Workers' Weekly

Vol. 21 No. 6 February 26, 1994 20p

From the Themes of the Coventry International Seminar:

The Elaboration of Political Theory

THE question of political theory for the communists is not one of developing hair-splitting arguments over political concepts from the classic writers of Marxism-Leninism, or of analysing tactics from the 1920s or 1930s, for example. For the communists, the way this question presents itself is that in order to bring about political changes in society, elaboration of political theory is necessary. In this way, it is a question of social science, not of polemics or sectarian interest.

It cannot be otherwise than as society develops, it throws up the necessity of developing and reworking facets of theoretical problems as well as solving new questions of the times. One feature of the pseudo-socialism of the Soviet Union and eastern Europe that contributed to their collapse was that such theory there had stagnated. This is not to say that old theory should be abandoned, proven principles of dialectical and historical materialism jettisoned, but that, as in any branch of science, theory is ever refreshed as practice, understanding and objective reality move forward or undergo changes. Nor does theory develop in a vacuum. The mainspring in such development is the desire to bring about changes and solve problems. Theory poses its own problems, has its own logic, consistent with its state of development. At the same time, they are posed in order to bring about changes in the objective reality. In terms of revolutionary theory, this aim is to bring about deep-going transformations in society, led by

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Irish self-determination and British withdrawal

The acceptance by John Major in the Joint Declaration of last December with the Irish Taoiseach that it is for the people of Ireland to exercise their right of self determination is an important defeat for the long-standing policy of the British government.

It is widely known that the right to self-determination belongs to nations. This principle has been accepted by the United Nations and by all progressive opinion. Further, in the Joint Declaration, John Major accepts that this right to self-determination must be given "on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South" with the people of Ireland freely determining themselves "without external impediment". That a nation must be allowed the right to decide freely for itself how it will exercise its right to self-determination is thus common ground. But, the question

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Three Weeks to the March 19 Rally!

AS the preparations and mobilisation for the 15th anniversary rally of RCPB(ML) on March 19 enter the final three weeks, the tempo of the work has been stepped up considerably. At the Pubic Rally, RCPB(ML) will give its **Analysis of the Present Situation** and affirm that it stands **For a Socialist Future!** Amongst the activists of the Party, there is a widespread determination that the momentum generated in the work will be maintained and even increased, any shortcomings eliminated, and everything done to ensure the success of the Rally.

The experience in taking out the ideas of the Coventry International Seminar on **The Retreat of Revolution and the Tasks of the Communist and Workers Movement** as part of the work of moving towards the March 19 Rally is confirming that it is precisely these questions which are decisive for the advance of the movement. Activists in the working class movement, for example, have expressed satis-

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Irish self-determination and British withdrawal

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then has to be asked, how can the Irish do this when part of the territory of their island is occupied by some 30,000 heavily armed British troops?

The Joint Declaration accepts the Irish as a nation and the logic following from this is that the British government must announce its intention to withdraw in order that the right of self-determination can be freely exercised. The very fact that the right to self-determination has been put down in writing by John Major is a climb down by the British government which has for decades attempted to justify its continued presence in northern Ireland and the partition of the country on the basis of theories such as that there are "two nations" in Ireland. Even had this ever been the case it could not provide a justification for the British presence in the six counties. But the fact that these "justifications" have been set aside by John Major makes the British government position still weaker.

John Major's concession in no way means that the British government has changed its political and strategic aims in Ireland. But it would like to maintain the position of northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom in a new way, one which does not hinder the interests of the ruling circles to intervene on various other fronts internationally. So rather than making a statement that Britain will withdraw, the Joint Declaration provides pretexts for Britain's continuing presence in northern Ireland by asserting that only those political parties in Ireland which accept the conditions laid down by the British and Irish governments can participate in discussions on the way ahead. Thus, whilst recognising the right of the Irish to self-determination, the British government places such conditions as to ensure its continued intervention in Irish affairs for as long as it pleases. It cannot be allowed to maintain such a contradictory position.

Having recognised the right of the Irish to self-determination, the government should also explicitly recognise the responsibility that Britain has had for preventing the exercise of this self-determination. The nub of this is that Britain should relinquish the exercise of sovereignty over Irish territory. It should also recognise the role of the British state in causing conflict and bloodshed in Ireland, particularly over the past 25 years, if it wishes to stand by its declaration to overcome the legacy of history. Let the government recognise the implications of this, and let it itself renounce the use of violence for political ends.

There is a strong desire for peace in Ireland, amongst both the Irish and British peoples. The Republican forces have so far refused to accept Britain's dictate and have demanded clarification of the terms of the Downing Street declaration. This is a positive step towards peace, a peace which could never be brought about whilst Britain maintains its hold on the north of Ireland.

