour puts forward. The book clearly demonstrates the changed situation in British society and the corresponding change in the methods and policies which the strategists of capital like Gilmour are urging the ruling class to adopt. We believe that Labour workers—at whom our journal is aimed—will find the information contained in this article to be of great benefit in the battles which loom ahead. In order to be victorious in the struggle against capital and for a new socialist society it is necessary at each stage to take account of the strategy and tactics of the class enemy. We seek through articles like this to arm the Labour Movement with such an understanding.

The second article is a lengthy extract from an important study undertaken by Ted Grant of recent developments in Africa, Asia and Latin America. What is the significance of the Ethiopian Revolution or recent events in Afghanistan? What is the class nature of the regimes in these countries, in Syria or in other countries which have experienced similar upheavals in the recent period? How to explain the bloody clashes between "socialist" Vietnam and "socialist" Cambodia? Only the supporters of **MILITANT**—as this vitally important article demonstrates—are capable of giving a Marxist explanation of these events. The alleged "Marxist" sects in Britain and internationally are completely at sea when approaching these issues. We are confident that the reader will be able to contrast the genuine method of Marxism, as revealed by this analysis, and the utter confusion and muddle created by those sectarian tendencies claiming to be "Marxist" or "Trotskyist". Of necessity many of the details of the progress of the revolutions which are mentioned in the article are omitted due to lack of space. These details have in any case been given in a whole series of articles in the weekly **MILITANT**. The reader can familiarise himself with these events by going through the back issues of our weekly. The Editorial Board would welcome letters and comments on the articles in this issue.

Editor

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THE BRUTAL FACE OF TORYISM BEHIND THE "LIBERAL" MASK.

BY PETER TAAFFE

Review article of "Inside Right—a study in Conservatism" by Ian Gilmour. Published by Hutchinson and Co Ltd.

When it was first published last autumn this book attracted a lot of attention from capitalist commentators. Some hailed it as a definitive answer to all shades of "socialism" and elevated its author Ian Gilmour—Tory MP and a member of Thatcher's Shadow Cabinet—to the level of a new Tory guru. Here at last was an "intellectual" justification of Toryism and capitalism. Even the right wing of the Labour Party was forced to sit up and take notice. They were stung into exchanging salvos with him in the pages of the capitalist press. Gilmour accused them of not facing up to the Left within the Labour Party. One thing is clear; many of the ideas floated in this book have become part of the arsenal of Thatcher and her crew in their grab for power in the next election. For this reason alone the book would be of interest to active workers in the labour movement. But there is an additional and even more important reason for analysing Gilmour's book.

Here is spelt out in the most brutal language—something which could not be done in the Tory "popular press"—the manoeuvring and intriguing of the political representatives of the British ruling class against the rights, conditions and organisations of the working class. It therefore provides a timely warning to the labour movement of the terrible dangers to itself on the basis of a continuation of a diseased and clapped out system.

Under the stewardship of the capitalists British society has been brought to the brink of ruin. Almost daily we witness new examples of the



collapse of British capitalism. In steel, motorbikes, electronics, cars, etc. the British bourgeoisie is outstripped and beaten not just by the major powers but increasingly by the secondary capitalist powers. Thus Italy now outproduces Britain in steel. Moreover a recent Financial Times article pointed out that steel output per capita is now **higher in Russia than in Britain.** Britain is being reduced to an industrial wasteland.

Profits Increase

Yet the capitalists have seen profits increase from just over 2% in 1974 to 8.77% of gross domestic product last year.

But the degenerate British bourgeoisie still refuse to invest.

During 1977 investment was down 4%, the lowest level for 10 years. Total investment will be 4% lower in 1979 than in 1974 according to even the most favourable estimates. Manufacturing industry increased last year by a derisory ½%. The greedy and myopic British bourgeoisie have refused to re-tool industry preferring to invest in agricultural land and other speculative enterprises. Thus the Financial Times recently reported on the colossal increase in the buying of agricultural land in America by British companies. And it is the working class which is paying the catastrophic price for the collapse of British capitalism.

Mass unemployment has returned to haunt the valleys of South Wales and the industrial areas of

Tyneside, Merseyside and Clydeside. Moreover the formerly sheltered areas of the industrial West Midlands and London, which in the 1930's provided some kind of escape from the 'depressed areas' now have unemployment figures which rival those of the industrial North and South Wales. The whole of Britain is now a gigantic "depressed area". At the same time the bourgeois Cambridge Economists estimate that on the basis of present trends there will be 5 million unemployed by 1990!

Nor do the capitalists now expect any kind of redemption from North Sea oil. The Marxists pointed out from the beginning that the "El Dorado" of North Sea oil was a chimera. This year it will contribute about 1% to government revenue! It has proved as illusory as entry into the Common Market as a lifeline for British capitalism.

This is the background to Gilmour's book. In the section dealing with the economy he shows the same stupidity as the Tory leadership in relation to manufacturing industry. He writes: "Some... seem to think that the structural fault in Britain's economy of too few people in the productive sector is the sole explanation for our poor economic performance." (p.229). His Shadow Cabinet sidekick Howell argues that investment abroad is the key to the revival of the British economy! In this respect the Tory leadership is reflecting the pressure and the arguments of finance capital in the City of London. So blind and palsied are these representatives of British capitalism that they have forgotten that the real source of wealth is not bits of paper but production itself. And it is these worthies who use millions of words and acres of print to accuse the working class of sabotaging the economy!

Gilmour begins his book with an historical excursion and analysis of those figures whom he believes constitute the pantheon of Toryism. He points out that "A Tory was originally an Irish robber and outlaw; a Whig (out of this Party came the Liberal Party) was a Scottish outlaw." (p.24). What emerges from this section of the

book is that the Tories have been able to survive, at least until the recent period, as the most successful bourgeois party in Europe by a combination of trickery and by adapting themselves to changing circumstances.

At the beginning of the 1850s Karl Marx expected that the Tories would disappear and be absorbed by the Liberals. The opposite has happened with the Tories as the major force and the Liberals as the junior capitalist party (Macaulay the historian described them as the front and back legs of the same horse.).

Camouflage

Marx's prediction was based on the expectation of the growth of the revolutionary movement of the working class around the Chartists. This in turn would have compelled the various wings of the bourgeoisie to organise a common front within the same party and the Liberals were at that stage the party of industrial capital. But Marx wrote on the eve of the economic upswing of 1851 to 1873 which resulted in the decline of the Chartists, and the **restriction of the workers' movement** to the trade union field for a whole epoch.

The bourgeoisie used the struggle between the Liberals and Tories as a means of ventilating the grievances of the workers in an attempt to prevent the growth of an independent Labour Party. But the increasing threat to British capitalism, particularly from German capitalism, led to the discrediting of "free trade" (the Liberals watchword) by "protectionism". Together with the growth of imperialism this led to the supplanting of the Liberals by the Tories as the main capitalist party. The development of the Labour Party was largely at the expense of the Liberal Party.

But it is not just the "cleverness" of the ruling class which has allowed the Tory Party to survive for so long and so successfully. The main reason is that, resting on its wealth and power, with a mighty Empire at its back, it was enabled to give concessions to at least a layer of the

working class, particularly to white collar workers and also to the middle class. Even in the post-war period, with the rapid decline of British capitalism, it was still possible to do this. This enabled them to skillfully camouflage the real nature of the Tory Party, masquerading as one representing the whole "nation" not as a capitalist party. Their traditional policy has been to blunt class antagonisms and thus prevent a collision between the classes.

Indeed Gilmour states: "capitalism as such in so far as people know what it is, is not very popular." (p.131). He adds: "The Conservatives have lost every election since the war when they did not get 50% of their vote from the working class." (p.257). What is even more horrifying is the fact that: "the renewal of the electorate has been helping Labour; there are more new electors reaching voting age from Labour than from Conservatives homes, and as there are more elderly Conservatives than Labour voters more of them are dying." (p.258). Thus capitalism and its social reserves are literally withering away and dying!

But the support of the backward sections of the working class for their own worst enemies has also been due primarily to the fact that the leaders of the Labour Party and trade unions have been incapable of advancing a programme which could solve their problems.

Social Democrats

Indeed the Labour and trade union right wing leadership have in the past been the most reliable bulwarks of the system. Leon Trotsky pointed out that capitalism would not last for six weeks without the support of the trade union leadership. The Labour Party leaders were pliable tools of the capitalists. In policy, outlook and even their social origins they did not differ substantially from their Tory opposite numbers. This was summed up by the ideas of "Butskelism." The capitalists in effect controlled both parties through controlling the leaders. In his own inimitable fashion Gilmour recog-



Power of working class shown at Saltley Gates 1972

nises this. Thus he correctly says of the right wing Labour leaders: "British Social Democrats or revisionists do not believe in Socialism." (p.172). (Our emphasis). He also writes: "I remember a conversation with the formerly left wing John Strachey in 1956 or 1957, in which he explained to me that now that capitalism was working so well it was obviously pointless to try to get rid of it. (p.129). At the same time the right wing trade union leaders were there to add their "muscle" in support of Strachey, Gaitskell and Co: "Up till the mid-sixties, the trade unions were more often than not a brake on Labour's extremists. 'Our job now', Vic Feather (then General Secretary of the TUC) told me in 1962, 'is to keep the Labour Party sensible, to support Gaitskell and squash Mikardo and Silverman,' (p.239). Not a whisper then from Gilmour or the Tories about the "tyranny" of the trade unions or the "undemocratic" trade union block vote at LP Conference. The trade union leaders were then on the side of the angels ie the capitalists and their shadows within the labour movement. Gilmour argues that a "tame" Labour and TU leadership was a vital ingredient of the "Constitution." and British stability.

But alas, and alack, events did not continue along this groove. The period of Tory reaction between 1970-74 resulted in an enormous shift towards the Left within the Labour Party and the Trade unions. "The Revolution sometimes needs the whip of counter-revolution" wrote Marx. With horror and with something approaching hysteria does Gilmour survey the results of this period: "up to 1970 the Labour Party was firmly in the British empirical democratic tradition, that has not been so during the last few years. There is probably a greater desire in the Labour Party today to nationalise everything in sight than at any time in the party's history." (p.185)

Gilmour puts these "frightening" and "shocking" occurrences down to the lack of backbone of Harold Wilson and the "ignominy and cowardice" of the Social Democrats.

How different things would have been if Gaitskell and not Wilson had been in the saddle during the '60s and '70s: "Hugh Gaitskell's courageous leadership seemed about to bring Labour into the modern age." (p.184). Here Gilmour betrays the shortsightedness and limitations of his class. With Gaitskell in the leadership his crude right wing position would

have probably provoked tremendous upheavals at an earlier period within the Labour Party. With his Lloyd Georgian demagoguery, by talking 'left', while carrying out pro-capitalist policies, Wilson was able perhaps to temporarily delay the process of radicalisation within the ranks of the Labour Party.

But the shift towards the Left and the growth of socialist consciousness within the Labour Party and the unions is the result of the experiences of the working class accumulated over the last eight years in particular and not because of the failings or otherwise of Wilson as compared to Gaitskell.

Gilmour seems to recognise this when he deals with the possibility of the "Social Democrats" regaining their lost positions: "Only if there is to be a counter-revolution in the Labour Party and Labour returns to being a genuinely democratic party acting in the free empirical tradition of British politics." (p.211). What is meant by a "return to a genuinely democratic party" is indicated by the ideas of the right wing on Labour Party structure. Thus in a recent issue of 'Socialist Commentary' they suggested annual meetings of Labour Parties with the wards and General Committees transformed into tea parties! At least Gilmour's statement has the advantage of calling

things by their right name! A return back to the dark days of right wing domination, of witch-hunts and thought control would indeed be a "counter-revolution." Gilmour foams at the mouth at the prospect of an end to the threat of witch-hunts. This is what he writes about the recent attempts in this direction:

"In 1973 the 'proscribed list' which declared various far-left organisations ineligible for application to the Labour Party and members of those organisations ineligible for membership of the party was abolished. This opened the way for far left MPs to co-operate with the Communist Party and with other outside left organisations. In 1975 Ron Hayward, the General Secretary of the Labour Party, visited East Germany and described the German Communist leader, Herr Honecker, 'as a man of wisdom and experience, very proud of the German Democratic Republic and with every right to be proud.' In 1976 a report on Trotskyist infiltration into the Labour Party was for months ignored by the National Executive Committee which then appointed a Trotskyist to be the party's youth officer. From 1974 onwards Mr Prentice and other MPs were under threat in their constituencies from various local Soviets and Commissars."

"Tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are." The ranks of the labour movement will note that it is the vicious reactionaries like Gilmour and the capitalist press which has looked with dread towards the prospect of a Labour Party armed with a Marxist programme. Those sections of the right wing and Labour Party officialdom who still hanker after a Labour Party purged of its left wing are doing the dirty work of the capitalists. They want a tame, "controlled" Labour Party and trade union movement which will attempt to mute the inevitable resistance of the working class to the programme of savage cuts in living standards which the bourgeoisie consider is vital for the maintenance of their system.

But this prospect seems to have



Prentice

completely receded so far as Gilmour is concerned. The right wing are incapable of preventing the "lurch to the left". In the tones of an outraged benefactor Gilmour lashes the right wing for not, in his opinion, putting up a fiercer resistance. He now considers them redundant and therefore unworthy of their former lush living. Ponder for a moment the following statement of Gilmour: "In the British system the duties of Opposition are almost as important as those of the governing party. Their prime responsibility is to preserve the allegiance of their followers...to parliamentary democracy and to the freedoms that go with it. This is in a sense a governing function, and that is why the leader of the Opposition is paid by the state...the opposition should be helping to deliver the consent of their party to the parliamentary process...Wilson drew his salary as leader of the Opposition but failed to perform the duties of his office." (Our emphasis p.204)

By "parliamentary democracy" Gilmour means capitalism as we shall see later on. Thus the payment of a massive salary to the Labour leader together with the thousand and one privileges and perks doled out by the capitalists is **conditional on the right wing being able to keep the ranks of the movement "in line."**

Because they are now incapable of doing this they are washed up and

no longer deserve their former privileges. This is the substance of Gilmour's fulminations against the right wing and the recent sly hints in the Times and other capitalist journals about their 'life-style.'

But if the right wing are incapable of checking "socialism" what other measures must the capitalists undertake? Gilmour is pre-occupied with this question and in fact it is the main theme of his book. The sheer hypocrisy of Gilmour and the strategists of capital is shown here. He contends that Britain faces a "constitutional crisis." In the past the hallowed British constitution was the best in the world argued the bourgeois ideologists. The "two party" system of "ins and outs" and of "first past the post" was superior to any system yet invented. With lofty disdain did they view the idea of "proportional representation" which resulted in "instability" in France, Italy, etc. No matter what **proportion of the vote a party got, "a majority of one"** was sufficient as Churchill argued.

But now everything is turned on its head. "Reason becomes unreason and unreason becomes reason." Gilmour writes: "The two party system in this country is crumbling and will continue to crumble". **Horror upon horror, the Labour Government was elected on a minority vote and the two major parties together only polled 55% of the total vote! The Government has no "mandate" from the people because people don't read manifestoes shrieks Gilmour!**

What factors have wrought this astonishing change in the attitude of the bourgeoisie in Britain? After all Gilmour freely confesses that ten years ago in a book he subscribed to De Gaulle's praise of the British Constitution! **Most Governments since the war have only received a minority of the votes cast in elections. The highest percentage for Labour was 48% of the votes cast in the 1945 election. Nor did the Tories hesitate to invoke the doctrine of the "mandate" to launch their vicious assaults on the working class and trade unions when they were in power.**

It is not at all accidental that

Gilmour and other bourgeois thinkers have raised the need for "constitutional change" at this stage. They have noted the process at work within the labour movement. They have also reflected on the experiences of their cousins in other countries. Looming in the future they see the coming to power in Britain of a Left Labour Government similar to Allende's in Chile, and probably led by Tony Benn. Although Allende received only 36% of the vote in the 1970 election when he came to power the masses pressed forward and compelled his government to nationalise approximately 30% of industry, introduce a land reform and ratify the "illegal" occupation of the land by peasants. This in turn resulted in "the Popular Unity" parties, primarily the Communist and Socialist Parties, increasing their vote to 44% of the vote in the March 1973 Congressional elections.

Parliamentary Cretinism

Chilean capitalism was only able to check this development by the methods of ruthless civil war. The lessons have not been lost on Gilmour and his ilk. This is what he writes on page 214: "The only sure way to prevent a revolution is to prevent a revolutionary situation arising." One way of doing this, he maintains, to prevent the coming to power of a Left Labour Government. Therefore the electoral system should be changed to some kind of proportional representation system. He estimates that this will keep Labour in the position of a permanent minority. At the same time, it could, hopes Gilmour plaintively, lead to a "return to sanity" by Labour and a "moderate" resurgence within its ranks. This is an example of what Marx called "parliamentary cretinism" which in turn is a reflection of the degeneration of the British bourgeoisie and its strategists.

Firstly an attempt to move in this direction would provoke the furious resistance of the working class. Secondly if it appeared that Labour was kept in the position of a permanent minority—by a Tory, Liberal and Nationalist Coalition

which Gilmour clearly favours at some stage in the future—the working class would be forced to the Left and into the extra-parliamentary arena.

Moreover it cannot be assumed that Labour will never receive a majority of votes just because this has not happened in the past. The Portuguese Revolution showed that on the basis of a stormy revolutionary upheaval those parties which stood for "socialism" received a crushing majority of votes. Events in Britain will raise the British working class to their feet on no less a scale, indeed on an even greater scale, than in Portugal. The upheavals of 1970-74 are a dress rehearsal for such events, particularly if Thatcher, Gilmour and Co return to power.

At the moment the Thatcher leadership of the Tory Party, in its lust for a monopoly of power, has rejected the idea of proportional representation and coalition. Nevertheless, events and particularly the failure of a Tory government, will revive the interest of the Bourgeoisie and the Tory Party in this idea. At the same time Gilmour also raises the urgency of transforming the House of Lords from an unelected second chamber into one that is elected or partially elected.

In so doing he is not at all motivated by a desire for greater democracy. In order to prevent the 'elected dictatorship' in the House

of Commons from going "too far and too fast and in the wrong direction" a "bulwark against revolution" (p.214) is necessary. Thus the bourgeoisie with all the checks and balances at its disposal—including the monarchy, clearly referred to by Gilmour as a "reserve" weapon—are so afraid of the pressures which a Left Labour Government will be subjected to by the working class that it is preparing itself, is building trenches, to bar the way forward for such a government.

This is the clearly stated aim presented by Gilmour in this book. He can see the pressure already generated within the Labour Party for the complete abolition of the House of Lords. The last Labour Party Conference passed resolutions virtually unanimously in favour of its abolition. A "second chamber", no matter on what basis it is cobbled together, will be a weapon aimed at frustrating a Labour Government from carrying through radical measures. Gilmour's book provides the evidence to show this.

He also proposes the use of referenda by Tory governments. Thatcher has subsequently taken up this idea and threatened to use it against the trade unions in a situation like another miners strike for instance, if she comes to power. This is another demonstration of the idiocy of the Tory leadership. It



Steel workers lobby Parliament

could completely rebound on Thatcher if she was ever to use it. The working class would not accept the verdict of a referendum with the bias of the press, radio, and TV. Nor would it mean necessarily that a Tory Government would always get a majority. Its defeat would precipitate its downfall. Nevertheless as outlandish as this proposal is it shows the direction in which the bourgeoisie in Britain are moving. Referendums are the usual devices of Bonapartist regimes ie military police dictatorships. No longer able to rely completely on Parliament the ruling class is searching for other means of thwarting and curtailing the powers of the working class. Gilmour's mentor Hailsham has suggested another "safeguard" against Parliament, the strengthening of the judiciary with the right to reject legislation passed by Parliament! In the long term they foresee a head-on collision with the Labour Movement. This is underlined by Gilmour's remarks on "democracy" and "freedom" and his hysterical denunciations of the Trade Unions.

On to the shoulders of the working class is heaped the blame for the catastrophic position of British capitalism. Even while dealing with the remotest historical figures Gilmour cannot refrain from hurling abuse at the working class, its leaders and organisations. Disraeli, he claims, showed that:



"All government is oligarchical, but the extent obviously varies. The Labour Party enshrined oligarchy in its constitution when it gave the block vote to trade unions at the Labour Conference. And the "Venetian" oligarchy of today are the leaders of the TUC who sometimes reduce the leader of the Labour Party to a mere Doge" (p.84). The real oligarchy in Britain is the handful of millionaires who own and control the monopolies. They in turn exercise an iron grip over the Tory Party and fill its coffers to the tune of over £3 million every year.

On page 189 Gilmour growls: "No baron in the fifteenth century acted with such arrogance or with such sublime indifference to the national interest as have Mr Scargill, Mr Buckton and many other trade union chieftains...great economic damage has been caused by trade union leaders' ruthless use of the strike weapon in pursuit of their own interests. All this is often accompanied by considerable intimidation. Business morality may occasionally be deficient (!); all too often trade union morality seems non-existent."

Trade Unions

The Lockheed bribes, the British Leyland slush fund scandals, not to mention the Poulson affair, and the Watergate conspiracy are just a few blemishes on an otherwise spotless "business" banner! Gilmour also makes the ritualistic denunciations of the "closed shop" and wistfully hopes that it will become as outmoded as "duelling".

The vicious denunciations of the trade unions by this worthy shows that the bourgeoisie in Britain understand that the chief danger to their position comes from the trade unions. Forced to tolerate them the bourgeoisie examine every avenue in an effort to limit and restrain their power. In a really cold, calculating and brutal fashion Gilmour discusses the various alternatives open to his class in its approach towards the unions. He gives a glimpse of the kind of discussion which takes place in the board rooms and fashionable

clubs: "a possibility favoured by some is to smash trade union power by very high unemployment." (My emphasis PT p.242) This is rejected not on any "moral" grounds but solely because of its impracticality—for the time being—and the consequences for capitalism if such attempts are undertaken: "The trouble is that a free society would probably be smashed at the same time. At the very least, high unemployment is unlikely to help the promulgation of free-market doctrines or to cement loyalty to the country's free and democratic institutions." In a sly dig at Thatcher and her high priest Joseph, with his philosophy of letting the market rip and cutting spending on the social services to the bone, Gilmour is warning that capitalism itself will be called into question if such policies are pursued.

Freedom?

Heath has recently issued the same warning. But in the long term the capitalists will be forced to take such measures. In Gilmour's ruminations on "democracy" can already be discerned the outline of the terrible threat which is posed to the working class in the future. Time and time again he accuses the labour movement of wanting to establish an "East European" state, of threatening "liberty" and cherished 'freedoms'. It is obvious from this and all the recent speeches of Thatcher—where this has been a constant theme—that the Tory leadership is contemplating fighting a scare election campaign. In 1945 Churchill attempted to make the flesh creep by warning that Labour wanted to establish a "Gestapo" regime. According to the Times recently Mrs Thatcher is considering; "an unashamed socialist scare argument, a scare election in which Mr Callaghan is shown as the Kerensky of an irreversible socialist revolution."

This is a desperate attempt by the Tories to grab power but also to link the labour movement and Marxism with totalitarianism. This clearly emerges from Gilmour's book. On the one side he boldly

declares: "If there is no private property there will be no freedom" (p.149). Freedom for whom? The Chilean regime is the armed gendarme of private property. It denationalised industries and restored them back to the former owners thereby restoring the "freedom" of the capitalists to ruthlessly exploit and starve the Chilean workers and peasants. At the same time the real freedom, the real democracy which existed in Chile, the right to vote, to strike, a free press and right to assemble has been stamped out by the junta. The same thing happened in Fascist Germany under Hitler, in Italy under Mussolini and in Spain under Franco. Gilmour lumps together the Fascist and Stalinist regimes as an example of "collectivism."

Stalinism

But this trick can easily be countered by the labour movement. Hitler oiled and financed his Nazi machine out of the coffers of the German capitalists. When he came to power and murdered millions of German workers and trade unionists he was supported by British capitalists like Vickers.

Stalinism, Gilmour says, is the 'inevitable' outcome of Marxism. On the contrary it is the result of the isolation of the Russian revolution in a backward country. It is also a demonstration of the

impossibility of constructing socialism in one backward country.

It was Gilmour's mentors like Churchill who organised and financed the intervention of and armies of imperialism against the young Russian workers republic and contributed to its isolation. It was also the pressure of capitalism on the workers state which resulted in the rise of a privileged caste and a totalitarian regime in Russia. Moreover this regime is of the greatest value to Gilmour and the capitalists. They fear the attraction of a planned economy for the British workers but at the same time these regimes provide them with a scarecrow to frighten the working class away from "socialism". With Robespierre they could say "if it did not exist it would have been necessary to have invented it." But a socialist Britain would not be totalitarian. It would allow the greatest flowering of democracy in the history of this country, indeed the world. For the first time the mass of people would be enabled to manage and control society. The cultural level of the British working class, together with the colossal resources which would be opened up by a socialist Britain would mean an immediate cut in the working day together with an enormous increase in living standards. This in turn would allow the participation of the most exploited and hitherto oppressed sections in the running of the affairs of society.

