

# Revisionism and Imperialism

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## PREFACE

For more than three years now the struggle between Marxism-Leninism and modern revisionism has raged throughout the International Communist Movement. In the last year this struggle has reached new heights of intensity. Several Communist Parties have produced strong contingents of Marxist-Leninists who publicly reject the revisionist programmes of the leaderships of these parties. In one case, Brazil, a separate Party has been formed on the basis of the programme of the original united Party.

In Britain, the leadership of the Communist Party made its attitude clear long ago on the international differences. From the publication of *Long Live Leninism* in April, 1960, this attitude was hostile. In the Autumn of that year, prior to the 81 Parties Conference in Moscow, "aggregates" were held all over the country to endorse the already firmly fixed viewpoint of the leadership on the differences and when John Gollan and George Matthews made their report-back after this Conference, they showed themselves, if anything, more deeply hostile than ever to the point of view expressed by the C.P.C. In the following two years, as attacks on the C.P.C. mounted, this hostile line was pursued unswervingly by the leadership of the British Party, although the hypocritical attempt was made to conceal it behind a mask of "impartiality".

During this year, this mask has been dropped. The E.C. Resolution of September, 1963, and John Gollan's statement, issued in the *Daily Worker*, attack the C.P.C. more openly than ever before, although the gesture is still made to the achievements of the "great Chinese people".

Is this a different situation from that of other revisionist-led Parties? In many ways it is identical, but in some very important respects the situation here differs from that in any other Party. In most other Parties where revolts against revisionism have occurred, the revolt has followed a relatively recent about-turn. This is true of Belgium, Brazil, Australia. What is noteworthy, however, in all these cases is that revisionism and anti-revisionism have appeared at *all* levels, from the leadership downwards. In the case of the British Communist Party two important differences have to be noted. Firstly, revisionism v. anti-revisionism has taken a leadership v. rank and file line-up. Secondly, the position of the leadership on the international differences does not arise out of a recent about-turn on policy or programme, but arises out of the line the leadership has pursued since long before 1951. *The British Road to Socialism*, published in that year, although constantly referred to by the leadership as the document on which they take their stand, was, in fact, the culmination of a long period of revisionist development which has only been extended since.

It is clear, therefore, that the anti-revisionist struggle at the present time in the Communist Party, although inevitably involving the current international differences and inevitably involving new examples of deception and misleading by the leadership, is rooted in a long history of revisionism deeply embedded in the history of the Party in this country, and inseparable from the leadership's record of failure to win any significant proportion of

support from the working class. It does not arise primarily out of a recent, obvious about-turn on the general line of the Party.

For these reasons, above all, a careful study of the history of betrayal of the *British* masses by the leadership of the Communist Party is necessary before a full exposure of the present, immediate, betrayals can be understood. This is true because the betrayal of the British masses is inseparable from the betrayal of the colonial peoples and the international working class. This cannot be carried out by one person, or even a few. It requires widespread collective discussion over a considerable period. That is why this pamphlet and those that are to follow it, are only introductions to this whole subject. The task must and will be one carried out by many Comrades, who, when it is generally understood that this is necessary, will make valuable contributions, theoretical and practical. Out of such a developing collective Marxist-Leninist analysis, unfettered by the subjective interests of an entrenched leadership, using its powers to suppress all genuine and honest reappraisal of the past failures of the British Communist Party, a new re-formed Party will be born, capable of as well as committed to, leading the working masses of this country to political power and socialism.

This will be a long process. Forty years of mistakes, failures and actual betrayal are not disposed of overnight. Moreover, it is essential that the struggle at the present time is seen as one *on behalf of* the Communist Party; an attempt to defend it against a minority of revisionists who have long dominated and controlled it. It is the easiest thing in the world simply to walk out of the Party, or retire into inactivity, as many sincere but frustrated Comrades have done. What is not easy; what is difficult to accept, especially by those who, as individuals, have been thwarted in their often correct criticisms, is the long, hard battle to win wide support and understanding among the members of the Party so that the anti-revisionist struggle becomes not an affair of individuals but a collective and mass pressure for a genuine revolutionary line. It must never be forgotten that, however weak the Party in this country is, in British conditions to join the Communist Party generally signifies a political potential which is in advance of the mass of workers. This does not mean that there are not powerful, potentially revolutionary elements outside the Party today. But they are not part of the Party primarily because of the revisionist leadership and its policies. They can be worked with now and can certainly be won for a genuine revolutionary Party.

This pamphlet introduces a series. The work done on these was originally carried out for a statement that was to have been submitted to the E.C. of the Party. In the meantime, however, the author has been expelled from the Party for undertaking, with his wife, the reproduction and distribution of literature issued by the Communist Party of China, to Party members. This is why these pamphlets are now being issued in this form.

Other pamphlets will follow entitled *Revisionism and the Trade Unions*, *Revisionism and the Labour Party*, *Revisionism and the State*, *Revisionism and Peace*, and *Revisionism and Communist Party Organisation*. Two others will deal with certain aspects of the class struggle in Britain which arise out of its longstanding imperialist history, and with suggestions for reorganisation of the work of the Party. These remaining seven pamphlets will become available at regular intervals in the future.

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## REVISIONISM AND IMPERIALISM

Colonialism, old or new, is the foundation of the economic and political power of the ruling class in an imperialist country.

