

**Pamphlet  
no 12**

**REVISIONISM**

## introduction

Today IN STRUGGLE! is republishing the English version of its educational pamphlets which was published nearly two years ago in French.

Why are we re-publishing in English this 2 year-old pamphlet on revisionism? Because in the progressive movement and in the workers' movement in English Canada, revisionism, the bourgeois line disguised as Marxism-Leninism, is an important obstacle to the penetration of true Marxist-Leninist ideology. The revisionists take advantage of the fact that the workers' struggles are becoming more and more radical and that the vanguard workers desire to grasp Marxism-Leninism, and never miss a chance to preach about the pacific road to socialism, about the USSR's socialist character, etc. Even though certain aspects of this pamphlet are dated, due to the development of the situation, it still identifies the principal characteristics of revisionism. Thus it remains an educational tool that can be of use to vanguard workers in their struggle to grasp Marxist-Leninist ideology and cast-off the different forms of bourgeois ideology.

Translated by our Toronto comrades, this first republication of our pamphlets will be followed by others previously published in French in the series no. 1 to 19, like the one of social-democracy.

Marxism-Leninism has always developed in the struggle against bourgeois ideas. This struggle is led not only against the openly reactionary ideas of the bourgeoisie, but also and above all in the very ranks of the international communist movement, against ideas which have the appearance of Marxism, but which are bourgeois ideas in reality.

It's against these ideas that Marx, Engels and Lenin fought, against the revision of the principles of Marxism by the social-democrats (people who claimed socialism could be achieved without overthrowing the capitalist State) such as Bernstein and Kautsky. Stalin and Mao fought against what we call modern revisionism. Modern revisionism is the latest instrument which the bourgeoisie uses in its efforts to empty Marxism of its revolutionary content.

Why is it important to understand modern revisionism? First, because it is an international phenomenon, and an obstacle to the revolutionary movements of the peoples practically everywhere in the world. This phenomenon is all the more dangerous for the people because it is backed up by one of the two imperialist super-powers of the world today, the USSR, and also because its reactionary character is still subtle and camouflaged.

Today, when the bourgeoisie is looking nervously for outlets for its crisis, and some means of putting obstacles in the way of the people's growing revolutionary movement, modern revisionism has room in which to grow. The necessity of leading the revolutionary aspirations of the masses along reformist lines is felt more and more each day, by the bourgeoisie.

In English Canada and in Quebec, even though revisionism is weak, its reality should not be underestimated. It has representatives in the union movement; it's re-forming its link with the social democrats (such as the NDP). Its slogans call for the "creation of a federated-mass party of workers" (instead of a disciplined party united around clear Marxist-Leninist politics). It finds a certain audience among workers.

In order to understand the conditions in which modern revisionism emerged as the dominant line in the international communist movement, we have to return to the period after World War II.

## How Modern Revisionism Emerged

### American Imperialism Divided The Communist Movement From Outside

After the last war, Soviet Russia came out of its isolation. Half the countries of Europe became socialist, as a result of the stubborn struggle of the Russian people and the Red Army, which, under the leadership of Stalin, carried on the main offensive against the Nazis, and successfully pushed them back. Socialism also came to

half of Europe because of the courage of millions of communists who, after leading the anti-fascist struggle before the war, were the principal architects of the armed resistance against the German or Italian invader. A few years later, China, a quarter of humanity, also entered the socialist camp, at the end of a long national liberation struggle led by its communist party.

During these years, American imperialism, which became the leader of world reaction due to the weakening of other imperialist countries by the war, used all possible means to weaken and divide the international communist movement. It destroyed the communist Resistance organizations, blackmailed the capitalist countries to reduce the role of communists in national reconstruction, and initiated military and diplomatic provocations aimed at starting the Cold War. In the United States itself, the "witch hunt" against communists began, with Senator McCarthy as the Grand Inquisitor.

