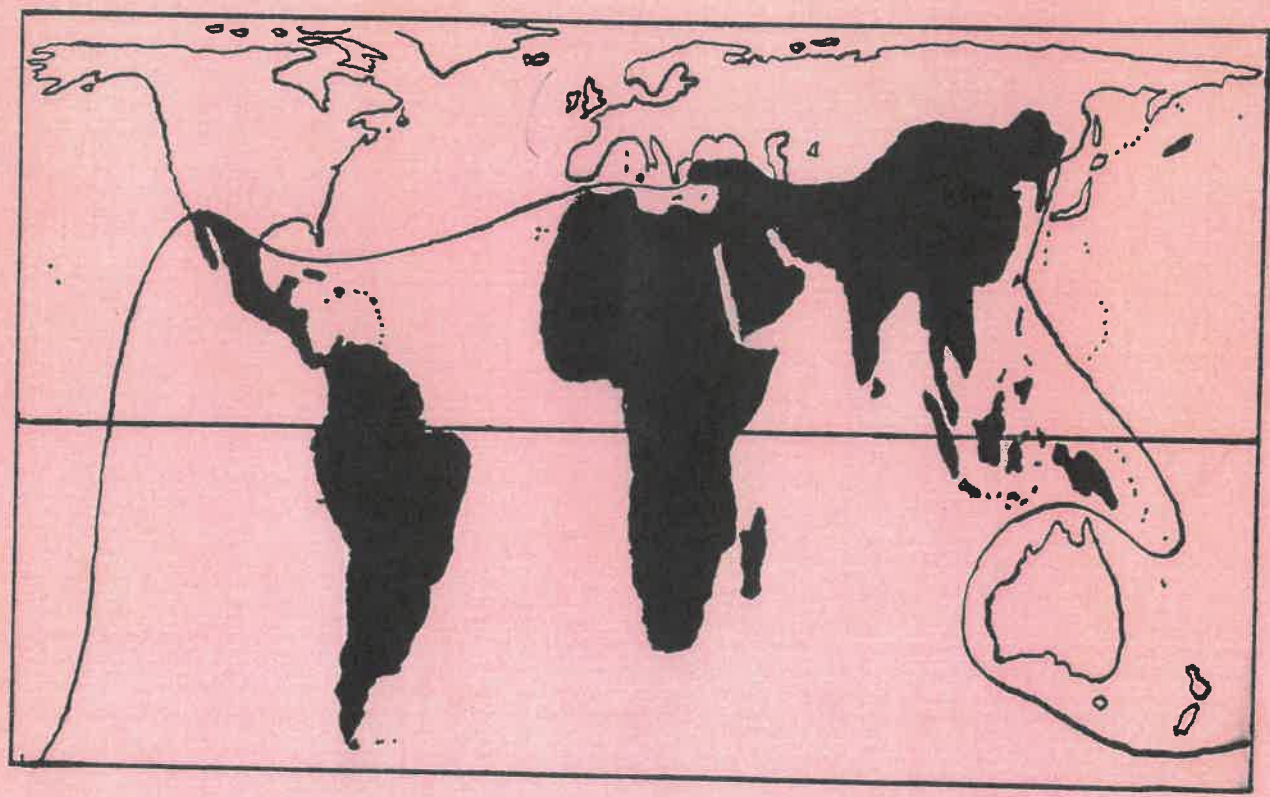


# OCTOBER

JOURNAL OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST LEAGUE

SUMMER 1985 70p



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OCTOBER :  
Published by the I.C.P., c/o 803 Seven Sisters Road  
London N4 3NG

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# EDITORIAL

The new series of October appears after a very long gap. This is not because the RCL has in any way relegated theory to a position of lower importance. On the contrary, we recognise that the advancement of a theoretical perspective for the revolution in England is one of our major tasks. No doubt there is a marked diffidence when we confront our own theoretical ineptitude. A poor theoretical level has contributed to the difficulties which the RCL has faced over the period of the absence of the theoretical journal. Debate over differences would have been conducted better and achieved more positive results if we had developed a common language of theory at a higher level.

The principal differences over this period have centred on the question of racism. This theme underlies all the articles in this issue, and it may be recalled that it dominated the last issues of the old series of October. Painstakingly, and even now tentatively, we attempt to resolve the issues. Some may rightly point out that the RCL has made no progress on other crucial questions, like women's oppression or the international situation. But we make no apologies for our preoccupation with the analysis of racism, and the struggles against it. The RCL is by and large a white organisation. Its world view is conditioned by the events and attitudes, distortions and material privileges of centuries of colonialism. The society which Communists in England seek to interpret and, ultimately, change, has a character defined by its racism, the more so to the extent that it attempts to deny it. On the other hand more than 80% of humanity are the victims of racism, and see the world the right way up.

The debate has been over the strategy for fighting racism in Britain. So far, there have been three phases of struggle. The first was to defeat the idea that all efforts must be concentrated on the industrial working class, and racism only dealt with in that context. The second lined up, on the one hand, those who argued that the aim was to unite black and white workers in the struggle against racism, by persuading white workers to fight racism in order to prevent fascism, from which they would themselves suffer, against those who saw the victims of racism as national minorities, whose struggle for specific national rights must be supported as a matter of principle, not of self-interest. In the third phase the position was put forward that the national minorities were the revolutionary vanguard of the British working class. This was opposed by the argument that the struggle of oppressed nationalities for national rights was distinct from the struggles of the working class, and that the revolution depended on a strategic alliance between the two.

This latter position succeeded, and the struggles for it are reflected in the RESOLUTION OF THE NOVEMBER 1983 CONFERENCE, and in the article criticising the line on racism of the Revolutionary Communist Group. At one stage the "black Vanguard" position was dominant in the RCL, not by majority consent, but because

its proponents controlled the Standing Committee and the RCL paper, Class Struggle. The position was taken from the RCG, which is why it is necessary to include a critique of their position in this issue. The position was elaborated in a document called "Reorientate the League", which was overthrown by the November 1983 Conference. Although the extreme positions of that document have been rejected, there is still struggle in the RCL around some of the issues involved, and, in particular, the strategic alliance.

The last number of October was produced before the "black vanguard" thesis had taken over the RCL. The article "Racism, National Oppression and Free National Development", which appeared in that number, put forward arguments for the line which was later adopted. The last editorial reflects the transitional stage. It upholds the article. But it also puts forward a metaphysical proposition which was to become the foundation of the positions which dominated the RCL, and Class Struggle in particular, for over a year:

"We would say that the revolutionary ideology for Britain which is based on Marxism-Leninism Mao Zedong thought is located in three streams of struggle against the British state. They are black power and the struggle of national minorities against state repression and for free national development, Connollyism or the struggle of Irish republicanism against British imperialism and for Irish self-determination and Asian Communism or the struggle of the Third World against imperialism and hegemonism."

There are some glaring errors in this statement which should be dealt with first. The Irish national struggle is a complex one, having different trends within it. We support it, and the Republican movement who lead it, unconditionally. But we do not purport to be able to isolate the theoretical or ideological essence of it, under the name of Connollyism or Republicanism or whatever. And, although clearly it is a struggle against the British state, in the sense that British imperialism is the enemy of the Irish nation, it is a national struggle outside the territory of the British state, and must not be confused with internal struggles against it. "Asian communism" is a figment of its inventor's imagination. We know from its subsequent use that it was intended to embrace the writings of Mao Zedong and Kim Il Sung, together with the revolutionary struggles of communists in Vietnam, Kampuchea, Malaya, the Philippines, South Asia etc. All these elements cannot be lumped together to form one school or form of communism. Nor can they be identified with the whole struggle of the Third World against imperialism and hegemonism. Apart from the fact that the Third World is not just Asia, there are many struggles against imperialism and hegemonism in the Third World which are non-communist. And of course, they do not amount to a "stream of struggle" against the British state.

What the former editor has done is to take disparate elements from vital and highly advanced struggles and to mix them together as if they could become an antidote to the backward ideology of the English working class. An injection of black power into the white workers of Brixton, a shot of Republicanism into the Liverpudlians, a spin-off of Asian

communism from the supporters of Naxalbari to the Midlands unemployed: this would put the English working class back on its feet. "We have no crystal ball" the editorial goes on, "which will tell us precisely and under what conditions the contradictions in British society will mature sufficiently to create a revolutionary crisis which can be used to advantage in the struggle to win power for the workers and oppressed peoples in Britain." He does not let this deter him, however. "But comrades should picture the opportunities presented by a combination of the 1981 summer uprisings and rebellions, a Middle East oil embargo, a republican offensive in Northern Ireland and the stirring into political activity by the severity of the crisis of the otherwise dormant mass of the indigenous working class."

This kind of fantasising does not advance revolutionary theory or the cause of communism one step. On the contrary, it acts as a blindfold to the reality of the racist and pro-imperialist mentality of the English working class. That last editorial posed the problem; it stated that "our starting point and guiding line must be that Britain is an imperialist power and an oppressor nation." But it failed to grasp its enormity. Thus, referring to the Malvinas war, the most obscene and momentous illustration of the imperialist nature of the English working class since the first world war, all the editorial said was "Repossession by British imperialism and the Task Force dominated British politics for several weeks." It was led into an easy solution - let others take the lead. The black and Irish youth are the most revolutionary forces, the argument goes, the English working class will spontaneously follow in their revolutionary example.

This new issue of October attempts to deal with the ideology of the working class of an imperialist nation. In the resolution of the November 1983 conference, it is argued that the racist alliance between the working class and the ruling class of the oppressor nation must be broken. And the article on Eurocentrism starts to explore the effect of European supremacism on communist thought. This begins what is hoped to become an ongoing theme in the journal, the deepening examination of political economy in a world of developed imperialism through a critique of the Eurocentric bias of traditional Marxist thinkers. The perspective of Third World Marxists, for instance, Samir Amin, is an important source of study in this task.

Alongside this developing theme, there are many other questions which the journal must take up. Among these are the issues indicated in the introduction to the Conference document: women's oppression, the peace movement, the Celtic nations. Other theoretical questions arise out of our practical work, for instance in relation to the solidarity movement with the Irish liberation struggle. We are proud in this issue to include an important and unique interview with Shaheed Maqbul Butt, the martyred Kashmiri freedom fighter executed by the Indian government in 1984. We welcome the opportunity to reiterate our unconditional support for the national liberation struggle of the Kashmiri people. We hope to publish many such articles in the future.

The policy of the theoretical journal is one of "opening wide" the debate around theoretical questions. Mao Zedong said: "To 'open wide' means to let all people express their opinions freely, so that they dare to speak, dare to criticise and dare to debate; it means not being afraid of wrong views or anything poisonous; it means to encourage argument and criticism among people holding different views, allowing freedom both for criticism and for counter-criticism; it means not coercing people with wrong views into submission but convincing them by reasoning. To "restrict" means to forbid people to air differing opinions and express wrong ideas, and to "finish them off with a single blow" if they do so. That is the way to aggravate rather than to resolve contradictions. To "open wide" or to "restrict"? We must choose one or the other of these two policies. We choose the former, because it is the policy which will help to consolidate our country and develop our culture." (Selected Works p. 432)

Within the RCL, opposing lines exist, and although the balance will be in favour of the majority opinion, both sides will be given plenty of room. We also encourage material from those outside the RCL who wish to contribute to or to initiate debate on important questions. Contributions need not be weighty, polished or lengthy. In particular we welcome letters on theoretical topics, and would hope to make them a regular feature. As to style, we will work hard to make the journal comprehensible. But it must be understood that, while there is no justification for the publication of articles that 75 per cent of our readers cannot understand, and while conciseness and lucidity will be our aim, the journal will also be the place for developing new ideas, often on very complex topics. In seeking clarity we sometimes have to take dark and tortuous paths. But if we fail to educate, stimulate or even to provoke, we rely upon our readers to show us swiftly the error of our ways.

# INTRODUCTION

TO THE NOVEMBER 1983 RESOLUTION OF THE R.C.L. CONFERENCE

## BACKGROUND

The resolution of the conference of the RCL held on 12th. and 13th. November 1983 was passed as the result of intense and complicated struggles in the RCL. These struggles continued to reverberate after the conference, and although they strengthened the line, they weakened the organisation of the RCL. That is the main reason for the delay in the publication of the resolution. Nevertheless, the importance of the issues raised and, not least, the fact that the struggles around them continue both within and outside the RCL, make the publication of the resolution still relevant and valuable.

The Marxist-Leninist movement in Britain emerged in the 1960s with some understanding of the significance of the struggles of the Third World. This was mainly as a consequence of the Sino-Soviet polemic and of the championing of the national liberation struggles by the Communist Party of China. This understanding, itself limited, was offset by the legacy of social chauvinism inherited from the British Communist tradition with its domineering and patronising attitude towards the nations oppressed by imperialism, and its concomitant preoccupation with economism, trade union consciousness and social democracy. The RCL on its formation in 1977 adopted a 'Manifesto' which reflected the unevenness of ideology produced by these contrasting elements. On the one hand it supported the Three Worlds Theory and the undermining of the imperialist system by the struggles of the Third World. On the other hand it contained deplorable pro-imperialist and racist positions on Ireland and the black national minorities in Britain and relegated all aspects of struggle to the arena of the organised workers on the shop floor.

The Manifesto was passed at a time when the economy was beginning its nose-dive. The days of full employment accompanied by successful industrial struggles and the willingness of an easy-going intelligentsia to dabble in left-wing politics were near their end. The second Congress of the RCL took place in 1981, the year of the Uprisings and the Hunger Strikers. By that time, the RCL had begun to re-direct its practice away from emphasis on industrial struggles and towards anti-racist and Ireland solidarity work.

