

# RCL - 3rd CONGRESS

The Revolutionary Communist League recently held its Third Congress, at which it reaffirmed its support for the general line adopted at the conference held last November, adopted a statement of self-criticism, decided general priorities for the next period and elected a new leadership, among other matters.

The Second Congress of the RCL was held in July 1981. This Congress marked an important stage for the RCL in that it stated our general position on party-building and on fighting opportunism and adopted a position of unconditional support for the Republican Movement. It also marked the beginning of a debate on the relation between national and class struggles in this country and noted the importance of the question of women's oppression and Wales and Scotland. Since the Second Congress we have gone on a zig-zag course. We have not grown as we would have liked to. But we have also not liquidated ourselves as have many Marxist-Leninist parties and organisations in First and Second World countries.

### APPLY MARXISM-LENINISM MAO ZEDONG THOUGHT

The RCL remains an organisation based on Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought and committed to the task of building a true communist party through applying the general truths of Marxism-Leninism to the concrete conditions which we face today. In many Second World countries, such as Canada and West Germany, the last period has seen parties that seemed much more advanced than our own organisation, disintegrate. Although we do not fully understand what happened to these parties, it seems that one important factor was that in criticising the dogmatism and sometimes chauvinism that existed within these groups, a trend within also began to criticise and abandon the basic truths of Marxism-Leninism, a process which ended with the disintegration of their organisations. Although we have much self criticism to make and to learn from, we can be proud that we have not taken this road.

### CRITICISE SOCIAL-CHAUVINISM

In particular the general trend over the last period has been for the RCL to criticise its earlier social-chauvinism which was most clear in our previous lines on Ireland and on black national minorities within this country. We have continued to develop the debate over the relation between the national and class struggles and now have a general line on this adopted at the November conference 1983. Our practice in solidarity work on Ireland and in anti-racist struggles has continued and we have learned much in the course of this work. Although we have, as yet, made little progress on the question of women's oppression or on Wales and Scotland, work in both these areas has started.

### ESTABLISH COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP

But the road we have taken has been zig-zag and we have made many mistakes. In this statement we want to take up particularly the main political points which have appeared in the pages of our monthly paper 'Class Struggle'. The main lesson of this period is the need for our Central Committee to control and give political direction to the League's paper. There are many criticisms of the previous editor who left the organisation last year. But the main criticism to be

made is that 'Class Struggle' was allowed to become the paper reflecting and promoting the line of certain individuals within the League and not the policy of the League.

### UPHOLD DEMOCRATIC DECISIONS

There are two key questions on which this was clear in 'Class Struggle'. The first of these is the 'strategic alliance'. At its Second Congress, the League adopted a position that the way forward in this country is to build a strategic alliance between the national minority people and the working class. Although there was much debate and many differences within the organisation over the question of the relation between national and class struggle, support for the strategic alliance was central to the Congress document. The second key question was in relation to our view of the international situation. The League has consistently supported the Three Worlds Theory i.e. that the world is divided into First World (two superpowers, US and SU); Second World (imperialist countries like Britain, Canada, Japan etc.) and the Third World consisting of oppressed nations such as the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America and socialist countries like China and Korea. Again, we have in the past made mistakes in our interpretation of this theory, having previously held to rightist positions, but we have always had a policy that the main enemy of the peoples of the world are the two superpowers, and that the Soviet Union has turned from being the world's first socialist state into its opposite, one of the two superpowers, an imperialist power.

On both these two questions, for a considerable period, 'Class Struggle' did not promote our collective view, but a view that was held by the editor of the paper. On the question of the strategic alliance, he had the support of members of the Central Committee, who arbitrarily overthrew what was a collectively agreed policy of the League. In a more general way, leading committees of the League had a 'laissez faire' attitude to the paper which was not treated seriously as the main way of winning support for the lines of the League among people outside.

### STRATEGIC ALLIANCE

The concept of the strategic alliance was replaced with the line that black and Irish people in this country are mainly workers, therefore their struggles are essentially work-class struggles. The national minority struggles are replaced with black and Irish workers forming the vanguard of the working class. This concept then changes, especially in the pages of 'Class Struggle', into the black youth being the vanguard of the working class, and in some cases the black and white unemployed youth. The revolutionary nature of black and Irish workers (or youth: unemployed workers) is said to lie solely in their origins in the Third World and Ireland and they will act as a bridge leading the white working class to revolution.

These positions were not League policy and were in fact a step back from the positions the League had taken at the Second Congress. (Although there were many contradictions in our line, at that time.) They objectively denied racist oppression and the resulting importance and revolutionary nature of national minorities and their struggles. They denied the cross-class nature of these struggles which

result from the national oppression of whole communities, within which different classes and different sections play varying roles and for whom the questions of national liberation in their own countries are inseparable from the racist oppression they face here. The positions put forward in 'Class Struggle' often denied the distinct nature of the different national communities, who, of course, often unite in alliances at particular times and repeated the bourgeois idea of the generation gap between the youth and older generation in the black communities.