Even Gilmour' and Thatcher and the Tory party would be allowed to preach the advantages of a return back to capitalism! Such would be the advantages of a planned economy and workers democracy that they would be seen as historical relics whose only interest to society would be to remind us of our barbaric past.

No! It is not the labour movement which threatens democratic rights but Gilmour and his class. This is spelt out in black and white in this book. We do not believe in selective quotes and distortions of the arguments even of the class enemy. It is therefore worthwhile quoting the whole of one particularly telling passage:

"Conservatives do not worship democracy. For them majority rule is a device. Each individual no doubt should be the best judge of his own interests, and if he were, majority rule would be more than a device to the Tories. But individuals do not always act in their own interest, as Halifax and many others have pointed out; still less do groups. Rational, economic, utilitarian man exists only in the imagination of some economists and philosophers. Similarly, majorities do not always see where their best interests lie and then act upon their understanding. For Conservatives, therefore, democracy, is a means to an end not an end in itself. In Dr Hayek's words, democracy 'is not an ultimate or



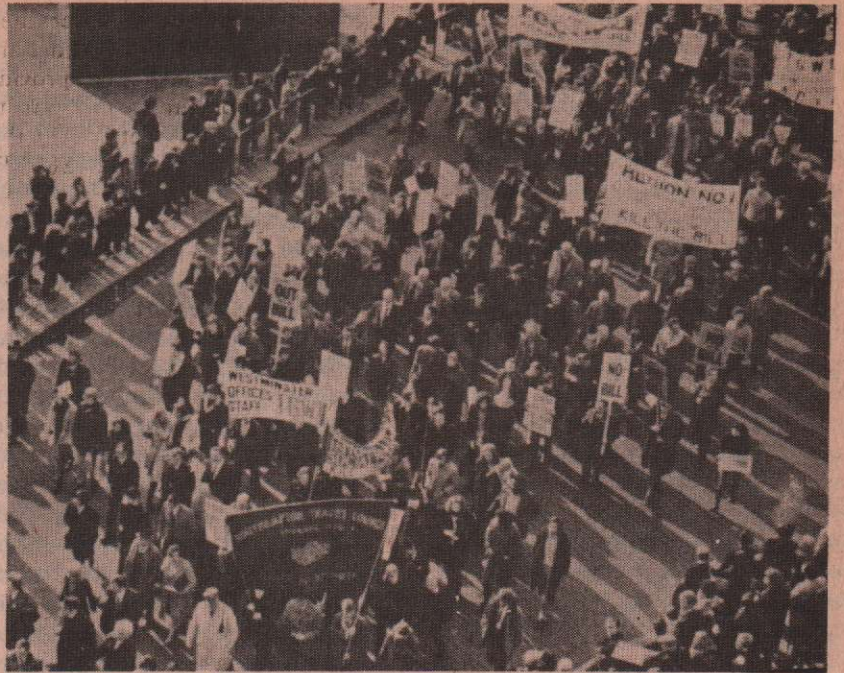
Labour Party Young Socialist Demonstration

absolute value and must be judged by what it will achieve.' And if it is leading to an end that is undesirable or is inconsistent with itself, then there is a theoretical case for ending it.

Yet as Sir Karl Popper has remarked, 'there are only two kinds of governmental institutions, those which provide for a change of the government without bloodshed, and those which do not. But if the government cannot be changed without bloodshed, it cannot, in most cases, be removed at all...I personally prefer to call the type of government which can be removed without violence "democracy", and the other "tyranny". Conservatives wholly accept Popper's distinction, which cuts through much cant and hypocrisy about democracy. 'Numbers in a state,' said Burke, 'are always of consideration, but they are not the whole consideration. In practice, no alternative to majority rule exists, though it has to be used in conjunction with other devices. And in the Conservative Party unlike the Labour Party there is no extreme wing which hankers after the death of parliamentary democracy and the imposition of dictatorship. If our free institutions are overthrown or totally perverted, the Left nor the Right will be responsible. There is no danger of a right wing coup. Only if the constitution had already been destroyed by the Left, might Right react and the Left find itself overthrown in its turn by a counter-coup from the Right.'

(My emphasis-PT, p.211-212)

Every serious member of the labour movement should reflect on these words. Remember this is not a maniac of the fascist National Front who is writing but "Minister of Defence" in Thatcher's Shadow Cabinet! Gilmour betrays here the real thinking of the British bourgeoisie: "majority rule is a device...democracy is a means to an end not an end in itself...if it (democracy) is leading to an end that is undesirable..then there is a theoretical case for ending it." A future direct challenge to the right to vote, to organise, to strike, to assemble etc is thus posed by this Tory theorist, if "democracy" is



Tories will attempt to take on Trade Unions

leading to an "undesirable" state of affairs, ie if the working class and its organisations are threatening the continued existence of the bourgeoisie.

This is what Gilmour says. He adds the ritualistic defence of "parliamentary democracy", of course. But what does this actually amount to? He writes: "no alternative to majority rule exists". He could have added "at the moment". Three years ago the bourgeoisie were openly discussing the possibility of a military coup in Britain. Both Jack Jones and Harold Wilson have since confirmed that discussions along these lines were taking place behind the scenes in bourgeois circles.

Pondering on the experiences of the ruling class in Portugal, Greece, and Chile the British bourgeoisie rejected any idea of a coup at that stage. It is one thing to impose a dictatorship but the inevitable dismantling of such regimes unleashes mass pressures which threaten the very existence of capitalism itself. The Portuguese revolution which has been mulled over by the strategists of capital together with the developing Spanish Revolution confirms this. It is this factor and not any squeamishness about "bloodshed" or hostility towards "tyranny", as Gilmour pretends, which leads him and his

class to reject this road at the present time. The long term threat to the working class is shown precisely in the careful formula of Gilmour about a future coup: "There is no danger of a right wing coup. Only if the constitution had already been destroyed by the Left might the Right react and the Left find itself overthrown in its turn by a counter-coup from the Right." The phrases about the "constitution" and the "threat" of a "Left wing coup" are a smokescreen to disguise Gilmour's thinking. In Chile in 1973 Allende's ratification of the nationalisation of many firms, following their occupation by the workers as an answer to the failed June 1973 right wing coup, was interpreted by all the bourgeois parties as a gross violation of the Constitution! The Chilean equivalent of the Tory Party, the Christian Democratic Party, called for the overthrow of the Allende government and its right wing obviously had prior notice of this.

At the same time they greeted the junta of Pinochet as the "saviours" who had prevented a "left wing coup." There is no doubt that the right wing of the Tory Party, probably coalescing with some former members of the "liberal wing", would act in like manner in a similar situation in Britain.

The labour movement in Britain

can ignore the warnings contained in Ian Gilmour's book only at its peril. A military dictatorship, backed up by fascist bands, is not on the agenda in the next period. On the contrary the next few years will see a further shift towards the left after the relative pause in the workers movement in the past three or four years. But the organic crisis of British capitalism demands further attacks on the already reduced standards of the working class. A Tory government led by Thatcher will attempt to take up where the Heath government left off.

Thatcher has correctly characterised the next election as a "watershed." Such are the desperate straits of the British ruling class that they have been compelled to abandon all those policies based on so-called "class harmony". They have resorted once again to the brutal policies of class war. This is the only hope they see of salvaging their system.

On the other hand the British workers will resist these policies. They have extended a period of

grace to the Labour Government, "their Government", in order that the Labour Leaders be provided with an opportunity to "put the economy on its feet." All their sacrifices have been in vain. The colossal bonus given to the big monopolies has been squandered by the greedy owners of industry. This has stoked up the anger and bitterness of the working class. If a Tory government comes to power this will burst open. Attempts to roll back the clock in wages, conditions and rights will result in a might collision between the classes which could end with a General Strike.

Ammunition

Even if a Labour Government was to be returned the working class will present the bill for payment for their sacrifices over the past four years. No matter what the results of the General Election the Labour Party and trade unions will shift towards the left. The process is already visible in the hitherto inert and backward layers who have

swung leftwards in the past period. The same developments will also take place in the engineering union and the electricians' union notwithstanding the recent results of the election of Duffy and the consolidating of the right wing in the AUEW. The upswing in the class struggle will undoubtedly affect these unions. The growth of Marxist ideas within the Labour Party will also be paralleled in the unions. An opportunity will be provided to rearm the labour movement with the programme of Marxism. And in these titanic events which impend in Britain it is only this programme which is capable of completely eliminating any possibility of the programme of Gilmour and his like from being realised. In the meantime his book should be used by the active workers in the labour movement to acquaint all workers with the real, brutal face of Thatcherism. It will be an invaluable source of ammunition in countering the Tories' scare tactics in the forthcoming General Election.

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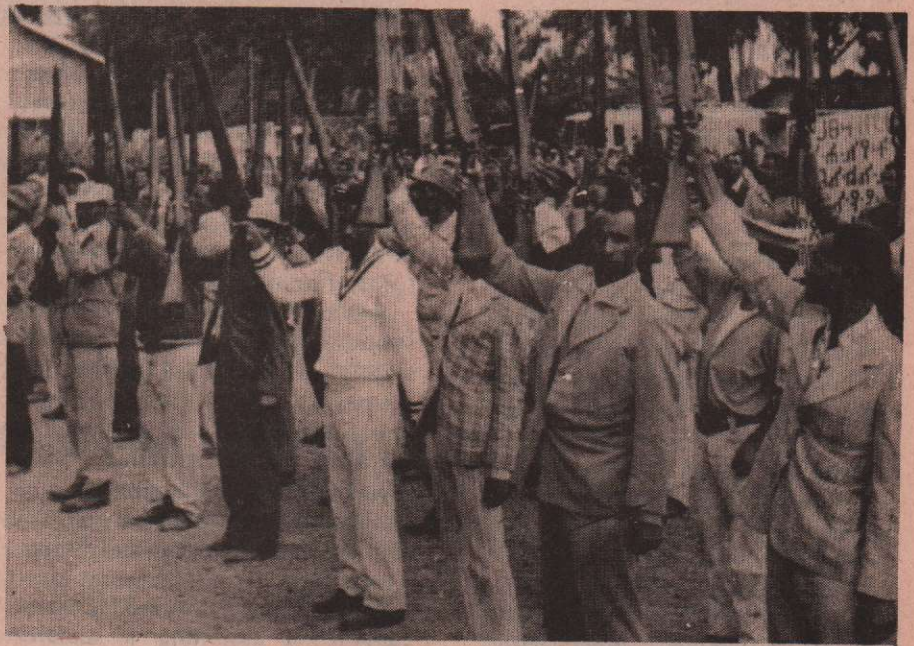
The Colonial Revolution and the Deformed Workers' States

BY TED GRANT

In bourgeois countries in the past, where the bourgeoisie has a role to play and looks forward confidently to the future—i.e. when it is genuinely progressive in developing the productive forces—it has decades and generations to perfect the state as an instrument of its own class rule. The army, police, civil service, middle layers and especially all key positions at the top; heads of civil service, heads of departments, police chiefs, the officer corps and especially the colonels and generals are carefully selected to serve the needs and interests of the ruling class. With a developing economy and a mission and a role they eagerly serve the "national interest" i.e. the interests of the possessing classes—the ruling class.

In Syria, as in all the ex-colonial countries, the imperialists, in this case the French, partly under the pressure of their rivals, especially American Imperialism, were compelled to relinquish their direct military domination. The state which emerged is not fixed and static. The weakness and incapacity of the bourgeoisie gave a certain independence to the military caste. Hence the perpetual coups and counter-coups of the military. But in the last analysis they reflect the class interests of the ruling class. They cannot play an independent role.

The struggle between the cliques in the army reflects the instability and contradictions in the given society. The personal aims of the generals reflects the differing interests of social



Ethiopian People's Militia

classes or fractions of classes in society, the petit-bourgeoisie in its various fractions, the bourgeoisie or even under certain conditions the proletariat in so far as they are successful in gaining power. The officer caste must reflect the interests of some class or grouping in society. They do not represent themselves though of course they can plunder the society and elevate their own ruling caste. Nevertheless they must have a class basis in a given society.

Bonapartist regimes do not rest on air but balance between the classes. In the final analysis they represent whichever is the dominant class in the society. The

economy of that class determines its class character. Some of these countries, as in Latin America, a semi-colonial continent which was under the domination of British then especially American imperialism for the last century, nevertheless have been nominally independent for more than a century. In consequence despite a period of turbulence the ruling class of landowners and capitalists has had a sufficient period to perfect their state. Sometimes the armed forces or different fractions or factions of the armed forces, can reflect different fractions of the ruling class and even the pressures of imperialism, primarily nowadays Am-

erican imperialism.

