

# R.C.L. CONFERENCE

The Revolutionary Communist League held a conference recently, at which a clear position was adopted, largely in relation to Black and Irish struggles, the main points of which are summarised below. The conference came after a period of debate within the organisation, and some of the different positions have been reflected in the pages of 'Class Struggle' over the past year. Whilst there have been differences, the context in which the debate has taken place has been one of agreement that many of our past lines have been social chauvinist, and agreement on the need to reject such positions. The conference reasserted its support for the principles of Marxism-Leninism as defended and developed by the Communist Party of China in the polemic of the 1960's. The essence of the polemic is still true today and is the basis of our unity. We also reaffirmed our commitment to building the communist party in this country.

## SOCIAL CHAUVINISM

This social chauvinism manifested itself most clearly in our attitude to the struggles of the Irish people and the struggles of Black people. For example, we did not recognise the revolutionary nature of the struggle being carried out by the Irish people under the leadership of the Republican Movement and openly opposed National Liberation organisations in 'Class Struggle'. We did not understand the nature and form of the struggle against racist oppression, or uphold the need for independent black organisations and black leadership. Instead, racism was seen mainly in terms of being a divisive, ideological tendency. The struggle for the liberation of Ireland and the struggle against racist oppression were both seen as peripheral to the class struggle.

Struggle against these positions started well before the conference, and progress has been made over the past two years. However, the conference marks the end of a particular stage - a clear recognition of our past social chauvinism, a clear intention to break with such positions, and the adoption of a line, which, whilst incomplete, provides us with a basis to go forward in the complex task of developing a strategy for revolution in an imperialist country.

## OPPOSE IMPERIALISM

The conference agreed that we must reassert the true essence of communism - that is, communists must oppose all class and national oppression, and stand for the freedom of people from all forms of domination, imperialism and hegemonism. Anti-imperialism must be part of communist ideology, but for communists in an imperialist country like Britain, the tendency to right deviations, manifested in social chauvinism, is a most dangerous one. Thus the need to stress anti-imperialism - not as something different, or distinct from communism - but as an essential part of it.

## NATIONAL STRUGGLES

The line that the conference adopted starts from the basis of an understanding of the significance of national struggles in the world today. Both Lenin and Stalin pointed to the changing nature of the national question in the era of imperialism, and Stalin referred to the fact that "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." (Foundations of Leninism). The era when the emerging bourgeoisie struggled against feudalism for the establishment of nation states and for bourgeois democratic rights has passed. The world has been divided into oppressor and oppressed nations, and the oppressed nations have to fight against imperialism for their right to national independence. This struggle for national liberation draws in many sections of the people.

"No matter what classes, parties or individuals in an 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)

National struggles in the era of imperialism are essentially struggles of oppressed peoples against imperialism - revolutionary anti-imperialist struggles. Their significance is reflected in the fact that the most sharp contradiction

in the world today is that between the oppressed nations and peoples of the world and imperialism, and as is pointed out in the 'Theory of the Three Worlds', the countries and peoples of the Third World constitute the main force combatting imperialism, colonialism and hegemonism.

## WALES AND SCOTLAND

Within Britain there are national contradictions. There are those between British imperialism and the oppressed nations of Wales and Scotland. Much work needs to be done on the precise relationship between England, Scotland and Wales, but in the meantime, we must

## LINKS

Increasingly, links are being forged between the Irish and Black struggles. The material basis for these links is their common oppression by British imperialism, and they can be seen in the support expressed by black national minority organisations for the struggle for the liberation of Ireland, the support of the Republican Movement for liberation struggles around the world and the struggles of black people in Britain. Both Irish and Black national minorities here are making conscious efforts to link the struggles.

## RACIST OPPRESSION

Whilst identifying the common basis of national oppression amongst different oppressed nationalities, we still recognise that there are differences. These must be understood so that we can build the basis for unity. The conference agreed that those national minority people originating from the Third World face a particularly severe form of national oppression - racist oppression. The ideology of racism originated in the slave trade of developing capitalism and became fully defined with the development of capitalism into imperialism. Thus, racism has its roots in the wholesale subjugation of black peoples to an extent and degree not previously known in history. The 'developed nations' of Europe and America were built on the backs of slaves, further enabling the colonisation and oppression of nations throughout the world. Racism, as an ideology was refined and defined in order to justify the exploitation and oppression of the peoples and nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Racist oppression is not separate from national oppression but the highest and most vicious form of it.