The Congress saw a clear overthrow, after so many years of shame, of the pro-imperialist line on Ireland. It also put a firm emphasis on the struggle against racism (as a result of which, the RCL was able to participate fully in the campaign to defend the Bradford 12). But the Congress equivocated on the crucial question of support for the right of national minorities to free national development. The struggle was obscured by the need to



mount a counter-offensive against a last ditch attempt to resurrect an openly social democrat ideology in the RCL.

Inevitably the RCL was in a confused position. However much it had heeded to genuine revolutionary ideas from the Third World on questions outside Britain, it had always based its concrete strategy on the traditional industrial struggles and the trade unions. While rejecting the Trotskyist view of the primacy of the working class of the economically developed countries on a world scale, the RCL had never seriously considered what this meant in terms of Britain itself. But events were showing that serious blows were being struck at British imperialism from directions far from the working class, while the working class remained at best disinterested and more often openly hostile to these developments.

This latter phenomenon was more sharply highlighted by the Malvinas war. This hitherto almost inconceivable regression to the 19th century shattered any illusions in the English working class. Even its effect on bourgeois party politics was incredible. The myth that the electorate's primary concern is with conditions at home was exploded. One of the least popular administrations this century, presiding over escalating unemployment on a scale unknown since the 30s, achieved overnight an anassailable electoral position as the English people rallied round their empire. The pro-imperialistic nature of the English working class was demonstrated with vivid clarity. If the Black uprisings of 1981 sparked a temporary flicker of resistance in some of the white unemployed, the "Falkland Factor" doused it with an overwhelming flood of chauvinistic hysteria. The naval assault on a cluster of rocks in the South Atlantic united the English people in a way which brooked no opposition. Labour leaders fell over themselves to support the offensive. The only issue taken in Parliament was over the defence cuts which had put the Malvinas at risk, not over whether Britain had any right to Argentine territory. The leftwing found they could join in the jingoism, because Argentina was led by a nasty fascist junta, and to attack Argentina accorded with their Anti-Nazi League and Chile Solidarity credentials. Although the RCL never faltered in its support for Argentina and its opposition to all shades of opportunism on the question, it had not the strength to organise an offensive. Nor did it immediately appreciate the lesson.

#### "RE-ORIENTATE THE LEAGUE "

At this stage the leadership of the RCL went out on a limb. A peculiar idea had been introduced at the 2nd Congress, although it had not been fully argued, and had not found favour. It was the theory of the "newly emerging forces", the black and Irish youth in particular, acting as the vanguard of the British working class and spearheading

it towards the revolution. The idea was not original. It emanated, as could be surmised from its nature, from the Trotskyist movement. The revolutionary Communist Group, together with its split, The Revolutionary Communist Tendency, was having success as the new radical fringe among students in the universities and colleges, the erstwhile stepping ground of its jaded progenitor, the SWP, RCG were an improvement on the rest of the Trotskyites in that they attached significance to the black struggle and the Irish national liberation struggle. They also saw the futility of the traditional "labour movement" orientation of other Trotskyites. They developed a strategy of concentrating practical work on black youth. Their views of the black and Irish youth as the vanguard appeared to be vindicated by the uprisings and the Hunger Strikes. This view together with much of the RCG rethoric, was imported into the RCL, dressed up with a degree of Maoist terminology in a document issued in October 1982 called "Re-orientate the League for the Tasks of the Moment". (RTL). It was around this document that the November 1983 Conference had been originally called. By the time it met, however, the main thrust was to criticise and reject the RTL position.

It is not proposed to deal with RTL in great detail here. It is sufficient to outline its main strategic thread. It argued that the British ruling class, to overcome the imperialist crisis, was "terrorizing and pauperizing the entire working class". It was attacking democratic rights, through "the PTA, Nationality Acts, Tebbit Bill, Criminal Trespass Act, The use of conspiracy Laws, the "Falklands Factor", the attack on street meetings, and so on. "The Key task in the class struggle was "to defend and extend democratic rights, not in a reformist way, but in a revolutionary way". The economic fightback was hamstrung by the domination of the working class by the labour aristocracy, "the shit of capitalist society", aided by "middle-class socialists..who have set themselves the task of searching for a golden nugget in the self-same shit".

The Vanguard of the working class were the "newly emerging forces", the black and Irish workers. The black and Irish workers in Britain were the most revolutionary because they were doubly oppressed. They were linked to Ireland and to the Third World countries, and thus part of the main revolutionary force in the world. At the same time they were part "of the British working class". "Where the black and Irish workers lead today the rest of the working class will have to follow. This is why we argue that they are a bridge - a bridge by which the British working class will gradually be able to join the mainstream of the world revolution. Black and Irish workers are the vanguard of the British working class. Communists must unite with, support, defend, and build that vanguard."

On the question of the specific struggles against

national oppression of the black and Irish national minorities in this country, RTL made this mystifying observation : "There is a point of junction between national struggles and the present issues of struggle posed to the wider working class in Britain. This has to do with the fact that most national minority people are workers, but this fact in itself does not furnish the full explanation. The essential point is that they have the potential to inject into the broader working class struggles an element arising from their national demands which in turn draws on their continuing links with the countries of the Third World... the national minority people's struggles... have a role autonomous from that of the majority working class but which introduces a more dynamic revolutionary trend into it."

A redraft of the RTL in July 1933 placed the strategy in the context of the Three World Theory, and purported to explain the significance of the struggle for democratic rights on the basis of a trend towards fascism. It was also intended to correct the weakness in the original draft in playing down the specific struggles of the national minorities against national oppression. In fact while it wisely avoided the idealism of mysterious elements and dynamic trends being introduced into the class struggle, it managed to endorse the view that national oppression merely made the national minorities a more potent force in the struggle of the working class. It said: "There is a sizeable number of national minority people in Britain, largely of Third World origin, but they face continuing national oppression in Britain, particularly the black and Irish national minorities. These national minority peoples are overwhelmingly working class, so that even the national struggles of the peoples as a whole have a strong proletarian tinge to them. The national minority peoples strongly identify with the struggles for self-assertion of the oppressed peoples and nations and have few illusions about the nature of British imperialism. The black and Irish working class, suffering as they do a double oppression - class and national-constitute a potent revolutionary vanguard force both within the national minority communities and the working class as a whole".

The central conception of RTL, of more and more white workers becoming revolutionary through the example and inspiration of black and Irish workers, was remote from reality. At best the document was a well intentioned attempt to resolve the theoretical and ideological confusion embodied in the Manifesto. At worst it was a cynical variant of the leftist chauvinism found in imperialist countries like Britain. It wishes to use the specific struggles of the black and Irish peoples against their national oppression as a "bridge" across which the British working class can clamber to join the world revolution. By emphasizing the working class position of most of the national minority people, stating that they are part of the "British working class" (not the working class in Britain), and the vanguard of "the British working class", RTL minimises the distinctiveness and autonomy of national minority struggles. They

become just struggles of the working class in which white communists can get involved rather than national struggles in which communists of the oppressor nationality must not interfere. The struggles are seen as important not because they strike out for freedom for oppressed nationalities, but because they advance the struggle of the British working class. (There is even a touch of absurd racism-no doubt unconscious - in RTL : White English unemployed youth responded eagerly to the lead given by their black contemporaries. In some towns to which the uprisings spread there was scarcely a black face to be seen (e.g. Maidstone) There is a clear parallel here with the RCG strategy on Ireland. For the RCG the struggle in Ireland is important, not for itself, but as the "key to the British revolution". Therefore it is open to the British left to determine the strategy in support of the Irish struggle, even when this flies in the face of the strategy of the republican movement itself. The classic example was the RCG refusal to accept the Republican movement's 5 demands over the Hunger Strikers, and their insistence in calling for political status against the express wishes of the Irish movement.

#### THE CONFERENCE DOCUMENT

The response to RTL, eventually resulting in the Conference document, was to highlight and develop two aspects; first the national oppression of the national minorities in Britain, and in particular its highest and most vicious form, racist oppression, and second, the strength of pro-imperialist and racist ideology in the English working class. A critique of RTL by the authors of the Conference Document illustrate these points. Of national oppression it says: "This (RTL) position reduces national oppression to a question of double oppression. It limits national oppression to the question of the origin of black and Irish workers and does not take up national oppression within this country. This is opposed to the "Free National Development" position which analysed the oppression of black people in this country and their resistance to it; linked racism in this country with the oppression of peoples and nations by imperialism and showed the continuity between the two; it showed that the struggle against national oppression here has mainly taken the form of a separate struggle not primarily based on the class position of black workers but on the unity of national minority communities. "On the ideology of the white working class it said: "The majority working class is also affected ideologically and materially (by imperialism) ... and this is reflected in its position facing two ways: on the one hand engaged in a constant struggle on the economic and sometimes political level with capital, at the present limited in a social democratic framework generally, and on the other hand,

allying itself with the ruling class in its oppression of the oppressed nations of the Third World and the national minorities within this country. "

Linking the two aspects, the critique points out: "The struggle of black people against their oppression and for national rights is a separate struggle of an advanced nature aimed at the British state. This struggle has been carried out without the support of and often in the face of direct opposition from members of the majority working class. RTL glosses over this important contradiction and engages in wishful thinking when it says that the majority working class will spontaneously follow the lead of black and Irish workers. If we understand that imperialism has to a great extent enlisted the support of the majority working class in its oppression of nations and peoples, and built an alliance with it, we can also then understand that to the extent that the majority working class either actively supports racist oppression or does not actively fight against it, the fight against this oppression will take the form of a struggle between nationalities."

These are the principal themes in the Conference resolution. Its strategy challenges the RCL's record of social chauvinism, and attempts to absorb the lessons of the 1981 Uprisings and the Hunger Strikes, without ignoring the lessons of the Malvinas. It begins on the national question. In a world where the sharpest contradiction is that between the oppressed nations and imperialism, the national question everywhere assumes the highest significance. In Britain there are a number of facets of the question: the oppression of Wales and Scotland, and the oppression of the national minorities, as well as the effects of the persisting colonial occupation of the six counties of the North of Ireland. Black national minorities face national oppression in its severest form - racist oppression. Their resistance has been based largely on the assertion of national identity and of separateness from the national majority. Organisations have been formed with national characteristics, and the forms of struggle have tended towards positive demands for national rights.

While the national minorities face racist oppression, the majority working class is imbued with racist ideology as a result of its experiences of imperialism from the side of the oppressors. Racist oppression does not come only from the imperialist state, but from the majority working class as well. There is, in this respect, an alliance between the classes of the oppressor nationality against the oppressed.

At the same time, the majority working class is itself exploited and oppressed by the imperialist ruling class. It fights back, although at present constrained by social democracy. The way forward is for these two struggles against

imperialism to support each other. A strategic alliance between the working class, which itself includes the bulk of the national minority people, and the national minority must be built. But no compromises can be made with racist oppression, nor can the means of its destruction be made more palatable to the white working class. The solution is free national development, and the majority must be confronted with this demand. Their recognition of it will be achieved unevenly, corresponding to the uneven development of racism with the class. But as the strategic alliance between the two mutually supportive social forces is built, the racist alliance will be destroyed.

There are already links between those struggling against racist oppression in England and those struggling for Irish national liberation. It is crucial to win the support of the majority working class for the Irish people's right for self determination. The alliance between the English working class and their masters still depends heavily on anti-Irish racism and support for the colonial repression of the Irish nation by British imperialism.

The text of the resolution has been left as it was passed. It is still rough and unpolished. Positions are still being developed, and the struggle continues in the RCL, as outside it. It is necessary to draw attention to three concepts in the resolution, because they have been the focus of struggle and may still reveal inconsistencies which have yet to be resolved.

Anti-imperialism. This term was very widely used in the RCL prior to the conference. It still has some currency. It emerged strongly at the 2nd Congress, particularly in the usage "anti-imperialist orientation". It is difficult to explain the usage precisely. It seems to have been used in two main contexts: - 1. As a criticism of the RCL and its social chauvinism, the remedy to which was expressed to be a genuine "anti-imperialist orientation" and 2. As a description of the character of a movement wider than the communist forces which had to be built or united with, as in "working class anti-imperialist mass movement" or "fighting anti-imperialist organisations".

The common feature was opposition to the insular obsession of the British left with the traditional forms of industrial and trade union struggles within the imperialist economy (an obsession which some members of the RCL and others have now begun to analyse further under the label of Eurocentrism).

The vagueness of the term anti-imperialism, and therefore its usefulness to opportunists, can be seen by the divergence between the two contexts in which it has been used. On the other hand, communists are seen as not anti-imperialist enough; thus it is an advanced stage of communism. On the other, the anti-imperialist forces are

seen as an advanced stage of the mass movement, and transitional to communism; thus, by definition, a lower stage than communism.

In the first context, the term was used, at its best to conduct a critique of the social chauvinism of the RCL Manifesto, with its emphasis on the industrial working class and lukewarm support for the struggles of the oppressed nations, and in particular its line on Ireland which objectively upheld the right of British imperialism to keep Ireland divided and controlled. It was also used to emphasise the need for opposition to British imperialism specifically, because the RCL lost sight of this in a mechanical adoption of the Three World Theory and the need to oppose the two superpowers.

In the second context, the term was used to describe a level of consciousness and a type of political work. As a level of consciousness, anti-imperialism seems to be contrasted with "anti-capitalism". The latter is opposed to the "bosses" and support the workers. Anti-imperialism opposes the imperialist state and supports also the oppressed nations and peoples. As a type of political work, anti-imperialism connotes solidarity work and anti-racist work as opposed to trade union work. At the extreme, anti-imperialist work is used to mean anything except the economic struggle, as when RTL talks of "the anti-imperialist struggle for democracy".

