

THE MARXIST-LENINIST RESEARCH BUREAU

SECOND SERIES: REPORT 1

WHO OWNS BRITAIN? : PART ONE : THE LAND

Introduction : Some Definitions

Land is

" . . . the solid portion of the earth's surface, as opposed to sea, water".
('Oxford English Dictionary', Volume 8; Oxford; 1989; p. 617).

and a holding is a piece of

" . . . land held by legal right".
('Oxford English Dictionary', Volume 8; Oxford; 1989; p. 302).

A holding may be freehold, that is, held

" . . . as one's absolute . . . possession",
('Oxford English Dictionary', Volume 5; Oxford; 1989; p. 797).

or it may be leasehold, that is, held

" . . . by lease",
(Oxford English Dictionary', Volume 8; Oxford; 1989; p. 770).

which is

" . . . a contract between parties by which the one conveys land . . . to the other . . . for years, usually in consideration of rent"
(Oxford English Dictionary', Volume 8; Oxford; 1989; p. 769).

A tenant is

" . . . one who holds a piece of land . . . by lease for a term of years"
('Oxford English Dictionary', Volume 17; Oxford; 1989; p. 764).

A landlord is a landowner

" . . . of whom another person holds . . . a piece of land".
('Oxford English Dictionary', Volume 8; Oxford; 1989; p. 627).

Ground rent is the

" . . . payment made by a tenant to the . . . landlord . . . for the use of land".
('Oxford English Dictionary', Volume 13; Oxford; 1989; p. 13).

The Concept of Social Class

The concept of social class as

" . . . a division or order of society according to status"
('Oxford English Dictionary', Volume 3; Oxford; 1989; p. 279).

is a very ancient one.

However, Marxist-Leninists hold that a person's social class is determined not by the amount of his wealth, but by the source of his income,

"Classes are large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated by law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organisation of labour, by the dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they dispose and their mode of acquiring it".

(Vladimir I. Lenin: 'A Great Beginning: Heroism of the Workers in the Rear: "Communist Subotniks"', in: 'Collected Works', Volume 29; Moscow; 1965; p. 421).

To Marxist-Leninists, therefore, the class to which a person belongs is determined, not by someone's opinion, but by objective reality.

On the basis of the above definition, Marxist-Leninists distinguish three basic classes in 19th century Britain:

"There are three great social groups, whose members . . . live on wages, profit and ground-rent respectively".

(Karl Marx: 'Capital: A Critique of Political Economy'. Volume 3; Moscow; 1974; p. 886).

These three basic classes are respectively: 1) the proletariat or working class; 2) the bourgeoisie or capitalist class and 3) the landlord class.

Thus, Marxist-Leninists define the landlord class as that class which owns land and derives its income principally from ground-rent on that land:

"Land becomes personified in the landlord, and . . . gets on its hind legs to demand . . . its share of the product created with its help . . . : rent".

(Karl Marx: *ibid.*; p. 824-25).

The aristocracy or nobility is the titled section of the landlord class. It is that sub-class

" . . . which has a titular (i.e., titled -- Ed.) pre-eminence".

('Oxford English Dictionary', Volume 10; Oxford; 1989; p. 450).

while the gentry is the lower, untitled section of the landlord class. It is that sub-class

" . . . immediately below the nobility".

('Oxford English Dictionary', Volume 6; Oxford; 1989; p. 455).

A peasant is

" . . . one who lives in the country and works on the land".

('Oxford English Dictionary', Volume 11; Oxford; 1989; p. 402).

Although the term 'work' is here used loosely to include entrepreneurship, it excludes members of the landlord class, since even if a landlord 'lives in the country' he does not work on the land, but derives his income primarily

from ground rent.

The peasantry does not form a social class, but is composed of a number of different classes which live in the country and are associated economically with the land:

"It is best to distinguish the rich, the middle and the poor peasants".

(Vladimir I. Lenin: 'To the Rural Poor: An Explanation for the Peasants on what the Social-Democrats want', in: 'Selected Works', Volume 2; London; 1944; p. 261).

