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**MODERN  
LITERARY  
REVISIONISM  
AND THE  
CHINESE CULTURAL  
REVOLUTION**

*by*  
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# CHINESE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

By A. H. Evans

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## Modern Literary Revisionism and the Chinese Cultural Revolution

The great cultural revolution now sweeping all before it in China is essentially an anti-bourgeois-intellectual movement, that is to say, our Chinese comrades, under the direct thought of Mao Tse-tung, have raised to new heights certain ideas of Lenin on intellectualism in much the same fashion as Lenin carried forward and applied Marxist thought to the problems of his day. Marxism is an historical movement responsible to the demands placed upon it by history. Nothing stands still, least of all society, which is ceaselessly adding to the book of knowledge.

In 1880, when the major tasks of Marx and Engels had been completed, steam power employed in British mining and manufacture was a good deal more than that of Germany, France and the United States combined. Within the next 20 years the economic domination by Britain of the rest of the world had come to an end. To fail to recognise such historical factors, to fail to recognise that society is always thrusting new questions to the fore, is to sink to the level of dogmatism, is to completely forsake the scientific methodology of Marxism-Leninism.

Marx and Engels followed on the very heels of St. Simon, Faurier and Robert Owen, the geniuses who brought the idea of Socialism into orbit for the first time. And Hegel, the greatest of bourgeois philosophers, was still alive in the youth of Marx and Engels. Contemporaries of theirs were the great Russian democratic thinkers, Belinsky, Dobrolyubov, and Chernyshevsky. In those days industrial capitalism was advancing on all fronts, challenging ideas in all fields.

By the time Lenin reached maturity, the bourgeois had lost its power of impetuous advance, no longer was there room for thinkers of the type of St. Simon, Faurier and Owen, nor could the bourgeoisie throw up another Hegel, or, in the field of economics, another Ricardo. Because of this, the dearth of penetrating intellectual thought on direct social problems—for they had now become a danger to the triumphant bourgeoisie—it was possible for Lenin to realise more fully than Marx and Engels that the intellectual was becoming a grave danger to the working class revolutionary movement.

We shall later see how Mao Tse-tung likewise carried forward the thought of Lenin on intellectualism, but first let us examine some of the direct observations made by Lenin on intellectuals and problems linked directly with them. In 1919, in his essay, "Communist Subbotniks", Lenin states: "Communist subbotniks are of such enormous historic significance precisely because they demonstrate the conscious and voluntary initiative of the workers in developing the productivity of labour, in adopting a new labour discipline, in creating socialist conditions in our economy and daily life." Comrades should remember that subbotniks were a form of voluntary, unpaid labour performed by the Russian working class at a pivotal period in the history of the revolution.

Lenin goes on to say: "If the bourgeois intellectuals had dedicated their knowledge to assisting the workers instead of giving it to Russian and foreign capitalists in order to restore their power, the revolution would have succeeded more rapidly and more peacefully. But this is Utopian, for the issue is decided by the struggle of classes, and the majority of the intellectuals gravitate towards the bourgeoisie. Not with the assistance of the intellectuals will the proletariat achieve victory, but in spite of their opposition (at least in the majority of cases)." And Lenin then says, "We must remove those who are incorrigible bourgeois, reforming, re-educating and subordinating the waverers, and gradually winning over ever larger sections of them to the side of the workers. Gloating over the difficulties and setbacks of the revolution, sowing panic, preaching a return to the past—all these are weapons and methods of class struggle of the bourgeois intellectuals. The proletariat will not allow itself to be deceived by them."

Lenin then goes deeper into the subject: "We also know that for some time after the revolution traces of the old ethics will inevitably predominate over the young shoots of the new. When the new has been born, the old always remains stronger than it for some time; this is always the case in nature and in social life. All the jeering at the feebleness of the young shoots of the new order, the cheap scepticism of the intellectuals, and the like—these are, essentially, methods of class struggle of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat, a defence of capitalism against socialism."

Later, Lenin speaks of "boundlessly heroic labour of plain working men like the unskilled labourers and workers of the Moscow-Kazan Railway". Then he warned "that traces of

the bourgeois-intellectual phrase-mongering approach to questions are observed at every step, everywhere, even in our own ranks." Unless we knew that Lenin said these things we would have sworn that they came out of the thought of Mao Tse-tung, so alike is the basic thought-structure of these two geniuses of our race.

Even on the point of formal examination of bourgeois institutions the thought of Lenin is the thought of Mao Tse-tung. Here is what Lenin says, "The old school was a school of cramming; it compelled pupils to imbibe a mass of useless, superfluous, barren knowledge, which clogged the brain and transformed the younger generation into bureaucrats regimented according to one single pattern. . . . We must not take from the old school the system of burdening young people's minds with an immense amount of knowledge, nine-tenths of which was useless and one-tenth distorted." So much for but a part of the view of Lenin on the cultural problem.