In all its uses the term helped to pull the RCL leadership closer to the thinking of the RCG, which makes much of the rhetoric of "anti-imperialism". It came closest in the RCL itself in a passage which combines all the weaknesses of the concept with the RCG youth vanguard thesis: "The League failed to grasp properly the imperialist character of British society, which must provide the starting point for establishing by what criteria we should determine who the advanced are - those with a relatively strong grasp of Britain's imperialist character who have begun to fight this monster. And these elements are mainly concentrated among the black and Irish peoples, whose collective struggles have overwhelmingly taken place outside the workplace (with notable exceptions like Imperial Typewriters and Grunwicks). "As has already been noted, RTL fails to pick up the one truth that this passage stumbles over, the strength of pro-imperialist ideology in the English working class.

Imperialism in its popular usage means colonialism, the domination of one country by another, particularly by occupation. In that sense it is meaningful to refer to anti-imperialist work e.g. solidarity with national liberation struggles. And it is true that supporters of the struggles against colonialism and neo-colonialism are generally more advanced in their understanding than those who fight for higher wages, or for reforms within capitalism. But two confusions must be avoided.

First to apply the term anti-imperialist to all struggles not based on the workplace - like the all white riot in Maidstone. Second to forget the scientific meaning of imperialism, that of the stage of monopoly capitalism. In that more precise and correct sense, the only genuine form of anti-imperialism must be revolutionary communism because it alone has the understanding necessary for a conscious struggle against imperialism. Not to recognize this is to lead into liquidationism. Accordingly, in paragraph 4 of the resolution, the concept of "anti-imperialist orientation" is rejected.

Labour Aristocracy. The resolution in para. A12 insists on the specific concept of the "labour aristocracy" while making it clear that there is not only one section of the working class which is influenced by imperialism. On the contrary, racism has thoroughly imbued the English working class, and it is this widespread and deep effect of imperialism which makes the English working class so susceptible to the influence of opportunism. Opportunism is the specific political form which imperialist ideology takes in the working class; it turns class antagonism into its opposite and recruits the working class to the side of their imperialist masters. The Labour Party, and all who make common cause with it, in any shape or form, are the principal proponents and repositories of opportunism.

This is clear enough, but the concept of the labour aristocracy raises difficulties. Its traditional meaning has been those more skilled, and therefore privileged sections of the working class (like time served engineers) and particularly those based in traditional craft-based unions (like the print unions, NGA and SLADE). It is absurd to say that the main social force promoting opportunism today derive from these rapidly diminishing and weakening section of the proletariat. The growth of "white collar" occupations at the expense of traditional manual jobs may suggest that this is now the source of opportunism. But there is not the slightest evidence for this. And since the labour aristocracy is a social force, it cannot merely be the trade union and labour party leaders themselves. Beside which there is a sense in which people get the leaders they deserve, The usefulness of this concept must depend on a thorough class analysis, the need for which was clearly recognised by the Conference.

The trend towards fascism. The resolution recognizes that this trend exists, but its exact form and source and its significance in explaining the overall development of British imperialism and the struggle against it, are subject to different interpretations in the RCL. One set of questions concern the general nature of imperialism today and particularly British imperialism.



Is imperialism still the driving force in the world today able to set the pace and take the initiative? Or are the oppressed nations and people of the Third World forcing imperialism to respond to their struggles? Is the contradiction between imperialisms more significant than the contradiction between all imperialism and the oppressed countries? Is Britain still a contender among imperialisms or is it a spent power internationally, vindictively terrorizing the Irish and the Argentines with its last breaths? Whithin Britain, is the imperialist ruling class pressing forward a strategy for fascism, to which the working class and the national minorities must respond, or are the struggles of the Third World, the Irish national liberation forces, the oppressed nationalities and the working class forcing British imperialism to respond to them?

The other set of questions concern the nature of fascism itself. The models of the 1930s still determine our conceptions of this. To what extent are they appropriate to today's conditions? What is the role of social democracy in bringing about fascism? What is the relationship between racism and fascism? As far as black people in Britain are concerned, do they not already live under fascism? And if so, is not the "Threat of fascism" something which the left holds up to the white working class, in an attempt to frighten it into combating racism in its own interest?

#### THE OBVIOUS GAPS -- WOMEN, PEACE AND THE CELTIC NATIONS

The question of women oppression, the peace movement and the national question of Wales and Scotland were adverted to in the Conference. Despite their importance, the RCL has done little to make progress in producing a line on them.

The resolution proposed by the Women's Commission and passed by the Conference is included as an Appendix. One criticism of it occurring in retrospect is that it appears to subordinate the struggle for women's emancipation to other struggles. It suggests that women's struggles must take place in the course of other struggles, rather than giving priority to women's struggles in their own rights.

A brief resolution on the peace movement is also included. The RCL has been particularly slow in understanding the question of nuclear disarmament. In particular this stems from the interpretation of the view that the main danger of war is Soviet social imperialism to mean that Britain, as a 2nd world country, must be defended against the Soviet, threat, even if this requires nuclear weapons. The hangover of this interpretation remains,

and the RCL has no definite line on unilateral disarmament. Coupled with this has been a justified contempt for the CPGB and its use of CND to win supporters on the "soft" issue of peace, while avoiding the "hard" issues like Ireland and at the same time trying to line these supporters up behind Soviet social imperialism. During the expansion of CND different trends have emerged, including apparently a dominant line which does not support the USSR. Debate on the issues has begun in the pages of Class Struggle.

There is no resolution on Wales and Scotland. The text has been amended to reflect, as far as possible, the notion which was passed that "whatever text is agreed should only be taken to apply to England and not to Scotland and Wales." The RCL has a legacy of a name which dates from a time when the emphasis was on a single party for a single state and when the national questions of Scotland and Wales were "resolved" by permitting the possibility of a Federation under Socialism. While the right of Scotland and Wales to self-determination is widely if not unanimously accepted in the RCL, there are still differences on how we should advocate this right be exercised, for separation or for unity, and on whether we have the right to advocate anything at all. Connected with this is the question of whether a single party building organisation should exist for England, Scotland and Wales. Progressive nationalist and Republican movements have grown in Wales and Scotland over the last few years, although they have had mixed fortunes. It is to be hoped that the RCL can develop its theoretical understanding of the national question in co-ordination with the thinking of these movements

# RESOLUTION of the RCL Conference

NOVEMBER 1983

## A. The national question and British Imperialism

1. In the world today, it is the peoples and nations of the Third World who are the main force for revolution and who are striking the main blows against imperialism. As the two superpowers, the Soviet Union and the USA collude and contend, carving up the world between them and the lesser imperialist powers fight to hang on to their share, they are faced with increasing resistance - in Afghanistan, Eritrea, El Salvador, Palestine, Namibia and so on. Imperialism is in crisis, and particularly British imperialism whose decline started before that of the other imperialist powers. Within Britain today, a declining imperialist power of the Second World, the working class and national minority people face intensified exploitation and oppression.
2. Resistance to imperialist rule in Britain gave rise to the uprisings in 1981, when mainly young black people rebelled against their oppression - a rebellion that was able to draw sections of white youth in its wake. These uprisings took place in a year when thousands of black people had marched through London in anger at the massacre of 13 black children in New Cross, thousands had demonstrated against the racist nationality bill, and increasing numbers of national minority people were waging campaigns against deportations and divided families. The state repression following the uprisings provided another focus for resistance through the Bradford 12 campaign.
3. In the same year, the Irish people's struggle for freedom forced its way into the consciousness of people in Britain and around the world with the heroic hunger strike undertaken by 10 prisoners of war. The bravery of these 10 men generated opposition to British imperialism on an international level, as well as gaining support for the Irish struggle in Britain, particularly amongst the Irish and black communities.
4. The sharpening of contradictions in the time of crisis means that the potential for revolution is increased. But is the RCL in any shape to take advantage of this situation? There is an urgent need to build a higher level

of unity in the League around a genuine revolutionary Communist stand - an urgency which became increasingly apparent as the events of 1981 highlighted the serious weaknesses in the RCL. Over the past year or so there has been some measure of progress away from social chauvinism which characterized our practice in the past. But overall our lines and policies did not reflect the reality of the events taking place around us and were unable to take us forward. It is however a misconception, that our work should have what has been called an "anti-imperialist orientation", as if these were something apart from a communist standpoint. Communists oppose all class and national oppression, and stand for freedom from all form of domination, imperialism, hegemonism, exploitation and oppression. Understanding this can lead to clarity.

5. In developing a strategy for revolution in Britain it is essential that, on the one hand, we look at Britain in its international context and, on the other, that we have a correct understanding of the national question and its relationship to class struggle in Britain. It is no accident that the resistance to British imperialism has been led by national minority people. It is this phenomenon that we are making some initial progress in understanding with a more correct line on the Irish struggle and beginning to develop a line on national minority people and the significance of the black struggle in in Britain.

6. The national question does not always have one and the same character; "The national question in the period of the Second International and the national question in the period of Leninism are far from being the same thing. They differ profoundly from each other, not only in their scope, but also in their intrinsic character." Stalin (Foundations of Leninism, p.70)

With the development of imperialism and the October Revolution, the national question has become part of the general question of the proletarian revolution. It has been transformed into:

"..... a general and international problem, into a world problem of emancipating the oppressed peoples in the dependent countries and colonies from the yoke of imperialism."

Stalin (Foundations of Leninism p.71)

No longer can the national struggle be seen as one against feudalism and for bourgeois democratic rights - predominantly a struggle of the bourgeois to form nation states. As Lenin pointed out, the developments since 1917 have resulted in the division of the world into oppressor and oppressed nations and he stressed the importance of the role of oppressed peoples in colonial countries in world revolution. (Report on the Commission on the National and Colonial questions, 1920 ).

Today the oppressed nations have to fight against imperialism for their right to national independence. The very struggle of oppressed nationalities brings them up against imperialism.

"No matter what classes, parties or individuals in the oppressed nation join the revolution, and no matter whether they themselves are conscious of the point or understand it, so long as they oppose imperialism, their revolution becomes part of the proletarian-socialist world revolution and they become its allies."

(Mao Zedong, On New Democracy p.11)

Thus national struggles in the era of imperialism are essentially struggles of the oppressed peoples against imperialism - revolutionary, anti-imperialist struggles.

7. Within the world today the most sharp contradiction is that between the oppressed nations and the people of the world and imperialism. Within Britain there are national contradictions, including the contradiction between British imperialism and the oppressed nations of Wales and Scotland. In the past we have underestimated the strength of the national struggles in Scotland and Wales, and at the present moment we have only just begun to understand their nature and significance. Residing within the British state are fragments of oppressed nations - from Britain's oldest colony of Ireland, and from the oppressed nations of the Third World - India, Pakistan, Jamaica, Bangladesh, Antigua Malaya etc. These people form national minorities in Britain, and what they all have in common - the Third World peoples, the Irish, Scottish and Welsh - is that they suffer from national oppression by British imperialism. The nature, form and degree of that oppression varies, but a correct understanding of the national question gives us a framework within which we can analyze each situation. It is the sharpness and severity of the national contradiction and the resistance of the nationally oppressed to their oppression which has resulted in the fact that these struggles against British imperialism are the most advanced.

8. Those national minority people originating from the Third World face a particularly severe form of national oppression - racist oppression. The ideology of racism developed in relation to particular economic developments i.e. originating in the slave trade of developing capitalism and becoming fully defined with the development of capitalism into imperialism. It was developed in order to justify the exploitation and oppression of the peoples and nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America. As such, racist oppression is not separate from national oppression but the highest and most vicious form of it. For black people in Britain, the effects range from racist immigration and nationality laws, institutionalised racism, discrimination at work, school etc., police harassment, physical attacks on themselves and their homes and denial of cultural rights.

9. The counterpart to the racist oppression and the denial of national rights has been the strong assertion of national identity and the development of an anti-imperialist tradition, powerfully expressed in the ideology of Black Power. Black Power identifies the white power structure as responsible for imperialism and also sees the corrupting effect of

racism on the white population as a whole. It lays stress on the autonomy of the black people's struggle and the need for black people to unite with each other before entering alliances with the majority nationality.

10. Within the national minority communities a variety of political viewpoints emerge over specific issues faced by each community. These are affected by class, cultural, linguistic and religious influences. We should recognise that such differences are bound to occur. Our attitude must be that these are issues for the national minority people to solve themselves (contradiction among the people). We must not allow these contradictions to be used by racists, white supremacists or bourgeois parties to exacerbate divisions or foster the idea that national minority people are incapable of solving their problems themselves or making their own decisions.

11. Ever since coming to this country, black people have fought back against their oppression. They have formed organisations which reflect their interests and struggles. Many of these have been on specific national lines such as the IWA, PWA, DWA, West Indian Federation, whilst others are not so specifically national - Black Parents, Race Today, Southall Black Sisters, Afro-Caribbean Self Help Group and so on. But most organisations within the Black community have national aspects and an identity which is distinct from that of the majority nationality. The AYM for example has a distinct Asian identity, whilst many of the Afro-Caribbean organisations consciously assert their origins in Africa, and have close links with political developments in the Caribbean. Many cultural and religious organisations also provide a focus for the struggle against racist oppression e.g. Sikh Temples, Mosques, Valmik Sabha, black churches and Rastafarians. The fact that some organisations are workers organisations reflect the recognition of the need for working class leadership, and there is sharp class struggle taking place in the black community - a struggle for the leadership of what is essentially a black peoples struggle. The practice and identity of all these organisations is very much with an oppressed community.

12. The main force of the struggle against racist oppression derives from organisations defined in one way or another by their origins in oppressed nations (demonstrated by the solidarity and support given to struggles in the Third World) but the main struggle is concerned with conditions of life here as the immediate issue. In the course of this struggle new forms and aspects of national identity are developed reflecting the fact that the struggle is not only a struggle against racist oppression but a positive one for national rights.

