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BEYOND THE SECOND CONGRESS -- THE BASIS OF OUR UNITY

The League is at an important turning point. On the one hand there are many very strong positive developments. On the other hand there is demoralization, resignations and confusion. Why is this?

In the past three years the RCL has turned into a backward organization. Ideologically it has been dominated by idealism. We had a strong preliminary programme, but once it was established no further systematic study was done to develop it or explain it. At no time was it linked to our developing practice. Politically we adhere to the theory of the Three Worlds and the view that the central task in Britain is to rally a vanguard based in the working class to rebuild the Communist Party. But we had a strong rightist aversion to directly attacking British Imperialism, and shied away from linking the problem of war and peace to the British revolution and from taking up the struggles of the Irish and the national minorities. Organizationally we were absurdly over-centralized and stultified.

In the past two years two things have happened. Firstly more and more comrades have seen through our bad way of operating, have struggled against it and have instituted new ways of doing things. The struggles for anti-imperialist lines, for the study and investigation carried out by the commissions and sub-committees, and the attacks on over centralism have all been part of this trend. The other trend has been the demoralization of comrades when faced with the fact that behind our pomp and circumstance we had nothing much to offer - that we have to start again. This leads to demoralization and confusion (towards liquidationism) It has been a complicated and tiring period, closely linked to deep problems in the international Communist movement.

Now we must rally our forces. BUT NOT IN THE OLD WAY.

First of all. Who are we? We are a small band who adhere to the theory of the three worlds and understand the grave danger of war. We are anti-imperialists who resolutely support the anti-hegemonist, anti colonial and anti-imperialist struggles in the world. We have the strategic goal of building a party of the working class, based on the working class organized in industry. We understand that we are at the first historical stage of rallying the vanguard. We stand foursquare with the most oppressed - the black people and the Irish people.

All this distinguishes us from other trends, and provides a sound strategic orientation for the British revolution. That is why we stand together.

On all the points on which we agree there are serious subordinate problems. Who are the vanguard? What is the relationship between 'base-building' work and anti-imperialist work? How do we link the struggle for peace with the struggle for revolution?

The difference between now and four years ago is that we understand that only an organization that will collectively study policy questions and test them in practice can resolve these difficulties. An open CC which reports frankly to its rank and file and is involved in the practical work of the organization, commissions that really investigate, an open and honest relationship with our friends and supporters - these are our weapons.

At the forthcoming congress we must unite, not as a pack of survivors, but as a group of communists prepared to learn from some very deep mistakes and make the contribution to the class struggle that can only be made by a Marxist-Leninist movement.

SOME LESSONS FROM THE CPGB'S HISTORY ON THE IMPORTANCE OF A STRONG STAND AGAINST OPPORTUNISM.

Marxist -Leninist organisations throughout the world, exist on one planet and share some conditions (the danger of a third world war) while differing drastically in others (e.g. whether they exist in the heartlands of imperialism or in the third world). The organisation of the third world continue to be at the forefront of the struggle and provide inspiration as they have since the outbreak of the October Revolution. The organisations of the imperialist countries are in general in the process of "regrouping and accumulating strength" due to the ravages of revisionism after Stalin's death. In Norway and Canada and the USA there are strong M organisations, which are successfully combatting the prevailing difficult conditions. But further setbacks are being suffered too. The KPD's liquidation of itself, the CPUSA's publication in "The Call" of an article reopening the possibility of "the peaceful road", are examples of ditching the principles of Maxim-Leninism Mao Tsetung Thought, the need for a vanguard party, the necessity of violent revolution etc. It's important to be aware of these trends abroad because we are also affected by them. Learning from the experience of more mature parties than ours, and from historical experience in this country, may save us a lengthy detour over ground that is already well-travelled.

This well-travelled ground is the early stages of party-building and the effects of imperialism in a metropolitan country. The reason for this resurgence of opportunism, taking as its initial form, a conciliatory attitude towards opportunism, is not a new one. It is the continued existence of imperialism which provides the material basis for opportunism.

Foundation of the CPGB: Theoretical tasks not fully carried out.

(NB The material on the CPGB is taken from a long article by WD on the history of the CP - incoming editor of "révolution" please note and publish!)