For Black people in Britain, racism means, amongst other things, control through racist

immigration and nationality laws, discrimination in all spheres of life, physical attacks, police harassment, the racism of all the state institutions, denial of cultural and language rights. Black people have always fought back, and in the course of the struggle, have developed their own organisations. Whether these organisations are specifically national, like the Pakistani, Kashmiri, Indian, Bangladesh Workers Associations, or not so specifically national like, Afro-Caribbean Self Help Organisation, Asian Youth Movement, Black Parents, they all have an identity which is distinct from that of the majority nationality. In addition, cultural and religious organisations provide a focus for the struggle against racist oppression, for example, Sikh Temples, Mosques, Rastafarianism, Black Churches.

## BLACK POWER

Whilst many of the struggles are by their nature defensive, there is also a strong assertion of national identity, upholding and promoting national cultures and against the direct repression and downgrading of all national minority cultures by English

It is we who have fought your battles for you, and picked your cotton for you. We built this house that you're living in. It was our labor that built this house. You sat beneath the cotton tree telling us how long to work or how hard to work, but it was our labor, our sweat and our blood that made this country what it is and we're the only ones that haven't benefited from it. All we're saying today is, it's payday - retroactive. Malcolm X

racist society. Strong links are retained with the countries of origin in the Third World - cultural links and political links in terms of supporting the struggles for national liberation in those countries. On a broader ideological level, the powerful anti-imperialist tradition of Black Power has developed a tradition which identifies imperialism as a white power structure and sees the corrupting effect of racism on the white population as a whole. It sees the whole of the social structure of white society as being built on the slave trade and the oppression of nations. It lays stress on the autonomy of black people's struggles and the need for black people to unite with each other before entering alliances with the majority nationality.

## IRELAND

Irish people in Britain and Ireland have been fighting British imperialism for hundreds of years. Ireland is Britain's oldest colony, and the centuries of brutal oppression of that country by British imperialism have left an anti-Irish racism deeply embedded in the English national consciousness and a continuation of national oppression of the Irish national minority in England.

The struggle for liberation in Ireland is of central importance to British imperialism, because of its long history, the closeness of Ireland to Britain and the large Irish national minority in Britain among other things. This has led to close connections between the struggle in Ireland and in Britain itself. Historically Irish people have often played a leading role in working class struggles in this country. As with oppressed Black nationalities, the Irish uphold and promote their national culture.

## RESISTANCE TO IMPERIALISM

In Britain, as in the world, national contradictions have become very sharp. It is no

Any nation that oppresses another forges its own chains. Karl Marx.

accident that the resistance to British imperialism has been led by the nationally oppressed - resistance such as the consistent and courageous struggle being waged by the Irish people against British imperialism, the heroic hunger strike undertaken by Irish Prisoners of War, the outrage and anger expressed by black people in response to the New Cross massacre; the uprisings of 1981; the many campaigns against deportations and divided families; the Bradford 12 and the Newham 8. The conference agreed that 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.

We went out to break the connection between this country and the British empire, and to establish an Irish Republic..

Believing that the British government has no right in Ireland, never had any right in Ireland, and never can have any right in Ireland, the presence, in any one generation of Irish men, of even a respectable minority ready to die, to affirm that truth, makes that government forever a usurpation and a crime against human progress.

I personally thank God that I have lived to see the day when thousands of Irish men and boys and hundreds of Irish women and girls were ready to affirm that truth, and to attest it with their lives, if need be .....

We shall rise again!  
James Connolly.

not simply assume that our analysis, most of which is based on England, applies to Scotland and Wales. When we have done more work, we can talk about which aspects are common, and which are different. This is not to imply that we are setting the question aside - the analysis must be made, but until then, we are trying to avoid the tendency to make unwarranted assumptions, or sweeping generalisations, thus falling into the same social chauvinist pitfall.

## NATIONAL MINORITIES

Another type of national contradictions are those between national minority peoples,

They have also developed a powerful anti-imperialist tradition in Republicanism. This ideology, as put forward by Connolly and others is a living revolutionary tradition upheld by the Irish national minority here and in Ireland, and expressed in many forms including songs and poetry.

#### ENGLISH WORKING CLASS

Having identified the advanced nature and strength of national

The revolutionary storm in Asia, Africa and Latin America will certainly deal the whole of the old world a decisive and crushing blow.