13. The development of imperialism resulted in the division of the world into oppressor and oppressed nations. The English working class is the working class of an oppressor nation and is thoroughly imbued with racist ideology. This racist ideology has been used to enlist the working class onto the side of imperialism in its oppression

of nations. This also includes the oppression of national minorities here. A labour aristocracy continues to exist and to be the main social force promoting opportunism in the working class. The deep influence of opportunism in the working class cannot, however, be explained solely by the activity of the labour aristocracy. Still less is it sufficient to say that only a section of the working class - the labour aristocracy - has been corrupted by racism and imperialism.

14. The present day social structure of England is built on imperialism, is built on the oppression of nations. This is not to say that the whole of the English working class has been "bought off", that they are no longer exploited. The working class is still exploited by capital, but in relation to the contradiction between the oppressed nations and people of the world and imperialism, they are, temporarily at least, in alliance with imperialism. This is why the racist oppression suffered by national minority people here does not come only from the state and the ruling class, but also takes the form of attacks and insults on the streets or in their homes (going as far as arson and murder), of collaboration by white workers with management to maintain discriminatory practices in work places, actively organising against black workers (e.g. Imperial Typewriters and Heathfields), and constant failure to support black people in their struggle against racist oppression and for national rights. It must be recognised, however, that racist attitudes are not held uniformly through the class. There is a spectrum which includes a thoroughly racist section, a middle section which has broken with racism in some respects, without being advanced enough to understand and support such demands as free national development; and an advanced section which has seen through the lie of racism and can unite with the national minority struggle against their oppression.

15. Objectively, the working class and national minority people face the same enemy - British imperialism, although the working class struggle is still contained within the parameters of social democracy. British imperialism exists on exploitation and national oppression and struggles against both of these are necessary to overthrow it. The majority working class can be mobilised on the basis of the struggle against its own exploitation and oppression by British imperialism. Any unity between the two struggles must start from mutual recognition of them, and particularly from majority working class support for the struggle of national minority people for free national development. It is in this sense that the concept of a strategic alliance is put forward - an alliance between the majority working class and the oppressed nationalities. This is the only way that the racist alliance can be broken and the struggle taken forward on a principled basis. Whilst many black organisations see the need to make alliances with the majority working class and progressive white organisations, they always retain their organisational autonomy.

16. Ireland is Britain's oldest colony and the oppression of the large Irish national minority here is based on the centuries-old oppression of the Irish nation. Anti-Irish racism is deeply embedded in the English national consciousness. As the struggle for national liberation in Ireland intensifies, national oppression here increases and so does national consciousness and resistance by Irish national minority people. The struggle for liberation in Ireland is of central importance to British imperialism. This is because of many factors: its long history; the closeness of Ireland to Britain; the large national minority here and other factors. Hence the close connections between the struggle in Ireland and Britain itself. Historically, Irish people have often played a leading role in working class struggles in this country. Winning support for the national demands of the Irish people among the majority working class is a key task for communists.
17. The increasing support for the Irish struggle, and our position in support of the Republican Movement, has meant that we are able to learn from the rich ideology of republicanism, as put forward by Connolly and others, which is a living revolutionary tradition in Ireland and is strongly upheld by Irish people in this country.
18. The material basis for links between the Irish and the black people's struggles is their common oppression by British imperialism. In practice, the main black national minority organisations were not slow to recognise the operations of British imperialism in Ireland and have long supported the Irish struggle. During the uprisings, black youth identified with the I.R.A. prisoners in the H-Block sent a message of support to the demonstration against the Nationality Act and Sinn Fein Britain is attempting to form links with black organisations here. Such an alliance between the nationally oppressed will provide a powerful opposition to British imperialism and shows clearly the revolutionary nature of national struggles.
19. The crisis of imperialism is intensifying for the British ruling class. It seeks to establish again a strong position among the imperialist countries by attacking the living standards and democratic rights of the great majority of working people living in Britain. There is a trend towards fascism and the struggles of the national minorities and oppressed nations, the women and the working class are taking place in that context. But the intensification of the crisis weakens the racist alliance between the ruling class and the majority nationality working class. If policies based on a correct political line are implemented, there are good prospects of breaking the English working class away from pro-imperialist ideology step by step, and building the strategic alliance.
20. As communists, our central task is party-building. We must uphold Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought and use it creatively. After the second World War, the predominant trend in Europe was for revisionism to destroy the living essence of Marxism, and this was accompanied by growing social chauvinism. Comrade Mao Zedong developed Marxism-Leninism in the course of Chinese revolution and



in the struggle against Soviet revisionism and upheld its revolutionary nature. It is Comrade Mao and other Third World revolutionaries in Asia, Africa and Latin America who have upheld Marxism Leninism, particularly using it to take forward the national struggles of oppressed peoples and nations against imperialism. We must learn from their Theory and practice and link Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought with the revolutionary traditions and ideologies that already exist in this country.

#### D. Self-criticism

1. The history of the RCL since its foundation in 1977 has been complicated: having adopted the 'Manifesto' as our basic political position, we took up the Zimbabwe campaign; we went through sharp internal struggles and attempted a 'rectification' campaign; we united with the CWM and the BCA, held a history conference and a unity conference; attempted to adopt a major programmatic document and ended up with 'Section 7' at the 2nd Congress in July 1981. Since that Congress, we have failed to make progress on the international situation and continued to struggle over contradictions in our statement at that time. In this period we have also changed from doing only industrial work to taking up Ireland solidarity work, anti-racist work and other broader areas of work.
2. There were obviously many factors in these struggles and developments; there were positive and negative aspects to our work; there were left and right errors. The central theme, however, has been the struggle against social-chauvinism in the RCL: the central political error was the social-chauvinism of the RCL's policy which comes out most clearly on its stand on Ireland and on the struggle of black people within this country, both of which related to our understanding of British imperialism, and the struggle against it, both internationally and in this country.
3. The history of the old RCL and its predecessor, the CFB(ML) \* does not make up the whole of the history of the present RCL. However the RCL was the dominant organisation and the 'Manifesto' was the basis for unity with other organisations. In the course of unity with the RCL, in some cases a relatively strong position became subordinated to the 'Manifesto' as in the case of the CUA and ELMLA. The CWM and BCA joined the RCL at a later stage and played an important role in the struggle against social chauvinism.
4. One of the urgent theoretical tasks which should have a high priority in the next period is for the RCL to sum up scientifically its own history.

\* CFB(ML) The Communist Federation of Britain (Marxist - Leninist). CUA Communist Unity Association. ELMLA. East London Marxist Leninist Association. CWM. Communist Workers Movement BCA. Birmingham Communist Association.

Many questions need sorting out on the basis of a good self-criticism and summing up of past work. In this document we pick out some of the most important points.

5. The 'Manifesto' only paid lip-service to the struggle against British imperialism. The principle of proletarian internationalism, the need to support all struggles against imperialism, including British imperialism, was not included. Within this country, the main contradiction was seen as between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and other contradictions were either ignored or subordinated by this. The industrial working class was seen as the leading and main force for revolution and the effects of imperialism on class relations within the country was not understood. The other side of this was that the 'Manifesto' ignored the sharpness of national contradictions within the British state. The struggle of black people was ignored, and that of the Irish people, and the people of Wales and Scotland. The working class was limited to the industrial working class and the only important arena of mass work was the industrial work place. The struggle for women's liberation was also reduced to the struggle in factories.

6. Ireland: In the 'Manifesto' the question of Ireland came under the heading of national oppression within Britain and in the context of a general statement pointing out the need to "strengthen the fighting unity of the working class of the working class of the British Isles against the British monopoly capitalist bourgeoisie". We did not oppose partition specifically, and advocated building the RCL in Northern Ireland. We did not recognise the nature of the revolutionary struggle being carried out by the Irish people under the leadership of the Republican Movement in Ireland, and openly opposed National Liberation organisations in 'Class Struggle!'

7. A full criticism of old lines on Ireland is well documented in the 'Irish Struggle', the CFB and the RCL' printed in the Internal Journal.

8. The failure to support the struggle of the people of Ireland, Britain's oldest colony, exposed the RCL's anti-imperialism as sham. It also showed our failure to learn from the Irish national minority people in this country who have a history both of playing an active role in working class struggles in this country, and of support for the Republican Movement in Ireland.

9. Black struggles: In the 'Manifesto' the question of national oppression of black people was reduced to a question of 'double oppression' within the working class, and the struggle against it to one for unity within the working class. Racism was seen as "the most serious... divisive ideological tendency" and its importance was that it was used to bring in fascism i.e. it enabled the ruling class to oppress the class as a whole. We only supported the struggle against racism in as much as it served the struggle of the working class as a whole.

10. The RCL was in fact ignorant of the nature and form of the struggle against racist oppression. Although the struggle against the Immigration Act and the need for self-defence are mentioned, there was no understanding of the history of resistance to racist oppression, the organisations that black people have built, or the revolutionary nature of these struggles.

11. The question was reduced to one of winning working class unity at the industrial work place. This ignored the fact that the history of black people's struggles was one based mainly in the different national communities and of alliances between the different communities. Although black workers have been at the forefront of many industrial struggles, this has not been the main arena for the fight against racist oppression. These struggles have been against racist oppression and for national rights: for example, the right to wear turbans, for language teaching, against deportations, for the right to self-defence etc. Racist oppression affects black people and it is they who have fought back relying on their own communities, often on a multi-class basis, as the main force in the fightback.

12. In the course of these struggles different organisations have been built to lead and coordinate the fightback, usually based in the different communities. The 'Manifesto' ignored the need for independent black organisations and the fact that religious and cultural organisations have in some cases become centres of resistance for black people.

13. A blatant example of our chauvinism dates back to the CFB(ML): our attitude to the IWA(GD) at that time led by Comrade Jagmohan Joshi, that we dismissed as a 'cultural organisation'. We ignored the leadership Comrade Joshi gave to the struggle against racism, in popularising 'Black Power' in the struggle against Soviet Social-Imperialism and imperialism in general, and in support of revolutionary forces in India. He was a leading communist who gave a lead to all communists, white and black, in the anti-revisionist movement and the struggle to rebuild the Marxist-Leninist movement.

14. Another example was our refusal to take part in an "Anti Racialist National Demonstration" in 1976, saying that we supported it, but were too busy with other tasks.

15. We would stress that these are just examples and there is much we have to learn about the past and present of black people's struggles.

16. One result of these lines was that we saw the RCL being in a position to lead these struggles. We did not uphold the need for black leadership and organisation. We saw the RCL, a small mainly white organisation, with no understanding of the struggle as being able to take up a leading role.

17. In the section on "Racism" in the 'Manifesto' para 22, we put on the same level white racism and narrow black nationalism'. For an organisation of mainly white comrades to target narrow nationalism clearly demonstrated our

chauvinism. We had an incorrect understanding of the struggle against racist oppression, we negated the whole Black Power Movement and demanded that the oppressed change their attitude towards their oppressor.

18. A clear demonstration of the application of these lines is found in 'Revolution' Vol. 3.3. August 1978. In an article "Firmly establish the Factory Cells" two different factories were discussed. One factory has a "high level of class consciousness and is well organised from the trade union point of view." The example given is of workers uniting to defend a worker who is victimised. This is a large factory apparently with a work force of mainly white men. Another factory is described which has a work force consisting of mainly national minority women workers. The article says: "They were also prepared to talk about a wide range of subjects like racism, liberation struggles in Africa and some had read about China, and the achievements of the Chinese people under socialism...later when leaf-letting started some of the national minority women workers were prepared to read them on the basis of what they said, as opposed to rejecting them on the ground that they were "Communist propaganda". This section of the workforce is certainly not backward. They are among the most solid of the middle elements." The implication is that the work force at the first factory is more advanced because of its unity in relation to trade union consciousness. The workers at the second factory are defined as 'middle elements' even though it is clear that on a general understanding of imperialism, they are in advance of those at the first factory.

19. Criticism of these lines came from many comrades as we began to understand how incorrect they were. The RCL took up a position of making ARAF work its 'second priority' after industrial work. At the time there was agreement on the importance of this area of work but the debate about the relation between national and class struggle was only touched on. Since then the struggle between different lines has continued. In the course of this struggle new positions have developed. Two incorrect views emerged which have in the main been defeated: that the struggle against racist oppression is a peripheral issue; that we define the struggle against racist oppression in terms of opportunist mainly white-led organisations such as the ANL.

20. The line on women adopted by the RCL in the Manifesto was idealist and economist (see criticism in October I, No.2) In the prevailing context of dogmatic insistence on the primacy of industrial work, it reduced the struggle for women's emancipation to the struggle of women workers for equal pay. This line effectively stifled development of either theory or practice on women's struggles. Three years later, this was recognised in the RCL History Conference, and the Women's Commission was subsequently set up, "to

strengthen our line and practice". At the RCL 2nd Congress, a marker resolution was passed without discussion. Thus the history of the RCL has been, at best, one of paying lip-service to the question of women, both in term of developing a policy and line, and of carrying out education internally.

21. Industrial base-building line: Following from these positions the RCL took a decision to concentrate exclusively on mass work in factories. Previously the CFB(ML) had taken part in anti-imperialist solidarity work (Indochina and Palestine); Ireland solidarity work(TJM); ARAF work and work in the women's movement.

22. There were positive aspects to this decision. It was a break in the practice of the 'left' who took trade union bureaucrats to be the working class and represented a desire to go 'lower and deeper into the masses'. It represented an attempt to transform the class nature of the RCL. But after five years of implementing a policy of cell-building, we can see from practice that it has failed. We have only mobilised a few workers to the M.L. movement and for some time now the RCL has been devoting more resources to ARAF and Ireland solidarity work. It has been a misuse of our limited cadre resources at this stage and the effect on individual comrades has been serious and far reaching and need summing up. Most intellectual comrades who volunteered for base-building were not used well. Most do not work in industry now, and some have moved away from the RCL altogether.