The period leading up to world war one was one of rising class struggle. The horrors of the imperialist war itself, the outbreak of the October revolution and the return of the soldiers only to join the dole queues led to an intensification of struggle. The CPGB was founded in 1921 in a period of mass upsurge, which brought forth a militant and activist vanguard. In "Left wing Communism" Lenin describes this stage as one of the vanguard being rallied already. Yet though this may have been partly true organisationally, other vital aspects of party building which belong to the first historical stage simply hadn't taken place: i.e. the application of Marxism Leninism to the concrete conditions, the elaboration of a programme for the party. Also in uniting the existing Marxists it was done on a pretty ad-hoc basis. For example, the British Socialist Party, (one of the larger organisations) had been led till 1916 by the arch chauvinist Hyndman. The fact that the founding congress, having agreed on fundamentals, the need for Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat, then spent most of its time debating tactics towards the Labour Party shows the theoretical weakness of the infant CP. To call its foundation premature, or doomed from the outset would be ridiculously purist, in view of the urgent need for leadership to the ongoing struggles at the time. Yet the blithe disregard for theory of the CP a feature of the British working class often noted by Marx, Engels and Lenin, and no less true today, and the failure to elaborate a programme was bound to lead to zigzags, and eventually to opportunism if not corrected. In March 1925 Tom Bell reported that the Comintern advised the party to

"Pay more attention to the international revolutionary experience of the various parties and particularly the Russian party, on the basis of the principles of Leninism. Further it was necessary for certain weaknesses to be eliminated. Two of these were underlined: first, too dilettante an approach to questions, no fundamental theoretical analysis of the problems before the workers in the party press, which is essential for the development of revolutionary Marxist-Leninist theory, and second, insufficient vital contact with the masses of the workers." (History of the British Communist Party p102 by Tom Bell)

Without such work the CPGB couldn't be considered ideologically or politically consolidated.

It is vital for us that we should clearly understand that we are in the first historical stage of party building. Section 7 of our programmatic document, "The struggle to build a revolutionary party in Britain today" should clearly state this. The tasks of working out a programme, rallying the advanced to party

building, uniting with other Marxist-Leninists and rooting our organisation in the working class are all still before us. At the Unity Conference a resolution was passed that the CC should give further leadership on the relationship between theory and practice. This has not been done, which is serious, because an understanding of the need for the advocacy of revolutionary theory in such times as ours underpins our position that we are in the first historical stage.

However, on the question of whether we are in the stage of rallying the vanguard or leading the masses, the draft text puts two lines simultaneously: as in paragraph 9 where it says "Communists today must strive to win the leadership of the class struggle....at the same time they must develop among advanced workers a consciousness how these immediate issues are aspects of the crisis of the imperialist system". This means all things to all people. To foster the illusion that the RCL today is (without a programme etc) capable of leading mass struggles harbours the danger of liquidating Marxist Leninist politics altogether. This is not at all to deny the importance of getting stuck into the existing struggles: and where our work has been conscientiously carried out over several years, it may be possible to win the leadership of particular struggles. But to talk in general terms of being capable of leading the masses is pissing in the wind.

British imperialism: failure to grasp its importance leads to revisionism.

By the time of the 6th Congress, the CPGB still didn't have a programme. Questions which had been the focus for struggle were mainly domestic, e.g. the red trade unions - the "minority movement", or internal, e.g. the struggle for democratic centralism. But the 9th Congress of Oct 827 produced the grossly incorrect theory of decolonisation. This

"took the view that imperialism had shifted its policy from one of hindering the economic development of the colonies to one of promoting industrialisation under the joint auspices of the imperialists and native bourgeoisie. This was shown particularly in the more advanced colonies such as India and Indonesia. It was the old social democratic theory of decolonisation. It implied that the main contradiction between imperialism and the colonies was being eased: the colonial revolution was thereby being defused. The main components of the revolution, the national liberation struggle and the agrarian revolution, were being eliminated through industrialisation. Thus, the perspective before the peoples of those colonies was not national liberation, but rather a long range struggle for socialism." (Harry Haywood in "Black Bolshevik" p273). This view was also put forward at the 6th Congress of the Comintern. Harry Haywood comments:

"Here was the British party, in the homeland of the world's greatest imperialist power, championing the idea that Britain was taking the lead in decolonising her empire. The Tragedy was that the British delegation seemed totally unaware of the chauvinistic implication of their stance. (Ibid. p274 my emphasis)

The decolonisation theory was routed at the Comintern: and the 10th Congress of the CP was forced to adopt the Comintern line: but they failed to put it into practice, nor was the detailed and militant support for colonial struggles outlined at the 11th Congress ever put into practice.