The recognition of the barbarity of colonialism, and the unqualified identity of interests between the colonial peoples and the proletariat within the imperialist country, must therefore be the ultimate determining factor in the class struggle in such a country. Without this recognition there can be no rejection by the masses of an imperialist country of the illusion of freedom and economic security fostered among them by the ruling class; there can, therefore, be no revolutionary mobilisation of the masses; no challenge to the political power of capitalism; in a word, no revolution and no socialism. That is why the first pamphlet in this series is an analysis of the Communist Party's attitude to imperialism both in the past and at the present time.

Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, in all references and works dealing with Britain and the British working class, never once neglected or ignored the fact that the imperialist interests of British capitalism were the primary conditioning factors in the class struggle within Britain. It might be expected therefore, that the British Communist Party from the time of its foundation would have worked on this basis. The evidence points the other way. It will be seen that in the early years there was a correct assessment of the nature of the alliance between the colonial masses and the British working class, but no real attempt to analyse the effect *within* Britain on the working class itself, of imperialism. It will also be seen that even this correct tactical assessment went by the board in time. So serious is this failure on the part of the Party over the years that some explanation is essential.

### INTRODUCTION

During the summer of 1924, Comrade Newbold, then a Member of Parliament, made an attack in the Commons on current trends of imperialism. This called forth a criticism in an article in the Labour paper *Forward* on August 9th of that year by a certain Mr. Johnstone. "He boggles at India and the Crown Colonies, the protectorates and the mandated territories staying in the union. Why should there be any difficulty if they have Home Rule and come in of their own free will? Our business surely ought to have been to convert the subject colonies into free partners." In 1951 the *British Road to Socialism* was published, containing the following statement:

"All relations between the peoples of the present Empire which are based on political, economic and military enslavement must be ended, and replaced by relations based on full national independence and equal rights. This requires the withdrawal of all armed forces from the colonial and dependent territories and handing over of sovereignty to Governments freely chosen by the people.

"Only by this means can Britain be assured of the normal supplies of the vital food and raw materials necessary for her economic life, obtaining them in equal exchange for the products of British



industry, needed by those countries for their own economic development.

"This would provide the basis for a new, close, fraternal association of the British people and the liberated peoples of the Empire. Only on this basis can true friendship be established between the peoples of the present Empire to promote mutually beneficial economic exchange and co-operation, and to defend in common their freedom against American imperialist aggression."

Thus Labour imperialism, as stated in 1924, received a new lease of life in the first major policy statement issued by the Communist Party nearly 30 years later. A comparison of these two statements by itself warrants a close examination of the manner in which this incredible situation came about. And this is no mere academic exercise. Because imperialism is fundamental to the class struggle in Britain, the decline over the years and the degeneration into paying lip-service to colonial liberation while retaining a clear image of a perpetuated "association" after the "ending" of imperialism is intimately connected with failures in every other aspect of the Party's work over the past 40 years.

It is the aim of this series to examine all these aspects in detail. But on the central question of imperialism itself it is necessary first to trace this degeneration.

#### THE EARLY YEARS, 1920-32

In the years immediately following the foundation of the Party in 1920 there was no confusion or ambiguity on the question of the alliance and solidarity of the British working class and the colonial masses. But more particularly, there was no confusion about perpetuating in any form whatsoever the essentially imperialist relationship of Britain and the colonies. The resolution before the annual Party Conference in 1922 read as follows:

"(On the Communist Party) devolves the special and mighty task of leading the struggle of the masses in the stronghold of capitalism which has its foundation deeply laid in the economic ground-work of Great Britain. Here British capitalism develops its strength and machinery of oppression which enables it to spread its brigandage throughout the world. Here it forges the links of bondage which make the struggles of the peasants and workers of the colonial empire one with the struggles of the workers of Britain . . . (the resolution calls on all workers and peasants subject to British imperialism to join with the British Communist Party) to shatter and replace the reign of imperialist terror by the rulership of the workers and peasants of all lands bound to each other in a world-wide federation of Soviet Republics aspiring to communism."

Similarly in 1923 and again in 1924 where the colonial resolution stated that the emancipation of the colonial workers and peasants was the condition of our own liberation, and that it was the duty of the Communist Party and the British working class "to assist directly and indirectly in the struggles of the workers in the Colonies and Crown Dominions." In 1925, one of the most important factors in the waging of the class struggle in this country was clearly recognised:

"In conducting this campaign (the call to the working class to

support the colonial peoples against imperialism) the Party had to take into account the growth of imperialist sentiment not only among the Right Wing Labourists or members of the Government, but amongst members of the left wing. This surrender to imperialism was sharply opposed by the Party."

Even the view of the leadership of the national liberation struggle in the colonies was relatively clear in those years, as is shown by the statement at the 1926 Conference recognising the need to distinguish between national bourgeoisie, workers and peasants. This statement affirmed support for all those struggling against imperialism but qualified this support in the following way:

"At the same time this Conference declares that 'Independence' will have no real meaning until it is achieved through the overthrow of the entire capitalist order by a united working class movement embracing peasantry and all the exploited people of the Empire led by the Communist Parties in alliance with the Communist International."