I have dealt with the views of Lenin because modern literary revisionism, following the path of the old revisionism as exemplified by Bernstein, would have us pit the thought of one of our leaders against another, even as Bernstein tried to prove Lenin wrong by quotes from Engels and Marx—on the possibility of "peaceful" transformation of capitalism into socialism insofar as Britain and the U.S. were concerned.

The enemies within our revolutionary movement would like us to break into devotional squabbles as to the exact position in a Marxist hierarchy each leader should occupy. Thus, we find the revisionist, Prof. George Thomson, attempting to degrade Stalin by pitting Stalin's philosophical views against those of Mao Tse-tung. Yet this type of fraud is easily seen through once the subject is brought to the light of day. No sane man would dream of pitting a Galileo against a Copernicus, for is it not obvious that without the work of Copernicus and the historical Copernicuses, the work of Galileo would have been impossible?

In the field of art, who would dream of pitting a Raphael against a Repin? No one but a madman, or revisionists who think they can turn back the wheel of history. All thinking people fully realise that knowledge is continuous, but this does not mean that it runs smoothly, without breaks, without meanderings and side-turnings, or that it travels along parallel lines. There is nothing of a purely mechanical action to be found isolated in matter or any form of its movement.

Society is responsive to its own day and age, it absorbs certain aspects of the past, it seeks to understand and evaluate the present, and it can see some of tomorrow, but it cannot see all the tomorrows. And society is responsive in sharp degree, that is to say, we must never forget that society is split into classes and that all human thought without exception is conditioned by this fact. There is no such thing as "pure" art or "pure" science. There is only class art and class science. Some classes are more fully aware of society and the relationship of the social forces to itself than others. There is no mystery about this. It is evident that a slave's understanding of society and the natural forces is far less than the master who rules him.

It is also evident that as society advances and the class structure undergoes change corresponding, though not in exact degree, to its economic base, so likewise will men's ideas about life undergo modification and drastic change. Thus, the modern working class is a thousand times more fully aware of the structure of society and its own position in society than were the slaves of old. And this fact was well known, and understood quite clearly, by the great landowners of Britain who savagely fought to prevent the coming into being of primary education for the working class. "Teach the people to read and write, make them literate, and, sooner or later, they will cut our throats," so said the Lord of a Breconshire Manor, Gwynne-Holford.

But capitalism could not develop without a literate working class, the aristocrats were defeated.

A tree has a root system which remains fixed though the tree is subject to the passing of time. It keeps on spreading out ever new roots and branches, discarding those parts which have become old and worn, in this way constantly enlivening itself. Should the tree fail to renew itself it becomes enfeebled, withers, and perishes. This is true for all phenomena and will remain true to the end of time, that is to say, forever.

So it is with Marxism, its basic root system defies the passing of time, yet without new growth in the form of new ideas relating to each particular age Marxism would indeed become a dogmatic system buried in formulae without a vestige of living meaning. Marx has splendidly illustrated the limited character of social knowledge, saying: "The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of man that determines their existence but, on the contrary, the social existence determines their consciousness."

And Engels deals with an aspect of subjective knowledge about which there is shameful confusion in Marxist circles, at least here in Britain. This is what Engels says in his wonderful comment on Robert Owen, one of the most advanced British thinkers of the last century, certainly the most advanced Welsh thinker: "Man's character is the product of his heredity constitution and his environment during his lifetime." Yet this attack of Engels on Freudian ideas long before Freud preached them is unknown to most British Marxists. All too often it is the ideas of Freud they have in their heads not those of Engels. Ideas are social, that we must never forget; the working class is under a constant barrage of ideas emanating from the upholders of capitalism.

Many comrades are in the habit of deliberately playing down the subjective side of man's nature, they are in the habit of placing environment on a solitary pedestal. Such comrades stubbornly ignore the fact that environment is a product brought into being through the activity of society as a whole. A great deal of this is conscious activity, as when the bosses plan to break a stubborn strike by brute force.

Probably the best textbook on Marxist philosophy is called, *THE TEXTBOOK OF MARXIST PHILOSOPHY*, which was a product of the early Stalinist period. It has splendidly dealt with the role of the subjective element, stating: "Every social class has its determinate criterion of practice. In every historical epoch this criterion is changed along with the development of the class in its historic role." And later on we find the revolutionary Marxist, A. A. Zhdanov, stating: "In class society there cannot be extra knowledge. The criterion of truth in class society is the practice of the given class. In the 16th, 17th, 18th and first half of the 19th . . . capitalist practice was the criterion of progressive mankind."

In passing I would point out that Marx and Engels gave full credit to brilliant thinkers of the ages referred to by Zhdanov. Capitalism, in the period of its decline, can only reflect pangs of sickness, of ulcers and cancerous growths. And this is most easily seen in the field of art and literature. Comrades should not be blinded by cleverness of presentation, garbage is garbage no matter how much disinfectant is used to kill the stink.