In the '30's, the correct policy of a united front against fascism was used to hide a multitude of chauvinist sins by the CP. In "The Way Out - a Manifesto" published after the 12th Congress, it speaks for the first time of mutual assistance after the revolution. It is assumed that the colonies will advance to socialism after revolution in Britain has granted independence. At the 13th Congress, a programmatic resolution entitled "Can Britain Feed Herself?" (after the revolution, that is,) proposed:

"The British engineering industry under workers control will be able to propose cooperation with the colonial peoples, who will be able at last to build their own economy and develop their own industry and transport. They can get the iron and steel and machinery they require from Britain and other such countries in exchange for foodstuffs, .. and raw materials." (For Soviet Britain, p18) This completely fails to envisage any fundamental change in the relationship between Britain and the ex-colonies. The 15th Congress dropped support for liberation struggles and replaced it with "full democratic rights for the colonial peoples including trade unions". Further, on Italy's invasion of Abyssinia, the CP attacked the national government for its "shameful betrayal of the people of Abyssinia" - a blatant invitation to British imperialism to enter a contest with Italian imperialism.

Today it is essential for us to be far more precise and accurate about how Britain continues to exploit and oppress the countries and peoples of the third world, and to disseminate this understanding in the working class: because such is the success of bourgeois propaganda that it's just not known. To soften up against British imperialism in any way is disastrous for a revolutionary organisation. If and when the superpowers become our main enemy, we must also draw the lesson of the importance of struggle within the united front, from the period of the united front against imperialism.

Britain - longest history of opportunism in the world.

In "Imperialism and the Split in Socialism", Lenin points out how England had two features of imperialism much earlier than other countries: i.e. vast colonies and monopoly profit due to her monopoly position in the world market: England between 1848-68 was in a unique position and only slowly lost this pre-eminence amongst imperialist powers. England's superprofits allowed the bourgeoisie to buy off certain strata of the working class and Marx and Engels traced the development of the "bourgeois proletariat" and the stirrings of the lower strata of the working class between 1858 - 92. But the CP apparently never made the distinction between the labour aristocracy as defined by Marx at the time of England's monopoly, and the definition of it by Lenin in the time of fully developed imperialism. Worse the decolonisation theory led to the unquestioned assumption that the labour aristocracy was declining. Undoubtedly, in times of imperialist crisis as in the '20s and '30s, and today, the bourgeoisie cuts back on the sops that it grants to the working class, and reformism loses its appeal when the bourgeoisie gives up conceding reforms. But never to understand the role of the labour aristocracy, the trojan horse in the workers' movement, was a dangerous blind spot.

Where the first world war blew to smithereens the idea of patriotism (that workers had any interest in imperialist war), in the second world war the anti-fascist aspect won a great national unity. Where the first world war was followed by a depression and a labour surplus, the second world war was followed by prosperity and labour shortage, in metropolitan countries. You've got to be about 80 years old to have taken part in the last round of really mass struggle. Reformism has had another lease of life. But decades of social democratic leadership of the working class results in the demoralisation on the industrial front today: it is not material interest in preserving imperialism which results in a mainly passive attitude towards attacks by the bourgeoisie. - but lack of faith in opportunist leadership, and the long standing lack of any other kind.

The effect of a further 60 years of imperialism since Lenin's time on the class structure of Britain must be summed up in the work on class analysis for the programme. But there are already some points to be made from our own experience. Firstly, in the CFB, there was some dogmatic distortion of what Lenin said about the struggle against opportunism. For example, a resolution adopted by the National Committee of the CFB (Printed in Revolution 1) said "Lenin pointed out that the proletarian party could not win over the class conscious vanguard without the complete ideological and political victory over opportunism". At a stage where revisionists and reformists are grouped in many separate organisations, instead of the different trends existing within one organisation as they were in Lenin's time, such a victory is impossible during the first historical stage of rebuilding a revolutionary organisation, though it is still an essential precondition for the ultimate victory of the working class. Secondly, our strategic opposition to opportunism must be applied to tactics: we cannot hold aloft unity at any price, and sabotage strategic opposition to opportunism. Thirdly, there is no evidence to my knowledge that our opposition to opportunism has damaged our practical work. On the contrary, such respect as we have gained has been because of our opposition to opportunism. Struggles against the bourgeoisie are generally waged in the teeth of opportunist opposition.