Throughout these years the newly-formed Communist Party was carrying out a militant leading fight in every field in this country. The question of its independent role was, of course, quite different at this time from what it came to be later. The fact that the Party was making the demand for affiliation to the Labour Party one of its main struggles must be regarded in the light of what was still commonly accepted as the structure of the Labour Party itself in the 1920s. This is not the place to deal with this point which will be looked at later on. Generally, however, the militant, fighting spirit of the Party—its lack of any shadow of opportunism went side by side with the relatively clear grasp of the nature of imperialism and its corrupting effect on the working class in this country. During the New Line period (1929-31), when the independent role of the Party and an all out attack on Social Democracy became the guiding rule of strategy and tactics,<sup>1</sup> the attitude to imperialism was, if anything, clearer. Particularly noteworthy was the colonial resolution of 1929 (Tenth Congress) which stated: "In particular it is necessary to conduct a vigorous fight against the social democratic line that the capitalist colonial regime can be converted into a beneficial system." This emphasised and underlined what had been said in 1925.

#### DECLINE AND BETRAYAL, 1932-57

From 1932 onwards we see beginnings of the decline from the relative political clarity of the 1920s. The 1932 Congress simply re-affirmed "their (the colonial peoples') right for complete independence and the right of separation from the British Empire," but at the Congress of 1935, *qualification* of this independence was already beginning.

"Because of the freeing of all parts of the present Empire from the burdens of interest on loan, profits taken away by British concerns and heavy taxation to maintain the British military and civil authorities, it will be possible for the less industrially developed countries to exchange their products for the machinery and other industrial equipment they require in order to build up their own industries. But only insofar as the British workers repudiate imperialist rule and imperialist ideology now will the colonial countries be willing to exchange their

1. In particular the aim of affiliation to the Labour Party was abandoned. The policy of a "mass Party" and the foundation of the *Daily Worker* date from this period.



products for British Soviet goods. Given this outlook on the part of the British workers then in spite of the deep hostility that imperialism has generated there will be friendly relations with the British Soviets and fraternal inter-change of products, whether in fact these former colonies also set up Soviet Governments at once or not."

Responsibility for the development of Party cadres and the drawing together of revolutionary elements in the colonies was also emphasised at this Congress.

Why was this statement qualified? Despite the reaffirmation of the need for the British working class to repudiate imperialism, this repudiation was now clearly linked with *economic* advantages to be gained by a future Soviet Britain by such a repudiation—economic advantages, moreover, which clearly accepted for some time after the establishment of workers' power in this country a primary producing role for the ex-colonies. The element of *special* relations between a socialist Britain and the ex-colonies was also now apparent.

It is important to remember, in view of what followed in the war years and afterwards, that this period in the mid-30s was one in which the sharp *internal* class struggles of the 1920s somewhat abated and the political struggle in general became more and more geared to the international anti-fascist fight on a broad-front basis. During the Depression the Party had rejected what was regarded as the sectarian line of 1929 (the January Resolution of 1932), and had reverted more or less to the position of the mid-20s as far as the Labour Movement in general, and the Labour Party in particular, were concerned, i.e. a general policy of co-operation, or united front, coupled with a renewed demand for admission to the Labour Party (1935). The sharpening mass struggles against fascism of these years, including the Spanish Civil War, have tended to obscure the fact that the basis of the Party's betrayal on imperialism and confusions on the leadership of the working class in Britain were formed in these years.

These were the years in which the Party membership grew from approximately 9,000 (1931) to approximately 15,000 (1939); in which the mainly industrial proletarian character of the Party membership of the 1920s was swamped by recruits from white-collar and petty-bourgeois sections as a result of the mass Party line combined with the policy of a united front. These were the years in which the political level of the Party as a whole began to sink disastrously, despite the valiant efforts of many rank and file militants over the years to maintain and improve this level. The situation was created where a handful of "old-timers"—a self-perpetuating college of cardinals—dominated and controlled the Party, despite the democratic centralist form in which the Party was supposed to operate. It is in these years that the real entrenchment of revisionism in the leadership of the Party begins.

By the Congress of 1943 the attitude on colonialism had already changed. Full freedom for India, it was asserted, must be recognised during the war. "Similarly, the right of self-determination should be recognised for all colonial peoples," but with a definite qualification—still not yet specifically mentioning any special relationship between a socialist Britain and the ex-colonies, but nevertheless preparing the ground for the same.

At the 1945 Congress, a large section of the political resolution was devoted to the colonies. But when compared with the current Labour Party plan there was very little difference. There was no mention anywhere