### Yugoslavia Created Internal Division in the Communist Movement

Further, American imperialism wanted to infiltrate into the ranks of the international communist movement itself. The link in the chain which appeared weakest was Yugoslavia. Already during the war, a section of the Yugoslavian party leadership, with trotskyist influence, had had annexationist intentions toward Albania, and had also ignored directives of the Third International. After the war, the Yugoslavian Communist Party, which was in power, initiated a transformation in the capitalist relations of production. But the planned and centralized economy soon gave way to the support of private enterprise and private capital, the dissolution of the agricultural co-operatives, the return to competition on the "free" market, the development of salaried work, and "workers control" which in fact established the power of directors of factories and other specialists over the workers. The anarchy in production and the waste of productive forces which this led to imposed the necessity of relying on foreign financial aid. The American imperialists, invited in by Tito, rushed to bring their dollars into Yugoslavia.

This dependent relationship on imperialism led to the reinforcement of capitalism in the country, the dissolution of the Yugoslavian Communist Party, the abandonment of the Marxist-Leninist principles of the dictatorship of the proletariat and of proletarian internationalism. Yugoslavia thus became the first divisive factor in the international communist movement.

### Stalin against Revisionism

Another event which marked the ascent of revisionism is the position taken by the USSR leadership at its party's 20th Congress in 1956, three years after the death of Stalin, concerning the previous decades when socialism was built in the USSR. At this Congress, Stalin was unilaterally denounced as a dictator, as the only person responsible for the difficulties of the country. The attacks of the Soviet leaders were all the more virulent given that during his lifetime, Stalin, faithful to Marxist-Leninist principles, had always opposed the rise to power of bureaucrats like Krushchev in the Party and in the State.

The one-sided denunciation of Stalin was not acceptable to sincere communist militants. For them, he had been above all the glorious defender of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the USSR. At all the decisive stages of the building of socialism — heavy industrialization, the collectivisation of farms in the country, the 5-year plans, the anti-fascist struggle, the resistance to the Nazi invader, Stalin was able to lead the struggle for the continuation of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the USSR, based on Marxist-Leninist principles. In the two line struggle (bourgeois and proletarian) in the party, an expression of class contradictions which still existed in the USSR,

Stalin energetically opposed such leaders of the party as Trotsky, Bukharin, and Zinoviev, etc., who carried a line of capitalist restoration. He also fought against the bureaucrats, who were taking more and more power in the State and party apparatus, as well as against the ideology which they spread among the people.

In the struggle, Stalin committed certain errors of principle. He confused contradictions among the people - which should be resolved by discussion and ideological struggle, with contradictions between the people and their enemies - which should be resolved by revolutionary violence towards the end of the 30's. Such errors lead to physical repression of sincere revolutionary militants. However, despite these errors, Stalin was a real proletarian revolutionary leader.

### Revisionism: Dominant Line In The Communist Movement

With the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and the denunciation of Stalin, the bureaucratic bourgeoisie took power in the Soviet Union. This change in the class in power had as a result the abandoning of Marxist-Leninist principles by the new leaders of the USSR. At the same time, these leaders played the imperialists' game by weakening the unity of the international communist movement gathering together the communist parties led by revisionists, and setting them against the genuine revolutionary parties.

For several years, up until 1963, the year that the Communist Party of China published its "Letter in 25 points" - summing up the essential criticism of the revisionist USSR leaders by the Chinese Party - the Chinese and Albanian communists, together with some others, tried to safeguard the unity of the communist movement. Relying firmly on Marxist-Leninist principles, they tried to transform the political line defended by the leaders of the USSR and the leaders of the majority of communist parties.

As for the revisionists, they abandoned all principle, and engaged in hysterical attacks against the Marxist-Leninists. They used all sorts of manoeuvres to provoke the exclusion of Marxist-Leninists from the ranks of the international communist movement. This split in the movement led to the expulsion of a large number of revolutionary militants from each of the revisionist communist parties.

### Revolutionary Principles Abandoned

Modern revisionism, like the older forms of revisionism, (see Pamphlet No. 11, on parties like the NDP) is characterized by a deformation, if not a total abandonment, of the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism.

1. In revisionist ideology, the central Marxist-Leninist concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat (the rule of the workers and their allies over the bourgeoisie) which defines the nature of the political power which the people have to give themselves during the period of socialism in order to finally achieve communism, becomes "the state of the whole people", "advanced democracy", "national democracy", etc.