The view that only a few of the top trade union leaders are class enemies, and ditto for the Labour Party, is to narrow the target a good deal too much. I've yet to hear anyone with anything good to say about paid union officials. But it is essential to distinguish between the leadership and the membership of the unions, and also between hard-boiled opportunists, and opportunist mistakes made by activists in a prevailing atmosphere of opportunism. On the other hand, certainly the welfare state has cushioned the working class, who

have a better standard of living than in third world countries. But does the fact that the national minorities are in the forefront of the struggle against the state, as they undoubtedly are, mean that the rest of the working class is a write off? This line is crudely what's put by the RCG and CS in recent issues. Definitely no. Though exploitation of workers in Zambia may be ten times as harsh as that of workers in the UK, it's still exploitation. And it does not make the working class into allies of the monopolies. If this petty bourgeois white liberal line were followed to its conclusion, we might as well shut up shop now.

Attitude towards imperialism and opportunism determines attitude towards the Labour Party.

Lacking a thorough understanding of British imperialism and of the results of this for the working class movement in Britain, led the CP to have an approach towards the Labour party which elevated tactics above strategic opposition to opportunism.

At founding meetings of the CPGB the controversy raged on tactical differences to the labour party and parliamentarism. Later when the application to join the LP was turned down by the LP, instead of using the event to expose it the question of the united front came to the fore. The CP's development was seen as conditional on its relationship to the LP. In the General strike, slogans were put forward of (among others) "All power to the General Council" and "Formation of a Labour government": Of the General Council, JH Thomas himself later said "The object of the leadership was to prevent the struggle getting out of the hands of those who would be able to exercise some control" (Quoted in Palme Dutt, p184) As for the Labour Party, MacDonald, speaking of the forged Zinoviev letter said "Who is it that has stood against Bolshevism? Liberals have contributed nothing, Tories nothing... all the work has been done by leaders and Labour Party leaders." (Palme Dutt, Social democracy and Fascism p184.)

After the general strike, the CP came in for more criticism by the Comintern for continuing to call for the formation of a labour government, and then for further criticisms, for seeing in the first criticism only a change in electoral policy. The 11th Congress in 1929 adopted a strategic line in opposition to the LP characterising it as social fascist. This was followed by a strong report to the 12th Congress ('32) entitled "Crisis policy of the LP, TUC General Council and the ILP". But Pollitt's conciliatory attitude to opportunism led him to say of Dimitrov's speech to the 7th Congress/which put forward the united Front against fascism that

of the Comintern

"It is a report that will take the international labour movement a big step forward to overcoming the split created in 1914 by the war policy of the social democrats." (Unity against the National Government)

Militant struggle against the LP was not revived till the outbreak of world war two, when Pollitt was removed from the leadership and dropped again from '41. We know the results today.

There's absolutely no doubt about the nature of the LP; it's an imperialist party, which in nine periods of office only helps to foster illusions in parliamentarism, whilst laying the foundations economically and politically for the corporate state. It is only necessary to look at the record of its deeds: yet imperialists foster the illusion that it is a working class party. Yet Section 7 says, in paragraph 65 "The Labour Party includes leading elements, particularly in the parliamentary party, who are not just conciliators of the monopoly bourgeoisie, but in essence themselves form part of the bourgeoisie". This implies that some leading elements of the LP are not class enemies: perhaps it's just a case of a few bad apples? This formulation is a complete revision of the existing RCG line. Further, it disarms communists, in creating illusions about what social democrats think of communists: they hate them; and in the history of the working class movement it has been precisely these characters who have split the working class. For example, Sherwood of the General and Municipal workers Union talking to the American AFL in 1927 said

"Branches of our organisation in London, over 15,000 strong, refused to comply with the instructions of our general council. Well Mr President, we simply smashed the branches... we had on our General Council two men who represented great areas in our country, but they were going to minority

meetings, and we said "sign a declaration or get out". Well, they had to get out". (quoted in Palme Dutt p190)

It is essential that we wrench our eyes away from what the opportunists are doing, and concentrate our energies and attentions on the sections of the working class that are not bound hand and foot to them already:

"Our view, which we have found confirmed by long practice, is that the correct tactics in propaganda are not to entice away a few individuals and memberships here and there from one's opponent, but to work on the great mass, which is not yet taking part in the movement. The raw force of a single individual whom one has oneself reared from the raw is worth more than ten Lassallean turncoats, who always bring the germs of their false tendencies into the party with them." Engels to A Bebel June 20 1873

To sum up: we need to hang on tight to our orientation that party-building is the central task: that the creation and advocacy of revolutionary theory is vital to our success in carrying out this stage: of continuing to unite Marxist Leninists, and of rooting the organization in the working class. This is our best contribution to the struggle against opportunism and the fight against imperialism.

