

Marxist-Leninist Organisation of Britain

“The Appeal Group”

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Transcription, Editing and Markup: Paul Saba and Sam Richards

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ORGAN OF THE MARXIST-LENINIST ORGANISATION OF BRITAIN

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EROL Note

The Appeal group was a small group that left the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1971 on the basis that the CPGB had abandoned revolutionary Marxism-Leninism and that, after many attempts, it was impossible to change it from within. Members of the Bexley branch of the CPGB led by Eddie Jackson regularly challenged at party Congresses the revisionist *British Road to Socialism* and Rule 2(b) in the party's rule book. The British Road replaced the former party programme *For a Soviet Britain* and was a programme of achieving socialism in Britain through the election of socialist government to Parliament. Rule 2(b) set this aim as a rule and outlawed any promotion of alternative revolutionary perspectives by party members.

In 20 years the branch was only ever allowed five minutes of open discussion time at a Party congress – and this was scheduled on a Saturday just after the lunch break when the hall was almost deserted as delegates lingered in the pub. By 1971 Eddie Jackson despaired of changing the party from within. The Bexley branch submitted its usual amendment to Rule 2(b) but this time Eddie and a small group of comrades backed it up with a lengthy polemical document, the "Appeal to Delegates" after which the group was named, to fight on an anti-revisionist platform and distributed it to delegates at the congress. The comrades who signed the Appeal knew this would lead to their expulsion and it did. The group issued a number of pamphlets and a monthly paper, *The Appeal*, which ran up to five issues. Eddie wrote under the pseudonym Wat Tyler; pamphlets included: "Pioneering Mistakes", "Shameful" (an attack on the Surrey District), "The Pauper Trap" (an analysis on the effects of housing benefit and other means-tested state benefits paid to low paid workers in undermining trade unionism), "Behind the Revolutionary Mask" (a critique of neo-Maoism) and "The Anti-Fascist Manifesto".

THE "APPEAL GROUP"

The Marxist-Leninist Organisation of Britain has always distinguished between the revisionist leadership of the Communist Party and its rank-and-file members, the overwhelming majority of whom joined the party with the aim of building a socialist society in Britain. It has always held that out of this rank-and-file there would continue to emerge comrades who, as individuals or groups, had come to understand the criminal betrayal of Marxist-Leninist principles and of the interests of the working class by the leaders of the party, and were prepared to struggle against revisionism and for the re-establishment of a Marxist-Leninist Party of the working class.

What claims to be the nucleus of such an anti-revisionist group has in recent months appeared in the "Appeal Group", based on Bexleyheath in Kent, which derives its name from the "Appeal to Delegates" which it issued in connection with the last National Congress of the CPGB.

The appeal issued by the Bexleyheath comrades went some way to expose the revisionist "peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism" which constitutes the core, not only of the programme of the CPGB but its very rules:

"The aim is to take the edge off the class struggle, to divert the working class away from the revolutionary road and to put all its faith in parliament once again. That is the essence of revisionism".
("Appeal to Delegates", p.4).

The conclusion which the "Appeal Group" draws from its analysis is one with which the MLOB completely agrees :

"Marxist-Leninists ... have as much chance of winning a majority at Congress as the working class have of winning socialism through a parliamentary majority. The revisionists (the ruling class) use any and every device to ensure that their delegates are elected in a big majority. They also make sure that no meaningful debates take place in either institution and that there are no policy or rule changes with which they do not agree. ... All the time the Marxist-Leninists are being driven out of activity or even out of the party. ...

We must break with the revisionists now and build a truly Marxist-Leninist Party". (Ibid.; p.36).

In recent years other groups have emerged within the CPGB in opposition to the revisionist policies of the leadership of the party. All so far, with the exception of the MLOB, have, unfortunately, degenerated into new revisionist groups by embracing maoism or trotskyism. The "Appeal Group" has ostensibly rejected both these latter revisionist trends:

"Revisionism in a Communist Party drives the young and politically immature and ideologically immature into the arms of trotskyist and maoist groupings". (Ibid.; p.14).

Yet it must be said that the "Appeal Group" also has not completely broken with revisionism. For the new "Marxist-Leninist Party" which it aims to build is one which will support the present leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union :

"We must break with the revisionists now and build a truly Marxist-Leninist pro-Soviet Party" (Ibid.; p. 36).

The comrades of the "Appeal Group" appear to base their

support for the present leadership of the CPSU on two facts :

Firstly, the leadership of the CPGB, who are indubitably revisionist, are hostile to the present leadership of the CPSU :

"Anti-Sovietism ... is becoming more and more open in the pages of the 'Morning Star' and is becoming a regular feature". (Ibid.; p.24).