Comrade Mao Zedong 1966

struggles, and the need for communists to support and promote them, we must also see their relationship to the struggle of the working class against exploitation, and particularly to the English working class. The conference agreed that the English working class is the working class of an oppressor nation and is thoroughly imbued with racist ideology, whilst accepting that racist attitudes are not held uniformly throughout the class. The working class is still exploited by capital, but in relation to the contradiction between the oppressed nations and peoples of the world and imperialism, they are, temporarily at least, in alliance with imperialism, i.e. racist ideology has been used to enlist the working class onto the side of imperialism in its oppression of nations. This is why the racist oppression suffered by national minority people here does not only come from the state and the ruling class, but also takes the form of attacks and insults on the streets, white workers collaborating with management to maintain discriminatory practices at workplaces, actively organising against black workers and failure to support black people in their struggle against racist oppression and for national rights.

#### LABOUR ARISTOCRACY

Whilst recognising the effect of imperialism on the whole working class, the conference agreed that a labour aristocracy still exists and is the main social force promoting opportunism in the working class. The precise nature of this labour aristocracy and the way it influences the working class still needs analysing. This work should be linked to the work on the development of a class analysis.

#### STRATEGIC ALLIANCE

Accepting that the working class and national minority people face the same enemy - British imperialism, the strategy the

The worker is the slave of capitalist society, the female is the slave of that slave.  
James Connolly.

Women constitute half the world's population, perform nearly two thirds of its work hours, receive on tenth of the world's income and own less than one hundredth of the world's property.

1980 United Nations Report

conference adopted was that of a strategic alliance i.e. an alliance between the struggle of the working class against its exploitation and oppression and the struggle of national minority people against national oppression. This is the long term strategy, and the precise tactics for achieving this are still being developed, however, 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 (the right of national minority

people to autonomy in areas of concentration, with political power, economic resources and the freedom for the national minority culture to grow and flourish). The majority working class will be mobilised on the basis of the struggle against its own exploitation and oppression, but we will argue for their support for the struggles of national minorities as part of building the strategic alliance.

Our tactics will be based on the recognition that racist attitudes are not held uniformly throughout the class. There is a spectrum which includes a thoroughly racist section, a middle section which has broken with racism in certain aspects, and an advanced section which can unite with national minority struggles. The more advanced we would expect to find amongst the most oppressed of the majority working class, particularly women, the youth and the unemployed.

#### FASCISM

The conference agreed that the context in which the struggles of the national minorities, oppressed nations, women and the working class are taking place is one where the British ruling class has to attack the living standards and democratic rights of the great majority of the working people in Britain, in order to re-establish a strong position among the imperialist countries. There is a trend towards fascism in Britain. It was also agreed that more theoretical work needs to be done on the question of fascism.

#### ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT

Taking note of the growing anti-war movements in Europe, North America and the Soviet Bloc, the conference also agreed that the aggression of the two superpowers puts the whole world in danger of war. The Peace movements are of varying political understanding, and more analysis needs to be done on questions of unilateralism/multilateralism; different forces within the peace movement and how to combine the struggle against the US which has bases here, with the struggle against the Soviet Union.

#### WOMEN'S OPPRESSION

Conference passed a resolution on the question of women's oppression. This resolution asserts that in the past, we have paid only lip-service to the question of women's oppression. In order to overcome this, it was agreed that at least some comrades should be enabled to make work on women a priority, to ensure that the necessary theoretical work to develop our line, gets done. Mass work amongst women should also be accorded a priority and more attention should be given to the aspect of women's oppression in all our areas

This is on the basis that all women are oppressed as women, but where possible we should engage in struggles of the most oppressed women - working class and national minority women. Womens fight against their oppression takes many forms - organised struggles against the state, resistance to male violence, campaigns for better health care for example. 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. As we carry out this work, we will find allies amongst sections of the women's movement.

#### REVOLUTION

Conference reasserted that we must uphold Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought and use it

creatively. Comrade Mao Zedong developed Marxism-Leninism in the course of the 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 the oppressed peoples and nations against imperialism. We must learn from such revolutionaries as Amílcar Cabral, Steve Biko, Malcolm X and link Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought with the living revolutionary traditions of Republicanism and Black Power that already exist in this country.

This report summarises the main points from the conference. In future issues of 'Class Struggle' we will discuss a more detailed criticism of our past lines, Ireland and its significance to the revolutionary movement here, the implications of conference decisions for our work, and women's