But, up to now, they have always reflected the interest of the ruling class in the defence of private ownership.

In Burma, where the regime, newly emerged from British domination and where the ruling class was incapable of successfully "holding the country together", it faced a series of rebellions and wars. The army was formed from the Anti-Fascist Peoples Freedom League, which described itself as "socialist".

With China as a model next door, the army leaders tired of the incapacity of the landowners and capitalists to solve the problems of Burma. Basing themselves on the support of the workers and peasants, they organised a coup, expropriated the landowners and capitalists and established Burma as a "Burmese Buddhist Socialist State".

China

Yet up to the Russian revolution even Lenin denied the possibility of the victory of the proletarian revolution in a backward country. The Chinese revolution of 1944-49 did not proceed on the model of the revolution of 1925-27. It was a peasant war, which because of the, complete incapacity of the Chinese bourgeoisie to carry out the tasks of the bourgeois—democratic revolution the ending of landlordism, national unification and the expulsion of imperialism, ended with victory to the Chinese Stalinists.

The programme of the Chinese Stalinists was not fundamentally different to that of Castro later in Cuba; 50 or 100 years of national capitalism" and an alliance with the "national bourgeoisie". Hence the belief of many American bourgeois that they were "agrarian reformers".

Only the Marxist tendency gathered around the Militant in Britain argued against the Stalinists, and the alleged "Trotskyist" sects and explained the inevitability of Mao's victory and the establishment of a deformed workers state.

At a time when Mao and the Chinese CP had the programme of

capitalism and "national democracy" we could predict the inevitability of proletarian Bonapartism as the next stage in China. This had nothing in common with the methods of the proletarian revolution in Russia in 1917.

Power was gained through the peasant war by giving the land to soldiers in Chiang Kai Shek's army. Then by balancing between the classes and playing off the classes against each other in Bonapartist fashion, once military victory was achieved, landlordism and capitalism were expropriated. Nearly all the so-called "Trotskyist" sects now accept the accomplished fact. But never before in history has it been even theoretically posed that a peasant war on classical lines could lead to a workers' state, however deformed. The workers in China were passive throughout the civil war for reasons we will not enter into here. But here was a perfect example of one class—the peasants in the form of the Red Army—carrying out the tasks of another.

It is amusing now to see the sects swallowing the idea that a "workers state" was established in China by the peasant army without turning a hair, only because at the head of the army was the so-called "Communist" Party. In classical Marxist theory this idea would be precisely considered hair raising and fantastic.

The peasants, as a class, are least capable of assuming a socialist consciousness.

It is an aberration of Marxism to think that such a process is "normal". It can only be explained by the impasse of capitalism in China, the paralysis of imperialism, the existence of a strong deformed Bonapartist state in Stalinist Russia, and most important of all, the delay in the victory of the revolution in the industrially advanced countries of the world. The colonial countries cannot wait. The problems are too crushing. There is no way forward on the basis of capitalism. Hence the peculiar aberrations in colonial countries. But the price for this, as in the Soviet Union, is a second political revolution to put the

control of society, industry and the state in the hands of the proletariat. Only thus could the first genuine beginnings of the transition to socialism, or rather steps in that direction, commence.

The wide support for "socialism" not only in the working class, but among the peasants and wide layers of the petit-bourgeoisie in the cities in colonial countries, is the expression of the complete blind alley of landlordism and capitalism in the colonial world in the modern epoch. It is also a result of the Russian and Chinese revolutions and their achievements in developing industry and the economy. It is this that lays the groundwork for the development of proletarian Bonapartism.

The state can be reduced to armed bodies of men, according to Engels. With the defeat and destruction of the police and army of Chiang Kai Shek, as with the destruction of the army of Batista in Cuba, power was in the hands of Mao and Castro. The fact that nominally Mao was a "Communist" and Castro a bourgeois democrat altered nothing.

Moscow's Image

So far was Mao from the model of the proletarian revolution that on entering Shanghai and other cities, workers who had seized their factories and met Mao with demonstrations of red flags were instantly shot in order to "restore order"! The state created by Mao was in the image of Moscow. Moscow, 1945-49, not Moscow 1917!

Mao in typical Bonapartist fashion on the basis of the peasant army, always an instrument of (bourgeois) bonapartism in the past, balanced between the classes. Having perfected a state in the image of Moscow, leaning on the workers and peasants, he could snuff out the bourgeoisie painlessly. As Trotsky put it, for a lion you need a gun, for a flea, a fingernail will do! Having crushed the bourgeoisie, after having balanced between them and the workers and peasants in order to prevent the workers from taking



power, Mao and his gang—after perfecting the state—could then turn on the workers and peasants to **crush whatever elements of workers' democracy** had developed.

The bureaucracy then developed a totalitarian one-party dictatorship, centred round the Bonapartist dictatorship of one single individual—Mao. But, not for nothing has Marxist theory given the task of achieving the socialist revolution and the transition to socialism to the working class. This is not an arbitrary role but because the specific role **in production** of the proletariat gives a **specific consciousness possessed by no other class**. Least of all can the petit-bourgeois peasant develop this consciousness. A revolution based on the latter class by its very nature would be doomed to degeneration and Bonapartism. It is precisely because a proletarian Bonapartist dictatorship protects **the privileges of the elites of state, party, the army, industry and the intellectuals of art and science** that it has succeeded in so many backward countries.

Marxism finds in the development of the productive forces the key to the development of society. On a capitalist basis there is no longer a way forward particularly for backward countries. That is why army officers, intellectuals and others affected by the decay of their societies **under certain conditions**

can switch their allegiance. **A change to proletarian Bonapartism actually enlarges their power, prestige, privileges and income.** They become the sole commanding and directing stratum of the society raising themselves even higher over the masses than in the past. Instead of being subservient to the weak, craven and ineffective bourgeoisie they become the masters of society.

Transitional Economies

The tendency towards statification of the productive forces, which has grown beyond the limits of private ownership, is manifest even in the most highly developed economies including even the United States. It is present even in the most reactionary colonial countries.

There is no possibility of a **consistent, uninterrupted and continuous** increase in productive forces in the countries of the so-called third world on a capitalist basis. Production stagnates or falls. In the world recessions, particularly in the smaller countries, living standards fall. There is no way out on the basis of the capitalist system. That explains the terror regimes of bourgeois Bonapartism like that of Pakistan, Indonesia, Argentina, Chile and Zaire. But with bayonets and bullets, on the basis of an out-dated and antiquated system, only a very

temporary respite is given. Discontent multiplies and is reflected in the officer caste of the armed forces and throughout the society. This in turn leads to conspiracies of individuals and groups of officers. **The army is a mirror of society and reflects its contradictions. That and not the mere whims of the officers concerned, as in Syria, is the cause of the upheavals. It is an indication of the agonised crisis of society;** which cannot be solved in the old way. These strata of society can espouse "socialism" of the Stalinist variety—proletarian Bonapartism—all the more enthusiastically because of their contempt for the masses of workers and peasants.

The horrible caricature of workers rule in Russia, China, and the other countries of deformed workers' states precisely **attracts** them because of the position of the "intellectual" educated cadres of that society. What is repulsive to Marxism is what attracts them.

All that these states have in common with healthy workers' states of the norm or Russia of 1917-23 is **state ownership of the means of production**. On that basis they can plan and develop the productive forces with forced marches at a pace absolutely impossible on their former landlord-capitalist basis. This is possible of course for **only** a limited historical period of time. At some point the Stalinist regimes become an absolute hindrance and a fetter to production. Russia and Eastern Europe are reaching these limits.

In common with a healthy workers' state on the accepted Marxist norm is the fact that they are **transitional economies** between capitalism and socialism.

But Marxism teaches that a movement towards socialism requires the control, guidance and participation of the proletariat. With a privileged elite in uncontrolled dominance and not reconciled to the loss of its status in a "withering away" of the state, this produces new contradictions. As the corruption, nepotism, waste, mismanagement and chaos which **bureaucratic control necessarily**

involves comes more and more into contradiction with the needs of **social development**, this manifests itself in the heightened antagonism between the proletariat and the bureaucratic elite.

Trotsky long ago explained in the case of Russia that at **three times the cost to the masses**, nevertheless the bureaucracy developed the productive forces which the bourgeoisie was incapable of doing. It **fulfills the function**, a relatively **progressive function**, which the bourgeoisie had accomplished in the past. But Trotsky explained that this role also engenders its own contradictions. The bureaucracy no more than the bourgeoisie—in some senses even less—is prepared to reconcile itself to the loss of privilege and power. It grows even more to become a monstrous cancer on society. It can only be removed by political revolution. This will be triggered by events at home or the **successful gaining of power** by the proletariat and the constitution of a workers' democracy in one of the advanced capitalist countries. In the case of China and the postwar crop of these states, it will be by social revolution in the west or by victorious political revolution in Russia and E. Europe that healthy workers' states and a workers' democracy will be created. It must be emphasised that all that these states have in common with the ideal workers' state is state ownership of the economy and a plan of production.

Only one of the "idealist" and "eclectic" sects could discover a fundamental difference between the peasant war in which Mao came to power and the guerrilla war of Castro, based on peasants and semi-peasants and landless peasants as well as some ex-workers. There is not much difference, despite the bourgeois democratic ideas in Castro's head which in any event were not all that different from the programme on which Mao fought the civil war. At least in the last stages of the struggle the participation of the working class in Cuba with the general strike in Havana, turned the scales in Castro's favour. Nothing of this

sort happened in the Civil war in China of 1945-49. Nor was this kind of intervention desired by the **forces of Mao**; true, had it not been for the stupidity of American imperialism the outcome could have been different in Cuba. But with the impasse of Cuban capitalism like that of **Chinese capitalism**, just as Mao had used the **strong proletarian Bonapartist state of Russia as a model**, so Castro used **Eastern Europe and China** as models in his conflict with American imperialism.

In both cases this marked an **enormous step forward historically**. Landlordism and capitalism were eliminated. That meant the removal of the fetters of semi-feudal landlordism and of private ownership of industry. The monopoly of foreign trade, following the Russian model, is also a powerful progressive factor. These measures meant a gigantic release of the constraints on the productive forces. Hence **in advance** we could hail the Chinese revolution as the **second** greatest event in human history, the Russian revolution being the first. Nevertheless because of its Bonapartist character—and the inevitable vested interest of the bureaucracy in maintaining the rule of privilege, prestige, power and income for the ruling layers of the bureaucracy itself—the masses would have to pay with a second revolution before there could be a workers' democracy on the level of that in Russia of 1917-1923.

Because of the incapacity of the sects to apply Marxism and "Marxist philosophy" in a concrete manner they have landed themselves in **ludicrous contradictions**.

Thus they declared Eastern Europe to be state capitalist in 1945-1947—while **Russia** which occupied Eastern Europe with the Red Army was a "degenerated workers' state".

When Tito broke with Stalin, overnight from mysteriously being "capitalist" Yugoslavia became a healthier workers' state than even Russia in 1917! This did not prevent these sects from simultaneously declaring Eastern Europe still to be capitalist. China

remained "state capitalist" according to them until 1951 or 1953. Then, "Hey Presto", China, from being "state capitalism", was mysteriously transformed over our heads into a "healthy workers' state"!

All this muddle and theoretical confusion has never been explained by any one of these petit-bourgeois tendencies masquerading as Marxists. One sect claimed Cuba was a petit-bourgeois Bonapartist state while describing China as a relatively healthy workers' state in which political revolution was not necessary. Not a single one of these tendencies was capable of analysing the main forces and processes out of the epoch, in which the colonial world saw a caricature of permanent revolution and these weird and deformed workers' states being set up. Not a single one of them understood the meaning of the "cultural revolution". Some hailed this as a second version of the "Paris Commune"! Only recently—some 30 years too late—some reluctantly concluded that the Chinese revolution was deformed from the start. Our tendency explained the process **in advance** of Mao's victory.

All the objective conditions for a socialist revolution are now maturing in Western Europe, Japan and the USA. The process, however, will be protracted because of the weakness of the forces of genuine Marxism. It is the delay of the revolution in the west and now its protracted character which gives room for these peculiar regimes in the neo-colonial countries. They are reaching unbearable tensions with the semi-starvation of great masses without a roof or a crust. The insolent parasitism and luxury of the landlords and capitalists in contrast, leaning on imperialism, invests all the contradictions in these societies with an explosive force. It is on the basis of this impasse—the decay and weakness of imperialism, the glaring rottenness and decay of landlordism-capitalism—which makes possible the development of the curious process of **proletarian Bonapartism**. Taking advantage of the revolt of the masses of peasants,

petit-bourgeoisie and even workers, the elite of officers, intellectuals etc. can emerge, as in Ethiopia, with firm power in their hands on the basis of the support of the workers and peasants. They can perfect a "KGB" secret police of their own—to silence anyone who would object to their privileges.