The peasantry is made up of:

Firstly, rich peasants, rural capitalists or 'kulaks', who employ labour. i.e., who exploit poorer peasants:

"One of the main features of the rich peasants is that they hire farmhands and day labourers. Like the landlords, the rich peasants also live by the labour of others".

(Vladimir I. Lenin: *ibid.*; p. 265).

Secondly, the middle peasants or rural petty bourgeoisie, who hold land but do not employ labour:

"Only in good years and under particularly favourable conditions is the independent husbandry of this type of peasant sufficient to maintain him and for that reason his position is a very unstable one. In the majority of cases the middle peasant cannot make ends meet without resorting to loans . . ., without seeking 'subsidiary' earnings on the side".

(Vladimir I. Lenin: 'The Development of Capitalism in Russia', in: 'Selected Works', Volume 1; London; 1944; p. 235).

Thirdly, the poor peasants or rural proletariat, who hold no land and live by selling their labour power to rich peasants as their employees as wage labourers:

The poor peasant lives

" . . . not by the land, not by his farm, but by working for wages. . . . He . . . has ceased to be an independent farmer and has become a hireling, a proletarian".

(Vladimir I. Lenin: *ibid.*; p. 265-67).

Sometimes Marxist-Leninists describe poor peasants as

" . . . semi-proletarians",
(Vladimir I. Lenin: *ibid.*; p. 267).

to distinguish them from urban proletarians, regarded as 'full' proletarians.

Land Utilisation in Britain

The area of Great Britain -- England. Scotland and Wales -- is 23.0 million hectares. This includes 0.3 million hectares of inland waters.

('Annual Abstract of Statistics: 1997'; London; 1997; p. 4).

The land is utilised economically as follows:

Agriculture:	17.7 million hectares (77%)
Building:	2.3 million hectares (10%)
Forests:	2.3 million hectares (10%)
Other:	0.7 million hectares (3%)

Total: 23.0 million hectares (100%)

('Statesman's Year-Book 1997-1998'; London; 1997; p. 1,316).

The afforested area, at 10%,

" . . . is well below the 25% average for the whole of Europe".
('Annual Abstract of Statistics: 1997'; London; 1997; p. 56).

Agricultural land is utilised as follows:

Under crops and grass:	11.9 million hectares (67.2%)
Rough grazing:	5.8 million hectares (32.8%)

Total: 17.7 million hectares (100%)

(Central Office of Information: 'Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry'; London; 1993; p. 2).

The Declining Economic Importance of Land

During this century, land has formed a declining proportion of the country's physical assets, namely:

1900:	22%
1910:	18%
1927:	11%
1937:	10%

(Doreen Massey & Alejandrina Catalano: 'Capital and Land: Ownership by Capital in Great Britain'; London; 1978; p. 58).

At the beginning of the 18th century,

" . . . 92% of the labour force worked on farms. By 1978 that figure had been cut down to less than 3%".
(Richard Norton-Taylor: op cit.; p. 320).

The contribution of agriculture to Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

" . . . was £6.3 thousand million in 1991, about 1.3% of the total".
(Central Office of Information: op. cit.; p. 1).

Thus, landownership in Britain

" . . . is no longer a crucial relationship of production; it does not in itself imply any control over the process of production".
(Doreen Massey & Alejandrina Catalano: op. cit.; p 63).

Land Holdings

The agricultural land of Britain is divided into some 211.6 thousand holdings.

(Alison Burrell, Berkeley Hill & John Medland: 'Agrifacts: A Handbook of UK and EEC Food Statistics'; New York; 1990; p. 80).

90.2% of this agricultural land is held by some 16,000 private individuals, partnerships or family companies.

(Alison Burrell, Berkeley Hill & John Medland: *ibid.*; p. 20).

The majority of these holdings are small -- only some 14.7 thousand holdings -- 6.9% of the total number -- are in excess of 200 hectares in size,

(Alison Burrell, Berkeley Hill & John Medland: *ibid.*; p. 80).

but they

" . . . occupy 45.5% of the total area"

(Alison Burrell, Berkeley Hill & John Medland: *ibid.*; p. 79).