2. The necessity of armed struggle, of a people's insurrection and the destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus (army, police, government bureaucracy etc.) is denied. Revisionists call for a pacifist transition to socialism, within the legal framework of bourgeois institutions.

3. The unending struggle against imperialism is transformed by revisionists into a peaceful competition between superpowers, supposedly for the maintenance of peace in the world, but in reality to allow the partition of the world between them.

4. The dialectical links between the economic, political and ideological struggles are separated into three distinct levels by the revisionists. The economic struggle is reserved for the workers, while the political struggle - which is essentially based on elections

- is reserved for the leaders of the party, who impose their line. The ideological and cultural struggle becomes the property of artists, intellectuals and party theoreticians, (instead of being led by the working class).

5. Proletarian internationalism (comradely relations with other socialists in the world) becomes a purely formal support to national liberation struggles, when it does not become support for bourgeois States which are executioners of their people, such as in India. In fact, "aid" from the USSR - arms sales at high prices, export of capital to sectors which are advantageous for the USSR etc., - does a poor job of covering up the selfishness of the superpower, and in fact only follows the imperialist's logic of intimidation and pillage.

Betraying Leninism, revisionism places "national liberation struggles" under the control of national bourgeoisies, and directly supports these in their politics of exploitation and aggression. For example, in the border conflicts between China and India, the revisionists of the USSR always supported the expansionist politics of India, at the expense of China.

### The Class Basis of Revisionism: Bourgeois and Petty-Bourgeois

The anti-proletarian politics of revisionism rely on the exploiting classes which continue to exist under socialism. In the "socialist" (revisionist) countries, they also rely on bourgeois elements (such as bourgeois who have had the means of production removed from their ownership, but who often hold positions of leadership in society, and are in a good position to diffuse their class's ideology among the people) or on petty-bourgeois elements such as small capitalists or middle (as opposed to poor) peasants (and farmers).

At the same time, specialists such as technicians and engineers who were educated in schools which continued to maintain the division between physical and intellectual work (which exists in capitalist society) consolidated their power in these countries, and formed another base for the development of revisionist ideas. Even though they were only salaried employees of the state, these specialists had more power, and better living and working conditions, than the workers. This assured the continuation of bourgeois ideas among them: individualism, elitism, competitiveness. It was such specialists who continued, even after the seizure of state power by the proletariat, to control the education and cultural institutions. Even at the factory, they spread the idea that intellectual work was "superior" to physical work. The importance of carrying on the ideological revolution in the factories can be seen from this: the proletarian line must take root there, and transform social relations.

The anti-proletarian line has another class basis in socialist society. There are always some leading elements of the working class, in the State and party structures, who put their personal interest above the interest of the people, who cut themselves off from the people and their needs, who become bureaucratic and degenerate into defenders of the status quo. This was, for example, the case with Liu Shao-shi and his clique (in China). The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (in China) revealed that it's the intense participation of the masses in the affairs of the State and the party which decides, in the end, and with good results, the struggle between the two class positions.

In the capitalist countries where revisionist parties are part of a parliamentary opposition, or where they have a share of bourgeois power, their proletarian class base continually shrinks (eg. Italy). The opening of the party in an opportunist way to "all the levels of salaried employees who are victims of the monopolies" brought on by the abandonment of a revolutionary line, and increasingly attracted the petty-bourgeoisie: intellectuals, technocrats and other officials, craftsmen, small tradesmen, etc. In the imperialist countries especially, revisionists also rely on a workers' aristocracy and a union bureaucracy who have received certain concessions from

the bourgeoisie, as a result of their huge profits coming from the super-exploitation of workers in the colonies, or of immigrant workers.

## Aspects of Revisionism

### A Return to Capitalism

Revisionism, an international phenomenon, takes various forms. The USSR which is its principal bastion, has been on the capitalist road since Khrushchev came to power. Industrial organization is based more and more on profit, and economic stimulation (premiums, credit) is present everywhere. Collective planning is partially suppressed: in certain sectors, enterprises are free to make their own production and exploitation plans. The greatest initiative is left to company directors, who have the freedom to decide on such questions as production, finances and personnel. They have the power to change salary scales, to hire, fire and fine workers.

