

DIALECTICS.

The British proletariat is the inheritor of classical British philosophy. We can identify that philosophy as being materialist, but a materialism that denies its logical historical conclusion, an empirical materialism whose political expression is Social-Democracy. What this materialism lacks is Dialectics, and it is only when an understanding of this has been grasped by the proletariat that its practice will cease to grope in the dark and realise the necessity for our Party and the socialist revolution, i.e. "an army utterly conscious of its own heritage and destiny".

The earth-shaking events of the French Revolution of 1789-1815 gave rise to many attempts to philosophise as to the tendency of historical development. In Germany, the philosopher HEGEL saw the Prussian monarchy as the culmination of all progress, yet in spite of this absurd conclusion his method was the first systematic exposition of dialectics. Lenin described Hegel's scheme as a work of genius: "the idea of a world-embracing, universal, living interconnection of all things one with another".

After Hegel's death in 1831, the liberal bourgeois opposition to Prussian absolutism gave rise to a school of 'Young Hegelians' who took over Hegel's dialectical method and turned it into a philosophy of action. But for many this action consisted solely of philosophical criticism. Nevertheless a decisive breakthrough was made by LUDWIG FEUERBACH who saw ideas (and God) not as the creators of Nature (and Man), but as having been created by them. However, this abstract materialism still saw Man as an unalterable entity, regardless of his historical development and concrete situation.

It fell to MARX and ENGELS to transcend the essential limitations of Hegelian philosophy. They had separately arrived at quite similar conclusions, that "philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it", and between 1844 and 1846 in 'The Holy Family' and 'The German Ideology' they broke away from the Young Hegelians and began to develop the essential features of dialectical materialism. Marx had earlier recognised that "philosophy finds its material weapons in the proletariat", and with Engel's investigations into 'The Condition of the Working Class in England', they began their criticisms of the capitalist system and their work with its eventual executioners. The writing of 'Capital' went hand-in-hand with the organisation of the International Working Mens' Association, and drawing on the experiences of the Paris Commune, they bitterly attacked the revisionism of German Social-Democracy, further developing dialectical materialism in 'Anti-Duhring' and 'The Critique of the Gotha Programme'.

However, after 1895 Bernstein's philosophy of Evolutionary Socialism became more and more accepted by the Parties of the Second International. It spoke of the development of a secure Middle Class, a factor of social stability that made revolution impossible.....but also unnecessary, as these people would be gradually won over to the ethical principles of socialism (actually the ethical principles of the philosopher Kant). The electoral successes of German Social-Democracy appeared to vindicate Bernstein's views.

In his book 'What is to be done?', LENIN analysed the intimate connection between German revisionism and Russian Economism, a reliance on the unconscious elemental forces at work in the depths of the workers movement, which decried the importance of being purposefully directed theory. After 1903 the Russian revisionists attempted to put socialism on a different philosophical basis, to replace dialectical materialism

by empirio-criticism. In 1909 Lenin replied in his work 'Materialism and Empirio-Criticism' attacking revisionism as "a spiritual cudgel" to aid the bourgeoisie, and emphasised the importance of practice as a criterion of true knowledge. While in Switzerland during the 1914-18 war Lenin made an intensive study of philosophy. He concluded that the essential element in Marxism is the dialectic, and the heart of the dialectic is to be found in the unity of opposites. The division of the one into its opposing elements, and the clash between them, is the immanent source of all activity and development. Hence the possibility of proletarian revolution arising from the Imperialist war. After the revolution, concerned with the task of the socialist development of the Soviet Union, Lenin stressed that only a materialistic interpretation of the Hegelian dialectic can be in a position to give an answer to the problems thrown up by contemporary science.

During the period of NEP, mechanistic theories of 'equilibrium' outlined by Bukharin went hand-in-hand with opposition to collectivisation. In 'Problems of Leninism' Stalin called for a war on two fronts against Rightist mechanism and the 'Leftist' philosophy of Deborin which reduced dialectic to a collection of empty formulae divorced from real life. Stalin held that theory must not only keep pace with practical work, but must keep ahead of it, to direct the proletariat in its advance towards socialism. In response to Trotsky's views that changes in productive relations automatically follow the development of the productive forces, Stalin in "Dialectical and Historical Materialism" that the existing relations of production were an obstacle which can only be removed by the conscious action of the revolutionary classes.