Indeed,

" . . . holdings below the estimated one-man size . . . formed 53% of the holding numbers but contributed less than 10% to the output".

(Alison Burrell, Berkeley Hill & John Medland: *ibid.*; p. 82).

while

" . . . nearly half the total number account for 90% of total a agricultural output, and about 7% of the largest estates now account for half the total acreage and the largest 10%, about 24,000 farms, produce half the food grown in Britain".

(Richard Norton-Taylor: *op. cit.*; p. 312).

67% of agricultural holdings are operated as proprietorships. 27% as partnerships, 4% as private (usually family) companies and 1% as public companies. Thus, 99% of holdings are operated as

" . . . family businesses, in the sense that all the principals (where there are more than one) are closely related by blood or marriage".

(Alison Burrell, Berkeley Hill & John Medland: *ibid.*; p. 91).

In view of the family nature of the operation of much agricultural enterprises, inheritance

" . . . plays a major role; a survey found that 44% of owner-occupied land in England was inherited".

(Alison Burrell, Berkeley Hill & John Medland: *ibid.*; p. 24).

Among the 16,000 private individuals holding land in Britain are aristocratic landowners, who

" . . . (as distinct from the landed gentry and owner-farmers) . . . account for 31.6% of the acreage of the country (England, Wales and Scotland -- with the percentage probably being higher in Scotland).

(Doreen Massey & Alejandrina Catalano: *op. cit.*; p. 74).

(NOTE: These figures overlap to some extent with the holdings of large corporate and state bodies).

Thus, the estates of the aristocracy

" . . . are still of major significance in the landownership pattern in Great Britain".

(Doreen Massey & Alejandrina Catalano: op. cit.; p. 74).

The size distribution of aristocratic estates is almost the mirror image of that for non-aristocratic landholdings, being as follows:

Acreage: 0-999 1,000-1,999 2,000-3,999 4,000-5,999 5,000-9,999 10,000 & over

% of estates	7.2%	3.6%	7.2%	20.0%	10.9%	50.9%
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(Doreen Massey & Alejandrina Catalano: op. cit.; p. 74).

The wealthiest landowners in Britain in 1997 were almost exclusively aristocrats, namely:

Duke of Westminster:	£1,700 million (5th)
Viscount Chelsea:	£500 million (20th)
Viscount Cowdray:	£475 million (35th)
Duke of Devonshire:	£390 million (39th)
Viscount Portman:	£260 million (68th)
The Queen:	£250 million (73rd)
Lord Howard de Walden:	£250 million (73rd)
Duke of Northumberland:	£250 million (73rd)
Marquess of Tavistock:	£175 million (119th)
Duke of Sutherland:	£150 million (132nd)
Marquess of Northampton:	£150 million (132nd)
Marquess of Bute:	£130 million (144th)
Duke of Beaufort:	£120 million (149th)
Marquess of Salisbury:	£120 million (149th)
Sir Richard Sutton:	£119 million (166th)
Marquess of Cholmondeley:	£100 million (178th)
Duke of Rutland:	£100 million (178th)
Viscount Petersham:	£100 million (178th)
Earl of Leicester:	£100 million (178th)
Marquess of Normanby:	£100 million (178th)
Sir Ewan Anstruther-Gough-Calthorpe:	£ 95 million (200th)

('Sunday Times Rich List: 1997', in: 'Sunday Times', 6 April 1997)

Land Ownership by Large Corporate and State Bodies

9.8% of agricultural land -- some 1,730 thousand hectares -- is owned by large corporate and state bodies.

(Alison Burrell, Berkeley Hill & John Medland: op. cit.; p. 20-21).

The ownership of this land is as follows:

Central State Departments: 461 thousand hectares (2.6%)

Local Authorities: 365 thousand hectares (2.1%)

Nationalised Industries:	225 thousand hectares (1.3%)
Financial Institutions:	215 thousand hectares (1.2%)
The Queen:	164 thousand hectares (0.9%)
Conservation Authorities:	132 thousand hectares (0.7%)
Educational Establishments:	98 thousand hectares (0.6%)
Religious Institutions:	70 thousand hectares (0.4%)

Total: 1,730 thousand hectares (9.8%)

(Alison Burrell, Berkeley Hill & John Medland: op. cit.; p. 20-21).

