

Democratic Centralism and Revisionism

By E. F. HILL.

Many good Australian Communists have been very worried about by what have been presented as breaches of democratic centralism and unity of the party.

It is necessary, therefore, to examine these matters.

In the struggle in the Communist Party of Australia, the revisionists headed by L. L. Sharkey, R. Dixon and L. Aarons, continually resorted to what they called democratic centralism and unity of the party, to crush those who upheld Marxist-Leninism and ultimately used these very concepts to drive Marxist-Leninists out of the Party.

They claimed that discussion had run its course in the Communist Party, a decision had been reached by a majority, and that that decision was binding on all. When issues arose such, for example, as the Indian aggression against China, or the Cuban affair, these individuals referred back to the decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Australia in February 1962, and said that the Party had made its decision on these matters, and it was not open to anyone to raise a different view, even on contemporaneous issues as they arose.

How they justified the proposition that these February decisions had made decisions that would be operative on then unknown future events, they did not bother to explain. Those who ventured a different opinion from their own, were denounced as "disruptors," as "re-raising questions," "leftism," "adventurism," "dogmatism."

The particular magic they apparently saw in the February 1962 decisions, was that these decisions lined up the Communist Party of Australia with the Soviet Party in its renunciation of the struggle against Yugoslav revisionism, its renunciation of the 81 Parties statement that revisionism was the main danger in the working class movement, and its renunciation of the principles governing the relations with fraternal parties which preclude public attacks on parties.

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(h-2)

In other words, in February 1962, these Australian Party leaders departed from their previous upholding of the 81 Parties statement and Marxism-Leninism, and openly embarked on revisionism. They attempted to use the concepts of democratic centralism and unity of the Party, in their effort to impose their revisionism on the Australian working class.

Hence, they joined the international revisionists, who have attacked the whole range of Marxism-Leninism including the principles, and practice of the organisation of the Communist Parties. It is with this latter matter that we are for the time being concerned.

General Principles

Lenin hammered out the general principles of organisation of the Communist Party. Experience since his great teachings, has further elaborated and clarified these principles.

The Communist Parties contemplated by Lenin, are Marxist-Leninist Parties, and Marxism-Leninism is composed of objective laws derived from an examination of all natural and social phenomena. Those laws exist independently of the will of man.

If, in the name of so called creative Marxism-Leninism, these laws are attacked then necessarily the attack includes the organisation, and operation, of the Parties of Marxism-Leninism. If these Parties fundamentally depart from the laws of Marxism-Leninism, they cease to be Communist Parties.

Lenin insisted on the purity of theory, and on no compromise on principle. He relentlessly opposed all compromises of principle. He ridiculed the concept of a Party that any high school student or professor or striker, as he put it, could join just because such a person proclaimed a vague belief in Communism.

He pointed out that a Marxist was not only one who accepted the class struggle but one who recognises that the class struggle must be carried through to the dictatorship of the proletariat. In its struggle for power, he said, the working class has but one weapon—that of organisation. The Marxist-Leninist Party is the highest form of class organisation of the proletariat. It has an iron discipline founded on clear consciousness of Marxism-Leninism; iron—because it is conscious discipline; majority decisions are binding on minority, higher committee decisions on lower.

The Australian Communist

Page 5

But if the Marxist-Leninist Party departs from Marxism-Leninism, then, of course, none of this is applicable, and it is the duty of Marxist-Leninists to wage relentless war against the departure from Marxism-Leninism.

Objective Truth

In the course of the present differences of opinion in the revolutionary movement, the Australian modern revisionists headed by Sharkey, Dixon and Aarons, have shouted loudly about majority decisions, about democratic centralism and about unity of the party. They have invoked all these concepts to try to impose on the Party members, and on the working people, their own departure from Marxism-Leninism and to try to stifle all opposition to it. But this will not do.

Nothing can destroy the objective truth of Marxism-Leninism, nothing can prevent people from defending and upholding that objective truth. It is not the defenders of Marxism-Leninism who attack the principles of party organisation, who attack democratic centralism, the unity of the Party, and majority decisions, but precisely the Sharkeys, Dixons and Aarons, because they have thrown overboard the fundamental basis, (the very elements), of the views upon which Marxism-Leninism rests.