## REAL KNOWLEDGE

Real knowledge does not scoff at or confound that of yesterday; rather, it qualitatively develops and enriches what the past has accumulated and gathered in all fields of social endeavour. For example, a savage knows that water is a liquid, and that was all that was known of water until a comparatively short time ago. Only bourgeois science, because such knowledge was needed, found out that water can be transformed into electricity, that "heavy water" can be extracted from it. And it is certain that socialist science will advance science at a speed much greater than in the past, for socialist and communist science will tap the thinking capacity of all humanity, quantity will be transformed into quality on a scale impossible in past class societies.

The enemies of Marxism-Leninism don't like this method of looking at things, of seeing them in constant, never repeating process, with the emergence of totally unexpected new qualities coming to life, oftentimes to the amazement of the researchers. The dirty enemies from their Moscow citadel and the lavatory of King Street shout, "Stop! Marx said nothing on that!" These modern revisionists are frightened of the future, they shrink back from the tasks of negation confronting the working class, the knowledge, increasingly mounting, that we must build a culture specific to our needs, that it is impossible for us to assimilate the alien culture of the bourgeoisie.

When we refer to basic Marxist concepts such as the Law of Value, the Law of Increasing Misery of the Working Class, the revisionists scream, "Dogmatists!" then get hysterical and howl like madmen when some new feature, unforeseen in the days of Marx and Engels, springs mushroom-like into life.

Let us ask ourselves a few simple questions. Could William Petty or Sir James Stuart have discovered the Law of Value? We know it would have been impossible at that stage in the development of merchant capitalism. Could Marx, for all his universal genius, have written Imperialism—or foreseen the gas-ovens of rampant German capitalism wedded to Hitler's crazy thoughts?

Marxism is theoretical knowledge plus the ever added knowledge gained through living practice. Marxism is invincible precisely because it is always moving to a higher level of understanding of phenomena, because it tells man to keep searching, that the discoveries of the future will open up an ever-wider horizon, that mankind's future is limitless.

The modern revisionists revile and hate Mao Tse-tung precisely because he has deepened our knowledge of Marxism-Leninism, carried it to a higher stage, in the fashion set by his predecessors. Today, as in the past, revisionism is active on all fronts of the class struggle, but it is most open and persistent, the most vicious and dangerous, in the field of art and literature, and in the province of teaching, particularly in the higher schools and at university level.

Modern literary revisionism had a strangle-hold on these fronts because of the lack of high literacy among the working class and toiling population. Sabotage in a factory means swift exposure, punishment and death to the saboteurs, for the working class know the factories like the palm of their hands, but they stand in puzzlement and confusion before the erudition of some professor spouting Shakespeare or another bourgeois immortal! That is how things are, that is why the working class needs its own analysers and spokesmen in every field.

The international bourgeoisie, in the guise of modern revisionism, are seeking to undermine socialism in the Soviet Union and other Socialist lands. They are watering down Lenin, hiding his key pamphlet, *STATE AND REVOLUTION* from the people. Likewise, these revisionist devils have thrown Stalin into the wastebin; they are seeking to divide the working class and peasant masses through unrestricted and constantly widening wage and salary differentiations. An intellectual caste is being created, for example, the Bolshoi dancers with their reactionary repertoire and god-worship of Chaikovsky are paid higher salaries than those in bourgeois lands, and this is also true for scientists. This caste is allied to the State bureaucracy, but we should remember that its power is shaky for it has not had time to consolidate its position; within the Soviet Union are healthy elements, comrades loyal to the teaching of Marxism-Leninism.

## IN CHINA

In China, modern literary revisionists took over control of very important positions, they edited newspapers and periodicals, they dominated teaching and administrative posts in the higher schools and universities, writing the textbooks and teaching what they pleased. Some of these people were undoubtedly blind as to what they were doing, this type can and will be reformed. But other intellectuals are steeped in Chinese intellectual tradition, their bourgeois instinct or apperception blinds them to everything but disdain and hatred for ordinary people, for all who work with their hands. This type of intellectual looks upon ordinary working people in much the same way as the ancient Greek slave-owners looked upon their slaves, as creatures ordained to obey orders.

We note that not even the cleverest upholders of modern literary revisionism have been able to forge a qualitatively new weapon for use against the defenders of Marxism-Leninism, it is still the old and discredited "art-for-art's sake", or, "art-encompassing-humanity". Basically, most of modern revisionism's output re-echoes Trotsky's views in his book, *LITERATURE AND REVOLUTION*, which came off the press in 1924. Its essence consisted of Trotsky's belief, "It is fundamentally incorrect to contrast bourgeois culture and bourgeois art with proletarian culture and art . . . the historical significance . . . of the proletarian revolution consists in the fact that it is laying the foundations of a new culture which is above classes and will be the first culture which is truly human." Trotsky capped his thought on culture with his euphuism, "Working class politics but bourgeois art!"