Land Tenure

The proportion of agricultural land respectively rented and owned is as follows:

Rented: 6,180 thousand hectares (38%)

Owned: 10,032 thousand hectares (62%)

Total: 16,217 thousand hectares (100%)

(Alison Burrell, Berkeley Hill & John Medland: ibid.; p. 23).

Thus, about

" . . . two-thirds of all agricultural land is owner-occupied".
(Central Office of Information: op. cit.; p. 3).

The proportion of land operated by tenant-farmers increases with the size of the holding:

Acreage:	0-99	100-299	300-999	1,000-2,999	3,000 & over
% rented:	27.2%	33.6%	44.5%	87.0%	94.8%

(Doreen Massey & Alejandrino Catalano: op. cit.; p. 66).

Indebtedness

Most farmers are indebted to financial capital. The current indebtedness of landholders amounts to some £8,400 million, of which 66% is owed to banks.
(Alison Burrell, Berkeley Hill & John Medland: ibid.; p. 66).

The current interest burden on loans is about 38% of pre-interest income from agriculture.

(Alison Burrell, Berkeley Hill & John Medland: ibid.; p. 69).

The Expropriation of the Peasantry

At the beginning of the 17th century, England

" . . . was a predominantly agricultural country".
(Christopher Hill: 'The English Revolution: 1640: An Essay'; London; 1955; p. 14).

In the early Middle Ages, English society was feudal in structure. Land was held as a fief, that is,

" . . . on condition of homage and service to a superior lord by whom it is granted".
('Oxford English Dictionary', Volume 5; Oxford; 1989; p. 796).

and the mass of the peasantry were serfs or villeins. A serf held a small piece of land

" . . . from the lord of the manor for which he had to till the demesne with his own implements two or three days a week, perform cartage or carrying duties, give additional 'boon' services at the spring and autumn sowings, harvest-time, haymaking and sheep-shearing, and render on special days a seasonal tribute of farm produce".
(Leonard W. Cowie: 'A Dictionary of British Social History'; London; 1973; p. 306).

Note: The 'demesne' was

" . . . the land in a mediaeval manor retained by the lord".
(Leonard W. Cowie: ibid.; p. 93).

However, by the last part of the 14th century,

" . . . serfdom had practically disappeared".
(Karl Marx: op. cit.; p. 671).

and the

" . . . immense majority of the population consisted then, and to a still greater extent in the 15th century, of free peasant proprietors".
(Karl Marx: ibid.; p. 671).

In the last third of the 15th and the first decade of the 16th century,

" . . . a mass of free proletarians was hurled on the labour-market by the breaking up of the bands of feudal retainers".
(Karl Marx: ibid.; p. 672).

This process was augmented when

" . . . the great feudal lords created an incomparably larger proletariat by the forcible driving of the peasantry from the land, to which the latter had the same feudal right as the lord himself, and by the usurpation of the common lands".
(Karl Marx: ibid.; p. 672).

Much of this land was transformed into sheep farms, since

" . . . the rapid rise of the Flemish wool manufactures, and the corresponding rise in the price of wool in England, gave the direct impulse to these evictions".
(Karl Marx: *ibid.*; p. 672).

And

" . . . the process of forcible expropriation of the people received in the 16th century a new and frightful impulse from the Reformation, and from the consequent colossal spoliation of the church property".
(Karl Marx: *ibid.*; p. 675).

The evicted peasants

" . . . were turned en masse into beggars, robbers, vagabonds. . . . Hence at the end of the 15th and during the whole of the 16th century, throughout Western Europe a bloody legislation against vagabondage".
(Karl Marx: *ibid.*; p. 686).

Thus, sums up Marx,

" . . . were agricultural people first forcibly expropriated from the soil, driven from their homes, turned into vagabonds, and then whipped, branded, tortured by laws grotesquely terrible, into the discipline necessary for the wage system".
(Karl Marx: *ibid.*; p. 688).