23. The founding of the RCL on the basis of the 'Manifesto' was marked by a high level of unity and great optimism about our ability to build a new communist party in this country. The cracks appeared very soon. The struggle to develop a correct line has taken many twists and turns. As we have argued, the main aspect of this has been a struggle against the RCL's social chauvinism.

24. The RCL has been bogged down in a futile debate about the relationship between theory and practice, and has drawn up mechanistic formulas at various times such as "theory is primary over practice", or "practice is now primary over theory, but theory is still important." The RCL has done little work on elucidating the nature of Marxist scientific method, the dependence of theory upon practice or the derivation of theory from practice. Our lack of understanding of this question has been intimately bound up with the way in which the basic errors of the old CFB were allegedly to be remedied. The rhetorical attitude to building leadership ensured that theory became the province of the Central Committee and that the rank and file merely put this theory into practice. It institutionalised the divorce between theory and practice. The simultaneous campaign against intellectualism ensured that those comrades who voiced dissent or wanted to widen the scope of thinking in the organisation were classed as deviationists.

25. Basis for change: In summing up this history we have to understand the relation between struggles within the RCL and outside it. The basis for change is in the struggles carried on inside the RCL for a general communist position. Events outside the RCL, particularly the Hunger Strike in Ireland and the development of black struggles culminating in the uprisings in 1981, were the conditions for change as they showed up sharply the failure of the RCL to understand the reality of the world around us and support the struggles of the most oppressed. The struggle over unconditional support for the Republican Movement in Ireland was long and complicated but the 2nd Congress marked a major change in the RCL's position on Ireland. The social-chauvinist line had been discredited by then. But the debate on the national question in this country was only beginning to be opened up throughout the RCL at the time of the second congress. Events such as the Black People's Day of Action and the uprisings of 1981 caused struggles and debate, and at the same time theoretical work was being undertaken. It was a serious mistake of leadership for the CC not to concentrate on this struggle immediately after the Congress.

#### APPENDIX A

##### RESOLUTION TO CONFERENCE ON QUESTION OF WOMEN.

a) We must recognise that the RCL upto now has paid only lipservice to the question of women's oppression. The struggle for women's emancipation must become a vital part of the RCL reorientation. Comrades assigned to the women's commission must be enabled to make the development of line a priority, and in turn the women's commission must ensure that it educates the RCL as it goes along. It is imperative that the theoretical work gets done. Mass work amongst women should be accorded a priority, and more attention should be given to the aspect of women's oppression in all our areas of work.

b) All women are oppressed as women under imperialism, but the class position of a minority of women, and the fact that they are white, far outweighs the significance of their oppression as women. Where the opportunity arises, women comrades should make it a priority to engage in struggles of women against their own oppression, primarily amongst those who are most oppressed: those whose oppression is compounded with class and national oppression. Women's fight against their oppression takes many forms: Their role as the main pillar of the family puts them in the front line of confrontation with the state in the form of the S.S., housing education. Both as individuals and in organised ways, women resist male violence. We cannot give a blueprint for what form such struggles will take - all comrades should be alert to the possibilities and recognise the significance of such struggles.

c) The question of struggles against women's oppression and the general anti-imperialist struggles cannot be separated. There are many examples of their interrelationship. e.g. in the struggle to ban depopovera, there are aspects of struggles against women's oppression and against national oppression, since the women who mainly have DP forced on them are Third world women. In the struggle against the immigration laws, where a woman is the target, there is an aspect of women's oppression as well as the contradictions between national minority people and the state.

d) Further, because of women's experience of the state, there is a basis for them to relate more easily to the oppression suffered by national minority people.

e) In the industrial struggles, women's exclusion from skilled work, the more "organised" section of industry and from "equal representation" in the trade union movement, also means their relative exclusion from consolidated opportunism.

f) In all mass work, comrades should pay far more attention to the aspect of women's oppression, and to understanding, supporting and developing the role of women in the struggle.

g) As we carry out this work, we will find allies amongst sections of the women's movement.

#### APPENDIX B.

#### RESOLUTION ON THE PEACE MOVEMENT.

The aggression of the two superpowers puts the whole world in danger of war in which the added destruction of nuclear weapons and their long term effects would almost certainly be brought about. The people of the first and second world countries are reacting angrily to the threat of nuclear war with growing anti-war movements in Europe, North America and the Soviet Bloc. These movements vary in their political development, and in particular in their attitude towards the oppression of the Third World by imperialism and the superpowers. The RCL should support and be involved in the peace movement. Investigation and debate should be organised around three issues: -

1. Unilateralism; 2. The different forces within the peace movement; 3. Who should be the main target - the two superpowers together, or the USA?

# Black National Minorities, Working Class & the RCG

Recognising the importance of struggling against all forms of oppression and endorsing all forms of struggle against oppression is a hallmark of the political activity of Marxist-Leninists. What is as important is adopting correct and specific means of fighting that correspond to those oppressions. This is especially relevant when tackling the dual oppression of women and national minorities. Otherwise there is an evasion of the political conclusions necessary to rectify those particular dual oppressions, thus hampering the progress to a classless society.

That understanding forms the starting point for this article. In criticising the line of the Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG) on black people in Britain and their role in the revolutionary struggle for the socialist revolution, we focus on Issue 9 of 'Revolutionary Communist', the last issue of the RCG's theoretical journal to appear. The main article was devoted to "The struggle of the oppressed in Britain against racism and imperialism" (R.C. 9 p.1). Although published in the Summer of 1979, the discussion article "Racism, Imperialism and the Working Class" remains the most complete statement of the political basis the RCG sees for an anti-racist movement in Britain; it also laid the foundations for a line eventually endorsed in the RCG's Manifesto published in 1984.

Many points and arguments criticised in the RCG's line have appeared in the League's own newspaper, 'Class Struggle', because "for a considerable period 'Class Struggle' did not promote our collective viewpoint, but a view that was held by the editor of the paper." (CS Vol. 8 6/7 July/August 1984 p.2) Thus, in a real sense these criticisms are relevant to wider questions of reorientation debated within the league.

Inevitably the criticisms of the RCG's article involve presenting the arguments for a perspective that the League upholds. This perspective has become known as 'Free National Development' - (previous public explanations of the strategic alliance it entails are to be found in OCTOBER Vol.1 no.1 - 'The Struggle of National Minority People and the line of the RCL' - and Vol.1 no.2 - 'Racism, National Oppression and Free National Development') While the League makes no pretence of having examined all the questions concerning the oppression of national minorities in Britain, nor of having exhausted the subject, Free National Development is part of the programmatic task facing us as revolutionaries in Britain. It forms part of a developing contribution to our endeavours to shoot the arrow of Marxism-Leninism at the target of revolution in Britain (to paraphrase Mao Zedong).

The laws of dialectical development make any detailed prediction of exact plans for the future idealist. In advancing the principles inherent in the Free National Development



stance, we recognise that our theoretical understanding and analysis will become more specific, profound and detailed as it is subject to the corrective of practice. This is to be expected if our efforts are to be rooted in an objective and historical analysis of the contradictions that are confronted in the on-going development of working class and national minorities' struggles. Those whose theory and practice of revolution are little more than a dogma present the case that the national question must always be seen as subsidiary to the cause of revolution. But they are answering the wrong question.

As an organisation the League does not romanticise or belittle the tasks before us. In preaching, sermon like, workers unity, the argument often concentrates exclusively on the use of racism to divide the working class or on the racist ideas of white workers, reducing the struggle for working class unity to either self interest or a liberal appeal to conscience and morality. In doing either the revolutionary thrust of national minority struggles is denied.

The appeal to help the "underprivileged minorities" reinforces the approach that national minorities should be uplifted into the mainstream labour movement, that is, trade unions. But for practical reasons alone, a working class imbued with the prejudices of chauvinist patriotism and racism requires more than a few formulas on workers unity.

Such an appeal blurs over the differences between the working class and national minorities. And in doing so side-steps the historical necessity involved: the right of the multi-national working class to be free of national as well as class oppression. This is a demand that has been developed in numerous struggles, on the initiative of the national minority people themselves. To exclude this demand from the revolutionary programme is a fatal act of chauvinism.

Part of what is at stake in the struggle against racism is the unity of the multi-national working class. This unity can only be built by addressing the contradictions within the class, the resolution of which is the recognition by white national majority of the right of the oppressed national minorities and support for their just demands.

A consistent element in the political consciousness and activity of black national minorities in Britain is their involvement with the struggles of their countries of origin: witness the demonstrations of Southall's Sikhs at the assassination of Gandhi, the vote for Kashmiri defendants in Birmingham's local elections and the composition of those who demonstrated at the U.S. invasion of Grenada. Such a point need not be laboured when so many national minority communities contain numerous specific organisations based on nationality. These national elements are also reflected in so many struggles, not just against state racism, but in relation to demands concerned with their own culture and language: for instance, Rastafarian prison rights, black educational orientation in schools, mother tongue teaching. (see National Freedom CLASS STRUGGLE 7.5 May 1983).

Superficially these elements, and their national character

are recognised in the article in 'Revolutionary Communist 9 when it states that:

"The racism and racial oppression within Britain today is a particular form of imperialist oppression. It is the form taken by national oppression within the oppressor nation." (RC p.10)

This early recognition does not permeate the entire analysis indeed is gradually diluted until we are informed that - national oppression is reproduced in the imperialist heart-land-by-

"the ruling class encouragement of discrimination" p.22

In employing a conceptual approach that recognises that - the oppression of nations is reproduced within the imperialist state as racial oppression" (p.11);

but then shrinking from accepting the political consequences which this entails, the article fails to provide the clarity necessary for advance.

"A RACIALLY OPPRESSED SECTION OF THE WORKING CLASS"

Throughout the article it is clear that, despite the definitions employed, its authors use a deductive reasoning which channels the analysis to a priori principles rather than a study and analysis which results in the development of principles and premises. Take the RCG's use of the term 'black and immigrant workers' throughout its publications; the avoidance of the term 'national minorities' is not a matter of semantic niceties, it reflects a basic theoretical position. Quite clearly the RCG ascribes to black people in Britain a particular functional role in the domestic labour market. A great deal of empirical data is used in a mechanistic fashion to assert the existence of "a special, super oppressed section of the working class" (p.25), that is, black people in Britain occupying a class position with a distinctive set of economic functions. Thus

"Racial oppression has forced black people to occupy the worst jobs, the lowest paid jobs, the worst conditions, shift work etc. and racial oppression is used to keep black workers in these sectors." (p.38)

The RCG's article, for all its detail and polemics, does not make a qualitative break from the view which reduces the solution to that of uniting two class fractions. As its authors spell out, they see the situation that while one section of the working class - black and immigrant workers - face discrimination, face racist assault and face the state's attack, the other section - white workers - has not yet come to their assistance. This means the disunity, the splitting of the working class." (p.43)

The political basis for the unity of the class proves to be little more than a rehash of the traditional recipe of the English left. Its core is the line that in the

struggle for an anti-racist unity as part of building the greater unity of the working class for socialist revolution, it is solely as workers that black people seek liberation: equality and full democratic rights to obtain an education, get a job and have a decent living.

However the facts do not fit this argument as neatly as some would want us to believe. It is not true that national minorities' struggles are immediately and directly bound up with the struggle of the working class. The struggle against national oppression in Britain is a movement of many classes, a reflection of the objective position and experience of national minorities in this country. There are specific community struggles that cross class boundaries within these communities, such as the struggle for Islamic provisions in education, the endeavours to send relief to Poland, and most commonly, the resistance to state deportations. Even the industrially based struggles of national minority workers have not been closely linked with the overall struggle of the working class and labour movement institutions in Britain, even when shared industrial conditions, such as at Hatfield's, provided a material basis for unity in struggle.

The daily experience of petty racist practices institutionalised in the state machinery, and endorsed by the majority nationality's individual racism and indifference, is the background in relation to which national minority communities often have a greater degree of unity and solidarity - in spite of class antagonism - than national minority workers have with class brothers and sisters in the dominant nationality. National oppression acts to weld communities together in resistance against that oppression. The RCG position, in common with the vast majority of the political left, avoids any consideration of the specific oppression which was previously identified as the reproduction of national oppression. The cardinal question that national oppression is the bourgeoisie's systematic suppression of nationalities - economically, politically, socially and ideologically - is not addressed. The RCG's reply to -

'What do we get from oppressed nations?'

is -

"a racially oppressed stratum of the working class"  
(p.31)

This transformation is achieved by a reasoning that allows for the structural unity of the working class despite fractionalisation on the basis of racial oppression. No trace here of a national element to impede -

"the real issue facing the working class, that of building an anti-racist movement against the British state." (p.9)

## ECONOMIC DETERMINISM

Imparting certain specific characteristics to immigrant labour, which is so central to the RCG analysis, is close to perpetuating the racial stereotype of the "backward" immigrant, with no formal education, no knowledge of industrial society etc. This theme runs through the main sources on which the article draws; so we have the influential Castles and Kosack talking of immigrants coming from communities with a pre-industrial mode of existence in which the

" hours and rhythms of work have been determined by the seasons and the natural needs of plants and animals " (S. Castles & Kosack, Immigrant workers and the class structure in Western Europe - Oxford University Press 1973 p.43 ) and the fiction that immigrants are unused to formal rules, and so on. Castles and Kosack's analysis defines the immigrants empirically, as young, unaccompanied men in the prime of their working lives with the particular aim of earning money and therefore cheap for Capital. These specific characteristics enable immigrants to be exploited in a specific way, and immigrant labour is seen as somehow external to imperialism but able to contribute to the domestic development of an imperialist economy. The RCG article does not take on board the last point . It recognises that:

" forced out of the oppressed nations by the poverty and starvation imposed by imperialism, immigrant workers and their descendants have become a super-exploited section of the working class. By this process imperialism has sown the seeds of its own destruction. " (FRFI 12, Sept. 1981 p1.)