Enterprises in the USSR are capitalist because they are in the hands of a privileged class of directors who, without being owners of the enterprises in the legal sense, in fact hold the political power of bosses, and have their economic benefits, as well. Workers and peasants, on the other hand, have become salaried slaves, forced to sell their labour power. This situation, while it consolidates the State's bureaucratic bourgeoisie, leads to class contradictions which provoke a growth in the people's resistance to their exploitation.

In the USSR the private sector of the economy grows every day, as does the "free market" and trade. Since 1966, more than 7,500 private enterprises had started to replace State stores, to assure their own monopoly over basic goods. The control of these enterprises by private tradespeople leads to speculation, fraud, the black market, and other forms of corruption.

This situation leads to a lowering of the quality of goods, waste in production, shortage of basic goods, the closing of enterprises, and higher prices. And all that means the firing and displacement of working people in the USSR, decreases in salaries, the superexploitation of apprentices, and the erosion of buying power. Between 1959 and 1965, the price of basic articles of consumption rose 42%, while wages and salaries rose only 19%. The anger of the working people, of intellectuals, and national minorities was exacerbated as increased repression in the country demonstrates.

To try to get out of these economic difficulties, the leaders of the USSR found no other way than to appeal to imperialists for credit. This gave the imperialists leeway to exercise an ongoing form of blackmail on the USSR's politics, to exploit Soviet workers, and further build capitalism by giving the Russian bosses management lessons.

In the meantime, in the institutes of education and culture (schools, universities, publishing, etc.) the specialists who were in charge taught a whole generation an ideology which pushed intellectualism, careerism, personal interest, and mistrust of the masses.

### The State Apparatus Becomes Increasingly Fascist

The Soviet regime is also characterized by a growing fascism in its State apparatus, which is why the Chinese and Albanian communists call it social-fascist (socialist in words, fascist in deeds). This is seen by a constant extension of the repressive apparatus in general: plain clothes cops throughout the country, massive arrests in certain regions, imprisonment of genuine communists, censorship, repression of all forms of opposition.

### International Politics: Imperialist

In the international sphere, the USSR is developing an openly imperialist practice. The USSR has traded in proletarian internationalism for a false support and a permanent betrayal of the peoples of the world. It has developed the military potential of a big power: 40% of its budget is put aside for military expenses. More than a million Soviet soldiers are camped on the Chinese border, and about 45,000 Warsaw Pact tanks point their cannons on Western Europe. The enormous naval power of the USSR includes 215 surface vessels and 250 submarines, which cover all the seas, and which permit it to exercise all sorts of pressure on numerous countries. The aid which the USSR gives to "developing" countries is only a means of camouflaging its political infiltration and pillage of basic resources. For example, in India, the USSR today controls 30% of steel production, 35% of petroleum refining, 80% of petroleum motors, and 85% of heavy machinery production.

In all the countries of Eastern Europe, with the exception of Albania, a country which is faithful to the principals of Marxism-Leninism, revisionism is in power. In all these countries, though in various ways and depending on the type of communist party leadership, the restoration of capitalism is proceeding.

### The Revisionist Communist Parties: Bourgeois Parties

In the capitalist countries, the form that revisionism takes is a little different. Its importance varies from country to country. In France and in Italy, there are "communist" mass parties, with hundreds of thousands of members, millions of voters; these parties have therefore been knocking on the door of bourgeois power for a number of years. In comparison, the revisionist parties of Canada and the United States are smaller, and their influence among the people is very limited. Nevertheless, the form and the practice of all these parties have several important characteristics in common.

These are, on the whole, essentially legalist parties who want to integrate themselves in bourgeois parliamentarianism (when they are not already in the parliaments since years ago) by way of universal suffrage. Given such aims, the important aspects of a communist party — working-class base, discipline, internal democracy, ideological struggle, a close tie between intellectual and physical work, rigorous application of the party's line, etc. — is sacrificed for essentially electoral ends. For example, the abandonment of the principle of democratic centralism and its replacement by bureaucratic centralism. Another aspect to note is the **unprincipled alliance** that the western revisionists always seek to form with the social-democrats (like the NDP). This is an application of the idea that it's necessary for communists to build a "vast anti-monopolist coalition" which would include the non-monopolist strata of the bourgeoisie.