The Genesis of the Capitalist Farmer

The driving of the peasantry from the land, the expropriation of the agricultural population, created

" . . . directly, none but great landed proprietors".
(Karl Marx: *ibid.*; p. 694).

The creation of the capitalist farmer was

" . . . a slow process evolving through many centuries".
(Karl Marx: *ibid.*; p. 694).

During the second half of the 14th century, the serf was

" . . . replaced by a farmer, whom the landlord provides with seed, cattle and implements. . . . Soon he becomes a *métayer*, a half-farmer. He advances one part of the agricultural stock, the landlord the other".
(Karl Marx: *ibid.*; p. 694).

This form

" . . . quickly disappears in England, to give place to the farmer proper, who makes his own capital breed by employing wage-labourers, and pays a part of the surplus-product . . . to the landlord as rent".
(Karl Marx: *ibid.*; p. 694).

The capitalist farmers

" . . . grew rich at the expense both of their labourers and their

landlords".
(Karl Marx: *ibid.*; p. 695).

So, by the end of the 16th century, England

" . . . had a class of capitalist farmers, rich, considering the circumstances of the time".
(Karl Marx: *ibid.*; p. 695).

The Genesis of the Industrial Capitalist

The Middle Ages

" . . . had handed down two distinct forms of capital . . . : usurer's capital and merchant's capital".
(Karl Marx: *ibid.*; p. 702).

but landlord-dominated state prevented this capital

" . . . from turning into industrial capital, in the country by the feudal constitution, in the towns by the guild organisations".
(Karl Marx: *ibid.*; p. 703).

The English Revolution

The state of Charles I

" . . . represented the landowning nobles".
(Christopher Hill: *op. cit.*; p. 9).

and the new class of capitalist farmers found itself

" . . . hampered by feudal survivals, without whose abolition it could not develop freely".
(Christopher Hill: *ibid.*; p. 21).

Thus, the English Revolution of the 17th century

" . . . was a struggle for political, economic and religious power, waged by the middle class, the bourgeoisie, which grew in wealth and strength as capitalism developed".
(Christopher Hill: *ibid.*; p. 9).

The civil war was fought between the armed forces of Parliament, known as 'Roundheads' because of

" . . . their custom of wearing the hair close cut",
(*'Oxford English Dictionary'*, Volume 14; p. 158),

and the Royalist forces, known as 'Cavaliers'. As the contemporary clergyman Richard Baxter related, on Parliament's side were

" . . . the smaller part . . . of the gentry in most of the counties, and the greatest part of of the tradesmen and freeholders and the middle sort of men, especially in those corporations and counties which depend on clothing and such manufactures".
(Richard Baxter: *'Autobiography'*; London; 1974; p. 34).

To a great extent, the civil war was fought out under religious slogans,
but

" . . . religion had little to do with it".
(Christopher Hill: op. cit.,; p. 45).

Those

" . . . who wanted to overthrow the feudal state had to attack and seize control of the church. That is why political theories tended to get wrapped up in religious language".
(Christopher Hill: ibid.; p. 11).

The Parliamentarians tended to call themselves 'Puritans' or 'Presbyterians',
but

" . . . the Puritan attack on the Church, on its forms and ceremonies, its courts and discipline, became hardly distinguishable from the Parliamentary attack on the Crown".
(Christopher Hill: ibid.,; p. 32).

Thus the English civil war of the 17th century was, in fact, the English bourgeois revolution. By it,

" . . . the state power protecting an old order that was essentially feudal was violently overthrown, power passed into the hands of a new class, and so the freer development of capitalism was made possible".
(Christopher Hill: ibid.,; p. 6)

The Compromise

In January 1649 Charles I was tried before a special court for

" . . . treason by levying war against the parliament and kingdom of England".
(Leslie Stephen & Sidney Lee (Eds.): 'The Dictionary of National Biography', Volume 4; Oxford; 1992; p. 84).

and

" . . . he was condemned to death",
(Leslie Stephen & Sidney Lee (Eds.): ibid.; p. 84).

and

" . . . executed in front of Whitehall".
(Leslie Stephen & Sidney Lee (Eds.): ibid.; p. 84).