But it has taken on aspects of the Castles & Kosack approach in an uncritical way. National minorities demands are an element in the wider class struggle against Capital, but they cannot be deduced simply from the position of national minorities within the labour process. The RCG article falls into an empiricist position which detracts from the nature of the oppression to which black national minorities (along with other national minorities ) are subject. A crude economic determinism colours their analysis as if a pure undefiled unit of labour abstracted from the mesh of countervailing social influences actually existed: theirs is the academic desire for the sameness of the statistic.

The British Left's analysis is coloured by the prescriptive assumption that the immigrant has entered a class position that is obscured by the emphasis on racism. Because racism is seen as a functional utility, the means to the realisation of ruling class interests - that of dividing class forces - the means of tackling intra-class antagonism is seen as a united class offensive against Capital's rule. The distribution of emphasis throughout the RCG's argument is on the need for unity because:

" The basis for creating real political unity is the recognition that the working class the oppressed people in Britain have a common interest in overthrowing the British imperialist state. " (RC 9 p43 )

This finds expression in the slogan 'one struggle one fight' implying a convergence of struggles. Thus the RCG analysis remains in the left's framework that either liquidates the national element in national minority struggles or tries to portray it as really a class struggle for socialism. This theoretical model falls in error on many vital issues, and, through a narrow economic interpretation, seriously fails to challenge the ideological hegemony of imperialism.

The general strategic thesis on the fundamental contradiction between Capital and Labour is not replaced by the contradiction between the national minorities and dominant nationality in Britain. Both of these contradictions arose out of the development of imperialism as a world system, and one should not sever the inter-connections.

A dialectical materialist appraisal of these contradictions does not posit a fractured picture of the reality of imperialist exploitation. The conjuncture of class struggle can no longer validly be analysed or understood by looking at the internal economic workings or social formations of a specific society but must be studied at the global level of the imperialist world system. Defining racism in term of the function performed for the domestic imperialist economy loses sight of the fact that racism developed as, and still remains, the ideological concomitant of imperialism's oppression of nations.

For national minority people in this imperialist society, racial oppression is the highest and most vicious form of national oppression. It is not separate from national oppression - it is intimately bound up with it and consequentially requires the resolution of the national question as the basis for its removal. If the question is posed whether class oppression precedes racist oppression as the determining factor, it is a good chance that one seeks an answer which can prove both arbitrary and mutually exclusive. This is fine for those who wish to invoke their desired conclusion which too often purports a class consciousness devoid of the racist reality of Britain. It gives no indication of a need for qualitative rupture with the opportunist practices, the virus of cultural supremacy and national arrogance engendered by over a century of British imperialist rule. Such a one dimensional 'workerist' approach is essentially an argument based on the premise that national minority oppression is a result of the function and position of the national minorities within the labour market. Conscious activists in class battles, in confronting the reality of a decaying imperialist society such as ours, recognise that a break from such an analysis is a task specified by the needs of revolutionary advance.. The fetish of fitting all phenomena within the parameters of the Labour/Capital contradiction

leads the RCG to eradicate the specific oppression of black people and, in practice, to portray it as part of a general offensive against democratic rights. As the article in 'Revolutionary Communist' 9 argues the ruling class

" has launched a systematic offensive against this oppressed section of the working class. To achieve success in their aim of defeating black and immigrant workers the British capitalists are relying on there being no united working class struggle against racism .... If they succeed in that aim they will be capable of disuniting the working class struggle and so lay the basis for defeating the whole working class. " ( RC 9 p43 )

#### THE BLACK VANGUARD

Seeing only a strategy for the ruling class to pick one section off at a time, the racist wedge in working class unity is the RCG's principal complaint, emphasised throughout the article. Such a line negates any intrinsic value or autonomy in the struggle for national rights. Such national minority struggles are seen as important because they can be utilized in radicalizing the white working class, as FRFI has stated, " it is they, the black vanguard, whose experience and example will explain the issues to the rest of the working class. " ( FRFI ) No. 4

The revolutionary Communist Group would have seemed to have progressed a long way from their founding statement of October 1974 with its single mention of "immigrant labour" ( our tasks and Methods Revolutionary Communist Reprints No. I, RCT August 1979 p11 ) But the emphasis placed on those least implicated in the old traditions reflects the RCG's birth marks, as the Revolutionary Opposition, inside I.S. (now S.W.P). Far from resting on the economic determinist basis that colours the RCG's perspective, the line with regard with young black workers could be mistaken for the inverse of the conclusions of bourgeois criminal sociology with its almost pathological fear of street unrest.

In its endeavours to defend working class unity against bourgeois and separatist ideologies, the article paves the way for ignoring any community response and the specific oppression of national minority communities. It refuses to see national minority people in any context other than as 'advanced workers'. A prime example of this approach was contained in FRFI's reportage on the Black People's Day of Action (FRFI 9 March/April 1981 ). Headlined 'Black Workers on the March' the report concluded: "All true revolutionaries and communists will see the resistance of the youth as a splendid example of revolutionary working class means of fighting oppression. Far from needing to 'excuse' it we rejoice that one section of the working class is on the road to revolution." (FRFI 9 p5) The transformation in terminology to proxy victories of black workers, nay black youth, fighting as the vanguard of the class singles out one section of national minority communities although the entire communities are effected by the national oppression imposed by an imperialist state.

Not content with arguing that the fundamental class character of national minority struggles stems from the over-

whelming working class composition of those communities, the RCG article argues that black people have utilized more advanced forms of class struggle and broken with respectable political tradition. It is part of a process that presents the case that the class demands of black people (!) are revolutionary and that their national demands are not. This neatly dovetails with the RCG's analysis of a labour aristocracy in Britain ( a position stated in D.Reed's restatement of Lenin's position in FRFI 27, March 1983 : " Marx and Engels : the Labour Aristocracy, opportunism and the British Labour Movement " ), with its mechanical adoption of Lenin's advice " to go lower and deeper to the real masses ... not affected by 'bourgeois respectability' ". The tremendous potential of the working class for change has been crippled by decades of class collaboration, and divisions within the class are given prominence by the RCG. Indeed, the polarisation of class forces " between the privileged strata of the working class on one side and the growing ranks of oppressed workers on the other " ( FRFI 33 Oct./ Nov. 1983 ) is ever present in their analysis. However in the application of this understanding the RCG identify the revolutionary potential of black people as that emanating from their status as workers, or more specifically as "people of no property" : the unemployed, the youth elements making up the vanguard that will draw in other sections. The English left's traditional commitment to specific struggles have contained a dominant element, an assessment of that struggle's relative social utility. For the RCG :

" The only revolutionary strategy today is to work among the most oppressed sections of the working class to build an anti-imperialist, anti-racist movement which can destroy the influence of the labour aristocracy over the working class as a whole. " FRFI 33 )

#### CLASS STRUCTURE OF NATIONAL MINORITIES

The article's judgement that national minorities have been in general integrated into the social relations of production in the British class structure avoids acknowledging that their relations with the majority nationality remain both distant and generally uneasy. The marginalisation of national minorities by a bourgeois definition of " ethnicity " has provided an alternative, but equally reactionary set of racist stereotypes which reduces the national oppression of dynamic communities to the need for an 'equal rights' policy.

The article emphasises the state's attempts to buy off middle class members of the national minorities. The attempt to subvert resistance into organized channels of complaint by provision of state-funded resources to cultivate allegiances is indeed a dangerous threat to the solidarity of an anti-racist resistance not only that based in national minority organisations but also that of the proclaimed anti-racists in the dominant nationality. The attention paid to individuals co-opted by the state as "spokemen", to act

as "professional moderators of the struggle", as they are described in the RCG Manifesto, underplays the resistance to national oppression as a material social force. The intention of the British state to create a black professional middle class, to create an interest in the imperialist system, comes up against the racist reality that hems in any advance: the State could not provide enough subsidies or employment to defuse the resistance to state racism. As that oppression increases, more and more are drawn into the struggle against it.

Class differentiation within national minority communities is expected, but reference to the disproportionate number of middle class "immigrant members of the Executive Committees (RC 9 p29) of CRCs is hardly evidence of any serious consideration of the interaction of classes within the national minority communities. The composition of a "special and oppressed stratum within the working class" is one drawn from skilled and unskilled urban workers, agricultural labourers, middle peasants and poor peasants. This is lost in the catch-all reference to "Black and Immigrant workers". In terms of migrant labour from the "New Commonwealth", the unskilled category C was abolished by the 1965 white Paper, whilst vouchers for other categories containing doctors, teachers, technological graduates etc. were increased, creaming off the skilled and professionals from the Third World.

The existence of different socio-economic positions is a feature of national minority communities, and it is evident that the struggle for leadership of these communities does involve different class forces. However since there is a distinct fraction of petty-bourgeois capital that arose partly out of the specific needs of such communities, what should also be acknowledged is that it has not been successful in entering British Imperialism's stronghold of wealth, to exercise social power over the national minority working class, let alone the working class as a whole. In Britain's racist society, in which racism was, and remains an element in the construction of a class alliance (however transitory) the shopkeeper, small manufacturer, food importer, and religious hierarchy have joined in defence of their communities. This in spite of the contradictions within that community. This is demonstrated time after time in anti-deportation campaigns, and even though no one is protected by their class position if they are from a national minority community, the RCG, along with the rest of the British Left, maintains that immigration controls whilst inherently racist, is one of the major ways

" by which the state manipulates and controls this section of the working class". (RC 9 p18)

The assumption of an entity termed "black and immigrant labour" totally devalues the existence of national minority communities with different duration of settlement, geographic concentration, generational structures etc.

In the RCG's examination of immigration, people from the Third World are given a very ahistorical treatment. They are presented without a history or suggestion of continuity.



What is missing are those important dimensions of an anti-imperialist history and culture. The concept of a long independent historical tradition of national minority resistance in anti-colonialist struggles, providing an inspiration for struggles in Britain is absent in the RCG's understanding. Instead national minorities, particularly the youth "showed spontaneous anti-imperialist consciousness" (FRFI 4 p3). The lack of even passing reference to third World Theoretical or political traditions as providing any political basis reflects more than just a passing contempt.

#### PERPETUATION OF RACISM

Since the mid-sixties immigration controls have been overwhelmingly targeted upon the flow of dependants. The 1965 TUC General Council report expressed concern about the numbers of New Commonwealth Immigrants because "...progress towards their integration is in some aspects being reversed as the numbers become large enough to constitute an extension of their previous environments and lead towards their settlement as a series of communities." (Miles R & Phizakelaa A. - the TUC, Black Workers & New Commonwealth Immigration 1954 - 73 SRRC paper 6 1977 p17) That reactionary concern to promote assimilation has found its echo in the Left's attitude that it is a united class offensive against Capital that will end all manifestations of racism. To state that there is "a distinct oppressed stratum" (RC 9 p42) and then offer no specific remedy other than unite and fight against a common enemy of an imperialist bourgeoisie and its state fails to grasp the nature of the task facing communists in Britain. Not to recognize the national demands of oppressed nationalities is to perpetuate the chauvinism that has perpetually crippled the revolutionary movements in the imperialist countries. There is no understanding that the working class of an oppressor nation, a working class that has been enlisted in the process of the subjugation and deprecation of the oppressed nation.

The main essence of racism is not that it divides a multinational working class (which is empirically correct), but that it was directed primarily at the subordinate classes in the oppressor nations and has been a major contribution to the ideological basis for working class support of imperialism. The alliance, however temporary, shifting and contradictory, between the classes of the oppressor nation directed against the oppressed nationalities has been presented in the 'national interest' be it against Polish refugees in the aftermath of the Second World War or the acceptance of expelled Keryan Asians. While it is true that the Labour Aristocracy has been responsible for the strengthening of chauvinism among the working class, with Labour's accommodation to the development of Britain's imperialist economy, the Left has consistently seen this as an all-embracing explanation and avoided the need to confront the racist and pro-imperialist ideology of the majority working class.

The recognition of this racist class symbiosis in terms of an acquiescence alongside a simultaneously antagonistic relationship between capital and labour is not to 'write off' the working class or its potential for revolutionary advance. The ideological permeation of the working class exists, brought about by an imperialist history and has its effects upon internal political relations. Working class struggle is already divided; mutual recognition of complementary struggles will advance freedom from oppression. Simply to assert that black people are part of the class does not result in the working class becoming a uniform whole. In fact it avoids tackling any question of the basis on which principled and effective unity is to be built between the majority working class and its most reliable allies, the national minority in Britain. This is to emasculate Marxism as a science of revolution, to remove it from the realm of the practice of revolution and strip it of its ability to serve as a reliable guide to the revolutionary process in Britain. The unity of theory and practice is best served not by arguing against the role of class, but by appreciating the dialectical force of national minorities in Britain as expressed in the 'Class Struggle' editorial of September 1982:

" Now the world crisis is "bring it all back home" and these world phenomena are imploded with increasing force into the imperialist countries themselves. "

The importance of the revolutionary nature of the national question in Britain finds no significance in an article which takes as its base assumption a sophisticated variant of a widely held view on the Left, that of an automatic structural unity of the working class in spite of factionalisation based upon racial oppression." achieved by the ruling class encouragement of discrimination" (RC 9 p22).

#### NATIONAL OPPRESSION AND SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

The struggle of the oppressed nationalities against the British state, in essence, can only be resolved through socialist revolution, because national oppression is an inherent feature of imperialism existence and can only be eliminated with the system's destruction. The historical example of socialist China and revolutionary Soviet Union in Lenin's and Stalin's time have shown that socialist revolution opens the way to the liberation of peoples and equality between nationalities. Lessons are to be learnt although speculation about the nature of the post revolutionary state is pointless. What must be clear is the need for a territorial component. The whole question of national oppression in Britain is not reducible to the right for provisions and rights in education, language and culture etc. It must encompass all local questions concerning the areas of national minority concentration. The strategic alliance will not come from denying specific national elements in national minority resistance, but by

recognizing them as worthy and positive factors.