Abandoning the strategic alliance meant throwing out the concept of separate streams of struggle - that of the national minorities and that of the working class - and merging the two. It glossed over the contradiction between English working class people and national minority people, whether workers or not, and the fact that the working class, although not the main benefactor from racism, is often the agent of racist ideas and practices.

At the same time, it denied the character and specific nature of the class struggle in this country by putting forward the idea of the English working class simply following black and Irish workers. Although the working class (and communists) have much to learn from these struggles and although national minority workers often play a leading role in the class struggle, the strategy and tactics of national minority struggle are specific to those struggles as are those of working class struggle and the correct strategy is to build an alliance between the two different struggles, an alliance that has to be based in the first place on recognition of the just struggle of the black national minority people and the Irish people. The fact that both the national minorities and the working class face the same enemy in British imperialism, gives the foundation on which such unity can be built.

In its crudest form, the line often put forward in 'Class Struggle' upheld that the working class must learn the forms of struggle taken by the youth in the uprisings of 1981. This would lead to an analysis of the present struggle between miners and the state, for example, as being one in which the miners have learned from the black and white youth the need to throw stones, set fire to buildings and confront the police with violent methods. However this is a distortion of the actual situation. The violent clashes between miners and police arise from the sharpness of the contradiction and the determination of the miners to fight for a just cause. It is of great importance that the miners' struggle is not being contained within the methods favoured by social-democrats and left to union negotiators. But the line being put forward in our paper at that time would have glossed over real contradictions that still continue to exist between the miners, fighting a determined working class struggle, and the national minorities and the Republican struggle in Ireland. The fact that a Portocabin gets burnt, for example, does not mean that the miners have consciously copied Republican struggle in Ireland, or that they support that struggle.

### SOCIAL IMPERIALISM

The second key question on the nature of Soviet Social imperialism can be seen more clearly. It is a fact that for many months the pages of 'Class Struggle' did not carry reports on the struggle in Afghanistan, Eritrea or Kampuchea because in these countries the people are facing the Soviet Union as the main imperialist invader or supporter of aggression. Obviously there are many questions in relation to the Soviet Union, the rise of revisionism, national chauvinism in Soviet ideology, the role of Stalin, that need further theoretical work. But 'Class Struggle' was allowed to change an agreed League policy without democratic discussion or a general decision by the organisation.

### IRELAND

We could give many other examples. Ireland is one key area where 'Class Struggle' again has represented a view not League policy. We plan to make a separate and detailed self criticism on our work on Ireland at a later date. The main lesson of the last period is that although we had at the Second Congress, adopted a position of unconditional support for the Republican Movement, 'Class Struggle' wavered on this question in some ways and we are now determined to re-affirm and deepen our stand on this question. In particular, 'Class Struggle' did not, at that time, put to the fore the representatives of the Republican Movement in Britain. It promoted a line on solidarity work which in practice subordinated the revolutionary national liberation struggle in Ireland to the class struggle in Britain, and attempted to build the solidarity movement as the core of a revolutionary movement in Britain. This line reverses the correct relationship between communist organisations and broad fronts. Communist organisations work to build broad fronts, not the other way round.

### AZANIA

Another example from 'Class Struggle' is that for a period, the pages of our paper carried articles claiming to be in solidarity with the people of Azania which upheld

only one of the liberation movements of Azania. It has been our policy to support all genuine national liberation movements and that it is for the people of that country to determine who will lead them. Yet 'Class Struggle' upheld only the role of the African National Congress and certain sections of its supporters in this country, the Anti-Apartheid Movement. The role of other liberation movements and organisations such as Pan-Africanist Congress and Black Consciousness Movement was ignored.

### 'CLASS STRUGGLE' WILL BE THE VOICE OF THE RCL

The main self criticism we would make then, is that the paper was not the collective voice of the League. Of course, we expect the paper to develop and extend our analysis but this must be done within the framework of the collectively-decided policies of the League. Our Central Committee must take up seriously, and make central to its work, the task of giving general political direction to our paper.

### HELP TO STRENGTHEN 'CLASS STRUGGLE'

'Class Struggle' still has many weaknesses. We need to deepen the analysis put forward and carry better reports which are a result of direct investigation, study and struggle and from summing up our mass work. But we are determined to strengthen the paper and make it into the scaffolding around which we can rally progressive forces to Marxism-Leninism. We call on all our readers and supporters to help us in this task. We need more contributions to the paper and we need to sell more. Letters, criticisms and comments, long or short articles, pictures or photos will all be welcomed and will make our paper broader and more lively.

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Our Congress received fraternal messages from the Communist Party of Peru (Patria Roja), Revolutionary Communist League of Bangladesh, Workers' Communist League of New Zealand, US League of Revolutionary Struggle (M-L), Workers' Party of Japan, Workers' Communist Party (M-L) of Norway, Communist Party (M-L) of France, and Communist Party of Sweden.