of the absolute, unequivocal right to independence, but instead a call to the Government (Labour) for *long term* policies for the "achievements by colonial peoples of equal and free status among the nations of the world". "We call," said the Resolution on the colonies, "upon the Labour Government to break sharply and decisively with Tory policies of imperialist exploitation which have impoverished the colonial territories and denied them their elementary civil liberties." There is no talk here of absolute rights to independence. It is a far cry from the unequivocal Marxist-Leninist statement of the 1920s. But then, some may say, we were all under the illusion in 1945 that the Labour Government, with its unchallenged majority, was on the threshold of initiating a new age of peace and plenty. The question is not why a vast number of non-Marxist British workers were under this illusion, but why was the *Communist Party* under the same illusion—with all the experience, knowledge and understanding it reputedly had of the treacherous and diversionary character of social democracy in general and the British Labour Party in particular. The leadership of the Communist Party was fully aware that earlier Labour Governments had faithfully carried out the policies of British imperialism, especially regarding India. The leadership knew that Labour Party policy and spokesmen had stood unequivocally for a perpetuation of imperialism. Even the most cherished "Lefts" of the Labour Party were not exempt from this. George Lansbury, for example, could write in *Labour's Way With the Commonwealth* (1935) as a prelude to his plan for land reform, "in the colonies, it is of course obvious that the white races must protect their standard of living." As will be seen, this complete volte face on the question of imperialism between the 1920s and 1945 can only be understood in connection with other growing illusions regarding the Labour movement in this period, *illusions which have not disappeared since 1945 but have, if anything, increased.*

In 1947 the story was repeated. Here are some of the statements on the colonial resolution of the Party Congress of that year.

"Only by the fullest economic, political and social development of all colonial countries can the future British standards be maintained." The declared aim of the Labour Movement of "independence for India and self-determination and social progress for the colonies must now be fought for by the whole Labour Movement." . . . "we call on the Government to draw up draft proposals for trusteeship for Tanganyika, Togoland and the Cameroons in full accord with the terms of the United Nations Charter . . .". "The Colonial Services and methods of recruitment to them should be overhauled and modernised so that Britain may be represented in the colonies by men who really believe in democracy, progress and racial equality."

The Communist Party had sunk to the level of calling for *trusteeships* and even had advice to give on how to recruit colonial administrators!

If this un-Marxist, opportunist line had been roundly repudiated in subsequent years, we would have gone some way towards rehabilitating ourselves before the international movement and colonial peoples, let alone discharging some of our responsibilities to the British working class, insofar as we would have distinguished the Communist Party in this country from all others on the fundamental question of imperialism. But we did not repudiate these statements. Instead, in 1951, a full policy statement was issued, the *British Road to Socialism*, in which the Party's colonial policy was stated in full in such a way as to make it appear to any colonial that the British Communist Party talked freedom *to ensure a better supply of*



*raw materials, etc., from former colonial territories.* What an advertisement of our policy for peoples whose one ambition and whose only view of liberation has been, and is, *industrialisation*—to break once and for all precisely the primary producing character of their economies which the imperialists have imposed by whip and gun. The formulation of the *British Road to Socialism* remained until 1957 when in the flurry and furore of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of Soviet Union and the Hungarian crisis, a Minority report was passed modifying the section on imperialism from talking about “fraternal association” to talking about “voluntary fraternal relations”. But behind this change, maintained up to the present, there is still the implication that there are some special relations between Britain and former colonies—some special, albeit beneficent, economic ties which will continue after the achievement of Socialism and working class power in Britain.

#### THE ECONOMIC FOUNDATION OF IMPERIALIST CORRUPTION

It may be argued that these are all academic points, nothing really to do with the day to day struggle in Britain—points that can be left to that indefinite time in the future when the working class comes to power. This is a dangerous view. What we say regarding imperialism does not only affect the attitudes of colonial people to the British Communist Party (important enough in itself). If it is accepted as part of the basic political analysis of the class struggle in Britain and the role of the Communist Party in that struggle, our attitude towards imperialism must also inevitably influence both long term strategy and tactics and day to day struggle *in this country.*

The steadily increasing emphasis on the *special* relationships existing between Britain and the empire which will *not* be broken after the achievement of working class power in this country, would be a serious enough error in any imperialist country. In Britain it is a particularly grave deviation. Lenin consistently emphasised the necessity for working class parties in imperialist countries to stand for the unqualified right of independence and self-determination of the colonial peoples and semi-colonial peoples everywhere. Likewise he emphasised the necessity for working class and peasant parties in the colonial territories to stand consistently for solidarity with the working class of the imperialist power in their struggle to overthrow the capitalist class. Only in this way could the national struggle for freedom yield genuine freedom for the colonial masses and the class struggle within the imperialist countries yield genuine working class power. Since 1917, this analysis has been proved again and again. Lenin's analysis, however, was made at a time when there was no world Socialist system. This world system has developed in the course of the last forty years and particularly since 1945, precisely and only because Marxist parties have closely adhered to Lenin's and later Stalin's analysis of the necessary relations between the workers and peasants of oppressed and oppressor nations. Yet it is precisely in this period, again particularly since 1945 when the old imperialism has been disintegrating, that the Communist Party has developed its thesis on the need for special relations between Britain and colonial and semi-colonial people after the advent of a socialist Britain. But as well as this manifest deviation from the path of Marxism-Leninism and defiance of Communist experience, this is a particularly grave error for us to have committed in Britain. Why is this so?