The peasantry, by its very nature as a class of individuals not bound together by production, is the perfect instrument for bourgeois or proletarian bonapartism. It is a class, that by its nature can be manipulated and deceived; a class that looks towards the "Tsar as a father of the people", or to Stalin as "son of the sun" or to the god-head, Mao. The urban petit-bourgeois too have these attributes; in Germany and Italy they looked to Hitler and Mussolini as "leaders". **Only the proletariat** stands firmly for genuine democracy—i.e. workers democracy in a workers' state—which is the only system where its **direct rule** can be manifested.



Trotsky

Our tendency has explained and predicted these processes. There is no real possibility of moving forward in the colonial world on a capitalist basis. It is this, plus the lagging of the proletarian revolution in the advanced industrialised countries, which has led to these regimes taking ten steps forward and five steps back. They can at least—for a period (in most cases)—develop the productive forces with seven league boots. They carry out in backward countries the historic job which was carried out by the bourgeoisie in the capitalist countries in the past.

The whole essence of Trotsky's

theory of the permanent revolution lies in the idea that the colonial bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie of the backward countries are incapable of carrying out the tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution. This is because of their links with the landlords and the imperialists. The banks have mortgages on the land, industrialists have landed estates in the country, the landlords invest in industry and the whole is entangled together and linked with imperialism in a web of vested interests opposed to change.

Under these circumstances the task of carrying out the bourgeois-democratic revolution fell on the shoulders of the proletariat. But the proletariat, leading the peasantry, and the big majority of the nation, having conquered power would not stop at the accomplishment of the bourgeois-democratic tasks of expropriating the landowners, unifying the nation, and expelling the imperialists. It would then pass on to the socialist tasks, the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the setting up of a workers' state. But the socialist tasks could not be encompassed in a single country, **especially a backward colonial country**. The revolution would have to spread to the more advanced countries. Hence the term for this process, **permanent revolution** beginning as a bourgeois revolution, becoming a socialist one, and ending in international revolution.

It is true that owing to the development of the Stalinist bureaucracy and the reformist degeneration of the Communist Parties exceptional difficulties have been put in the path of the proletariat in both advanced and backward countries. But the impasse of landlordism—capitalism in the so-called third world—has been aggravated during the course of the decades since the outbreak of the second world war. For a period the industrialised capitalist countries passed through a relative development of productive forces once the political pre-conditions had been established by the betrayal in the early post-war period of Stalinism and reformism.

But while living standards in the

west increased at least in absolute terms, in the "Third World" with few exceptions there was a decline in already low living standards. The decay of antiquated land relations under the inexorable pressure of the world market continued apace. A large surplus population of paupers, beggars and lumpens is endemic in the colonial world. Living standards of the masses have fallen. **On the old relations there is no way out.**

In Burma, Syria, Angola, Mosambique, Aden, Benin, Ethiopia and as models, Cuba and China (which in their turn had the model of Eastern Europe as a beacon showing the way) there has been a transformation of social relations.

This is because of the rotten ripeness of world capitalism for the socialist revolution. But all history shows that where, for one reason or another, the new progressive class is incapable of carrying out its functions of transforming society, this is often done (in a reactionary way, perhaps) by other classes or castes. Thus in Japan big sections of the feudal lords became capitalists and in Germany—as Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky recognised—the **landowning Junkers** of E. Prussia under Bismarck and the monarchy carried out the task of the national unification of Germany—a task of the bourgeois democratic revolution.

Attractive Power

As Marx long ago explained, there is no such thing as a supra-historical blue-print. **It is necessary to take the material objective reality as it is and then explain it. That is the method of "marxist philosophy"** and not the philosophical gibberish of the sects. But it is not only necessary to see **objective reality** as it is but to explain the process that brought it into being, the contradictions encompassing it, the law of social movement which it represents and the future processes of contradictions and change which will envelop it. Its process of birth, development, decay and the changes which will destroy it.

Under the conditions of the decay of capitalism-landlordism in the colonial countries all the social contradictions are aggravated to an extreme. Social tensions reach an unbearable level. Hence in one country after another of Asia, Africa and Latin America, bourgeois democracy is replaced by bourgeois-Bonapartist dictatorships or proletarian bonapartist dictatorships.

In the above-named ex-colonial countries not one proceeded on the model of the norm of the socialist revolution. **Neither did the countries of Eastern Europe before them in the aftermath of the second world war.**

The great Marxist teachers in the past have often explained that once the norm of the socialist revolution has been established in the main capitalist countries, it would have **an irresistible appeal to the rest of the world** and result in a painless transformation without conflict. Even the bourgeoisie would recognise the superiority of workers democracy, apart from the effect this would have on the world working class. Marx himself believed that in this way the backward areas of the world, and even the backward countries of Europe, would be brought forward by the advanced industrialised countries acting as a magnet and a model of socialism. Lenin and Trotsky conceived of the socialist revolution taking place in some backward countries first **only** with the leading role and participation of the proletariat. The proletariat would lead the petit-bourgeois masses especially the **peasantry to the overthrow of landlordism and capitalism** and then link the workers to the international working class and the tasks of the world revolution.

The Bonapartist totalitarian dictatorship in Russia of a completely deformed workers' state repels workers in advanced capitalist countries. This is because nothing remains of October except the abolition of landlordism and **capitalism, a plan of production, plus the monopoly of foreign trade, albeit bureaucratically twisted and distorted.**

But nevertheless the mighty achievements of the revolution, the productive advances, the abolition of backwardness bringing Russia to the position of the second industrial power of the world, have an enormous attractive power for the colonial masses. (This is further reinforced by the example of the Chinese revolution which in the space of less than a quarter of a century has transformed China into **a mighty power.** In most of the colonial countries where it still exists, 'bourgeois democracy is a hollow and empty shell backed up at various times by "states of siege", "states of emergency" and even martial law.

Consequently the lack of workers' democracy in these proletarian bonapartist states is not such a drawback in attracting the masses. **It is a positive attractive feature as far as the professional and lower army officers are concerned.** The solution of their most pressing problems of food, clothing and shelter loom large in the minds of the colonial masses.

Ethiopia

This in its turn has an enormous effect in the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The bourgeois-Bonapartist regimes, in the colonial countries are charged with terrible contradictions. Their problems are insoluble. They spend large sums on armaments further exacerbating the poverty of the masses. They are inherently unstable. They provoke the hatred of the workers, the petit-bourgeoisie, the students and peasants. Even the weak bourgeoisie they represent comes into collision with them.

It is in this social soil that plots, counter-plots and conspiracies in the army flourish. **The army [or armed forces] is always moulded in the image of society and is not independent of it. Where the army dominates that indicates a crisis in society and a regime of crisis.**

Different cliques, groups or even individuals at the top in the army come to reflect groupings, sections of classes or classes in society. They do not represent themselves but

precisely reflect the antagonistic interests of different classes in society.

Under conditions of social crisis people change. This applies to classes and even individuals. Thus Marx explained that with the decay of feudalism a section of the feudal lords, bigger or smaller as the case may be, goes over to the side of the bourgeoisie in the bourgeois revolution. A section of the bourgeoisie, particularly the intellectual bourgeoisie, can also put themselves on the standpoint of the proletariat.

No more barren, formalistic, anti dialectical, philosophically idealist, anti-"Marxist philosophy" idea in the history of the movement has been put forward than by those who argue that because Castro began his revolutionary struggle as a **bourgeois democrat with bourgeois democratic ideas and goals** that therefore he must remain a bourgeois democrat for all eternity. They forget that Marx and Engels themselves began as **bourgeois democrats** who broke decisively with the bourgeoisie and became the leaders of the proletariat.

Under conditions of the crisis of capitalism in Portugal, a semi-colonial country, a majority of the officer caste, sickened by the decades of dictatorship and the seemingly unending wars in Africa, which they realised they could not win, moved in the direction of revolution and "socialism". Only our tendency explained this process.

This gave an impetus to the movement of the working class, which then reacted in its turn on the army. This affected not only the rank and file, and the lower ranks of the **officers, but even some admirals and generals who were sincerely desirous of solving the problems of Portuguese society and the Portuguese people.**

This was something that would have been impossible in previous revolutions. Thus 99% of the officer caste supported Franco in the Spanish civil war.

True enough, because of the reformist and Stalinist betrayal of the Portuguese revolution—by preventing it from being carried through to completion—there has

been a reaction. The army has been **purged and purged again to become once more a reliable instrument of the bourgeoisie.**

But how far this has succeeded remains to be tested in the events of the revolution in the coming months and years.

But what it has demonstrated is the need for a genuine dialectical understanding and interpretation of the events of the present epoch. If such a transformation was **possible, in a semi colonial, but imperialist capitalist Portugal, how much more could similar processes take place in the newly independent countries of Africa and of Asia?**

Events in Ethiopia have crushingly confirmed the theses we have worked out. There the famine **brought about by Haile Selassie and the landlord nobility, was the last catastrophe even the officer caste was prepared to tolerate. The callous indifference of the Emperor and the landlord class to the famine and the death from starvation of hundreds of thousands and possibly even millions, plus the accumulated social contradictions in a backward country under the pressure of imperialism, pushed the middle layers of the officer caste to organise a coup.**

This in its turn awakened the movement of the small working class in Addis Abbaba and the students and petit-bourgeois layers in the capital and in the towns. It awakened the peasantry also into a **cataclysmic movement to gain control of land. Thus the 1,000 year old "empire" and its class structure under this impetus crumbled into dust.**

The crisis in the army and the attempts at counter-revolution, the further impetus this gave to the **guerrilla war in Eritrea, the guerrilla war in the Ogaden, aided by direct intervention of Somalia, the uprisings of the Galla and other tribes, all acted as a spur on the revolution.**

The movement of the classes in its turn had its effect on the new ruling junta in the army. It produced splits and individual and group conspiracies of officers. **These reflected the classes in battle in Ethiopia and the developing civil**

war in the whole country. Whatever the individual whims of the officers, they reflected (as in Syria)—and had to reflect—the class struggle taking place. Hardly any wished for a return to the old regime.

The model of the Emperor's land lord semi-feudal regime was rejected by the bulk of the officer caste.

But there were differences as to how far to go which ended in armed conflicts and executions. This in a distorted way perhaps reflected the struggle of the classes in Ethiopia.

It ended in the victory of **Lieutenant Colonel Mengistu.** Already the land had been divided among the peasants and industry nationalised without compensation to the imperialists and the native capitalists (though of course compensation is not necessarily the decisive factor).

In the struggles **Lieutenant Colonel Mengistu has emerged victorious as a Bonapartist dictator under the influence of the wars and civil wars. In order to obtain mass support Lieutenant Colonel Mengistu, formerly a high-up officer of His Majesty has gone all the way. He (probably without reading a single word of Marx or Lenin) has declared himself a "Marxist Leninist" and set about creating a one party "Marxist-Leninist" totalitari-**

an dictatorship. This is in the image of Moscow or Peking. The landlords and capitalists are expropriated and the imperialist countries are without real influence on the processes taking place in Ethiopia.

In this case the process is clear. It is even clearer than in Mozambique, Angola or the former Aden, and this without a direct struggle against imperialist occupation.

The imperialists are too weak and debilitated to intervene directly by military means and can only grind their teeth in impotence.

But undoubtedly only the Militant foresaw these possibilities in advance for many countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. **The revolution, or rather the primary tasks of the revolution, in backward countries have been accomplished in the regimes mentioned above. Landlordism has been eliminated. Capitalism has been destroyed, the influence of imperialism dispelled.**

Thus the **bourgeois origin of the leadership of the guerrilla movement in Cuba was of third or fifth rate importance. What was important was the attempt to take action to bring Cuba back to neo-colonial status which precipitated the break of Castro with American imperialism.**

It is the social and economic



A public meeting in Mozambique

basic similarities which are decisive for a Marxist in the social overturns in these countries.

To carry through a revolution like that of Russia of October 1917 requires the consciousness, the action, the understanding and the active participation and movement of the proletariat itself in the overthrow of capitalism landlordism. It requires organs and organisations through which the proletariat can move such as soviets, shop stewards committees, trade unions and so on. After the victory of the rule of the workers, the checking and control can be effected by such organs of workers' rule.

In fact the outline of the new state within the framework of the old state of capitalism is developed by trade unions, shop stewards committees, co-ops and other organisations with their rights and powers.

In a revolution according to the norm such ad hoc committees and traditional organisations are indispensable. They are a training ground for the workers in the art of running the state, of developing the solidarity and understanding of the workers. After a victorious overthrow of capital they become vehicles for workers' rule, the organs of the new state and of workers' democracy.

