
Marxist-Leninist Organisation of Britain

Correspondence

[on the Indian Marxist-Leninist Association]

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[MLOB Note]

CHANGE OF NAME

The Central committee of the Marxist-Leninist Organisation of Britain has acceded to a request from the RED FRONT MOVEMENT to relinquish to it for its journal the name "RED FRONT". From this issue the organ of the MLOB will be called by the name of the slogan of the 6h World Congress of the Communist International: "CLASS AGAINST CLASS"

All subscriptions to "RED FRONT" will be transferred to "CLASS AGAINST CLASS" and adjusted accordingly.



ORGAN OF THE MARXIST-LENINIST ORGANISATION OF BRITAIN

Number ONE 1973

C O R R E S P O N D E N C E

(EDITORIAL NOTE: In 1969, the "Indian Marxist-Leninist Association" - the membership of which was made up of Indians resident (for the most part temporarily) in London - established relations of cooperation with the Marxist-Leninist Organisation of Britain. Joint meetings were held between representatives of the two organisations; "INLA" endorsed the main programmatic positions of the MLOB, and invited MLOB members to lecture under its auspices; and the two organisations collaborated in practical work, principally in the field of the struggle against racism. In 1971 "IMLA" dropped out of this activity, and began to collaborate with notorious black racists in setting up a "Black Workers' Defence League" (later transformed into the "Black Workers' League"), with a black racist orientation. When the MLOB sent a confidential memorandum to "IMLA" criticising its policy in this connection, "IMLA" severed relations with the MLOB.

The following letter, dated October 18th, 1972, has been received from Comrade Vijay Singh, formerly "Education Organiser", "Participation Organiser", and "Research Organiser" of "IMLA"; it reveals how these events came to be seen by honest comrades within that organisation. The letter has been slightly abridged for reasons of space.)

...

As you are aware, the "Black Workers' League" has as its professed aim "the development of Black Marxist-Leninists". It is the offspring of the "Indian Marxist-Leninist Association" which, as its name implies, claims to be a Marxist-Leninist organisation. These claims make it necessary to subject these organisations to a thorough analysis, in order to determine whether they are, in fact, a genuine section of the progressive - not to say revolutionary socialist - movement.

The origins of "IMLA" lie in the Indian Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain, the primary aim of these national committees being to restrict contact between Communists from the former colonial countries (many of whom were anti-revisionist) and the rank-and-file members of the CPGB. "IMLA" was ostensibly a breakaway group from the Indian Committee of the CPGB. Its leader, Ambuj Mukharji, had numbered among his many services to his King Street masters the leading of a deputation of "Communists" to the Indian High Commission in London, asking them to publicise in stronger terms the Indian government's case in the Sino-Indian "border dispute". It is now clear that, in becoming leader of "IMLA", Mukharji in no way abandoned his active anti-Marxist-Leninist activity, and that the real aim of "IMLA" (as its leader saw it) was to provide a harmless framework within which dissident Indian members and ex-members of the CPGB could be isolated as far as possible from the new Marxist-Leninist movement that was beginning to develop in Britain in opposition to the revisionism of the leadership of the CPGB.

When I became a member of "IMLA" in the last quarter of 1969, the declared aim of the organisation was to forge "unity" amongst the various Indian "left" (in fact, revisionist) trends represented by the right revisionist Communist Party of India,

the centrist revisionist Communist Party of India (Marxist), the left revisionist Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), trotskyite and guevaraites groups, on the basis of "practical activity" on the question of racism. This aim was expressed in a leaflet issued by the "IMLA" in 1970 as

"... to try by all means to attain functional and practical unity in the face of the many theoretical and structural diversities of the groups and individuals with avowedly Marxist-Leninist aims".

A year later, the "avowedly" Marxist-Leninist aims of these groups and individuals had become "genuine", the primary aim of "IMLA" being defined as

"... to try to attain functional and practical unity, in the face of the immense theoretical and structural diversity of the groups and individuals with genuine Marxist-Leninist orientation". ("Red Indian", January/February 1971; p.11).