Trotsky's view on art and literature was never fought to a standstill even though it flatly contradicted Lenin's own published view on literature. Comrades in those days did not take the literary front as seriously as we have been compelled to under the knowledge of what is today happening in China. All comrades, with but few exceptions—probably none in the West—accepted the belief that a great deal, if not the most, of bourgeois culture, could be absorbed into the rising culture of the working class.

Although classes will disappear, contradictions of one kind or another will always remain, there will always be reluctant

and backward looking people frightened and antagonistic to forward movements. It is certain that art and literature will record these contradictions just as surely as it has in past ages. Solving the problems arising out of class society will not solve or even hint at the problems of the future or are we to believe, with Trotsky, that contradictions have been banished from the human race? No, we cannot accept this any more than we can accept Trotsky's view that a new culture can arise which is above the class struggle in a period where classes still exist.

How different is Lenin's thought from that of Trotsky's culture above the class struggle! Lenin's basic view was put forward in November of 1905, hence Trotsky had almost 20 years to mull it over before his basic work on literature appeared. There is no room for argument, Trotsky completely rejected Lenin's views. Here is what Lenin states: "What is the principle of Party literature? It is not simply that, to the socialist proletariat, literature should not be a means for enriching individuals and groups; it cannot, in fact, be an individual undertaking, independent of the cause of the proletariat, it must be a 'cog and a screw' of one single social democratic mechanism set in motion by the entire politically conscious vanguard of the working class. Literature must become a component of organised, planned and integrated social democratic work."

Without a shadow of doubt Lenin sharpened the Marxist view on art and literature, he demanded an art and literature subservient to the needs of the working class, he scoffed and derided the thought of an art and literature "above the class struggle", which was the deeply considered view of Trotsky.

Modern literary revisionism is at one with Trotsky in trying to avoid the brutality of class struggle on this front, the fact that artists and writers come mainly from the ranks of the bourgeoisie and most remain faithful to its ideology to the end. In fact it is from within the ranks of artists, writers and teachers in the higher schools and universities, those dealing with the so-called "humanities", that we find the most bitter and cunning foes of Marxism, enemies who fight us with any sort of conceivable weapon they can lay their hands on. They creep within our ranks and are ashamed of nothing, for their conceit and pride is a form of lunacy.

There are comrades who would have us remain silent, or have us "tone-down" our views for fear of offending that small minority of intellectuals from the "humanities" who

can be won over to the revolutionary movement. These comrades are silent on intellectuals who preach pacifism, "socialist catholicism" or forms of individualism. I remember a conversation with the revisionist Emile Burns when I pointed out serious weaknesses appearing in Prof. Haldane's articles in the *Daily Worker*. He agreed with what I stated, then said, "If we follow your advice we are in danger of losing a group of young biologists. We are not prepared to do that." Forgotten was the fact that an honest and brave intellectual is not afraid of criticism. He has intelligence enough to realise that he is psychologically badly prepared for a death struggle with bourgeois culture. If artists, writers and teachers are not honest and not brave they are of no use to us whatsoever. That is how matters stand.

## MAO TSE-TUNG AND NEGATION

Mao Tse-tung places negation, the destruction of what is old and worthless, ahead of anything else. His view is clearly a continuation of Lenin's remark, "It is necessary to create rubble before the new building can go up." It is obvious that one cannot build anything substantial without a firm foundation, yet even to this moment there are comrades who shy away from destruction, are frightened of it, comrades with a soft heart for art and literature which, at rock bottom, is alien to the aspirations of the working class.

Mao Tse-tung has fully developed what is implicit in Lenin's thought on literature. Mao Tse-tung asks this question, the first to do so in the history of Marxism: "Will not Marxism destroy any creative impulses?" And he answers, "It will." Then he goes on to state exactly what sort of creative and artistic impulses will be definitely destroyed by the working class. "It will certainly destroy the creative impulses that arise from feudal, bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology, from liberalism, from individualism, nihilism, from art-for-art's sake, from the aristocratic, decadent and pessimistic outlook." Then he emphasises: "Indeed, any creative impulse which is not rooted in the people and the proletariat." And again he asks the question: "Should not these sort of creative impulses be destroyed?" And he answers: "I think they should. Indeed they must be destroyed before new things can be built up."

Yet we see how literary revisionism, through the pens of such as Prof. George Thomson, Christopher Caudwell, Maurice Cornforth, Ernst Fischer, Georg Lukacs, do all in their power to stuff bourgeois and petty-bourgeois literature down our throats. It is high time comrades rid their minds of veneration for culture which is alien by its very nature to the aspirations of the working class. We must recognise much more clearly than in the past that such art and literature is propaganda levelled at us and poisoning our outlook. Much of bourgeois art and literature—indeed, most of it—prevents us from seeing the positive elements contained within the struggles of the working class and toiling population to free themselves from every vestige of wage-slavery and alien class rule.