The traditional view has been that only certain sections of the British

working class have been economically corrupted by imperialism. But economic corruption does not consist solely of £ s. d. It is not the cash—a tribute that may at this or that time fall to one or other section of the workers, large or small, in this country which is the only factor to consider. It should be remembered that the total industrial capitalist economy of this country—the total material environment of the working class, its history and the growth of its Labour Movement, have been and are, conditioned by, and dependent upon, the imperialist system. How else could a country with such *few* natural resources enjoy such a *relatively* high standard of living in comparison with the colonial and semi-colonial masses? Could there be a Dunlops without Malaya—a Unilever without control of the economies of the countries of West Africa—a Tate & Lyle without the domination of the West Indies? Could the cotton magnate in Lancashire have survived after the American Civil War without imperial control of India and Egypt? Where would the great oil companies be without the political domination and economic control of the Middle East? These are only some of the bigger monopoly industries. They could be multiplied many times. On the existence of these great industries depends the existence of the multitude of small scale minor industries, let alone the vast field of servicing trades and industries which these major ones automatically call into existence. Even British agriculture has in the last 100 years been heavily influenced by the imperialist tie. Recognition of these facts is basic to any scientific analysis of the class struggle in Britain. They have operated longer (200 years or more) and more generally than in any other imperialist country in the world. Being determines consciousness, said Marx, and social being therefore determines social consciousness. It is true that the bourgeoisie have worked overtime over the years to corrupt, ideologically, the masses of this country. This they could never have succeeded in doing (and from time to time over extended periods they *have* succeeded a very large part of the way) had there been no material foundation to work on. No one can deny the political backwardness of the working class in Britain today. If it is denied take a look again at the election results since 1950 (remembering that 80 to 90 per cent of people in this country are *wage earners* and own no part of the means of production).

Political backwardness of the working class in the era of imperialism is the direct product of imperialist corruption. Everyone who lives in this country is inevitably subject to these corrupting influences. It is the first duty of the Communist Party vigorously to counteract them, ideologically and practically. But what has been done? Since 1945, the leadership have progressively capitulated to the very corruption which they should have been combating. They have pandered more and more to the deeply instilled belief in the British masses that imperialism is necessary. They have, in a word, walked out on the greatest responsibility any Communist Party can have in an imperialist country, and in particular in Britain.

For this responsibility precedes all other responsibilities to the working class because it is through such corruption that the bourgeoisie, by disguising its exploitation of the working class of *this* country, struggles to maintain its grip on the minds as well as the bodies of the masses. For an imperialist country the first condition for releasing the masses from their bondage to capitalism, the first condition for proletarian solidarity and militancy of which the British working class is as capable as any other, is a clear and uncompromising attack on imperialist exploitation and deception of the colonial and British workers alike. And let no one say that the British working class is not capable of acting in solidarity with another



working class struggling to overcome its exploiters. Remember the action of the cotton workers in the American Civil War when the cotton famine prevailed. They were solidly for the North on the anti-slavery issue. Remember the actions of the British T.U.C. in 1913 when a call went out to support the strike of the starving Dublin dock workers. Remember the Councils of Action of the British dockers in 1920 when the bourgeoisie were poised, under Churchill's instigation, to attack the new born Soviet Union. Remember Ben Bradley and the Meerut Trials. Remember in our own time the mass demonstrations over Suez. All these things show clearly the capabilities of the British working class under the worst possible conditions of imperialist indoctrination through every medium the bourgeoisie could lay its hand on. The possibilities are immense. All the more cowardly and invidious is the Party leadership's opportunism and flight from its responsibilities.

The fact is that the position the Party has taken up on imperialism reflects closely the desire, especially since the war, to become acceptable to the working class of this country. Look at the following paragraph in the *British Road to Socialism* of 1951: "The enemies of Communism declare that the Communist Party by underhand subversive means is aiming at the destruction of Britain and the British Empire. But it is a lie, because it is precisely the Tories and Labour leaders who are doing this by their policy of armed repression and colonial exploitation." And again in the General Election programme for 1955 the following comments were made: "Tory policy has worsened colonial conditions. *No wonder* (my emphasis, P.S.) the colonial people everywhere are demanding their freedom—the right to run their own countries in their own way." And these points were followed by a repetition of the "raw materials" argument.

#### THE COMMON MARKET AND NEO-COLONIALISM, 1957-63

Since 1957, the story has not changed. In two statements by John Gollan, *What Next* (November 1959) and *Gaitskell or Socialism* (October 1960), both of them purporting to be up to the minute analyses of the stage of struggle reached in Britain, there was not a whisper about imperialism bar an odd reference in the first to colonial liberation. In one recent policy statement, *A World of Difference*, the section on imperialism (minute enough anyway) reads like a balance sheet. Here it is exactly as it stands:

"The right of all colonial people to be free and independent and to rule themselves will be recognised. A Socialist Government will at once renounce all colonial possessions and interests.

"You sometimes hear a fear expressed that if Britain had no colonies she would never pay her way in the world, that this would mean unemployment and starvation for our workers.

"This is nonsense. We need raw materials, foodstuffs, minerals. We have manufactured goods, capital equipment, scientific and industrial knowledge. They need manufactured goods, capital equipment, scientific and industrial skill and knowledge. They have raw materials, foodstuffs and minerals. When we treat the former colonial peoples as friends and equals it will be in their interest to trade with us. The products of our factories are needed all over the world."

After all, recognition of colonial demands is good business!