Secondly, "in the old days" (the group's own phrase) revolutionary socialists were of necessity supporters of the Socialist Soviet Union and of its Bolshevik leadership :

"In the old days, ... our test to find out whether we were dealing with a Communist or an ultra-left trotskyst or anarchist was to find out their attitude to ... the Soviet Union". (Ibid.; p.19).

The latter criterion would, of course, remain valid if the Soviet Union were still a country of the dictatorship of the working class, a country building socialism under the leadership of a Marxist-Leninist Party. Since 1956 this is, however, no longer the case. Since 1956 the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has succeeded in taking one step after another in restoring the essentials of a capitalist system in the USSR: the restoration of profit as the principal regulator of production; the transfer of the means of production to the cooperative farms; the division of the profit of an enterprise among the "staff" in proportion to "responsibility", so creating a new class of state capitalists who exploit the working class; the concessions granted to companies from the older imperialist countries to exploit Soviet resources; the formal ending of the dictatorship of the proletariat and its substitution by the classless "state of the whole people" before communist society has been achieved; the repudiation of the concept of the Communist Party as the party of the working class; the repudiation of socialist partisanship in the arts, etc. etc.

Furthermore, it must not be forgotten that it was the leadership of the CPSU which, at the party's 20th Congress in 1956, brought its prestige into full support for the "peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism" which the comrades of the "Appeal Group" correctly denounce as revisionist :

"The present situation offers the working class in a number of capitalist countries a real opportunity ... to capture a stable majority in parliament and transform the latter from an organ of bourgeois democracy into a genuine instrument of the people's will. In such an event this institution, traditional in many highly developed capitalist countries, may become an organ of genuine democracy - democracy for the working people". (N. Khrushchov: Report of the Central Committee to the 20th Congress of the CPSU; London; 1956; p.30).

The Brezhnev-Kosygin clique have fully endorsed this position.

The belief that the Soviet Union remains a socialist country, that its leaders are Marxist-Leninists, flies in the face of all the known facts. It is an illusion, and no truly Marxist-Leninist party can be built on the basis of such an illusion.

The argument of the "Appeal Group" that, because the leaders of the CPGB, who are indubitably revisionists, are opposed in important respects to the leaders of the CPSU, a Marxist-Leninist Party must support the leaders of the CPSU :

"The Marxist-Leninist line is pro-Warsaw Pact. ... The ... opportunist line ... is anti-Warsaw Pact". (Ibid., Supplement, p.4-5).

This argument is false.

The differences between the leaders of the CPSU on the one hand, and the leaders of the CPGB, the Dubcek clique, etc., on the other hand are not differences between Marxist-Leninists and revisionists: they are differences between revisionists. These rival groups of revisionists are both committed to the "peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism" (i.e., to the maintenance of capitalism where it exists) and to "the purging of socialism of its Stalinist distortions" (i.e., to the elimination of the essentials of Marxism-Leninism and to the restoration of capitalism where it had previously been abolished by the working class). The principal difference between the groups lies in the fact that the Soviet revisionists stand for the retention of the facade of the "socialist state" as an instrument of deception of the working class and for the maintenance of colonial-type relations with the smaller countries belonging to the Warsaw Pact, while the ultra-revisionists of the Gollan-Dubcek type stand for a more openly social-democratic concept of "socialism" in the shape of multi-party "parliamentary democracy" and for the attainment of independence by these countries so that their national state capitalists may have the predominant exploiting rights over the working class.

Of course, the Soviet revisionists are interested in bringing about the establishment of pro-Soviet revisionist parties in those countries - like Britain, France and Italy - where the existing parties are under ultra-revisionist leadership. But the "Appeal Group" could fulfil this function only by repudiating the principled opposition to the "peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism" on which they base their political orientation. ...

As groups of Marxist-Leninists emerge in different parts of Britain, it is axiomatic that they must get together, exchange ideas, coordinate their activity and organisations with a view to fusion into the nucleus of a Marxist-Leninist Party. The concept of competing parochial groups is completely alien to Marxism-Leninism, while between honest Marxist-Leninists there are no differences which cannot be resolved on the basis of scientific analysis and frank discussion.

The "Appeal Group" declares :

"The immediately essential thing is that all ... Marxist-Leninists establish communications, draft a programme and organise themselves." (Ibid.; p.36).

The MLOB agrees wholeheartedly with this declaration, and is ready to send representatives to meet the comrades of the "Appeal Group" at once.

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