But where—as in Eastern Europe, China, Cuba, Syria, Ethiopia—the overthrow takes place with the support of the workers and peasants certainly but without their active control, clearly the result must be different. The petit-bourgeois intellectuals, army officers, leaders of guerrilla bands use the workers and peasants as cannon fodder, merely as points of support, as a gun rest, so to speak.

Their aim, conscious, or unconscious, is not power for the workers and peasants, but power for the their elite. They had and have their model in Stalinist Russia. The revolution—change in property relations—begins where the Russian revolution ended, Stalinist Russia of 1945-49, or if you prefer Stalinist Russia of 1978. They are fundamentally the same; a one party totalitarian state machine

where the proletariat is helpless and atomised, with an apparatus of control of the state by the officials. The guerrilla army chiefs who with an iron hand imposed not voluntary discipline—take control undoubtedly with the support of the masses but with no organs of workers' rule independent of the state whatsoever. Also none of the rights and powers of the workers and peasants, which the existence of soviets as organs of workers' power would mean, exist.

For a transition to a Bonapartist workers' state such organs of workers' democracy, indispensable for a healthy workers' state, would be an enormous hindrance. They constituted a tremendous obstacle to the Stalinist bureaucracy in Russia, which had to wage a Herculean struggle and even a one-sided civil war to erase the last remnants of workers' democracy which stood in the way of their untrammelled and dictatorial rule. This was reflected through the one man dictatorship of Stalin and his successors.

What is important is that this was the model of "socialism" for Mao, for Castro, for Lieutenant Colonel Mengistu, for the Burmese generals and for the Syrian Baathist "Muslim" generals in Syria.

Engels Explained

It is important to see what all these variegated forces have in common not the secondary personal differences but the social forces and class forces they represent.

Lieutenant Colonel Mengistu, Castro, the Burmese generals broke with their class background and the advantages or disadvantages of their "bourgeois and university education" and outlook. It is true that they did not put themselves on the standpoint of the proletariat—as Marx, and Lenin did—but they accepted the much easier "socialism" which entailed the individual rule of them and of their elite on the backs of the working class and peasants.

All individual differences are stamped out by the decisive class

and economic changes which they have presided over in their countries and their societies.

All the self-styled "Marxist-Leninists" sects have not even understood the ABC of Marxism as taught by its founder and echoed by Lenin and Trotsky. This is something to marvel at. The emancipation of the working class is the task of the workers themselves. This is not because it is some kind of penance which the workers must do or because they are "nice people". It is because, without this there is the inevitability of a small minority taking control of art, science, industry and the state. Engels explained that in the event of a minority having a monopoly of culture they will then use—and inevitably abuse—their power against the interests of the workers and peasants and in their own interests. Also the mobilisation of the proletariat, its conscious struggle for power, and fight for workers' democracy transforms the proletariat and fits it for the task of workers' rule. This, then partially rubs off onto the peasants and petit-bourgeoisie which follow the proletariat in both the advanced and the backward countries. This process does not take place with the struggle of petit-bourgeois guerrilla bands or where radical army officer cliques take power.

Thus the intellectual and army elite in all the social revolutions and overturns in the countries mentioned took state control firmly into their own hands. They had the passive—or more or less active support—of the masses. But there was not the conscious organised movement of the proletariat. The peasants and petit-bourgeoisie are not a viable substitute for the "self-movement" of the proletariat.

It is a striking fact that in the case of every sect, ex-post-facto they accept Mao and the Chinese revolution and find in the "Communist" badge of Mao the excuse for this. In reality Mao was an ex-Communist who had broken with the proletariat and put himself at the head of a peasant war.

The fact that he later balanced between the classes and in typical Bonapartist fashion, leaned on the

workers for a time, alters nothing. The fact that the Peking gangsters called their hideous caricature "socialism" or sometimes the "dictatorship of the proletariat" also alters nothing. There is no fundamental difference **economically or socially** between any of these regimes. This means that the secondary differences in comparison with the **basic fundamentals** are only of trifling importance.

Lenin's Mistake

It is no accident also that all the sects base themselves on the mistake of Lenin in "What is to be Done" **ie that the proletariat is** capable by itself only of "trade union consciousness" and not "socialist consciousness". In reality this is not Lenin's idea but **appropriately Kautsky's. Lenin discovered his mistake, and Lenin's** works, as those of Marx and Engels and Trotsky, not to add Luxembour and Mehring, are the living refutation of this idea. In all 55 volumes of Lenin's works there is never again the repetition of this **error. In fact, without idealising the** proletariat, as with all the great Marxists—all his works, down to the smallest article, are saturated with confidence and trust in the **mighty power** of the proletariat as the **only vehicle** which would lead mankind to socialism. This, of course, comes from the dialectical materialism of Marx.

In reality all these gentlemen of the sects have a haughty if secret—and sometimes not completely secret at that—contempt for the working class. Dialectically, while embracing enthusiastically this false idea, at the same time, **they worship at the shrine of Ho Chi Minh or Mao or Castro or Tito or some other proletarian Bon-**apartist dictator. They are incapable of understanding the process of history and the temporary conjuncture of the economic upswing which led to a long lull in the class struggle in the west and the continuing crisis of society in the underdeveloped world. This was one of the corollary factors of the West's boom. This inevitably led to the rise and development

of **proletarian Bonapartism in the** colonial world, which the dominance of Stalinism in Russia and the predominance of Stalinism and reformism in the workers' movement in the world contributed to. Only genuine Marxism has been able from the beginning to explain all these "outlandish" phenomena from the viewpoint of the working class and the class nature of society and the organic crisis of **world capitalism** which is manifested first of all at its weaker and more backward extremities.

All these regimes are temporary aberrations on the road of the **world revolution. The excrescence** which Stalinism represents will be eliminated almost in passing when the mighty proletariat of one of the advanced countries takes power in the West or the regimes of Russia and Eastern Europe are regenerated by the overthrow of the bureaucracies.

Eclectic Method

The "Marxist" sects either preserve a discreet silence as to the class nature of Ethiopia—**now**—or otherwise characterise the regime as a "petit-bourgeois" or "Bonapartist" state as they did in the case of Cuba.

Such an eclectic method is entirely foreign to Marxism. Genuine Marxists would first take the general world trend of development of society and **the international relation of forces between the classes**. Then they would consider the relations between the great powers and the world balance of forces between them.

They would also consider the enormous power of the gigantic deformed workers' states like that of Russia and China standing at the back of the development of the colonial revolution on the continents of Asia, Africa and Latin America. They would see the impotence of imperialism, especially the strongest, the USA, to **intervene directly at the present time**.

Having taken the **international context** as a basis they would examine the processes taking place in the colonial world. The factors

which should be taken into account **are the impasse of the colonial countries on a landlord-capitalist basis; the rottenness, premature senility and degeneration of the colonial bourgeoisie; their absolute incapacity in all colonial countries to solve the problems of economic development; the frightful ruin and pauperism of the peasantry, the big majority of the population; the blind alley for the professional classes and the petit-bourgeoisie; a small and weak working class without Marxist leadership and perspectives.**

Under such conditions all these factors in the society would affect the ranks of the army **not only the peasant rank and file but the lower layers of the officer caste, and even the middle layers, and possibly also some of the tops.** The prevailing moods and attitudes of society, even in a semi-feudal society, are bound to affect all layers of the army under conditions of crisis and ferment.

The army is not hermetically sealed off from the developments in society. **In a country of absolutism without a developed proletariat, it is precisely in the army that the crisis of society will reflect itself.**

We have the fresh example of Portugal, even in a relatively developed semi-colonial country, of the **process of revolution beginning in the army**. When we consider the **regimes of oriental despotism**, which the regime of Haile Selassie resembles, it is precisely here that coups and conspiracies in the army are endemic leading to this or that dynasty being replaced by another. **In China** there were revolts by the peasants over 2000 years leading to victory in many cases but inevitably ending in the vicious circle of the betrayal of the peasants and a new dynasty. That was because there was no economic or political way out on the basis of the Asiatic relations of production in China.

No doubt under different circumstances we could have had a similar result in Ethiopia.

But the whole national and international environment is different to the past. Imperialism, capitalism and finance capital,

penetrated Ethiopia leading to the disastrous decay and ruin of the old society.

The **army generals or colonels** who began the coup (like those in Portugal) had no idea **where they were going**. They probably had no intention of even dethroning the Emperor, initially but only in imposing certain reforms on him. But this action lifted the lid on the boiling forces of class tension underneath the calm. In this case too a crisis in society reflects itself among the ruling class and the ruling elite first.

It opened up a Pandora's box of **clashes between classes** on the basis of the thousand year old feudal or semi-feudal relations onto which had been grafted the relations and pressures of capitalism and the world market.

Students, always a sensitive barometer, began to organise, demonstrate and clash with the police and the Army. They reflected the discontent at the lack of outlets and the barbarism and backwardness of the society. The splendour and luxury of the nobility and the court contrasted with peasants who died of hunger.

The wage-earning working class organised strikes and trade unions. The guerrilla war in Eritrea was intensified. This was one of the factors, as in Burma and Portugal, for the collapse of the regime.

The Emperor had no solution to the problems of these national revolts and wars. The Army ranks too were affected by this process. The soldiers were mainly **poorer peasants**.

All the problems were aggravated by the fall of the Emperor. The students raised the question of "socialism". The workers in the capital and the towns were affected by similar ideas. The peasants, as always hungered for the land.

It is in this atmosphere that plots—and counter-plots—affected the lower, middle and even upper layers of the Army. First births are usually difficult. Later births are usually much easier. In the turmoil in Ethiopia, there were the shining examples of China, Cuba and the other countries of proletarian Bonapartism.

To give themselves a basis in society and within the ranks of the army, after a series of upheavals the ruling junta divided the land among the peasants, and foreign capital, 90% of capital in Ethiopia, was nationalised. After a further upheaval in the leading core of the junta, and facing wars and civil war simultaneously in the Ogaden, Eritrea and in Ethiopia proper—**Mengistu** saw no way out but to turn to "socialism". In this way he outmanoeuvred the students and workers and satisfied the soldiers and peasants, temporarily perhaps but for a historical period nonetheless. It gave the radical officers supporting him a firm basis and access to aid in arms, and economic assistance from Russia and Cuba. (The latter was a willing arm of the Russians). In addition, Cuba provided technicians, special troops and trained fighters and pilots.



Lt. Col. Mengistu

The hope of the imperialists that Ethiopia would disintegrate was falsified precisely because **she took the path of the revolution** even in a distorted form.

Of course, on the road of **proletarian Bonapartism** the independent trade unions were suppressed and the students' organisations banned. All political parties were banned except for the self-styled "Marxist-Leninist" Party of **Mengistu**. But in this **Mengistu**, and the sections of the officer caste supporting him, followed the well worn road of Stalin in Russia and Mao in China etc.

With all the economic resources of society in the hands of the state,

the ruling caste sees a glittering future before it. They, with the help of Russian arms and aid, seem already to have beaten the revolt of the nobility in its attempts at counter-revolution and the restoration of the "Ancien Regime". They have forced the retreat of the Somali Army from the Ogaden and crushed the national liberation attempt of the Somali separatists. They are poised to bloodily crush the Eritrean insurgency with the help of superior arms supplied by Russia and specialist troops as auxiliaries supplied by Cuba, unless the Eritrean insurgents come to some compromise with them (under pressure from Russia and Cuba, involving some measure of autonomy).

Castro

On this basis the leading clique see a glorious future before them. They are the sole and dominant ruling elite. Basing themselves on state ownership and "Marxism-Leninism" they can decisively **develop society** in a way which was impossible under the old system, or even under capitalism where they would have been completely dominated—at least economically—by international finance capital and at the mercy of neo-colonialism and the big imperialist powers.

Inevitably the contradictions latent in proletarian Bonapartism will develop and mature. On the other hand there could be a massive increase in class struggles of the working classes in developed countries which will in turn affect Ethiopia.

But such considerations never even enter the heads of the new elite. All they can see are the empirical facts and a glorious future for them and their country. (Whose "interests" of course they interpret as being synonymous with their own welfare and domination). In the process of the wars and civil wars which have taken place the decisive **economic transition—with all its contradictions on a low economic base—has taken place**. Capitalism and landlordism have been overthrown and at least the germs of the new economic system



Peasants come to Havana to support agrarian reform

introduced.

In a number of works we have traced the contradictions and inconsistencies which the sects show on the question of what is a healthy workers' state with "bureaucratic deformations", or **what is a deformed workers' state**. Though both are based on **state ownership**, they are fundamentally different in their super-structure. For that reason a **political revolution** is necessary in the case of a deformed workers' state before a "workers' democracy" or "the dictatorship of the proletariat", in its political as well as economic sense, can be established. On the other hand a workers' state with "bureaucratic deformations" is a workers' state under conditions of backwardness and isolation which can still be reformed through the **restoration of party, trade union and state democracy**, ie a return to the control of the workers and peasants and where, if only in vestigial form, these organisations still exist under the pressure of the workers.