Finally, in the former colonial powers (France, Portugal), the revisionists have been unmasked, due to their betrayal of the national liberation movements which were directed against their own bourgeoisie. The French Communist Party, which participated in the bourgeois government at the end of the 1950's, voted for military expenditures which served to repress the national liberation movement in Algeria. The Portuguese Communist Party is now participating in a "democratisation" of the Portuguese society, which is completely under the leadership of the bourgeoisie, and which can only lead to a modernization of capitalism in the country.

### Revisionism in Canada

The Communist Party of Canada is today a revisionist party. It nevertheless has a long revolutionary tradition. Founded in 1921 in Ontario, basing itself on the organizational principles of the Third International and giving itself the strategic objective of taking power, of the destruction of the bourgeois State apparatus

and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Communist Party of Canada played a very important role in struggles for unionization of unskilled workers, the organization of the unemployed during the Depression, the antifascist struggle, etc.

Despite certain important tactical and organizational errors — difficulty in constructing the party on the basis of democratic centralism (internal democracy, external unity in action etc.), weakness in communist propaganda work, weakness in the formation of Marxist-Leninist cadre, inability to take leadership in the united front against fascism in the 30's, difficulty in drawing Quebec workers and intellectuals into the party — the line of the Communist Party of Canada remained principally revolutionary until the beginning of the 50's. From 1952 on, in particular, the struggle between the two lines in the party — the revolutionary line and the revisionist line — lapsed into openly revisionist positions. The party abandoned its revolutionary Marxist-Leninist principles and preached peaceful transition to socialism, and the legal electoral struggle as a means to reach socialism.

Such a reformist line sowed confusion among the sincere revolutionary militants in the party, and left them completely disarmed in the face of the repression which was increasing at that time. As a result, as the years passed, the Communist Party of Canada found itself, becoming just a small group.

At the present time, it has grown to a certain extent. Militant workers and union members who saw through the pro-capitalist lines and opportunism of the social-democrats (NDP) and the Parti Quebecois, came to this organization, which in words at least claimed to defend the interests of the working class, and to be fighting for socialism.

In Quebec, it claimed to be struggling against "leftist Maoists" (such as the militants of IN STRUGGLE!), and called for the formation of a vague "federated mass party" made up of workers organized around their unions, citizens' groups, the left wing of the NDP, and itself, in order to send deputies to Parliament who would, according to it, struggle to restrain the monopolies' power, and establish a real democracy in Canada.

Although it does this in a restrained way, it can be seen that the CP plays the role that the bourgeoisie assigns to revisionists well; to turn the revolutionary aspirations of the people to reformist channels.

### **Against Revisionism: We Must Firmly Defend Marxist-Leninist Principles**

It is important for Marxist-Leninist revolutionaries to lead a struggle to defend the principles of Marxism-Leninism among workers and the petty-bourgeois who aspire to socialism, to allow them to demarcate clearly from false ideas about revolution. Relying on Marxist-Leninist principles they will be able to build a genuine communist party, the indispensable instrument needed to lead the people to take power, to destroy the bourgeois State apparatus, and to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The better the Marxist-Leninist vanguard becomes organized, and unified under a single leadership, the more we are able to struggle against revisionism effectively.

Even today, the struggle between the two lines is going on in the young Marxist-Leninist movement. The revisionist line has already taken several forms: workerism, sectarian attitudes, localism, and dogmatism, all of which led certain groups to deform the Marxist-Leninist principles, on which they claimed to base themselves, and to leave workers to bourgeois organizations and bourgeois ideology.

Scattered, inexperienced, divided and weakly linked to the masses, the Marxist-Leninist movement always runs the danger of reinforcing revisionism in the communist movement. The victory of the revolutionary line requires the unification of authentic Marxist-Leninists around common theoretical, organization and tactical principles.