A system of society which is no longer based on rationality inevitably throws up artists and writers who reflect the ever deepening and growing aberrations of the diseased society. These aberrations find reflection, even wild exaggerations of certain types of phenomena, precisely because the artistic intellectuals are the most sensitive barometers of their time.

Within the framework of a rising bourgeoisie Alexander Pope could ask serious questions, a Shelley could fight the gods and glorify man, but such writing is no longer possible, it is not acceptable to the bourgeoisie of today for such writing contained a strong element of hope for the future of society. The bourgeoisie of today have lost all hope, are mad with fear and despair, that is why Kafka's major opus, *THE CASTLE*, has been glorified and the author treated as a "great realist writer". Every single character in *THE CASTLE* speaks in educated monotone. Kafka's characters are lifeless puppets moved according to mad fancies in the author's brain. Kafka's fear of the State as being omnipresent, a featureless power holding mankind in its grip, suits the ideas of today's ruling class, who would have us believe that man is powerless to change destiny. An old story told in a modern guise.

But does Mao Tse-tung's rejection and harsh negation of much of the art and literature of past ages mean that Marxism-Leninism condemns in the fashion of the Catholic Church? No, Marxism-Leninism has a scientific criterion for evaluating the art and literature of past ages. We acknowledge that the coming into being of slavery was an advance over savagery, that capitalism was an advance over feudalism. Art and literature which played a progressive role in their time will always be honoured by us. We will honour a Shelley while dismissing a Wordsworth, a Repin while dismissing a John Sargent.

## WHAT GAIN ?

What does the working class gain from a study of such as Boccaccio? Nothing of value, for all this Italian feudal writer was interested in were the doings of the particularly decadent upper classes of his day and age. But more than this, Boccaccio's writings, absorbed in a perversion of sex, psychologically prepare us for the filth of a Henry Miller, a Genet. The working class will build a moral structure having nothing in common, nothing whatsoever, with feudal or bourgeois moral structures. Morality is class morality, despite the entreaties "not to be narrow-minded" of the Dr. John Lewises and the Maurice Cornforths, and other spokesmen for the King Street group of revisionists.

Marxist-Leninists honour and respect the memory of past intellectuals who persisted against great odds in the pursuit of true knowledge, even to the point of agonising death. Marxist-Leninists honour and treasure the uprisings and revolts of people against their savage oppressors of past ages, and give full praise to their leaders, not all coming from the ranks of the toiling people.

We note that it is not the revolts of the people in past ages and the way they lived which interests modern literary revisionism, but novels such as *THE DREAM OF THE RED CHAMBER* which deals exclusively with the fortunes of an upper class feudal Chinese family. Why should the working class and peasant masses study the doings, the comings and goings, of this set of exploiters or that? As far as the people are concerned they were all of the deepest dye, savaging the people from birth to death.

The lives of our own ancestors, that is what we are primarily interested in, and we have a rich history, a history largely hidden because bourgeois historians cannot help but be more interested in the lives of their own ancestors. We will rewrite history to suit ourselves alone, and that history will be a thousand times nearer objective truth than the trash we have been raised on.

We note in passing that art and literature are very big business, the cult of Shakespeare alone runs into millions; entire departments in the universities are tied up with literary and art cults, and this activity finds reflection in the publishing houses with their steady income from "public libraries".

It is the duty of Marxist-Leninists to show up and expose the material base of art and literature, as well as the fact that it stinks to the heavens of great race chauvinism; for example, the Moscow revisionists' worship of Pushkin, their stupid veneration of Chaikovsky and his interpreters in the field of ballet. Narrow nationalism has less to flaunt, that is why it is a lesser evil, that is why great race chauvinism must be constantly hammered as the greater danger.

Modern literary revisionism accepts the view of bourgeois aesthetes that artists and writers are creatures apart from the rest of humanity and as such must be given a great deal of free-play. They are of the opinion that the artist cannot be "contained" within the framework of any society, the artist being an expression of the absolute totality of life; only the artists, only they, are capable of assimilating to the full life's hidden mysteries; in short, the artist is the translator of the soul. Few have better expressed this sort of mystifying gibberish than Professor George Thomson in his pamphlet, *POETRY AND MARXISM*. Yet this same professor, who claims to be a Marxist of Marxists, remained totally silent when Dr. Joseph Needham stated that Confucianism is what the working class should study and not Marxism! Yet these men have had intimate connections over the years.

Modern revisionism preaches the philosophy of idealism, that out of the void came the spirit to bless men, that matter is secondary—and here I would refer comrades once again to the works of Christopher Caudwell and Professor George Thomson. It is our duty to be thoroughly at home with our own brand of literary revisionism.

Modern literary revisionism is pacifist by its very nature, for it deeply believes that the art and literature of slave, feudal and capitalist societies will never be qualitatively surpassed. This is but a form of expression of social democracies' view that socialism will gradually impress itself upon capitalism and ultimately absorb the latter. That is why modern revisionism in the shape of King Street and the Moscow usurpers, hates Mao Tse-tung, who has correctly pointed out that "politics comes out of a barrel of a gun", modernising Marx's famous utterance, "Force is the midwife of history".