There is agreement with the RCG article that "the struggle against racism, the defence of black people must be a necessary and integral part of the struggle for socialism." (RC 9 p35 ) But it is not a matter of the "working class must defend those suffering" (ibid) as national minority communities have and are defending themselves, nor is it that acceptance of the revolutionary road be made conditional on joint participation in anti-racist struggles as suggested in the article (RC 9 p30).

In the re-building of a genuine revolutionary communist party in Britain, communist activity in building the strategic alliance is essential.

While national divisions already exist in the working class, the reconstituted multi-national communist party is not built by smashing pre-existing forms of national minority organisations, arrogantly to 'feed off' them. Because of the differing nature and purpose of national minority organisations and the multi-national communist party the automatic merger of the two should not be taken as read. Given the double oppression of national minority working class comrades, both class and national oppression, they have a specific dynamic role in the forging of the strategic alliance.

Because the forging of this alliance is not simply a matter of struggle within the multi-national working class, it is essential for a multi-national communist party to build the alliance between the working class and national minorities, and to build working class unity as a predominant element. Communists must unite in action with national minority organisations regardless of whether any one national minority organisation within that alliance is communist led.

Communists from the dominant nationality have the prime responsibility for taking up the struggle against racism in the working class and winning the class to support the national rights of national minorities. While the tendency to tail after national minority nationalism may emerge as a main deviation at times, a deviation to be corrected, the opposite tendency to tail after the deep rooted chauvinism and liquidate the national element is overall the main danger to combat. The danger of narrow nationalism, as a vehicle to establish an exploitative dominance within national minority communities means that the responsibility to fight such bourgeois nationalism lies with national minority comrades.

Today's embryonic communist forces can only strengthen their grasp of the requirements of the revolutionary struggle through integrating marxism-leninism with concrete conditions. The process of the rectification of past Euro-centric practice is not just a readjustment, or reorientation, it is participation in constructing genuine

anti-imperialist politics on the basis of Marxism-Leninism. The long stubborn and ruthless struggle against opportunism, reformism, social chauvinism, sexism, racism and all imperialist ideologies is one of the necessary conditions for preparing the proletariat for its victory. It may involve on the road to state power mistakes and deviationist errors. This is not a bad thing : it can only be accomplished against the background of revolutionary practice. The promotion of free national development is part of the programmatic work to aid that victory, by recognising that the national question must be considered a part of the general advance of the socialist revolution. That consideration is absent in the RCG's article "Racism, Imperialism, and the Working Class".



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# EUROCENTRISM

## THE 'KEY LINK' IN THEORETICAL WORK

The thesis which follows originated in an attempt to analyse certain immediate problems facing the RCL in 1984. Since it was written, a number of comrades, both inside and outside the League, have taken its very sketchy analysis a great deal further. It can thus be seen very much as a first shot in a battle to understand and root out what we believe to be a key deviation in the western Communist movement.

It is our view that the key to understanding the failure of successive 'revolutionary' initiatives in the West lies in the influence of EUROCENTRISM. Although this trend can be characterized in a number of ways, its fundamental characteristic is that it views the world from the standpoint of the western 'Labour Movement', exaggerating the significance and potential of the economic struggles of the western working class and relegating to a subordinate role the oppressed nations and their struggles. This is not at all a question of sentiment or morality. On the contrary. Underpinning the very brief outline which follows is a far-reaching theory on the nature of imperialism and class contradictions in the world today. This theory - the understanding and elaboration of which is the subject of our current endeavours - has been developed over a number of years by mainly Third World Marxists, in particular Samir Amin, and it seeks to develop a model for analysing contradictions on a world scale.

As Amin himself put it: -

"The social reproduction of capitalist society cannot be understood by looking only at the internal economic workings of the nation-states of the capitalist world system. To be understood, social reproduction involves the interference at the level of the state in the economic regulation and application of the class struggle-economic laws dialectic not to each nation state but to the system as a whole."

(Class and Nation, historically and in the current crisis p.3)

If we accept this thesis then clearly the contradiction between the developed imperialist world and the Third World (in Amin's terms the 'centre' and the 'periphery') becomes not subordinate or marginal, but the central theoretical and practical question of our age.

The project to understand it is an ambitious one and may well take months if not years, raising as it does fundamental questions about accepted Marxist theory. Rather than wait for the fruits of our deliberations, we prefer now to put

forward these initial points in the hope that they may spur on others to take up this central theoretical struggle.

### EUROCENTRISM and the Modern Marxist Leninist Movement

The history of the modern Marxist-Leninist movement in the West still awaits a scientific appraisal. However on some points we can agree.

The new communist forces which began to take shape in Europe and North America in particular after 1968 shared a number of common characteristics : -

\*In the Sino-Soviet polemic they lined up with the Chinese Communist Party and it was the general line of the CPC in the period which gave them their identity.

\*They marked a break with revisionist tendencies which were more or less strongly established in the West by the 1950s

\*There were three questions of line which demarcated them most clearly from the revisionist parties

- 1) opposition to the capitulation to Western Imperialism by the revisionist parties in the Imperialist countries and the CPSU.
- 2) reaffirmation of Leninist theories on the State, the class struggle and the need for violent revolution.
- 3) identification with and support for the revolutionary national liberation movements in the Third World.

In all of these aspects the ML movement was fundamentally correct.

There were also inherent weaknesses in the new parties and organisations, which were to affect them all to a greater or lesser extent. In the first place they were none of them proletarian parties or organisations. As the Belgian comrades of the Parti du Travail de Belgique have pointed out, the modern ML movement in the imperialist countries arose fundamentally out of the radicalisation of the petty Bourgeoisie, in particular the intelligentsia. As such they were unstable, and few if any of them had any roots among the masses. A major task of the young parties and organisations was the proletarianization of its members linked to the sinking of deep roots among the masses.

Secondly, the movement had a common characteristic of dogmatism and sectarianism. Subordinately this was a reflection of some dogmatism in the positions of the CPC at this period. Fundamentally, however, it was because the positions adopted by the MLs during the 1960s were indeed adopted from the general line of the CPC. As such they were certainly correct, but they were also very general and abstract positions. This factor, combined with the petty bourgeois class character of the movement led it into a number of extremely dogmatic and sectarian

positions in the late 60s and early 70s. Some - whom we would now characterize as the lunatic fringe of Maoism - have never changed from that idealized dreamworld of boldness, purity and irrelevance. Most parties and organisations, however, particularly after the overthrow of the Gang of Four in China, became conscious of the need to make concrete and relevant the general theses they had adopted in the 60s. From the period beginning 1977/78 the majority of ML organisations began a process of criticising dogmatism and sectarianism.

In undertaking this necessary task the movement was faced with a dilemma - a contradiction which had existed at the heart of the modern ML movement since its inception. The most powerful strategic deviation for the communist movement in the imperialist countries has always been a rightist, if not revisionist, tendency. More particularly there has existed in these countries a long term tendency to adopt social chauvinist/social imperialist positions. In Britain this tendency is manifested most clearly in relation to the communist movement's stand on Ireland, and similar particular manifestations of social chauvinism can be seen in respect of most imperialist countries - e.g. in France the position on Algeria and Indo-China, in the US on the Afro-american question. The roots of this are extremely deep-seated and are to be found in the white-chauvinist Eurocentric standpoint which relegates to a peripheral or subordinate role the oppressed nations and their struggles, a standpoint which gained the upper hand in the Communist movement after Lenin's death, including in the Soviet Union.

The problem is thus an extremely important and deep rooted one, which we are only now beginning to understand. The early ML movement of the 60s made a break with this Eurocentric tradition - in particular through its espousal of the Chinese Communists' analysis of the revolutionary role of the 3rd World. However this break was only partial. Forced as it was to define itself in relation to the revisionist and social imperialist parties, the ML movement often viewed itself as returning to correct principles, in particular as enunciated by Lenin and Stalin. This - the politics of the 'return' - combined with the movement's inherent tendency towards dogmatism meant that it was often recreating in more militant and 'revolutionary' form the basically Eurocentric theses of the revisionists, thus espousing a form of neo-Trotskyism, rather than adopting the revolutionary essence of the new storm from the East. Viewed historically we might say that the 'return to principles' was a necessary stage to demarcate the new movement from the capitulationist politics of revisionism but that strategically it would lead it down a blind alley.

Indeed, when the time came to criticise dogmatic and sectarian errors, this was often done not from a revolutionary standpoint, but from a rightist and liquidationist one.

The movement had not profoundly grasped the revolutionary essence of Third World struggles and the national question; it was still hidebound by certain dogmatically applied principles' of Marxism-Leninism; it had made few if any theoretical contributions and was theoretically weak. As a result in attempting to overcome its dogmatism by breaking new ground and creatively applying some of the correct general theses of the anti-revisionist period, it often fell into precisely those rightist deviations which it had opposed in the 1960s. One might well conclude that the struggle against revisionism had not gone deep enough, and that during the 70s and 80s the rightist, social imperialist tendency has reasserted itself within the ML movement. The fact that it has done so in the name of relevance and concreteness should not blind us to the facts either of the inherent tendency within our movement towards social chauvinism or of the very real need to make our politics relevant and concrete.

#### The Movement in Britain

These general points have their echo and particular manifestation in Britain. In many ways the negative features of the ML movement were accentuated here. The revolutionary tradition was weaker; social chauvinism - particularly over Ireland - was if anything more thoroughly engrained in British Communism certainly than in the rest of Europe; there was a long tradition of empiricism and resistance to theoretical work. All of these tendencies can be seen in the degeneration of the CPGB which long predated Khrushchev's secret speech and the Sino-Soviet polemic.

These characteristics of British 'communism' hamstrung the young anti-revisionist movement, and made even more inappropriate the call to 'return to principles' - principles which were themselves tinged with rightism and social chauvinism. Looking back now at the publications and resolutions of the various trends which made up the anti-revisionist movement in Britain, one can see an extremely powerful Eurocentric trend which saw the revolutionary tasks of the 60s far more in terms of recreating the Russia of 1902 than in uniting and identifying with the revolutionary movements of the oppressed nations and people. We can further see that all these main trends were tainted with social chauvinism, and that most of them embraced it in its totality.

The most extreme example of this is of course the CPDML. As early as 1971 (The British Working Class and its Party - adopted at 2nd, Congress ) the CPDML was not simply ignoring the revolutionary struggles of the Third World ( in a 9 page document neither the Third World nor the anti-racist struggles nor the struggle in Ireland are so much as mentioned), they were revising Leninist theories of Imperialism in order to do so -



"Imperialism the highest form of capitalism is stronger than national capitalism. It follows that an imperialist power fights on all fronts as a predator.."  
 ....but we can never say that "it is open to that power to bribe, corrupt or appease any section".

The prose - as usual - is tortuous, but the message is fairly clear -

1. Imperialism is a "stronger" form of capitalism (not the highest stage, moribund, monopoly ...)
2. The struggle against it is the same everywhere (2 class line:)
3. The metropolitan working class is not, and can not be bought off or appeased nor can any section of it.

Perhaps significantly few of the CPBML's rivals criticised it for its social chauvinism in this period (the main exception) being the MLWA (Marxist Leninist Workers Association) They mainly like the RCLB's precursors the JCC (joint Committee of Communists) and CFB (Communist Federation of Britain) criticised it for the incorrect manner in which it had been set up. It was only in 1976 that the CFB made any criticism of the CPB's social chauvinism (Revolution no. 3), at a time when its revisionism had become so glaring as to be unmistakable. For the fact is that a large part of the ML movement shared the Eurocentric and then social chauvinist orientation of the CPBML. This was certainly true of the JCC and CFB.\*

A detailed analysis of this period has still to be made, and it is a task which certainly needs to be carried out. At this stage we confine ourselves to some initial remarks on the CFB and the RCL.

From its origins in the JCC the CFB never adopted a clear position on imperialism, or the revolutionary national struggle. (In fact it rarely adopted a clear position on anything). Worse than this it adopted some clearly reactionary positions - most notably on the Irish national liberation struggle. Between 1972 and 1974 a 'great debate' raged in the CFB over the question of Ireland which centered around two major positions - the 'anti-imperialist' line of the Glasgow Group and the 'socialist struggle' line of the London Group. Of the two the London line was most clearly eurocentric and social chauvinist - being a (slightly) more intelligent variant of the ICO (Irish Communist Organisation) '2 Nations theory' which totally discounted the Irish national struggle as a progressive force. However the 'Glasgow' line which eventually became the line of the CFB was for all its 'anti-imperialism' quite fundamentally part of the same Eurocentric trend. The CFB RESOLUTION ON IRELAND (1974) is extremely vague about the national character of the struggle in Ireland, says nothing about republicanism or the republican movement, and subordinates the Irish struggle to

\* See notes at end of article for some explanation of various initials

the struggle in Britain:

"CFB recognizes that the divisions that have been created amongst the Irish working class constitute the main obstacle to progressive political advance within Ireland..... To help overcome these divisions the CFB as part of the international working class movement will work to develop links with the working class forces throughout Ireland in the fight to throw off the domination of all foreign imperialism and to help achieve a socialist republic as advocated by the Irish revolutionary forces."

This line - which did also say some correct things - was further modified before the foundation of the RCL, in order to accommodate some of the main objections of the 'London' line.

It is hard to think of any debates or statements in the CFB concerning the national minority people in Britain. Like the CPB, it probably regarded them as 'immigrant workers' whose 'most obvious positive feature is of course their class position as workers' (CPBML Party School Document 1972) (Their less positive features were of course the 'facts' that they were 'unstable' and 'moved around a lot').