Without Marxism-Leninism, there can be no democratic centralism, no binding majority decisions, no unity.

Lenin fought a long and sustained battle for the victory of Marxism-Leninism, and for a Party organised and equipped to uphold the banner of Marxism-Leninism. From the victory of his ideas, emerged the Party of a new type. The struggle went through many vicissitudes, from the earliest Marxist circles at the close of the 19th century, until the formation of the Third International. Since then much more experience has accumulated. Lenin fought (more often than not, in a minority) for the purity of Marxism-Leninism, and the purity of an organisation to uphold it. Such an organisation is not a static thing but one capable of leading the working class in all the complexity of its struggles.

Democratic centralism has two sides — (1) democracy and (2) centralism. Democracy guarantees to Marxist-Leninists the right to discuss all questions.

But it guarantees that right only on the basis of Marxism-Leninism.

It is not democracy on some basis other than Marxism-Leninism but only democracy, freedom to discuss, within the limits of Marxism-Leninism.

It is not democracy, nor freedom to attack, and destroy Marxism-Leninism. Once it is invoked to attack Marxism-Leninism, naturally it is the duty of Marxist-Leninists to call a halt to the attack.

Marxist-Leninists base themselves on the proposition that amongst themselves there is the utmost freedom, democracy, in seeking to integrate the universal truths of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of their own country. But those universal truths have an existence independent of man's will, and there can be no freedom or democracy to attack them.

Such an idea is just nonsensical because how can such an attack alter the truth. Yet it is precisely such an attack that the Australian revisionists are making. They allow themselves complete "democracy," "freedom", to attack the universal truths of Marxism-Leninism and attempt to deny to Marxist-Leninists, democracy, or freedom to defend those truths.

Operation of Freedom

The operation of freedom, democracy, amongst Marxist-Leninists is fundamentally important. No single man, and no group of men, ever attains absolute knowledge. There are limits on each man's knowledge. Each Marxist-Leninist, and each Marxist-Leninist Party, strives to obtain the best possible Marxist-Leninist understanding, and the best possible integration of that with concrete practice. To attain that, the freest possible study of practice, exchange of ideas, discussion and pooling of ideas, taking advantage of the superior understanding of some, eliminating the weaknesses of others, generalising concrete practice, listening to the masses, are all required — all form an essential part of Marxism-Leninism.

Armed with the general principles of Marxism-Leninism, the Marxist-Leninist Party in Australia has the task of examining all practice, seeking the way ahead, guiding its action and developing those principles.

It never throws overboard those principles, because to do so, would be to attempt the impossible, would be to attempt to overthrow the truth.

The Marxist-Leninist Party itself, is part of that truth — part of objective reality. The development of society has dictated, com-

pelled, that there come into existence, a democratic centralist Party composed of people, who will uphold and apply the universal laws of Marxist-Leninism. So it is equally impossible to destroy the Marxist-Leninist Party because it is part of that same objective truth.

Once a Marxist-Leninist Party deserts Marxism-Leninism, it is doomed; it will wither away, disintegrate.

Serious Examination

Centralism is the other side of this concept. After the discussion amongst Marxist-Leninists on the integration of Marxism-Leninism with concrete reality has run its course, a decision is reached and action is decided upon. This discussion is not just a pleasant debate, but a serious examination, to decide on action.

Man's will is part of objective reality, and in turn influences objective reality. Marxist-Leninist Parties are based upon recognition of the universal laws revealed by Marxism-Leninism and the recognition of the fact that man himself, as a conscious being, is capable of influencing the operation of those laws.

Knowledge of those laws, gives him freedom to act within them. Ignorance, or denial of them, makes his actions blind and irrational. Hence the Party of Marxism-Leninism must act in accordance with those laws. Centralism gives it that capacity to act. Marx said: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point however is to change it." (Marx: Thesis on Feurbach XI).

The Marxist-Leninist Parties acknowledge this. Centralism, based on democracy, means that the Party is a weapon to change the world, to lead the workers to victory for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Centralism provides for effective actions, effective machinery, to carry into life the universal truths of Marxism-Leninism. It determines that the whole Marxist-Leninist Party will act as one, in carrying out Marxism-Leninism.