Some of these sects bowed down before Castro as the **leader and organiser of a healthy workers' state**. They went even further and compared "his struggle against bureaucracy" with that of Trotsky against Stalinism. They actually committed the indecency of publishing the photographs of Trotsky and Castro together as **fighters against bureaucracy and for democratic socialism**. They thus showed that they understood neither the role of Trotsky as an immortal fighter against the Stalinist bur-

eaucracy nor Castro's role as the **incarnation of the Cuban Stalinist bureaucracy**.

Words are cheap. Castro's "struggle" against the Cuban bureaucracy was no different in essence to that of **Stalin on occasions against the Russian bureaucracy**. Stalin as a Bonapartist dictator sometimes attacked the "bureaucracy" in words. He went further on occasions and leaned on the workers and peasants. This happened when the greedy bureaucrats went too far in their swindling, speculation and plundering of the state and threatened to devour the foundations of the state. He took action even against high-up bureaucrats and certainly against wide sections of the lower ranks of the bureaucracy. This was to **preserve the Stalinist system** by making scapegoats of some bureaucrats, especially the lower ranks.

Fundamentally, Castro's role in Cuba is the same. True he played the leading personal role in the **guerrilla war, the overthrow of Batista**, the movement towards expelling imperialism, and overthrowing landlordism and capitalism.

But Stalin had lived through a **proletarian revolution** together with the existence of a **workers' democracy**. He carried out a **counter-revolution** against it. But right from the **first day**, the Cuban **revolution was deformed and distorted**. The **proletariat never held political power** directly as in Russia. The fact that even today probably the decisive bulk of the Cuban people, as the Chinese

people too, at this stage, **support the regime** alters nothing as to its character. Castro's strictures against bureaucracy, like Stalin's are necessary if he is to preserve the role of Bonapartist "arbiter" and "father of the people".

Now, when dealing with Ethiopia, some of those gentlemen who bow the knee before Castro, declare that Mengistu—whose regime is **basically a copy of that of Russia, China and Cuba**—to be "fascist". This particular example of contortions and eclectic acrobatics can only be greeted with gales of laughter by genuine Marxism.

State Capitalism?

Why is Mengistu's regime "state capitalist" and different to the others? There is no explanation. They merely echo the arguments of the student, Maoist ultra-lefts in Ethiopia. At least the Ethiopian Maoists have the consistency to declare—as the Maoists have done everywhere—that Russia too is "state capitalist".

The proof of the "fascist" character of the Mengistu regime, they claim, is the vicious repression, the executions, the repression of national rights and the national revolutions of a similar character to **that of Ethiopia—or of Eritrea and the Ogaden**—and the suppression of other national minorities. The crushing and dissolution of independent trade unions and all the nascent democratic organs of self-expression of the workers and peasants is certainly to be condemned. So also is the concentration of

power into the hands of the Army junta clique and the dictatorship of Mengistu.

But one rubs one's eyes in disbelief at the shallowness of the "Marxism" of these self-styled "Trotskyists".

For every crime committed by Mengistu in this regard, Stalin committed a hundred times more!

The repression of independent organs of the workers must have reached a state of perfection by the bureaucracy in Russia. Puppet "unions" exist like the "Arbeit-front" of the Nazis in Germany. The "Communist" party is the arm of the bureaucracy itself and has long ago ceased to be a workers' party. Concentration camps, or "labour camps" as they are called, and psychiatric madhouses have been established for all dissidents—right or left. The national oppression of the minorities, especially for worker dissidents, reached levels never reached even under Tsarism. A one-party totalitarian machine has been established without allowing any opposition anywhere and whatever among workers, peasants and intelligentsia. The regimentation of art, science and government into a Stalinist straightjacket, without any independent initiative or thought has been unequalled in history except, possibly, in Hitler's Germany.

More or less, that is the picture common to all the proletarian Bonapartist states, including China and Cuba.

Some of the sects pick up the characterisation of the Mengistu regime from the Maoists. This after their support for guerrillaism in Cuba. Moreover some of them supported the brainless—if heroic—terrorist guerrilla movements in Uruguay and Argentina! They also support the heroic guerrilla peasant war in the Ogaden and in Eritrea, which if vicious would probably end in a carbon copy of Cuba or of Mengistu's Ethiopia. That would be inevitable with a backward economy and with the limited nationalist leadership looking to their own resources alone and not seeing the necessity of linking up with the workers of the

advanced capitalist countries. If there is a struggle for national rights of these peoples—so long as there is not the direct intervention of imperialism—we would give critical support to the struggle as we would for example to the struggle of the Ukrainian people for independence from Stalinist Russia. An independent socialist soviet Ukraine would prepare the way for a genuine and voluntary socialist soviet federation of all the peoples of the USSR. This could only be achieved by the overthrow of the Russian Stalinist bureaucracy by the Russian working class.

Support Revolution

Unfortunately in Eritrea and the Ogaden, as in Ethiopia for the next period, democracy will receive short shrift. This is inevitable on the basis of a peasant war, as well as the Stalinist ideology of their leaders.

But as we did in the case of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia and for that matter China also—we would give support without closing our eyes to the inevitability of Stalinist totalitarian regimes whatever the result of the conflict.

Because of its character as a national struggle (though on the basis of state ownership and the elimination of landlordism and capitalism) and the limited outlook of its leadership, neither the Somalis nor the Eritreans have a means of influencing or winning over the peasant soldiers of Ethiopia. They too have carried through a revolution and are influenced by the national idea of a united Ethiopia.

The proletarian and far sighted policy of Lenin—in standing firmly for the bourgeois-democratic right of self-determination—has no place unfortunately in the policy of the Ethiopians. But neither is there present, on any side in the conflict, the other policies of Marxism—democratic-centralism in the Party, democracy in the soviets, trade unions and so on.

Our policy is dictated first by the international socialist proletarian revolution and its interests. The defeat of imperialism and the

overthrow of landlordism and capitalism in the Horn of Africa are big steps forward.

This is so despite the conflict between "socialist states" which sows confusion among the advanced workers and the proletariat generally. The complexity of the problem and the need to keep our ideas clear is shown by the way imperialism and the Russian and Cuban bureaucracy have changed sides.

Yesterday the imperialists supported Haile Selassie and the landlord-capitalist regime in Ethiopia against Somalia and the guerrilla movement in Eritrea.

Russia and Cuba financed, armed and organised the Somali state and supported the guerrillas in Eritrea with arms, finance and technical assistance.

Ethiopia assumed more importance in their eyes, with the collapse of the Emperor, followed by the overthrow of the semi-feudal landlord-capitalist regime. Ethiopia has 35 million people against approximately 2 or 3 million each in Eritrea and Somalia.

Fascist Regime?

Opportunistically taking advantage of the civil war in Ethiopia, organised by the landlord-capitalist counter-revolution, President Barre of Somalia sent troops into the Ogaden. He hoped for the disintegration and collapse of the Ethiopian revolution. He was nationally limited and short-sighted, interested only in a "greater Somalia". Undoubtedly the imperialists, surreptitiously through the semi-feudal reactionary Arab states like Saudi-Arabia, gave support to the Somalis, as they now give support to the Eritreans despite the social character of the movement in Eritrea. They wish to weaken Ethiopia and strike a blow against the Russian bureaucracy.

The Russian bureaucracy and Castro have changed horses in mid-stream after vainly attempting to persuade the Somali rulers to make a compromise and establish a federation of Eritrea, Somalia and Ethiopia. This would undoubtedly have been the best solution, given

the character of all these regimes either as Bonapartist deformed workers' states, or as such states in the process of formation.

When the Somalis rejected this proposal the bureaucracy switched sides. It is not certain that the Ethiopians were in agreement with this proposal either. Now they are trying to negotiate some form of agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia. If the Eritreans do not accept some form of limited "autonomy" Cuba and Russia seem certain to support the crushing in blood of the Eritrean attempt at self-determination. The imperialists, unable to intervene directly, will weep crocodile tears about the national and democratic rights of the Eritrean people. (Yesterday they brutally tried to suppress the rights of the Vietnamese people.)

But what is really entertaining is these dramatic conflicts is the position of some of the sects. They solemnly declaim that Russia (correctly) is a deformed workers state and Cuba (incorrectly) a relatively healthy workers' state. But in no way do they explain how and why the relatively "healthy" workers' state of Cuba, or the deformed workers state of Russia actively help the "fascist" state of Ethiopia to establish itself and suppress the national rights of the people both of Eritrea who are attempting to establish a "Marxist" regime and the Somalis of the Ogaden and the other minorities.

Undoubtedly, on the basis of land distribution, the overwhelming majority of the Ethiopian peasants support the Ethiopian regime. Possibly even the bulk of the small working class at this stage, support the regime for want of an alternative.

It is theoretically possible of course that for the purpose of "defence" against other capitalist states, a deformed workers' state or even a healthy workers' state could ally itself with a reactionary or fascist state. Stalin's Russia did this in 1939 with the "non-aggression" pact with Hitler's Germany.

But what strategic necessity was there for Brezhnev and Castro to switch from supporting Somalia



U.S. troops in Vietnam

and Eritrea to their "fascist" rivals. The rulers of the deformed workers' states would look with trepidation at the rise of a healthy workers' state in the industrialised countries because of the social reverberations it would provoke in their own countries. But they would welcome the establishment in the backward and neo-colonial countries of social regimes on the pattern of their own regimes.

This strengthens them internally against their capitalist imperialist rivals. The basic world antagonism between the social structures of these countries and capitalist countries remains.

Stalinism & Fascism

It is ridiculous to suggest that the bureaucracy of a workers' state, healthy or deformed, would actively assist the "fascist" reactionary forces of a country like Ethiopia to establish their domination of Ethiopia. What social, political or strategic gain could they possibly get from this?

Now the economic and political structure of Ethiopia is not greatly different from that of Poland. Leaving aside the fact that Ethiopia has very little industry some of the sects call one "state capitalist" and the other a "deformed workers' state". Why? There is no explanation of the difference. There is nothing but petit-bourgeois emotional outbursts about the crimes of

the Ethiopian rulers. These crimes have been committed in every one of the deformed workers' states. And without in any way excusing them, nevertheless Ethiopia is a country far more backward than Russian Czarism or even pre-revolutionary China, and is under conditions of civil war on a whole series of fronts. With a leadership which takes Cuba and China as its model, and without revolutionary training, this officer leadership has moved towards Stalinist conceptions in the course of the revolution itself. But we cannot throw out the baby with the bathwater. We must separate out the enormously progressive kernel from the reactionary wrappings. Landlordism and capitalism are eliminated and this decisive fact will have far-flung effects on the whole of the African revolution in the coming epoch.

Not for nothing did Trotsky explain to the American Socialist Workers Party in the discussion with Scachtman that, separated from state ownership of industry and the land, the political regime in Russia was fascist! There was nothing to distinguish the political regime of Stalin from that of Hitler except the decisive fact that one defended and had its privileges, based on state ownership while the other had its privileges, power, income and prestige based on the defence of private property. That was a fundamental and decisive difference! There is no difference in fundamentals of economic and political structure of

Ethiopia from China, Syria, Russia or any of the other deformed workers states.

No doubt—as they have done on innumerable occasions in the past—these petit-bourgeois epigones of Trotsky will switch “the line” and stealthily, without explanation, declare that Ethiopia is a “deformed workers’ state”.

They have burned their fingers too much in the past on this question to declare Ethiopia a “relatively healthy workers’ state”, though even this somersault is not beyond them. The whole thing arises from their entirely anti-dialectical methods and their complete lack of understanding of the role of the proletariat in the socialist revolution and the nature of the epoch since the Second World War.

Vietnam

They will make the change without explaining to themselves or to the working class the reasons for the **change** or the reason for their mistakes. That is why they remain petit-bourgeois tendencies incapable of self-criticism or of learning from their mistakes and thus raising themselves and their followers to a higher theoretical level.

None of these tendencies have explained the **class nature** of South Yemen, Mozambique, or Angola and the “differences” between Syria, Cuba or Ethiopia. Fundamental differences do not exist. But on a vital theoretical question of this sort they prefer a discreet silence.

The latest events in Indo-China have served again to show the ridiculous contortions of the policies of all the sects. Our tendency gave whole-hearted support to the struggle of the Vietnamese “communist” party of Ho Chi Minh and its Laotian and Cambodian offshoots in their **peasant guerrilla war** against American and world imperialism and their native puppets.