This unprincipled approach was, of course, carefully designed to suppress the discussion of fundamental theoretical principle as "destructive of unity", and to divert any genuine Marxist-Leninists within the organisation from the primary task of building the nucleus of a Marxist-Leninist Party by involving them in practical activity with a purely reformist or quasi-reformist perspective. The fact that the "Indian Marxist-Leninist Association" consistently rejected (except as a task of the remote, indefinite future) the primary task of all Marxist-Leninists of rebuilding a Marxist-Leninist party of the working class, even when called upon explicitly to honour it, is sufficient in itself to expose the spurious character of the "Marxism-Leninism" of the "Indian Marxist-Leninist Association".

In line with its "theory" of "functional unity" through practice alone, "IMLA" naturally rejected Leninist principles of organisation, based on democratic centralism with a single democratically-elected leading body subject to criticism and recall, with a single line of policy on all questions binding on all members. The absence of democratic centralism - even of any written constitution - together with the loose, amorphous nature of the membership, provided a seedbed for every kind of trickery and demagogy on the part of the "leader", Ambuj Mukharji, around whom a "cult of personality" was erected.

A partial retreat from these opportunist and revisionist positions was forced on Mukharji in the last quarter of 1969, when a number of members of "IMLA" came into contact with the Marxist-Leninist Organisation of Britain. The influence of the MLOB and of its publications was such that, from this time until the middle of 1971, "IMLA" formally adopted the main theoretical positions of the MLOB, defended these positions publicly, distributed the published material of the MLOB, and cooperated politically with MLOB in a number of spheres. In line with this cooperation, leading members of MLOB were invited to deliver lectures in the courses of Marxism-Leninism organised by "IMLA" at the "Free University of Black Studies". It was indeed as a result of the correct political guidance of the MLOB that "IMLA" accepted the fact that its manoeuvres to set up a "Socialist Alliance Against Racism" by means of a "united front from above" with the trotskyite "Socialist Current Group" and the libertarian-anarchist "New Socialists" had been incorrect, and, out of the collaboration of "IMLA" and the MLOB, the Black and White Workers' Unity Front came into being as a genuine grass-roots organisation of struggle against racism.

That "INLA" accepted the correctness of the tactic of building a united front primarily from below is shown by a letter dated October 14th, 1970, signed by J. Nerwanji (on behalf of "INLA"), by A. Kumria (on behalf of the BWWUF) and by N. Baker (on behalf of the MLOB) :

"We firmly hold the view that the racist offensive can be defeated only by developing multi-racial working people's defence groups in areas of high immigrant concentration (these bodies are likely to be predominantly black) and multi-racial anti-racist committees in areas of low immigrant concentration (these bodies are likely to be predominantly white). Whereas the functions of the former will be to prepare the black and white workers to defend themselves against the hired hooligans of the system, the function of the latter will be to educate the white workers (in theory and practice) that the racist ideology is a weapon of the ruling class directed against the most fundamental interests of the working class and other sections of the working people as a whole. The correctness of this view has been tested and tried through the practical experience of the militant black and white workers, especially in connection with our work in the East London area.

Needless to say, this kind of grass-roots organisation of the black and white working class and other working people would need a lot of work on the part of the most advanced and class-conscious black and white workers, as we have experienced with regard to our work in the East End".

Taking advantage of the fact that this work on principled lines proved exacting, Mukharji succeeded in winning support among the less politically developed adherents of "INLA" for the view that the adoption of a conciliatory attitude towards black racism and black racists could provide a short-cut for the organisation to gain a numerical strength and influence comparable with those of the black racist organisations with which "INLA" was in contact in the "Free University of Black Studies". As a result of this policy, in place of the frontal assault on black racism which had characterised the earlier presence of "INLA" in the "Free University of Black Studies", "INLA" set out to try to build a "united front from above" with the black racists - above all with the notorious Roy Sawh, whose expensive sports car and luxurious residence in West London had been bought out of the hard-earned money of duped black workers. The depths to which this unprincipled conciliationism sank is illustrated by Mukharji's own statement within "INLA": "I told Roy that we regarded him as our leader"; by his attempt (which failed) to prevent Mrs. Margaret Mujumdar from assuming the position of "Education Organiser" of "INLA" on the grounds that her skin was "too white", and by his public attack in the "Free University of Black Studies" on a leading member of MLOB for his alleged "dogmatism" on the question of black racism.