## REVISIONIST STIFLERS

Modern literary revisionists seek to stifle independent working class enquiry into the art and literature of the past, they attempt with all their strength to "humanise" it, to make it appear as incidental to the class struggle. Modern revisionism instead of showing us the life of the people is chiefly interested in showing off the "great art and literature" of the past. Thus, Rubens, a Painter of Gluttony, is praised to the skies, anyone would think that the Netherlands of his day was a land flowing with milk and honey, and so it was, for the people Rubens glorified, fat merchants and their equally fat wives. For the workers and peasants, the 14-to-16-hour day and forced military service.

Modern literary revisionism would have us accept the evaluation of "experts", people trained through years of "intense study" at universities. But, we ask, who owns and controls these universities? Who draws up the curriculum, establishes the teaching methods and mans the teaching posts? There is only one answer: the universities belong, body and soul, to the bourgeoisie. How, then, can we rely on "objective truth" emanating from such a source? Truth is always class truth, as all who would master Marxism-Leninism must never forget for a single moment.

The working class must accept a class point of view on all phenomena, and this is not an easy matter for we have all been more or less poisoned, corrupted, by the persistence with which bourgeois ideas have been driven into our heads. It is necessary to emphasise and re-emphasise our class outlook, and we should not worry too much over repetition, for variation on a theme is well-nigh endless. After all, is it not largely through endless repetition that lessons are driven into young heads? Even Marxist-Leninists, who are atheists, can freely quote from the Bible of the Christians and Jews, or from the Koran, or from the Annals, for these ideologies were pounded into us from the moment we left our mothers' breasts.

That is why it is essential to single out and utterly demolish writers and artists who have been "immortalised" by the bourgeoisie. For an example, Shakespeare's attack on gold, "yellow, glittering gold". Is it not evident that Shakespeare could only reflect the ideas of the most sensitive members of the literate classes of his time? If he could do more he would be a god. Shakespeare's condemnation of gold is an abstraction, beautifully phrased, but it never hints that back of gold, "yellow, glittering gold" lies the power of man. According to Shakespeare gold transforms the man, but this is only an appearance for in actuality gold is only one of many metals, it is man who made gold, transformed it into "yellow, glittering gold". Man transforms man.

So with Goethe and his comment on gold. Goethe thought in terms of universals, of things which last forever, unchanged by social development and the harsh dictates of time. One of the main reasons for the popularity of the works of Shakespeare and Goethe with generations of the bourgeoisie is this: that these authors see mankind as a helpless victim of powers too great to be understood. They all too often preach awe in face of the unknowable. Marxist-Leninists aver: what is unknowable today will become comprehensible tomorrow, for knowledge accumulates in all fields with the passing of time.

Only in the field of the practical sciences and those disciplines surrounding them was there still room for bourgeois advancement, advancement of a precise nature, conditioned by specific requirements of the bourgeoisie of our period. Thus, not the production of unlimited food, but food which can be sold at a profit sharply limits the advance of agriculture. Too much coffee and it is burned, too many apples here in Britain and they rot in the orchards, for the profits of Covent Garden take first priority.

## **ANTI-BOURGEOIS-INTELLECTUAL MOVEMENT**

Because of this, the dearth of penetrating intellectual thought on social problems—because the problems posed were insurmountable by the bourgeoisie—it was possible for Lenin to realise more fully than Marx and Engels the fact that intellectual advance in capitalist countries would never again initiate and support a truly progressive line of thought against reaction. Lenin's distrust of intellectuals came out of living practice, that should not be forgotten. Lenin's struggles against the Bernsteins, the Kautskyists, the Martovs and Plekhanovs, against the Capri professors, against the Trotskyists and their allies, entered deeply into the very fibre of his being. Lenin's work contains dozens of references to his suspicion and dislike, and even open hatred, of intellectuals.

During the Stalin period Soviet intellectualism as an appendage of the bourgeoisie pretended to support the drive for Socialism and, without doubt, a minority did so without reservation. We honour such people, for it is extremely difficult to break away from class and family ties. But the great majority never resigned themselves to the Dictatorship of the Working Class, it was too bitter a pill to swallow. These people did all in their power to limit the drive for Socialism even while giving assent to the drive for production, for they wanted a Russia economically powerful which the bourgeoisie would someday take over from the Soviets.

The terrible danger from the intellectuals had never clearly enough been recognised. "We have ten years," said Stalin, "to catch up with capitalism, we either do that or perish." So the struggle against bourgeois intellectualism as a hostile and deeply antagonistic force, a segment of the bourgeoisie, was put aside. It was a difficult period, for a section of the practical-intellectuals saw their drawing-room plans burst into fruition and couldn't help but be impressed by the Stalinist plan to transform the old Russian Empire into an advanced base of technology. Further, this type of intellectual came into direct, in many cases, daily contact with the working population and learned respect for them. Until revisionism raised its head and used economism as a measure to sharply increase differences in the living standard, the working Soviet people had undoubtedly won over many an intellectual to their side.