One of the major issues regarding imperialism which has arisen in the

last three years is the Common Market. This issue has been treated as one of "national independence". Britain must not go into the Common Market, it was argued, because "we" would lose our "independence" which proper development of the Commonwealth (yes, it is politically respectable at last) would avoid. And yet facts and figures from widely differing sources such as Nkrumah and Sekou Toure on the one hand and *Peking Review* on the other, demonstrate that the main objectives of the Common Market are *neo-colonial* and that to oppose it on the grounds of Commonwealth preference is to take sides with one section of the capitalist class against the other in a quarrel which is itself a product of the deepening crisis of capitalism as a whole. What interest has the working class or the Communist Party in saving the skins of the old colonialists as opposed to the new? None whatever. Does the taking of sides in this quarrel among the "angels" further the cause of the *working class*? Does it bring the working class nearer to political power? Not at all. It simply identifies the Communist Party with a backward-looking section of the capitalist class which languishes after the old Empire as opposed to the monopolists, who see a temporary respite in and through the Market. Such a line is a tacit acceptance of imperialist corruption in all its forms, of the heyday of British imperialism and a demand for a continuation of the older perks of imperialism falling to the working class as against the likelihood of the loss of some of these perks through Britain entering the Common Market. One of the worst capitulations to imperialist corruption on this issue appeared in the article in the *Daily Worker* by J. R. Campbell on September 5th, 1961. Here, all pretence at covering up the nakedly imperialist argument of imperial preference was dropped and the case plainly stated that the T.U.C. (1961) was wrong to vote in favour of any steps towards entering into the Common Market because of the "special relations" Britain has with "the Commonwealth". Here are the relevant sections in full:

"It is utterly impossible to assess what would happen to the British workers by looking at the records of the Market Countries. For there is one very marked difference in Britain's situation. Neither Germany nor Italy have overseas territories with which they have a special economic or political association.

"France has such territories but because they are almost completely non-competitive with Europe, a special place has been allowed for them inside the Common Market.

"But Britain has special relations with its dominions (old and new) and colonies. Some of them, industrially as well as in agriculture, are in strong competition with Europe.

"These countries give special preferences to British exports (either admitting them duty-free or with a small duty) in comparison with those of foreign countries.

"On the other hand, more than half of Britain's imports come from the Commonwealth countries. They are admitted at lower rates of tariff than foreign imports. A margin of preference is from 5 per cent to 20 per cent.

"If Britain joined the Common Market, these preferences to the Commonwealth must cease and the Commonwealth would in turn withdraw the preferences it now gives to Britain.

"The extent of the damage which this would cause to Britain



cannot possibly be arrived at by looking at what has happened in the Common Market. The General Council is looking in the wrong direction."

In short, instead of publicising the fact that entry into the Common Market means a further possible avenue for colonial exploitation (in the neo-colonial sense) for British capitalism—and therefore a perpetuation of the basis of the state power of the bourgeoisie in this country—we have turned to national chauvinism and special economic privileges arising from imperialism as a basis for the working class's resistance to entry into the Common Market. Of course we must oppose entry into the Common Market but has it to be done by the *Communist Party* taking sides with the "old guard" imperialists against the "new guard"? Do we have to fill the columns of the *Daily Worker* with talk of "the country's economy suffering" in a similar tone to the bourgeois press itself when describing the strikes of the working class? Do we shed tears over the dominion and colonial bourgeoisie who would no longer be able to benefit from crumbs from the British Imperialist table in the form of special trading privileges? Do we think that by keeping the "Commonwealth" the colonial workers and peasants will benefit in some obscure way? They, in either event, Common Market or Commonwealth, will experience intensified exploitation if the imperialist countries maintain their grip on the colonial countries. The Common Market undoubtedly permits the imperialists to do this longer than the old set-up. Therefore, we must oppose it. But unless this opposition is linked with a true exposure of the neo-colonialist plots of the imperialists; unless it is stressed to the working class in Britain that *working class power here is the only guarantee against a fall in standards of living and an intensification of exploitation as the imperial system, one way or another, crumbles, this opposition can only be what it is now—pure opportunism.*

The political aspects of the Common Market are equally important, but how are they dealt with? It is claimed that *Parliament* will lose its initiative; that *Parliament* will be tied to the controls of a handful of giant monopolists. What is it now if it is not thus tied—only to British monopolists, instead of British and foreign monopolists? Is there some subtle qualitative distinction—a variation in moral tone between monopolists? The truth is that the political implications of the Common Market are feared by those who cherish the neat picture of a peaceful transition to socialism. What did we expect? That the bourgeoisie will accept our delusions about their resigning power gracefully? They never have yet anywhere else in the world. The truth is that the Party's responsibility here, as with the whole question of imperialism, is to expose the fact that the political implications of the Common Market prove that parliamentarism is an illusion and a sop with which to divert the working class from awareness of and vigilance against the dictatorial plans of the bourgeoisie. Such exposure does not preclude the Party and the working class from defending tooth and nail all those political concessions the bourgeoisie have allowed in the past, not because they are good in themselves but because of their use as weapons against the bourgeoisie.

Because, therefore, the Party leadership has deliberately turned its back on the real issues involved in the struggle against the Common Market, the Party has found itself on occasion shoulder to shoulder with Tory backwoodsmen and the new "Britain Forward Movement", and the anti-Common Market League. Such a situation contains a grave

warning. Nationalism among oppressed colonial masses has been and is a vital progressive movement provided it is properly understood and worked with by Marxists and Marxist-led workers' and peasants' organisations. But nationalism (not to be confused with patriotism) in countries where imperialism is rooted, nationalism at the centre of imperialist exploitation (and Britain unquestionably falls into this category) can lead only to fascism. Nationalism in these circumstances is a clouding of the class issue—it is an encouragement of all the worst effects of imperialist indoctrination on the working class of the past in the imperialist countries.