Like all revisionists, the Australian revisionists do not want to have anything to do with Marxism-Leninism. They invoke the name of Marxism-Leninism to attack Marxism-Leninism. Hence they violate the very purpose of centralism in the Marxist-Leninist Parties. They insist on centralism to impose their own revisionist ideas on the Party and the Australian working people.

They invoke the binding effect of majority decisions, of higher Party decisions, in order to attack Marxism-Leninism and Marxist-Leninists, and to deny Marxist-Leninists the right to reply.

They say that they have allowed democratic discussion throughout the Party, including the Central Committee and that when they have decided on their revisionist policy, then that policy becomes binding on all Party members, and there can be no further discussion of it. All further contributions to discussion of Marxist-Leninists are condemned as "re-raising" decided questions, "turning the Party into a debating society," "disruption," "splitting," and so on.

The views of Marxist-Leninists are branded as "dogmatic," "adventurist," "left doctrinaire," "warmongering," "turning the Party into a narrow sect," and Marxist-Leninists are, in the name of democratic centralism, majority decisions, and unity of the Party, denied the right of reply to these statements.

Moreover, a thoroughly lying and distorted account of the Marxist-Leninist views has been and is spread by the Sharkeys, the Dixons and the Aaronses. Then they invoke democratic centralism, majority decision and unity of the Party, to deny any right of reply inside the Party to these lies and distortions.

As we have pointed out, even on contemporaneous questions as they have arisen, the Sharkeys, the Dixons and the Aaronses have denied Marxist-Leninists the right to express an opinion. And they do so because they know there is no answer whatever to the Marxist-Leninist case. It must be stifled.

Treacherous Aims.

Thus Lenin's conception of the Party is perverted to serve the treacherous aims of the modern revisionists. Indeed Lenin's great conception of the Party is used by these individuals to perpetuate a modern dogmatic revisionist view. Having forsaken the path of Marxism-Leninism, and having taken the path of revisionism, these individuals now seek to impose it dogmatically in all circumstances on the Party and the working class.

In their view, it brooks no contradiction, no discussion; in short, it is a new dogma. Hence in the name of creative Marxism-Leninism, by embracing revisionism, Sharkey, Dixon and Aarons

have spawned a new and monstrous dogma which is attempting to doom the working class, and working people, to passivity and to submission to imperialist exploitation.

No Marxist-Leninist worthy of the name is going to permit Lenin's great concepts of the Party to be perverted in this way. Every Marxist-Leninist will strive to re-establish these concepts to secure a party based on Marxism-Leninism with complete freedom to discuss the integration of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of Australia and based on centralism, to give effect to the decisions reached in that democratic way.

The struggle for Marxism-Leninism involves a struggle to establish a Marxist-Leninist Party for now there is none in Australia. Marxist-Leninists will join together to fight to establish such a Party.

Upholding the banner of Marxism-Leninism involves upholding the Leninist principle of the party and its organisation.

Prepare for the Worst to Win the Best

By DUNCAN CLARKE

In the Melbourne Guardian of July 11, the revisionist B. Taft, of the Victorian State Committee of the Communist Party, wrote an article entitled "On Peaceful Co-existence" in which he expounded his views on what peaceful co-existence was all about.

"The policy of peaceful co-existence is a policy of fighting out the world historic battle between capitalism and socialism by all means and with all weapons excepting one — world war," wrote Taft. He then followed this statement with a lengthy quote from the 81 Parties' statement on the favorable opportunities created by the policy of peaceful co-existence for the prosecution of the national liberation struggle in the colonies and the revolutionary movement in the capitalist countries.

All genuine Marxist-Leninists want peace and they strive to settle questions both internationally and nationally in a principled and peaceful way, but at the same time they make it clear they will never bow the knee to the imperialists and capitulate to nuclear blackmail or any other threat.

Serious revolutionaries always prepare for two eventualities.

To prepare people ideologically for the worst is precisely what is required to win the best.

B. Taft's statement is capitulationist. We will fight with every weapon except one — world war.

The imperialists should say "thank you" to B. Taft for letting them know that all they have to do to win victory is to threaten to launch world war. But this question won't be decided by Taft or his ilk.

The revisionists do not want to prepare for the worst eventuality. To do so is "left sectarian" and "dogmatic." Preparing for the worst is revolutionary and involves the struggle against the State and the exposure of the class nature of the State.