As far as the national struggles of the world's peoples are concerned, the CFB had rather more to say. Again in 1974 it adopted a "Statement on the World Situation" (Section B) which devotes 7 paragraphs out of 37 to what it calls the Fight against Imperialism in the Tricontinent. This document well illustrates the contradiction within the ML movement from its inception - of on the one hand supporting the national struggles of the Third World, and on the other failing to grasp their revolutionary significance - and so it is worth referring to at somewhat greater length. The document states that "since the war the main revolutionary struggles in the world have developed in Asia, Africa and Latin America." It upholds the socialist revolutions in China, Korea and Vietnam, and the national liberation wars in Indochina, Africa and S. Asia. It supports the movement for non-alignment. All this represents an embryonic line of rupture with the social chauvinist traditions of Western Communism. Against this must be set a number of negative features. The support for the socialist and national revolutions in the Third World is lukewarm, and really misunderstands their dynamic and revolutionary nature. So -

"The heroic fight of the Indochinese peoples had a great influence on revolutionary developments all over the world."

Great attention is given to the divisions in the Third World, the failures of certain popular struggles and the vacillating nature of the 'national bourgeoisie'. The significance of the movement for non-alignment is not at

all grasped -

"The UN today provides a useful forum for anti-imperialist propaganda though it cannot be used as an instrument for the objective expression of the will of the peoples of the world".

In sum the statement is made from a Eurocentric standpoint - summed up best by the condescending way in which 'we' offered to support national struggles in the Third World -

"Insofar as all these struggles demonstrate a growing awareness of the nature of imperialism and the desire by the masses to improve their conditions we support them. This support will encourage the working class in its fight for hegemony in the anti-imperialist movement."

The foundation of the RCLB and the publication of its Manifesto in 1977 was seen by many of us as a new departure in the British movement, marking definite break with the revisionism, and with the confusions of the previous period. In fact it was nothing of the kind. It is true to say that the early League marked a serious attempt to come to term with the class character of the movement - one of the necessary tasks of the modern Marxist Leninists, and to this end it placed enormous stress on 'ideological' work (carrying out a number of 'rectifications' based on the Chinese Communists experience in Yenan!). However at the same time a number of extremely negative features were enshrined in the new organisation. In particular the 'RCLB' mark 1' or Manifesto period was a time when Idealism and Dogmatism became dominant features of the League. Indeed the very basis on which it was possible to build the RCL was itself profoundly idealist: an ideological campaign devoid of political or theoretical content. The Manifesto which followed was an extremely dogmatic hotchpotch of ideas, a few of them correct but not dialectically understood, others frankly rightist or ultra-rightist. In terms of our overall analysis this period marked a (belated) 'return to principles' for the League, an elevation therefore of certain dogmas to the level of theory and a denial of the need for concrete analysis or study. We also took on board and made 'revolutionary' the social chauvinism of the Western communist Tradition which had been a marked feature of the CFB.

Despite its claims that 'theory was primary' the early League was clearly opposed to theory. This is demonstrated not only by the dogmatism of the Manifesto, but by the anti-intellectualism campaign which preceded it, the sole reliance on the 'Little Red Book' as the fount of all wisdom and the Byzantine obscurantism of many of its documents in 1977. Notable among these of course was the now laughable

'Build the League to Build the Party' which as well as pronouncing that -

"Practice and mass work is now primary in party building!"

was also responsible for such gems of arrogant dogmatism as

"The principal contradiction in Party-building is between proletarian and bourgeois ideology. Our success in Party-Building has been mainly determined by the extent to which we have correctly handled this contradiction."

and -

"The RCLB itself has been basically Dolshevised as far as theory, line and leadership is concerned."

Although BTLTBTP - as it soon became called - was subsequently withdrawn, it nevertheless represents a definite feature of the early League and its 'party-building line', a feature which is mirrored in other documents of the period. The two points quoted are significant in that they put forward a line that a) questions of line, theory and leadership had basically been resolved in the League and b) that the way forward was through ideological struggle. This is only the most striking example of the League's quite stunning idealism.

The social chauvinism of the Manifesto and the early League has already been widely criticised. The touchstone for this was of course, our line on Ireland which perpetuated indeed accentuated, the chauvinism of the CFB position, and there has been a long struggle to overthrow this. In terms of understanding the way forward, however, we must go further than rejecting particular aspects of our line, whether they concern Ireland, the national minorities or the Three World Theory crucially important as these specific questions are. For the fact is that the whole basis and orientation of the Manifesto/League was inside the Eurocentric tradition which we have already criticised. Quite apart from its specific and now glaring social chauvinist aspects the whole weight of the Manifesto was towards the re-establishment of the Eurocentric 'principles' of the Comintern period. Certainly in response to the Sino-soviet polemic, some correct principles on the Third World struggles and the national question were included. But they were never fundamental to our general orientation; their true significance was downplayed; they were regarded as 'marginal'.

This view of 'marginalisation' is reinforced by even a cursory review of the main documents and articles of the period. During 1977/78, the pages of 'Revolution', the League's theoretical journal, are concerned with a) (Ideological) party building b) China worship and c) industrial base building. Internal documents are concerned with a) ideological tempering etc. (DTLTBTP, 'Bolshevise the League..')

b) organizational questions and c) industrial base building. On the burning issues of the age, Imperialism, the national question - there is not a word.

At its foudation then the RCL perpetuated the social chauvinism of its predecessors while at the same time compounding it with chronic dogmatism and idealism. When it too responded to developments in the international movement and began to criticise its own dogmatism and sectarianism in 1979, it did so as an organisation which was fundamentally rightist!

### A Conclusion

It is not intended here to expound on the errors of the League's failed attempt to achieve relevance - the so called 'Rectification Stage' of 1979/80, nor of the subsequent weakness of its 2nd CC. For our purpose is not so much to attempt to understand the League but to establish an initial grasp of the effects of Eurocentrism on our movement. If the RCL has received the major share of our attention is only by way of an example and because we know more about it than we do of other trends in the movement.

We are confident that the concept of 'Eurocentrism' based as it is on a comprehensive theory of political economy, is a key tool for understanding not only the failures of our organisation but of the more general weaknesses of the Western 'revolutionary movement'. That is why we must take this question so seriously and develop and deepen our analysis, not just to understand, but also to change reality.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Note on initials

CPBML - Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist

founded in 1968 by Reg Birch; based largely on section of Engineering workers and student membership. Characterised by highly centralised internal operation. Workerist (2 classes only) line which has degenerated into out and out support for S.U. (revisionism)

J.C.C. Joint Committee of Communists

As its name suggests a federal grouping of autonomous local groups. Characterised by lack of organization, liberalism, unclear lines. Produced Origins and Perspectives, founding document of the CFB.

C.F.B.

Communist Federation of Britain

The successor to the J.C.C., comprising some 5/6 local groups which retained good measure of autonomy (for example it promoted two opposing lines in the 1974 election). In 1976 - faced with collapse - it made some progress towards centralism and the development of a general line. It formed the core of the Revolutionary Communist League.

M.L.W.A.

Marxist Leninist Workers' Association

London based group, involved mainly in theoretical work. Produced pamphlets -- 'Economism or Revolution' criticising the economist, pro-imperialist line of CPBML (and CFB). Later united with C.U.O. (Communist Unity Organization) - a spilt from the CFB, to form the C.U.A., Communist Unity Association, one of the other founding groups of the Revolutionary Communist League

I.C.O. (B+ICO)

Irish (British and) Communist Organization

Another small group which gained a certain notoriety in the early 1970's mainly for its line that Ireland was two nations and hence that partition was progressive. Heavy involvement in Reading Room at British Museum. Little practical work except during 'Ulster Loyalist Strike' of 1974 when lined up on the side of reaction.

\*\*\*\*\*

INTERVIEW WITH NAQBUL BUTT

By Aseem

Q. Since the hijack of the Indian plane the activities of Kashmiri freedom fighters have come to the world attention. However, Kashmiris residing in Britain are of the opinion that the Government of Pakistan had forced Kashmiri fighters to set fire to the plane. Is it correct?

A. Yes, it is correct. During the whole incident the attitude of the Pakistani Government was unsympathetic and disappointing. Instead of supporting the Kashmiri freedom fighters, the Government of Pakistan attempted to deceive them. We had the feeling that in Pakistan the officials themselves were the agents of our enemy. On February the 2nd, we set fire to the plane because the Pakistani Government had decided to take away the plane from us in order to return it.

Q. It is said among some political circles in Pakistan that the hijack of "Ganga" is the result of some foreign conspiracies. As a proof they point to the internal political crises. What is your reaction to this line of thinking?

A. We have nothing but contempt for such a line of thinking. This hijacking is the milestone in the history of Kashmir. The Pakistani political scene was completely different at the time we planned this hijacking. There were no problems. Likewise we are not concerned with the problems of any country. We are concentrating on our struggle for liberation. As far as foreign conspiracies are concerned, these could be involved in crushing the popular movements, not in supporting them. We know that there is a conspiracy to create a wave of suspicion against us. However we are certain that God will always maintain a difference between truth and lies.

Q. There is news today that the government of Pakistan has ordered an inquiry into the hijack incident and some people are of the opinion that it shows Pakistani government's lack of confidence in you. What is your reaction to it?

A. We have also come to know through the newspapers that the government of Pakistan has decided to set an inquiry, but to my knowledge there is no order given as such. As far as the question of people's movement and the power whose confidence we seek are the people of Pakistan. We will make effort to gain Pakistani people's confidence on the basis of our views and will be successful. We are not the agent of Pakistani government to care for its confidence or lack of confidence.

We know the difference between the people and the so-called government.

Q. Will you co-operate with the inquiry of the High Court judge?

A. We have in front of us the objective of the armed struggle of Kashmiri people. If the inquiry of the High Court judge is going to benefit that objective, we will certainly co-operate.

Q. Can you pin-point those powers and centres who are busy spreading all kinds of suspicions against you?

A. We have four enemies:

1. The Indian army and those sections of the Indian government helping to perpetuate the aggressive occupation of the state of Kashmir.
2. In Pakistan, circles of those politicians who are the agents of American and Russian imperialism and do not believe in gaining their national objectives through popular movements.
3. Those sections of Kashmiris who have a defeatist mentality. They are pessimist because of their lack of confidence and therefore consciously or unconsciously become an obstacle in the way of a movement at the masses' level.
4. At the international level those powers who are either leaders or supporters of imperialism and colonialism.

Q. What is your opinion of the Movement of "Freedom Fighters" (Al - Mujahid Tehrik)?

A. In the first place we read the publicity of the Al-Mujahid Tehrik Movement in the papers. In this regard we only heard the name of one person, Sardar Abdul Qayyum who is the president of the Azad Kashmir Government.

I met Sardar Abdul Qayyum more than once. During our meeting he outlined some points of his initial plans to run the Al Mujahid Tehrik movement. When this movement comes into existence and proves its work in the struggle, then only can co-operation in the field of struggle be considered.

Q. We in Britain, have heard a lot about your personal bravery, but can you briefly tell us about that company of your fighters who went to Indian Occupied Kashmir in 1966 under your command?

A. The first task that was performed by that company of freedom fighters was:

1. We eliminated the so-called respect for the cease fireline from the mind of Kashmiri people.
2. Our fighters proved to all related elements that the land of Kashmir is suitable for guerilla war and that Kashmiri people have the ability for armed struggle.
3. We also proved that Kashmiri people can be self-sufficient in armed struggle.



Q. There are some contradictory stories about your escape from Srinagar jail. Can you throw some light on that incident?

Especially now that some people are saying that some foreign clandestine organisations have been involved in your escape from prison.

A. The truth is that the whole plan for the escape and its successful completion is owed to the Front for National Liberation. The reason for its success lies with the superiority of our movement over our enemy.

Q. Do you want to carry an armed struggle in occupied Kashmir or do you think in this struggle the people of Azad Kashmir should also participate? In your opinion, what role should Azad Kashmir play in the struggle for freedom? In particular, to what extent do you agree with Basit's approach in his book, "The war of independence for Kashmir"? (Kashmir-Ki-Jang-I-Azady)

A. Occupied Kashmir is the "battle ground", but Azad Kashmir is the centre for preparing the war of independence. I completely agree with Basit's approach. I think this book presents a correct ideological base for the war of independence.

Q. Has your organisation the support of any other country than Pakistan and if not, from which country would you seek support?

A. Our organisation has no support from any country whatsoever but we wish to get support from the people of all the world who stand for freedom and liberty.

Q. How long will it take for the Kashmiri people to win their war of independence?

A. The length of time required for our success depends upon the military balance between our enemy and ourselves. However it is obvious that our struggle will be a long term struggle.

Q. Is your movement a socialist movement?

A. Our movement is of the masses and every mass movement is correct.

Q. In your opinion, in what way can Kashmiris residing in Britain participate in the war of independence for Kashmir?

- A. In my opinion a detailed outline is presented in the last chapter of Basit's book. I would like to see British Kashmiris concentrating on those suggestions. They can establish that kind of economic centre which has been indicated in that chapter of the book. With the establishment of such a centre our victory will be nearer.
- Q. What specific message do you wish to give to British Kashmiris?
- A. Kashmiris residing in Britain should prepare themselves for full participation in the war of independence.
- Q. Do you and other freedom fighters Hashim and Ashraf intend to visit Britain?
- A. We have no intention of a visit in near future. However if our aims of the movement force us then we will certainly visit Britain.

\* \* \* \* \*

**NOTE** "Azad Kashmir" is that part of Kashmir which remains outside Indian occupation. Pakistan exercises a considerable degree of control over it. Occupied Kashmir is that part occupied by India which the Indian government terms the state of Jammu and Kashmir. For further information see "Paykar or Class Struggle."

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