

Sussex 'internationalists' attack SACU'S 'friendship lobby'...

The following statement was sent to the Society by a group of students calling themselves the 'Sussex Internationalists'.

While their attack on SACU is of limited importance, the decision to give space in the Society's journal to their views was taken because their criticisms are not entirely unrepresentative. Their statement is followed by comments on it from Joan Robinson and Joseph Needham.

WE HAVE DECIDED not to join SACU. Instead we are going to attack it sharply.

We do not see how any organisation which has placed itself under the sponsorship of reactionary bourgeois professors, doctors of philosophy, Fellows of the Royal Society, distinguished members of the Order of the British Empire and 'leading figures in many fields of public life' can do anything but harm to China and the British people. How can there be 'Anglo-Chinese Understanding' between imperialists and anti-imperialists?

Instead of tackling the task of how to bring the shining example of People's China to the British working class, SACU is running after the imperialists trying to persuade them to adopt 'a less hostile official attitude'. SACU is simply trying to build up a 'peace and friendship' lobby of liberal imperialists.

Why else is SACU's Council of Management so full of MPs, Dames, Ladies, and reactionary bourgeois academics and businessmen? Why else is Dame Joan Vickers MP on the Council of Management? Why else is the avowed anti-Marxist, Dr Joseph Needham, SACU's chairman? Did not this enemy of the working class state publicly at SACU's inaugural meeting on May 15, 1965 that 'the age-long traditions of Confucianism and Taoism were still, and always would remain the background of Chinese mentality — just as Christianity does of the mentality of the West. The idea that China has taken the philosophy of Marxism as her chief inspiration from the West is a mistaken concept.' Are these not the words of an open counter-revolutionary? The Rev Paul Oestreicher is another member of the Council of Management: this reactionary is one

of the leading figures in the recent 'dialogue' between Christians and revisionists and on April 12, stated over the BBC that 'Communists have a terrible past to live down'. Is this not a naked slander of the heroic achievements of the Soviet people under the leadership of that mighty Marxist-Leninist, Joseph Stalin?

How can we support an organisation which publishes articles saying: 'The thought of Mao Tse-tung may curdle into strange forms when it is injected into other civilisations'? (SACU NEWS, February 1968). This statement is official: it was made by none other than SACU's deputy-chairman, the liberal bourgeois 'professor' Joan Robinson. How can we have anything to do with this ideologist for state monopoly capitalism, a follower of J M Keynes, himself a deadly enemy of the working class, an 'inveterate bourgeois', as the immortal Lenin called him, 'a merciless opponent of Bolshevism'? Are we to speak differently of those who follow him? Are they not also merciless opponents of the working class?

What an insult

Joan Robinson talks about the 'bad international manners of the Chinese'. What an insult! Not only to the heroic Chinese people but to all people struggling against imperialism! She slanders the heroic Red Guards as 'callow youth' and accuses them of 'diplomatic gaffes' which 'overflow the bounds of correct behaviour between Sovereign states'. No doubt she would have felt much happier if British imperialism had not been punished for its fascist atrocities against the people of Hong Kong! No

wonder she attacks the culture that is at present being consolidated to serve the working masses instead of their former oppressors as 'debased socialist realism' for is it not a dire threat to the class for whom she speaks? This woman Robinson is poison, all the more dangerous because she poses as one of China's friends. She wants China to end its 'isolation' — isolation from imperialism. We must thoroughly expose this spokesman for British imperialism, who does not shrink even from directly attacking the greatest Marxist Leninist of our era, the Lenin of our times, Comrade Mao Tse-tung. His mighty red book is shamelessly referred to as 'a text on which to practise literacy', a 'cut above the horror comics which GI's prefer'. Where is the Marxist Leninist whose heart does not burn with fierce class anger at the monstrous impudence of this counter revolutionary? — Who does not clench his fists out of hatred for the class enemy when he hears that the revolutionary ideology of the proletariat is but 'a cut above' the most corrupt and brutalised propaganda put out by US imperialism!

As Professor of Economics at Cambridge University, Joan Robinson is a hireling of the capitalist class. The day she ceases to serve their interests she will be out of a job. She is an enemy of Marxism, of Mao Tse-tung, and of working peoples the world over.

So is SACU. It is an opportunist organisation under the domination of the bourgeoisie paving the way for the growth of revisionism in the ranks of British Marxist Leninists. It is the duty of every Marxist Leninist who wishes to promote real understanding between the peoples of Britain and China to ceaselessly attack and expose it.

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... and two leading members reply

From Joseph Needham

THE 'Internationalists of Sussex University' probably have their hearts in the right place, but they do not use their heads to do the reading and study that students ought to do. Perhaps this is why they are so un-Marxist as to agree with that great capitalist Henry Ford that 'history is bunk'. For if they knew any history they would know that the Royal Society, the premier scientific academy of the world, a body with which the Soviet Academy of Sciences and Academia Sinica have permanent agreements, is so called only because of its enlightened founder, Charles II in the 17th century. What he did was part of the bourgeois revolution, considered by all Marxists as highly progressive in its time.

Anyone with the slightest historical perspective would also know that Chinese history did not begin with the Communist Revolution, nor with the Kuomintang either. One would study what bureaucratism, Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism have in fact meant to the Chinese, instead of talking nonsense about 'enemies of the working-class'. If the 'students' looked into any modern history, incidentally, they might have informed themselves about the political records of those whom they are now attacking in so unfriendly a way. Having been written off as a Marxist in academic circles for forty years I am not unduly concerned at being called anti-Marxist by the Sussex 'students'.

A little philosophy might also not be out of place. If they had had a more careful look at that, they would not have made so ludicrous a misunderstanding of what I have said about China and Marxism. In 'Science and Civilisation in China', and in other publications, much evidence has been brought forward to show that the philosophical roots of dialectical materialism in Europe were in part Chinese, transmitted Westward in the 18th century. Hence there was indeed a natural affinity between Marxism and China's main philosophical traditions, and Marxism going eastwards was in a way going home. This is why China did not exactly have to borrow it from the West. Or could it be that the 'students' are following the example of old-style theological polemics, and quoting out of context to suit their purpose?

What their words really express is a general venom against the 'Establishment'. This is no bad thing in itself, yet if indulged in this way must make the 'Sussex Internationalists' a tiny sectarian group. But SACU was founded to mobilise friendship and support for China, for People's China, among the great broad masses of the British people, the vast majority of whom are far indeed from sharing their ideas, and would repudiate their intemperate and rhetorical language. This task will be faithfully continued.

From Joan Robinson

THAT A GROUP of radical students is resolved to promote friendship with the Chinese people in the British labour movement is much to be

welcomed, though I doubt if the ultra-left line will prove to be very effective at this stage. The immediate and urgent task is to build up a public opinion that will oppose our Government's policy of supporting the USA in hostility to China, and this can by no means be confined to the 'ranks of British Marxist Leninists'. SACU tries to follow the injunction to unite with all who can be united with. Let us look for the major contradiction, which is certainly not between me and the students, but between both of us and the apathy which permits decent British people to be unwitting supporters of aggression and imperialism.

It is natural that my article should rouse controversy. There seem to be some misunderstandings in these criticisms of it which can be dealt with later. Meanwhile I must point out that nothing in my article is 'official'. Apart from statements issued by the Council of Management of SACU, each of us takes individual responsibility for our own efforts to carry out the general aim of promoting understanding and combating misrepresentations about China.