However, the English bourgeois revolution did not proceed, as did its counterpart in France, to exterminate the aristocracy. The monarchy was restored in 1660 with Charles II, the son of the executed Charles I, as king.

But in fact, a restoration

" . . . of the old order at home was made impossible by demolishing fortresses, disarming the Cavaliers and taxing them to the verge of ruin, so that many were forced to sell their estates and with them their claim

to social prestige and political power".
(Christopher Hill: op. cit.; p. 54).

The landowners

" . . . were not restored on the old conditions".
(Christopher Hill: ibid.; p. 58).

The returned Royalists

" . . . had perforce to adapt themselves to the new free market conditions, i.e., to turn themselves into capitalist farmers, or lessors of their estates, or they went under in the competitive struggles".
(Christopher Hill: ibid.; p. 58).

Thus, the Restoration

" . . . was by no means a restoration of the old regime. . . . Charles II . . . was not restored to his father's old position. The prerogative courts were not restored, and so Charles had no independent executive authority. The common law, as adapted by Sir Edward Coke to the needs of capitalist society, triumphed . . . over the arbitrary interference of the Crown".
(Christopher Hill: ibid.; p. 57).

For example,

" . . . the King had no power of taxation, independent of Parliament. . . . Charles was really King by the grace of the merchants and squires. . . .
The King . . . henceforth became dependent on a Parliamentary civil list, a salaried official".
(Christopher Hill: ibid.,; p. 57-58, 59).

The limited constitutional powers of the restored monarchy were, it is true, not spelled out clearly in official documents. But when Charles II died in February 1685 and was succeeded by his son as James II, in 1688, James

" . . . made the mistake of taking these theories at their face value and threatened to restore the old absolute monarchy, James was hustled out by the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688".
(Christopher Hill: ibid.; p. 60).

In November 1689, the Netherlands ruler William of Orange, who had married the daughter of James II, was invited to take the throne as William III. The new regime represented a compromise in which the landed aristocracy shared power, but in a subordinate capacity, with the now dominant capitalist class:

"The 'glorious Revolution' brought into power, along with William of Orange, the landlord and capitalist appropriators of surplus-value".
(Karl Marx: ibid.; p. 676-677).

Consequently, by the end of the 17th century, the English state was one

" . . . representing landed and moneyed interests fundamentally united".
(Christopher Hill: op. cit.; p. 59).

Indeed, the French historian and critic Hippolyte Taine states that he was told by an English manufacturer that the capitalist class was happy accept a division of labour which left the work of governing to the aristocracy, who had more experience, thus leaving them more time to 'make money':

"We do not wish to overthrow the aristocracy; we consent to their keeping the government and the high offices. As members of the middle class, we believe that specially trained men are required for the conduct of affairs -- trained from father to son for this end".
(Hippolyte Taine: 'Notes on England;' London; 1872; p. 188).

Landownership

" . . . had been adapted to the conditions of the capitalist mode of production".
(Doreen Massey & Alejandrina Catalano: op. cit.; p. 64).

The Decline Of the Aristocratic Landowner

The position of the landowning aristocracy as junior partners in the ruling class continued for several centuries. As the bourgeoisie consolidated its position,

" . . . it did so in union with the aristocracy".
(J. V. Beckett: 'The Aristocracy in England: 1660-1914'; London; 1986; p. 12).

Even today, as we have seen, aristocratic estates account for

" . . . 31.6% of the acreage of . . . England, Wales and Scotland, with the percentage probably being higher in Scotland".
(Doreen Massey & Alejandrina Catalano: op. cit.; p. 74).

and the majority of aristocratic landholdings are large, 50.9% being over 10,000 acres.

(Doreen Massey & Alejandrina Catalano: ibid.; p. 74).

This pattern of landownership

" . . . distinguishes the British pattern, even today, from that both of other European countries and of North America".
(Doreen Massey & Alejandrina Catalano: ibid.; p. 60).