We should remember that literature to a Marxist is a great deal more than poetry, novel and short-story writing, than aesthetic discussion, and "learned" comment on them. There is direct political literature, and that is the most important of all. We should give hearty thanks to certain individuals and periodicals which claim to be Maoist but in practice are proving that their knowledge of Marxism-Leninism is of a very limited character.

There is nothing to be ashamed of in lack of knowledge of a subject such as philosophy, which requires a great deal of concentrated study; what is shame, deep and abiding, is the unlimited conceit, the almost insane vanity typical of the irrationality of the petty-bourgeoisie—its unstable character—of many of the people now breaking into print.

We are not liberals, we state outright that certain periodicals, such as the **MARXIST**, have nothing in common with either the theory or practice of Marxism-Leninism. For example, the study circles they have initiated would be a very good thing providing the teachers took it for granted that they themselves were students of Marxism, and had a great deal to learn. Also, why is it that orders have been issued from the top that certain individuals must be denied membership in the circles despite the fact that certain of such individuals have an unblemished record of struggle, having opposed the King Street revisionists, the Trotskyists, neo-Trotskyists, and others of a similar nature for twenty years and more?

The struggle for people's victory over our many enemies is not simple and direct; on the contrary, it is extremely complex, with twistings and turnings which will confuse us unless we are firmly grounded on Marxist-Leninist-Maoist theory, for without theory we are blind. To degrade theory, to push it aside, to praise practice as the all-in-all, is to hamstring the revolutionary movement.

The leading figure on the Management Committee of **MARXIST** is Reg Birch, a top ranking Trade Union official, long-time member of the British Communist Party, at one time sitting on its E.C. There have been rumours for a number of years that Reg Birch had serious differences of opinion with the majority line of his party, but nothing has appeared in print of a precise nature regarding such alleged differences. For example, the reformist document, **THE BRITISH ROAD TO SOCIALISM**, came out in 1951. Certain members of the party at the time and after fought the theory of

British exceptionalism to the best of their ability, why didn't Birch line up with them by coming out in print and establishing a rallying point? After all, he was a well-known party member and T.U. official. We can arrive at only one conclusion: Reg Birch wanted the continued support of the C.P. in order to further advance his trade union career.

The second issue of MARXIST contains a letter from Mrs. Joan Robinson, the well-known economist. Professor Joan Robinson has printed a number of works on economics of which every single one is an attack, often veiled, on Marxism; yet, knowing this, the Management Committee of MARXIST states: "WE WELCOME a letter from Professor Robinson, whose contribution to progressive movements has been consistent and unwavering." Better far for the working class to take a viper to bed than a Joan Robinson.

At SACU's\* public inaugural meeting the main address was given by the Chairman of that organisation, Dr. Joseph Needham. The heart of this address was an open and sustained attack on Marxism, Needham stating that in his considered opinion the working class should study Confucius and not Marx. Needham stated that "Maoism is a temporary phenomenon and will be overcome by the age-long teachings of Confucius."

\*Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding.

Sitting in the Hall were these members of the Management Committee of MARXIST: Reg Birch, Milke Falkner, Ewan McColl and Colin Penn. Although time for discussion was allowed none of those mentioned took exception to Needham's attack on the Marxist doctrine. Over a year has elapsed since then, two issues of MARXIST have appeared, but not a word of condemnation of Needham can be found. Is it to be wondered that the Sunday *Observer* for February 12th reviewed MARXIST in most favourable terms, stating that "here was a Neo-Maoist periodical which must be seriously considered." I have paraphrased in all honesty.

## WILLIAM ASH

Then we have such a figure as William Ash, a most active member of SACU, also sitting in the hall when Needham made his attack. To this day silence has been the answer of William Ash on Needham's attempt to turn the working class away from the thought of Mao Tse-tung. William Ash is emerging as a political supporter of the Chinese line, he has been appointed representative of the U.S. anti-revisionist periodical PROGRESSIVE LABOR, and two articles by him appear in issue No. 6, 1966. These are of interest, one dealing with philosophy, the other with the neo-Trotskyist, Isaac Deutscher. We will devote a few remarks to them.

William Ash is attempting to drive a wedge between the basic thought structure of our by-gone leaders and that of Mao Tse-tung, the foremost Marxist of our day. Ash is following the line of a more subtle thinker, one more clever, Professor George Thomson, who recently attempted to denigrate the philosophical teachings of Stalin by "comparing" them to those of Mao Tse-tung. William Ash, more "ambitious", has "taken on" all four of Comrade Mao's predecessors—Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin!