In pursuing this new policy, "INLA" naturally proceeded to sabotage the work of building the Black and White Workers' Unity Front, transferring its energies to the setting up, on the basis of a "united front from above", of a "Black Workers' Defence League", which came into being in March 1971 in connection with the 1971 Immigration Bill. This included three fictitious organisations: the "Pakistani Marxists" (afterwards the "Pakistani Workers' Group" and later the "Pakistani Workers' Association, London"); the "Afro-Caribbean Marxists" (afterwards the "Caribbean Workers' Group" and later the "Caribbean Workers' Union"); and the "Indian Workers' Association, London" (a purely paper organisation composed of members of "INLA"). The real

components of the "Black Workers Defence League" at its inception were : the "Indian Marxist-Leninist Association"; the "South-East London Parents' Association"; the leaders of which were on record as holding that monkey blood flowed through the veins of white men; and two organisations dominated by Roy Sawh and his black racist courtiers: the "Free University of Black Studies" and the "Black Power Party".

These events did not, of course, pass unnoticed by the Marxist-Leninist Organisation of Britain. On the eve of what was to be the last meeting between representatives of the two organisations, it delivered a confidential memorandum which strongly criticised the political line now being pursued by "IMLA".

The contradictions between the principled Marxist-Leninist line of the MLOB and the opportunist/revisionist line of "IMLA" had already been brought to the surface at the previous meeting, when the MLOB representatives had proposed that the more advanced elements of "IMLA" should constitute themselves forthwith into the disciplined nucleus of a genuine Marxist-Leninist organisation of India. This proposal had been rejected by "IMLA" on the unprincipled grounds that it would seem "presumptuous" for Indians temporarily residing outside India to work towards the establishment of a future Indian Marxist-Leninist Party. Even the suggestion by the MLOB that the more advanced elements of "IMLA" should constitute themselves into an Indian Marxist-Leninist Information Bureau was rejected. The one commitment that was accepted - the production of a Marxist-Leninist analysis of Indian society - was never implemented.

The MLOB memorandum brought these contradictions to a head, and discussion of the memorandum naturally formed the focal point of the next meeting. Mukharji, in an outburst of characteristic petulance, attempted to deny that "IMLA" had embarked on a policy of conciliation of black racism, but eventually agreed that the "IMLA" pamphlet "The Social Problem; A Socialist Analysis" would be amended in accordance with the criticisms made by the MLOB, that is, to take a stand not merely against white racism but against all forms of racism. (Characteristically, this was never implemented). For their part, the MLOB representatives emphasised that they had presented their confidential memorandum purely with the desire to try to correct what they regarded as errors in policy on the part of "IMLA", so that the cooperation between the two organisations might be strengthened on the basis of the unprincipled policies previously agreed between the two organisations.

Because of the time occupied in discussing the MLOB memorandum, it proved impossible to complete the agenda of the meeting, which was accordingly adjourned till the following Sunday. Mukharji, however, had a sharp nose, and he saw that continued contact between "IMLA" and MLOB must endanger, not only his political line but also his position. His first step was to secure the postponement of the adjourned meeting arranged between the two organisations and, shortly afterwards - when the forces within the "IMLA" that were developing towards Marxism-Leninism were weakened by the departure for India of Comrade J. Merwanji, embarked on a campaign to "justify" a breach of relations with the MLOB on the grounds that it was a "white racist" organisation.

Mukharji's "case" that the Marxist-Leninist Organisation

of Britain was "white racist" in character began with the surprising charge that the MLOB's exposure of the "left"-revisionist leadership of the Communist Party of China (made in a report which "INLA" had endorsed and distributed) reflected "white racism" since the leaders of the C.P.C. were "non-white".

Mukharji's second point was that some of the MLOB members who had lectured at the "Free University of Black Studies" (at which the students were exclusively black, unanimously opposed to white racism but in the majority of cases under the influence of black racist ideas) had devoted more time to the analysis of black racism than to that of white racism.

Thirdly, Mukharji - while admitting that the MLOB supported the right of immigrant workers to organise along national lines - argued that the MLOB's critical attitude towards the formation by "INLA" of a "united front from above" with black racists was in contradiction to this.