In China, after the disastrous failings of previous 'leaders', Mao Tse-Tung emerged with a dialectical analysis of China that was a concrete application of Marxism-Leninism to the concrete situation of China. His two most famous philosophical works written in 1937, 'On Practice' and 'On Contradiction', were a counter-blast to the dogmatists who blindly tried to apply a universal truth without regard to concrete circumstances, and the empiricists who mistook their partial, fragmentary experience for universal truth, and did not understand the vital importance of theory to direct revolutionary practice.

DIALECTICS therefore has always provided a key to the understanding of, and the practice necessary within, each new situation. Its essential aspects may be summarised as

- a) seeing everything in its total situation, not in isolation; understanding the interconnections and interdependence that determine the relation of every factor to every other.
- b) seeing everything as dynamical, not static; understanding the nature of things as coming-into-being or dying away; seeing every situation as part of a process of development.
- c) understanding the unity of opposites, the identity and interdependence of the contradictory aspects, seeing one contradiction as the principal contradiction, and one aspect of each contradiction as the principal aspect of that contradiction.
- d) understanding that change results from developments inherent within each situation or element, not primarily as a response to outside pressures.
- e) seeing struggle as universal and constant, and equilibrium or rest as only relative or temporary.
- f) seeing knowledge as practice-theory-practice, a development from the perceptual to the rational, to the application of knowledge, the testing of rational hypotheses in practice, and the necessary summation of experiences essential for further advance.
- g) understanding that social change is a conscious process, not mechanical or automatic; that history is made by human activity, once the situation has been properly grasped, by definite classes within each historical period.

Within Britain, the principal aspect of the principal contradiction is the character of the proletariat within declining bourgeois society. But a new dialectical analysis is not required, for it already exists within 2nd and 3rd Congress Documents. In the 'British Working Class and Its Party' it was stated that the proletariat has not remained true to its revolutionary origin, that it has struggled, and recognised the necessity of struggle without acknowledging the logical historical conclusion. Many theories have been put forward as to why the oldest and most experienced proletariat is so lacking in political acumen, but the truth is that the revolutionary aims of Marxism have been distorted, the social-democrats have filched from the workers our national heritage. The historical relationship of the Labour Party to the Trade Unions should be seen as more important in relation to the failure of the British working class to develop politically than any other factor. The working class cannot be a revolutionary force if it does not know the how and why of revolution, therefore our task is nothing less than to change the ideology of our class; all it lacks is its own ideology, our task is to remove the confusion of thought which alone has held back the British working class for so long.

This analysis is the most significant advance in dialectics for several decades. It destroys the empirical evolutionary mechanistic philosophy that has always dominated British communism until the birth of our Party. The deepening of this analysis in the documents 'Burning Questions for our Party' and 'The Struggle of Ideas' provides the consistent, systematic policy that if adhered to faithfully will certainly result in the first socialist revolution in a highly industrialised country.

The contradictory ideologies of dialectical and empirical materialism arise out of the material existence of the proletariat within bourgeois society. The division of labour into piecemeal, fragmentary aspects of production is the social basis of empiricism, while the collective social character of production is the material basis of dialectics. The basic material life of the proletariat reveals itself to him as primarily narrow, static, isolated, thus giving rise to ideas of survival, palliative reforms, to the ideology of Social-Democracy. Yet this only takes account of superficial, fragmentary experiences that conceal the essence of his situation. The proletariat, as a consequence of basic human qualities, is capable of thought, and at the same time the reality of the productive process necessitates thinking, that transcends the limitations of empirical experiences, thus giving rise to dialectical thought that is natural to the working class once the bourgeois/proletarian relationship becomes the predominant contradiction in society. The breaking down of the basic divisions of labour, between male and female, town and country, and between mental and manual labour is most highly developed in Britain. The proletariat in Britain is itself capable of dialectical thought, hence the birth of our Party from the class, not an alien philosophy to be imposed demagogically by aspiring shepherds. Revolution is made by the class, the Party exists to direct, develop and organise their consciousness.