#### DEEP-ROOTED REVISIONISM IN THE BRITISH COMMUNIST PARTY

The desire to become acceptable to the working class in this country has led the Party leadership, on the most fundamental issue of the class struggle—imperialism—to become clearly and undeniably opportunist. But there is more to it than this. The question has to be answered how this could have happened in a Party claiming to be Marxist. Lenin's correspondence with the first leaders of the British Party, together with his book, "*Left Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder*", indicated the main front on which the Party in an imperialist nation such as Britain should fight. His views on the relations which such a Party should have with the Labour Movement and the Labour Party will be referred to later on. But it is relevant to say here that Lenin produced a dynamic interpretation of the position of the British working class as it stood in the 1920s. In subsequent years that dynamic interpretation has been turned by the Party leadership into a sterile dogma—a dogma that influences us right up to the present. It is a dogma that rests on the assumption, whatever lip-service may be paid to the independent role of the Party, that the working class in this country is politically advanced because it has a complex and long-standing system of organisations; that these organisations are "organs of rebellion" in the same sense as Lenin described the Soviets in Russia in the 1905 Revolution; that this assumption includes the Labour Party which must be regarded as the principal field of political activity of Communists and which must be accepted as the principal organ (once transformed by a victory of left over right wings) by which the working class will take power in this country (together, of course, with the Communist Party). By thus sterilising and dogmatising Lenin's original analysis, we have inevitably been led into firstly ignoring and then definitely excluding the imperialist factor that has played such an important part in the growth and development of the British Labour Movement as a whole, and the British Labour Party in particular. It has led us on the one hand to the incredible assertion in 1957 (*World News*) that, "there is no guarantee that even a tiny share of the big profits from the colonies means higher wages in Britain", and contradictorily, on the other hand to the analysis of the Common Market by J. R. Campbell quoted above. The first statement, over which considerable controversy raged, not only completely rejects the profound analysis of British capitalist development in the 19th century made by Marx and Engels, it also throws out of the window the fundamental contribution of Lenin's work to the Marxist understanding of monopoly capitalism. Worse still, it ignores entirely elementary facts regarding the complex industrial system which has grown up in this country, outlined above.

This failure to understand the impact of imperialism on the British working class is the most signal failure of all in the past 40 years. It is a



failure almost too great to assess in its repercussions on world events in that period. This is true because a failure to understand this impact is a failure to take into account the determining feature of the *local* conditions of struggle in Britain, conditions which are not recent but are of long historical standing. The failure itself, however, is *not* local but international since it has meant that the Communist Party has defaulted on its leadership of the British masses throughout the period of the intensifying crisis of capitalism and imperialism internationally. This failure has been most obvious since 1945. True, it is not restricted to Britain. The Parties in every imperialist country have to answer in similar ways for similar failings. We, however, have a special responsibility, because British imperialism today stands second only to the United States as an instigator of colonial and semi-colonial repression, as an aggressor of the first magnitude and as a preparer for a third world war to destroy Socialism. We say that imperialism is weaker today than ever before. It is undoubtedly weaker, but this weakening is due primarily to the struggles of the colonial masses together with the forces of the Socialist camp *and not to the Communist Party's activation of the British working class*. In the last two years in particular, the Communist Party has sunk itself deeper and deeper into various "broad" movements. A "peaceful transition" to socialism is talked of glibly, while the British imperialists arm themselves more rapidly than ever before. It is true that these arms are not yet directed against the British working class, but who can say when this is to happen? The Peace Movement is treated as a major force in Britain today, yet the Peace Movement is riven by splits and finds it increasingly difficult to arouse enthusiasm among its flagging members because it is a movement led by pacifists whose leadership has time and again been confirmed and endorsed by the Communist Party.

#### THE BRITISH COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE INTERNATIONAL STRUGGLE BETWEEN MARXISM-LENINISM AND MODERN REVISIONISM

Within the last year this disastrous history of abdications on the part of the Party, particularly its leadership, has reached a new low in the handling of the issues raised in the international differences. Hostile to the Chinese Communist Party at the 81 Parties Conference in Moscow in 1960, the leadership of the British Communist Party has persisted in this hostility and increased it since.

Our Chinese Comrades do not and never have asserted that the struggle between the imperialists and the oppressed masses excludes all other contradictions in the world revolution now in progress. What they and other Marxist-Leninist Parties do assert, however, is that the storm-centres of the class struggle on a world scale lie, *at the present time*, in Asia, Africa and Latin America. It is this, together with their analysis of the related issue of the peaceful transition to socialism, which has earned them the hatred of the leadership of the British Communist Party. These analyses and their clear truth contradict and expose the whole line pursued by this leadership over 25 years or more. It is that that has given rise to the perversions and lying vilifications of the Chinese view-point that appeared in the January 12th statement of the E.C., the Executive Committee Resolution and John Gollan's statement, both made during September, 1963.

The sharp arrows of the Chinese arguments drive too closely home for the comfort of Gollan, Dutt and Co.