For his fourth point, while admitting that the MLOB had issued a number of statements and articles clearly exposing the reactionary nature of racism of all kinds, Mukharji produced a document issued by the MLOB in which the question of racism was not mentioned.

Finally, Mukharji attempted to refurbish the hoary, discredited theory of the supra-class nature of British imperialism, the theory that the white British workers participated in the exploitation both of the working people in the colonial countries and of the immigrant workers in Britain, alleging that the MLOB's rejection of this theory reflected its "white racism"! This, of course, is not the first time that this false, rabble-rousing theory has been presented as the last word in r-r-revolutionary Marxism-Leninism by demagogues; the "left"-revisionist "Finsbury Communist Association" put forward this theory several years ago in a document entitled "Class and Party in Britain", and it is not coincidental that the demolition of this poisonous "theory" should have been the work of the Action Committee for Marxist-Leninist Unity, the direct forerunner of the MLOB.

Such was the sum total of the "case" by which Mukharji sought to establish the "white racism" of the MLOB, and "justify" a breach of relations with the MLOB on the part of "INLA". Clearly, Mukharji now considered that he had surrounded himself with a gaggle of such unthinking sycophants that he felt free to sink to the lowest level of political chicanery.

Nevertheless, the increasingly obvious contradictions between the professed "Marxism-Leninism" of "INLA" and its revisionist-or-opportunistic practice could not but lead to growing criticism of Mukharji. This criticism centred at first around three points: the question of "functional alliance", of unprincipled unity on the basis of practice alone; on the rejection by "INLA" of the need to organise immigrant workers at the point of production (a rejection that was defended on the pretext of "opposing economism!"); and on Mukharji's continued membership of the revisionist CIGB, twenty years after the publication of "The British Road to Socialism", in flagrant contravention of his promise of December 1970 to leave that organisation.

It was during this period that it was revealed to all honest members of the "BWL" that Mukharji's legal activities

were as opportunist and rotten as his politics. Confronted with the efforts of tenants oppressed by a rack-renting landlord to seek redress through a Rent Tribunal, the unerring bourgeois class instinct of the "leader" of the "BWL" led him to represent the landlord. For these services to the class enemy, Mukharji demanded payment in cash, but reluctantly accepted a cheque when the landlord concerned declared that he did not have enough ready cash. When it became clear that this action would be brought up at a meeting of the "Central Committee" of the "BWL", Mukharji hastily despatched Miss Margaret Dobner to return the cheque by hand to the landlord in question !

To ward off this criticism, Mukharji and the faction of the "INLA" which gave him uncritical support adopted a series of panic measures:

1. they arbitrarily declared themselves to be the "Nucleus" of the organisation, its "leading body".
2. they refused to convene meetings of the "Organising Committee", the leading body of "INLA" according to its unwritten constitution;
3. they prevented the developing Marxist-Leninists within the organisation from continuing to lecture in the "INLA" courses in Marxism-Leninism, and excluded them from meetings of the "Central Committee" of the "Black Workers' League" (as the "Black Workers' Defence League" was now called);
4. they broke off relations with the Red Front Movement, and took all possible steps to prevent contact between members of the "BWP" and the Red Front Movement;
5. they demanded that all members of "INLA" accept the opportunist-revisionist formulations embodied in the first pamphlet of the "BWL".

But in spite of all Mukharji's efforts, the "united front from above" with the black racists disintegrated. The more extreme black racists, headed by Roy Sawh, resigned from the "Central Committee" of the "Black Workers' League", and the remains of the "BWL" headed by Mukharji, were expelled from the "Free University of Black Studies". Significantly, the conclusion which Mukharji sought to draw from this was that the conciliatory attitude of "INLA" towards black racism had to be accentuated ...!

It should be manifestly plain from this brief history that the "Black Workers' League" and the "Indian Marxist-Leninist Association" are opportunist, revisionist and black racist organisations.

Vijay K. Singh
 (Former "Education Organiser",
 "Participation Organiser", "Research
 Organiser" of "INLA", 1969-71;
 Member of the "Black Workers'
 League", 1971).