Nevertheless, the economic position of the landlord class was inherently weak. Even after improvements,

" . . . agricultural estates give a comparatively low return".
(Doreen Massey & Alejandrina Catalano: op. cit.; p. 84).

and the bulk

" . . . of the acreage owned by the landed aristocracy is . . . rural/agricultural, and for most members of the group it is entirely so".
(Doreen Massey & Alejandrina Catalano: ibid.; p. 76).

Only a small minority of aristocratic landowners

" . . . own urban land, and such land forms a small part of the acreage even of those who do".

(Doreen Massey & Alejabdrina Catalano: *ibid.*; p. 79).

As the Swedish historian Sven Liljegren points out, the process of decline of the aristocracy began even before the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688:

"From the reign of Henry VII down to the last days of James I, by far the better part of English landed estate changed owners, and in most cases went from the old nobility by birth and the clergy into the hands of . . . merchants and industrials".

(Sten B. Liljegren: 'The Fall of the Monasteries and the Social Changes in England leading up to the Great Revolution'; Lund; 1924; p. 130-31).

An important factor in the decline of aristocratic landholding was

" . . . the development of the mortgage into a long-term instrument of credit",

(J. V. Beckett: *op. cit.*; p. 296).

combined with the growth of aristocratic debt:

"Indebtedness mounted after 1660, until by the mid-18th century many families already had an accumulation several generations old".

(J. V. Beckett: *ibid.*; p. 300).

The 'Industrial Revolution' gave rise to a 'new aristocracy' alongside the old:

"The enormous fortunes made during the Industrial Revolution . . . led to a 'new aristocracy' proliferating at an alarming rate".

(Douglas Sutherland: 'The Aristocrats'; London; 1988; p. 36).

and

" . . . many of the new peers were sufficiently traditionalist to acquire estates to support their new dignity".

(Douglas Sutherland: *ibid.*; p. 37).

This process accelerated in the 20th century. Between 1896 and 1914,

" . . . 246 new titles came into being, of which scarcely a quarter were drawn from the heads of old landowning families".

(Douglas Sutherland: *ibid.*; p. 36).

Many aristocratic landowners contrived to hold on to their estates by contracting marriages with these 'newly-rich' families who became wealthy during the Industrial Revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries:

"The business of advantageous marriages . . . remained . . . an important means of preserving the great estates in a changing world".

(Douglas Sutherland: *ibid.*; p. 43).

By the 1880s,

" . . . the aristocratic position began to be undermined".
(J. V. Beckett: op. cit.; p. 463).

The dominant bourgeoisie had little interest in protecting the landowners from taxation on their estates, which

" . . . was becoming ever more onerous".
(Douglas Sutherland: op. cit.; p. 46).

particularly after the introduction of death duties at the end of the 19th century:

"Even where death duties did not immediately destroy an estate, their imposition over time sometimes caused a progressive reduction in its size which made it more likely that in the end it would be sold".
(John Habakkuk: 'Marriage, Debt and the Estates System: English Landownership'; Oxford; 1994; p. 662).

Consequently, few of the great aristocratic landowners were

" . . . able to hang on to their territorial holdings without the accident of the discovery of mineral wealth or the development of their urban land".
(Douglas Sutherland: op. cit.; p. 53).

It therefore became

" . . . a common practice for landowners to sell off outlying parts of their estates".
(Douglas Sutherland: ibid.; p. 43).

Furthermore, from 1873 to 1896, there was a

" . . . great agricultural depression"
(Douglas Sutherland: ibid.; p. 38).

which

" . . . struck very deeply at the entrenched position of the landowners".
(Douglas Sutherland: ibid.; p. 38).

Only those landlords

" . . . with other sources of substantial income were equipped to weather the storm".
(Douglas Sutherland: op. cit.; p. 39).

By 1914,

" . . . even the greatest landowners were putting some of their estates on the market. . . .

In many cases the estates were broken up and sold to the tenants for it was seldom that a willing buyer was to be found for a whole block of land".

(Douglas Sutherland: ibid.; p. 46).

and the First World War weakened the position of the landowning class still more, so that

" . . . by 1919 well over a million acres were in the market, and in 1920 the figure was even greater".
(Douglas Sutherland: *ibid.*; p. 36).