Nor is this a question merely of past errors such as the *British Road to Socialism* or the attitude of J. R. Campbell on the Common Market in 1961. The playing down of the anti-imperialist struggle has continued throughout this year. Take the record of the *Daily Worker* alone. The vitally important Third Afro-Asian Solidarity Conference held at Moshi in February received scarcely a mention. Why? Because it stressed that the anti-imperialist struggle was the key to peace. The liberation struggles raging in various parts of the world have received scant attention—South Vietnam scarcely at all until August, the Omani people's armed liberation struggle, specifically against British imperialism, which has continued for seven years, no mention at all. Both the Party and the *Daily Worker* ignored the call for an "Omani Day" on July 18th, by the Afro-Asian Conference. The extensive armed struggles taking place in Venezuela, Peru, Guatemala, Ecuador and Colombia have been virtually ignored. The question of Malaysia was covered only when it was a *fait accompli*. The North Kalimantan people's armed struggle, in operation since December 1962, has been completely ignored.

At home, actions in solidarity with the anti-imperialist struggle have been pitifully small throughout the year. An example of this was the flat refusal of the Party leadership to act immediately after the coup in Iraq, followed as it was by a wholesale massacre of Communists and militants. On this occasion, the leadership excused itself on the grounds that a Labour Party observer mission was on its way to Iraq and that it would be unwise to act precipitately in view of this!

Why all these errors and omissions? Why all the lies about and attacks on the Communist Party of China and other Marxist-Leninists? The answer is that, at last, on an international scale, a challenge to reformism and opportunism has begun in earnest and it has caught up within it those in the British Communist Party who, long before the international differences arose, practised reformism and opportunism; who have misled the British masses and above all have betrayed their prime responsibility to wage an unceasing war on imperialism. The leadership is fighting a defensive rearguard action against an oncoming exposure which is, at last, overtaking them.

Yet what is there to defend, apart from the positions these leaders hold? Has the British Communist Party succeeded over the past years in gaining the support even of a moderate section of the working class by these methods? No. Election results are ludicrous, the Party's influence in the factories and Trades Unions is reduced to a pitiful attempt at jockeying for positions—an attempt doomed to failure especially exemplified by the E.T.U. fiasco.

After 40 years of existence, the leadership still talks of transforming the Labour Party and still evidences the 1960 Scarborough decisions as proof, ignoring three successive General Elections producing increased majorities for the outright party of imperialism and war. The record in the Peace Movement has already been noted. These are only some of the Party's failures.

The truth stands bold and clear. There is nothing to defend *except* the entrenched positions of those who are most responsible for the present condition of the British working class and Communist Party. Yet is there not a need for the revolutionary mobilisation and leadership of the working

class at the present time? Is there not a need to develop the day-to-day struggles of the masses against exploitation into a wider and deeper political understanding of the evil of capitalism and the need for workers' power and Socialism? Is there not a need to extend the revolutionary consciousness of fighters for peace? Is there not, in short, an overriding need for a strong and vigorous Communist Party in Britain today?

The answer to all these is an emphatic yes! But the basis of all of these actions is the correct understanding of the role imperialism has played and is playing in the retardation of the class struggle. Unless there is a continuous exposure of imperialism to the masses, unless the Party continually demonstrates to the masses that the struggle for the extra 1d. or  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. an hour, the actions against nuclear weapons and all the multitude of possible blows against capitalism and its State, must take place side by side with open actions against imperialism and open actions in solidarity with all oppressed peoples the name Communist Party is nothing but a label concealing social democratic, petty-bourgeois conceived policies.

#### CONCLUSION

These things are not a political panacea for all the ills of the British working class movement at the present time. It is a long, hard and difficult process to combat successfully the material as well as ideological effects of imperialism. It will take time for the masses to learn at last that they are doomed as long as they permit the continuation of imperialism and the continued political power of the imperialists—their own exploiters. But unless this struggle is embarked on (and we have to make up for the many years lost by the opportunists) there is no hope for a genuine revolutionary consciousness awakening among the working class in Britain—even with the deepening crisis of capitalism itself with its attendant oppressions, political as well as economic, which the working class can expect. Parliamentarism is the dictatorship of the capitalist class in an era of “social peace”—an era when the profits from imperialism can be used, partially at least, in quietening the class anger of the masses. But the rule of the bourgeoisie in a period when the profits of imperialism are no longer available for this, is the rule of the gun, the jack-boot and the concentration camp. The power of the British masses is immense—if it is used. Their revolutionary potential is as great as in the days when Engels remarked on it. The weakening of imperialism has meant the weakening of the capitalist class here in Britain and the immense increase of monopoly concentration and political centralisation which, despite its immediate threat, is a sign of this weakness. But an enemy is also weak in proportion to the strength of his opponent. It has been amply demonstrated in modern times that a weak bourgeoisie is doubly, trebly vicious if the masses are unprepared. Witness Iraq, witness India, witness the Latin American countries, especially the Batista regime in Cuba before Castro.

This need not be the case here. This will not be the case here provided the task is begun now—the task that should have been carried out over the last 43 years by the C.P.G.B. (and especially, by its leadership)—the task of building piece by piece, struggle by struggle, victory by victory, a revolutionary vanguard and a revolutionary proletariat second to none in the world.