William Ash states that the Marxist conception of the Negation of the Negation "is unsatisfactory . . . because they [formulations such as the negation of the negation, A.E.] do not immediately suggest how they are to be used in practice." So, it appears that unless an idea or theory is of "immediate" practical use it "is unsatisfactory"! Can anything be more clear as to Ash's position?

William Ash—without in the least realising what he is doing, for ideology can completely blind one—has substituted pragmatism for Marxism; to be more precise, Ash is putting forward as Maoism John Dewey's variant of pragmatism, called—and quite correctly—"instrumentalism".

According to William Ash, only in Comrade Mao's philosophical work, ON CONTRADICTION, does Marxism shed "the last vestiges of Hegelianism". Ash is basically a stupid but enormously conceited man, for while he states that it is the young Marx who "has not entirely emancipated himself from the Hegelian legacy", the inference of the entire passage is that nobody up to the time of Mao had freed themselves from the influence of Hegel's triad.

What are the irrefutable facts? That Marx and Engels in their own life-time had been charged with making a fetish of the Negation of the Negation, and had refuted the charge in language that cannot possibly be misunderstood. Later, in 1894, Lenin went to considerable length to prove that Mikhailovsky was lying in his attempt to distort the Marxist conception of the Negation of the Negation. Lenin quoted extensively from the works of Marx and Engels, and proved, to the satisfaction of anybody but an idiot, that Marx and Engels had long since shed every vestige of Hegelianism.

William Ash is not an idiot, even if he is not a very clever man; is it possible that Ash is unaware of the position taken by Marx, Engels and Lenin regarding Hegel's famous triad, the Negation of the Negation? If so then this proves to the hilt his inordinate conceit, his vanity in taking it for granted that a William Ash can become an all-round teacher and expositor of Marxism-Leninism without the necessity of deep and continuous study of their works. If William Ash has read them, then either he has an exceedingly bad memory or else he is deliberately trying to mislead us in the style of Mikhailovsky and, I will add, of Professor George Thomson. I incline to the view that Ash has a weak memory, for eclecticism is an integral part of his make-up—as it usually is with all representatives of the petty-bourgeoisie.

Ash states: "Nowhere in Hegel will such practical formulations be found as the principle and secondary contradictions, as the principle and secondary aspects of a contradiction, as antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions or the inequality of development of contradictions." Substitute, "Nowhere in Marxism" for "Nowhere in Hegel," and you will see what William Ash is *unconsciously* trying to accomplish—for ideology is a class force, the individual oftentimes its blind instrument, as with William Ash.

William Ash is attempting to degrade all Marxist theory prior to the appearance on the historical scene of Mao Tse-tung. He is, without a shadow of doubt, attempting to split us away from our past, the wonderful heritage of Marxist dialectic, that precise and unique form of dialectic which enables Mao Tse-tung to couple the past to the present, and point to the future. Mao Tse-tung is adding a new chapter to the practice and theory of Marxism-Leninism, which has now become Marxism-Leninism-Maoism!

It will take more than the William Ash's to make the working class deny its revolutionary past. Long live the memory of Marx, of Engels, of Lenin, of Stalin! Long life to Comrade Mao Tse-tung, the great continuer of Marxism, and leader of the people everywhere!

We will now deal briefly with William Ash and his attitude to Isaac Deutscher. Deutscher, as most of you are aware, hates Stalin and all that Stalin stood for. Within the last two years Deutscher's pathological hatred of Stalin has been mated with an equal hatred for Mao Tse-tung, whom Deutscher now regards, "as the inheritor of the Stalin disease of loathsome foulness, unspeakable!" My paraphrase has captured the language of Deutscher to a "t".

In the pages of PROGRESSIVE LABOR Ash correctly attacks Deutscher, why then did Ash present this same Deutscher with a public platform from which to air his hatred of Mao a few short months ago? Do you give your bitter enemies a chance to air their views without mercilessly exposing them from the same platform? But this is precisely what Ash did. Mao Tse-tung has pointed out that on all occasions we should never let slip a chance to defend our views and attack the enemy. Is this not so?

One last point, Ash says: "Dialectic is a method by which Marxism is capable of comprehending a reality which is not static but ever changing, and not changing gradually but by revolutionary leaps. . . ." The fact is that the law of quantity into quality and the obverse, which Ash had stumbled upon, proves to the hilt that every change in quantity is in itself a change in quality also. Innumerable "little qualitative changes" take place before the nodal line of measurement—a determined point, as with water before it turns into steam—is reached and "leap" takes place.

But enough has been placed before you on William Ash, who is a revisionist operating within the ranks of the anti-revisionist movement.

Thank you, comrades and friends. May we have a good discussion.

# ***Pamphlets —***

***By A. H. EVANS***

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Obtainable from Collet's, Charing Cross Road and David-Goliath Publications, 27 Gerrard Road, London, N.1.

Recommended reading: The complete works of Mao Tse-tung; His pamphlets: **ON CONTRADICTION; ON PRACTICE.** Lenin's complete works; His pamphlet: **STATE AND REVOLUTION.**