Between 1873 and 1967,

" . . . the estates of the titled nobility . . . have shown an average decline of 76% in England and Wales and 69% in Scotland. The bulk of this decline took place between 1918 and the end of the 1920s. Between six and eight million acres of land changed hands between 1918 and 1926".
(Doreen Massey & Alejandrina Catalano: *op. cit.*; p. 69).

Thus, at least relatively speaking, the great estates of the 18th and 19th centuries

" . . . are now a relic of the past".
(Douglas Sutherland: *op. cit.*; p. 118).

Landowners

" . . . have not been able to survive the loss of their land".
(J. V. Beckett: *op. cit.*; p. 463).

In the words of the British journalist Robert Lacey,

"Cut off from the land, the noble identity has nothing to sustain it. . . . It is the loss of the land that makes the noblemen headless".
(Robert Lacey: 'Aristocrats'; London; 1984; p. 157).

Thus, the 20th century trend

" . . . has been for property to pass to owner-occupiers",
(J. V. Beckett: *op. cit.*; p. 478).

so that in the ten years alone from 1918 to 1928

" . . . the percentage of owner-occupied land jumped from 11% to 36%".
(Douglas Sutherland: *op. cit.*; p. 40).

Today, as has been shown, it is approximately

" . . . 70%".
(Douglas Sutherland: *ibid.*; p. 117).

Strategy for the Socialist Revolution in Britain

According to Lenin, the strategy for the socialist revolution is as follows:

"The proletariat must accomplish the socialist revolution and in this unite to itself the mass of the semi-proletarian elements of the population in order to crush by force the resistance of the bourgeoisie and to paralyse the instability of the peasantry and petty bourgeoisie".
(Vladimir I. Lenin: 'The Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the

Democratic Revolution', in: 'Selected Works', Volume 3; London; 1946; p. 111).

The Programme of the Communist International

In September 1928, the 6th Congress of the Communist International adopted unanimously a programme — described as

" . . . the first attempt to formulate in concrete terms the task of establishing the world proletarian dictatorship"
(Jane Degras (Ed.): 'The Communist International: 1919-1943: Documents', Volume 2; London; 1971; p. 471).

This programme included the following clauses relating to land ownership:

"a) The confiscation and proletarian nationalisation of all large landholdings in town and country (belonging to individuals, churches, monasteries, etc.) and the transfer of all State and municipal property in land, including forests, minerals, waters, etc., to the Soviets, all land to be subsequently nationalised.

b) the confiscation of all production equipment on large landholdings, such as buildings, machinery and other equipment, cattle, installations for processing agricultural products (mills, dairies, kilns, etc.).

c) The transfer of large farms, particularly model farms and those of considerable economic importance, to the organs of the proletarian dictatorship, to be organised and run as Soviet farms.

d) The transfer of part of the confiscated land of . . . landowners to the peasants (to the poor peasants, and partly also to the middle peasants), particularly where these lands were formerly cultivated by tenant farmers and served to hold them in economic bondage. The size of the part to be handed over to the peasants to be determined by economic expediency and the need to neutralise the peasants and win them over to the proletarian cause. It will therefore vary according to different local conditions.

e) Prohibition on the sale and purchase of land, which is to be retained by the peasants and not transferred to capitalists, speculators, etc. Any infraction of this prohibition to be vigorously combated.

f) In the fight against usury, all usurious debt agreements and all debts owed by the exploited strata of the peasantry to be annulled; poor peasants to be exempt from taxation, etc. . . .

Housing:

a) Confiscation of properties of large landlords;

b) Transfer of the confiscated houses to the local Soviets.

c) Bourgeois districts to be settled by workers.

d) Palaces and large public and private buildings to be handed over to workers' organisations".

(Jane Degras (Ed.): *ibid.*; p. 495-497).

In the view of 'The Marxist-Leninist Research Bureau', the 'Committee for a Marxist-Leninist Party' should decide whether and to what extent this programme requires amendment in the light of any change in conditions since 1928.

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