We supported the struggle unconditionally and whole-heartedly. We supported it because it was a colonial war for liberation. We would have supported such a

war even under bourgeois or petit-bourgeois leadership which had fought merely for the right of national self-determination alone. But, it inevitably became a **war for social liberation as well as national liberation**—in the sense of fighting for the elimination also of landlordism and capitalism. Without this the struggle could not have been carried on for decades against overwhelming military odds.

How far the sects have strayed from the Marxist or Trotskyist method was shown by the polemics between two different sects of the same international tendency, as to how far the Vietnamese were “unconscious” Trotskyists, operating on the basis of the permanent revolution?

None of these worthies have understood the peculiar character of the epoch so far as the colonial or ex-colonial areas of the world are concerned. Nor have they understood the inevitable perversion of the revolution under either open **Stalinist—or pseudo-Communist leadership**—or that of radical sections of the officer caste. They have not understood the inevitable consequences when a colonial revolution is led to its **progressive and “final” conclusion of eliminating capitalism and landlordism but when the main force is not that of the working class with a Marxist leadership**.

When the main force is a peasant army using **classic peasant tactics of guerrilla war**, then it must result in a **“deformed workers’ state”** even if that were not the aim of the leaders. In the event of an army coup of the younger officers, allied to “intellectuals” and students, the consequences would—inevitably—be the same.

This is particularly the case given the world environment of strong Bonapartist workers states, in the form of Stalinist Russia and other countries. Taken together with the existence of the imperialist capitalist powers there could be no other outcome.

Of course if there were in existence of the **imperialist capitalist states**—for instance in Russia, or one of the big industrialised states of Europe, or of Japan—then the

results and the possibilities would be entirely different.

The proletariat and people of the advanced workers’ states would give aid and assistance to a workers’ state in a backward country, linking the economies together, and sending tens of thousands of technicians to small countries and hundreds of thousands to one with a big population. That would mean rapid industrialisation plus workers’ democracy. That is what Lenin meant when he said Africa could move straight from tribalism to Communism.

But given the present relationship of forces in international affairs and the class balance of forces, with classical reformism and Stalinist reformism dominant in the workers’ movement of the advanced countries, such a conclusion in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos was ruled out.

Indo-China Clashes

That is why our tendency, while wholeheartedly supporting the Vietnamese and Indo-Chinese revolutions, **warned the workers and peasants** of these countries that while they should support actively the struggle and fight for social and national liberation, at the same time the dominance of the Stalinist leadership of this struggle would mean that while an enormous social step forward would be taken by the victory of the national liberation movement, it would be succeeded by a **new enslavement** by the totalitarian Stalinist bureaucracy. Without a Marxist party and without Marxist leadership the goal of the “Communist Party” leadership would be a state in the image of the so-called “socialism” of Russia or China.

We appealed to the advanced workers of Britain, America, France and the world, to support the social and national liberation struggle of the Indo-Chinese peoples, because it weakened imperialism and world capitalism. The liberation of the productive forces of these countries, by the overthrow of the rule of capital, would be of **immense long term benefit** to the peoples of these countries and also

to the world proletariat.

But we never deceived ourselves or the workers and peasants of the world as to the inevitable nature (the class relationship of forces) of the regimes which would be set up in these countries.

We warned of, and predicted, the inevitable setting up of **nationalist totalitarian Stalinist regimes in these countries** but even we had not expected just how far they would go in their distortions.

The armed clashes between Cambodia and Vietnam are a crushing condemnation of all those "Trotskyist" sects in Britain and internationally who did not understand the **class nature of these regimes and their Stalinist character**. There was no surprise in these events for our tendency. The clashes on the borders between Russia and China when tens of thousands were killed had shown what nationalist bureaucrats are capable of.

These bureaucracies cannot look beyond the boundaries of the nation state. Behind these clashes in former Indo-China are the aspirations of the Vietnamese to set up an Indo-China federation of "socialist states".

Obviously this would have been of immense benefit to the economies of all these countries. But the reason that the Cambodians are against the setting up of such a federation is that under conditions of Bonapartist totalitarianism they would inevitably come under the **nationalist** domination and national oppression of the Vietnamese bureaucracy. Leaving aside the virulent national chauvinism of the Cambodian Stalinists, this would be as inevitable as it was in Stalinist China and in Russia.

For the same reason the Vietnamese Stalinists, in their turn, would refuse to federate with Stalinist China. They know, as the minorities in China have seen, that they would come under the national oppression of the Chinese bureaucracy. Even though economically it would be of immense benefit, they would not agree to this, no more than would the Chinese bureaucracy agree to a federation with Russia, though economically and

even in terms of world power politics, it would be colossally beneficial to the peoples and the economies of both these countries. What stands in the way are the **national vested interests of the bureaucracies of all these countries**.

Only workers' democracy without any hint of national superiority or advantage as in the days of Lenin and Trotsky, can have such a programme. But a Bonapartist Regime, basing itself on privilege and inequality, is incapable of such a policy. The chauvinistic excesses of Stalinist Russia and China are proof of this. Bonapartist totalitarian regimes by their very nature, can never look beyond the narrow horizon of the national state. By the very nature of bureaucracy and its privileges they are nationally limited.

Basing themselves on peasants, students and intellectuals, **and without the decisive domination and participation of the working class**, they are inevitably nationally limited.

Afghanistan

The working class can secure its emancipation and the domination of society only by overcoming all the prejudices of the past—national, racial, caste, sex or any other. But only the working class and no other—and only under Marxist leadership at that—is capable of this feat. But the emancipation of the workers means the emancipation also of the petit-bourgeois strata in society, who under the leadership of the working class, and only under these conditions, would be capable of rising to these heights.

The petit-bourgeoisie and the intellectuals can adopt the standpoint of the proletariat only by breaking completely with their origins and the outlook of their class. Under modern conditions that is extremely difficult where genuine Marxists, as in the early days of Marx and Engels, have been reduced to a handful.

This is particularly the case today when the struggle is not merely in the ideological sphere but

where the immediate issue in country after country is the transformation of society. In this situation it is easy for the intellectuals to come under the domination of the muddled ideas of Stalinism in its various forms.

Only a strong workers movement dominated by Marxism could make the metamorphosis of such intellectuals possible. This is especially difficult in colonial or neo-colonial countries where the problems are immediate, where the masses live an almost animal existence, where also there are almost insuperable obstacles to modernisation and the development of society on the basis of the semi-feudal landlord capitalist regimes.

It is easier for the intellectuals, the radical officers, even civil servants and upper layers of professional people, doctors, dentists, lawyers and so on to make the transition to Stalinist Bonapartism than to support genuine but tiny Marxist tendencies. Especially this is so in most of these countries where "Marxism" and "Trotskyism" do not exist as organised tendencies.



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Russian Revolution

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Thus it is easy for them to rationalise their class position. They have a hatred of the corrupt landlords and capitalists under whose control their societies and countries are either decaying or only inching ahead. They have a contempt for the downtrodden masses of peasants and even for the weak working class.

These strata, apart from their economic position, are imbued with an overwhelming conceit and concern for their own importance in society. They are concerned with perks, status, standing, power, privileges, income and prestige. Thus, it is easy in the modern world to see how they can embrace "socialism" on the pattern of Cuba for example.

In the past period the fresh example of Afghanistan underlines the analysis we have made of the

colonial revolution. The "Communist" party of this terribly backward country was only formed in the last decade or so. Like the Baath party in Syria it had no difficulty in swallowing the doctrine of "Islam" as well as "Communism". It has done so because religious superstition has deep roots among the overwhelmingly backward peasant majority, 90% of whom are illiterate.

Complete Transformation

Now, as with the Baath Party in Syria, the CP leaders have allied themselves with the radical lower and middle ranks of the officer caste in the army.

The immediate issue which precipitated the coup was famine—as in Ethiopia—and the impossibility of the corrupt, semi-feudal Asiatic rulers, to cope with it. Afghanistan has had many coups in the past decades leading to different tribal leaders and groups gaining power. They merely changed the tops, leaving the social structure intact. The same corruption inevitably developed, leading, when the impositions had become unbearable on the masses, to a famine, or through foreign intrigue to a new coup. Thus social relations were contained in the same vicious circle. This coup opens up the possibility of striking in a new

direction. "Communists" have become Prime Minister and President and also have a dominant role in the government. This indicates in which direction the officers wish to go. One of the first acts of the new regime has been to seize the lands of the monarchy which though overthrown by the former Daoud regime, still possessed 20% of the land in Afghanistan! This is a new departure and may be the beginning of a complete transformation of social relations.

As in Poland, where the Polish Stalinist bureaucracy came to an agreement with the Catholic church, so in Afghanistan the Communist Party leadership, together with the officers, can arrive at an agreement with the Mullahs of Islam.

The fact that Taraki, the new Prime Minister, is the leader of a so-called Communist Party alters nothing. He pursues the same policy as that of the Syrian leaders of the Baath.

In the case of Afghanistan, only two roads are possible at this stage. The working class is miniscule. Sections of the intelligentsia, and apparently the majority of the officers and a great part of the professionals want to construct a modern civilised state. The peasants want the land.

On the road of capitalism and landlordism, there is no way

forward. The army officers wish to take the road traversed by Outer Mongolia. **In fact these peculiar changes are only possible because of the international context.** The crisis of imperialism and capitalism, the impasse of the backward countries of the third world and the existence of the proletarian Bonapartist states, especially of Russia, and China in Asia together with the delay of the proletarian revolution in the West, are powerful factors in the case of Afghanistan.

The barbarous regimes also of Pakistan, Iran and nearby India have no attractive force. The army officers, many, if not most, trained in Russia, are attracted when they see the consequences of the Stalinist regime in the modernisation of Russia. Its effect on the tribesmen, of similar peoples and even the same tribes, in bordering areas of Russia has a big effect, with formerly as low a standard of living, and just as great illiteracy and ignorance.

Marxist Approach

The industrialisation, complete literacy and high standards in comparison to Afghanistan, are bound to impress these strata. In contrast, the backwardness and barbarism on which the nobility thrived in Afghanistan cannot but **appal all the best elements—the intelligentsia, the professionals and even the officer caste.** They wish to break out from poverty, ignorance and dirt from which their country suffers. The capitalists of the West, with unemployment and industrial stagnation offer them nothing as far as they are concerned. They wish to break away from the vicious **circle of tribal rulers and different military regimes** which change nothing in fundamentals.

The world crisis of capitalism hits even harder the backward regions of the world, which impels them to draw the conclusion that capitalism offers no way forward.

The "republican" regime of Daoud—**incidentally, backed and propped-up by Moscow in the past—altered nothing.** The upheavals and coups, leading to mere changes of dynasties by different

clans of the nobility over the last fifty years have been completely sterile. The nobility and the relations on the land on which they were based, was the main obstacle to modernisation.

Under these circumstances, if the new regime leans on the support of the peasants and transforms society, then the way will be cleared for the development of a regime in Afghanistan, like that of Cuba, Syria or Russia. **This, for the first time for centuries, will bring Afghanistan society forward to the modern world. It could become a new blow at capitalism and landlordism in the rest of capitalist-landlord Asia, especially in the area of South Asia, if the social transformation is completed. It will have incalculable effects on the Pathans and Baluchis of Pakistan. It will have an effect on the like peoples on the borders of Iran. The rotting regime of Pakistan in coming years will face complete disintegration. A re-vamping of social relations in Afghanistan can further contribute to the decay of this regime. The tribesmen will be influenced by the process taking place among their brothers across the borders. On the North West frontiers of Pakistan and among the Baluchis there is already endemic and simmering revolt, with these peoples looking towards unity with their brothers in Afghanistan. The effect would be in widening circles, the repercussions of which could be felt in Iran and further afield, also in India.**

This is the road which the

"Communist Party", which holds power together with the radical officers, will take. The opposition of the old forces in Afghanistan, as in Ethiopia, will in all probability impel them in this direction.

If they temporise, possibly under the influence of the Russian ambassador and the Russian regime, they will prepare the way for a **ferocious counter-revolution** based on the threatened nobility and the Mullahs. If successful this would restore the old regime on the bones of hundreds of thousands of peasants, the massacres of the radical officers and the near extermination of the educated elite. **For the moment—until there will be a movement of the only advanced class which can bring a transition moving in the direction of socialism in the industrially developed countries—the most progressive development in Afghanistan seems at the present time to be the installation of proletarian Bonapartism.**

While not closing our eyes to the new contradictions this will involve, on the basis of a transitional economy of a workers state, without workers democracy, Marxists in sober fashion will support the emergence of such a state and the further weakening of imperialism and capitalism and the regimes, **basing themselves on the remnants of feudalism in the backward countries.**



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