Workers in Britain also have an important role to play. They should call for the Irish people to be allowed to exercise their right of self-determination, which has long been a demand of the progressive forces in Britain. Now that it has recognised this, the government should go further by declaring that it will withdraw its armed forces and instruments of government so that the Irish can freely and without outside interference decide their future. No conditions or strings can be accepted. Britain must transform its words into deeds if peace is to be achieved.

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Views on the Coventry International Seminar:

An important political event

Dear Editor,

In my view, the International Seminar of January 2-3 on the topic "The Retreat of Revolution and the Tasks of the Communist and Workers Movement" was an important political event for several reasons.

Firstly, views were presented and discussion developed there on what are the questions which must be addressed by a communist party which aims to capture the imagination and commitment of the working class and people – that is, what are the characteristics of our times, and how does the communist party organise to meet the needs of these times?

Secondly, amongst the participants in the Seminar, there was great enthusiasm to tackle the problems which the present circumstances have presented us with. Both during the Seminar and since, much serious discussion has continued on the views given there.

Also, what was brought home to political activists in a very clear way was the necessity to think deeply about the conditions in one's own country and to avoid dogmatic interpretations of events which use analyses which are no longer appropriate to the times. At the same time, communist principles must be held onto, for without these there is no possibility of developing a theory and practice which will actually help to move society forward.

On March 19, RCPB(ML) will celebrate 15 years of its existence and will give its views on the present situation; it will also uphold the future as one of socialism. The enthusiasm aroused by the Seminar has been present in the preparations for the March 19 Rally, and shows a great desire to move things forward. The views presented at the Seminar are sure to continue to provide food for thought and to assist in developing a programme of action.

Marion Clark

The Elaboration of Political Theory

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the working class. For the Marxist-Leninist party, it can never be sufficient to repeat old theoretical formulations without elaborating the theory of the complete emancipation of the working class in the economic, political and philosophical spheres, in the course of waging the necessary class battles. In other words, the relevance of modern Marxist-Leninist theory is at the opposite pole from sterile dogmatism. Rather, it is at one with taking up the vital problems that society is facing. For example, the question of the reform of the political process with which there is so much popular dissatisfaction is one which this historical juncture is posing. This is a question of first-rate theoretical importance, not reducible to one of some party or parties being anti-people. It raises the whole question of where power lies and where it originates from. In terms of the social system, there is, for example, the theoretical problem of whether the development of the productive forces should ensure that society is responsible for the welfare of all its members, or whether everyone should be left to fend for themselves within that society. And there are many other such questions. Under socialism, too, this elaboration of political theory needs to be constantly renewed, to provide a guide to the development of such a society.

The questions of revolutionary theory will take on a sharper profile as the working-class and revolutionary movement develops. The Marxist-Leninist party must take the initiative both in championing the importance of this theory and in developing its content. As the revolutionary movement develops into flow, as it takes on a mass character, such questions contribute to its development. Even more important is that they should become burning issues of the movement, so that it moves consciously forward towards a socialist society. Such considerations are part and parcel of working to prepare the subjective conditions for the revolution to establish socialism, and it is crucial that such work be done at this time, going hand in hand with the question of opening a path for the development of the practical movement.

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Three weeks to the March 19 rally!

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faction that the Party is doing this work, tackling such fundamental questions as *What kind of society? What must the working class and the communists do?* and *What kind of Party?* In discussions, there has been excitement expressed that the Party is taking up the issue of providing modern definitions appropriate to the times and to the problems of today's society, yet, far from abandoning its fundamental principles, is affirming the future lies with socialism, and that RCPB(ML) is maintaining its revolutionary character.

In the practical work, the superb colour posters produced for the Rally have been appearing on the streets and in the colleges. The leaflet produced by the Preparatory Committee for the 15th Anniversary has been distributed nationwide.

There have been a number of local initiatives, including fund-raising social events in a number of areas, where the themes of the Seminar and the Rally have been discussed. More are planned. In one such social, discussion continued late into the night, such was the enthusiastic spirit for the celebrations that was engendered. Discussions have continued among students in a number of areas, and there are other meetings planned to discuss the ideas of the International Seminar.

The spirit prevailing now is to go all out in the preparations and mobilisation for March 19 and in taking amongst the people that RCPB(ML) has something to say!

PUBLIC RALLY

Celebrating the 15th Anniversary of

The Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist)

Come and Hear RCPB(ML) on the Present Situation!

FOR A SOCIALIST FUTURE!

Saturday March 19, 1994 2.00 pm

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1

(nearest tube: Holborn)

Programme

2.00 pm	Registration and Welcome
2.30 pm	Party's Analysis of Present Situation, for a Socialist Future
3.30 pm	Interventions by Invited Organisations and Individuals
4.15 pm	Messages of Greetings from the Communist Party of Ireland (Marxist-Leninist), the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) and Others
5.30 pm	Break
7.00 pm	Reception and Cultural Programme

For further details contact: Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist)
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