The second issue of the Interim Journal carried a critique of a document that was first circulated internally within the RCLB entitled "Support for the Communist Party of China Continues to be an Important Part of Proletarian Internationalism". The author of the critique concentrated mainly on what he saw as "extremely serious" errors in the document which accepted the "class orientation of the bourgeoisie". By comparison with the space devoted to this, the author of the critique did not write much directly about the changes that have occurred in China and how to understand them positively and correctly. Before examining the significance of this, for it is surely not accidental, it would be well to stress first, the political situation in which this debate should be firmly set.

The Chinese revolution of 1949 was the greatest victory for socialism since the October Revolution in Russia. It had special additional significance in that it was the most important liberation of an oppressed people in the era of imperialism. Furthermore, after the seizure of power by a revisionist clique in the Soviet Union and the establishment of rule there by a bureaucrat state monopoly capitalist class, China represented the most important standard of socialism in the world. Under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, the PRC achieved considerable successes in uniting the overwhelming majority of the people politically, and in building a strong socialist economy. In addition socialist China gave substantial aid to the crucial national liberation struggles of Korea and Indochina, which first checked and then broke the back of US world hegemonism.

Nevertheless in the later years of their outstanding revolutionary leader, Mao Zedong, the Chinese people ran into significant problems of relative economic stagnation, and of a chaotic political situation in which careerists and demagogues appeared to flourish. Since the death of Mao Zedong the Chinese Party and people have been trying hard to sum up what happened, and to make necessary political and economic changes. In some respects these changes have been quite substantial. The political question in front of us then, is do we still support the CPC?

The author of the critique seems to treat support as a matter of making a purely formal declaration in the first paragraph of his article, before moving on to other considerations. But giving support to the Chinese people is not a question of brief formal declarations but a difficult problem of political practice. Partly because of the great prestige of the Chinese Revolution and of Mao Zedong, but also partly because of the dogmatic way this was presented, many of those who formerly most supported the Chinese people are now badly torn about the present changes in Chinese policies.

Perhaps the author of the critique was not fully aware of the situation but this is an acute and concrete problem within the British movement for friendship with China. Although a few of our comrades have tried to work hard in the Society of Anglo-Chinese Understanding during the all too brief amount of time they can devote to this, they would undoubtedly be the first to say that our efforts do not correspond to what is needed in uniting with other long-standing and very hard-working members of SACU in rising to the challenges. Ordinary people in Britain have never been more receptive to hearing about China but the irony is that one after another, branches of SACU have folded. Now even the travel agency side of the work has come under pressure from commercial competition. This is not the time or place to go into internal matters of SACU in detail, which we must rely on friends and comrades within SACU to solve. But rather than appearing to treat support for China as a question of making a couple of sentences of an abstract declaration of support, the author of the critique should take time to listen to comrades about the problems of SACU and should try to pitch his contribution in a way that assists this work.

For it is this that the comrade does not do in his critique. On the basis of careful study of a lot of material, the circulated document aimed to summarise the main changes that occurred in China economically and politically and the seriousness of the Chinese arguments for these changes. The document tried to draw the essential distinction between a change that is an opportunist flip and a change that is the result of honestly and scientifically summing up experience at a higher

level. It argued that while the Chinese would inevitably make some mistakes and while some of the changes were experimental, what the Chinese were doing was part of a process of building socialism on a higher level of Marxist-Leninist understanding.

We are not in a position to rubber stamp and should not want to rubber stamp, any particular policy, which only the practice of the Chinese revolution can really prove, but we are in a position and have the duty at this testing time of supporting the general direction that our Chinese comrades are going in and to explain it better. That is our proletarian internationalist duty as Communists in an imperialist country to support comrades in a third world socialist country.

If the author of the critique had made serious criticisms of the circulated document and then gone on to make better points about how we should understand and support China then his opening statement of support would not be mere formal window dressing but would be a real practical contribution of support. But the author of the critique did not do this. It is impossible to escape the overall political direction of his contribution. A document is circulated by one comrade calling for continued strong support of socialist China. A reply comes making not just strong but extremely strong criticisms of it. The critique in short is unmistakably not a statement of support for the CPC but a hard-hitting "exposure" of the comrade trying to urge support for China. For what purpose?

It is said that in the 1930's Mao Zedong focussed his criticism on Wang Ming, although Wang Ming's line was actually the line of the Communist International, out of the need to uphold the unity of the international Communist movement. Whether the author of the critique had similar such methods in mind he presumably alone knows. Should we welcome the fact that he has not criticised China directly but only indirectly by means of strong criticisms of a comrade trying to support the CPC, if that is the case? From one point of view it might seem to be a concession to be welcomed but overall it is not much better than outright criticism. For the net effect of contributions like those of the "critique" is to paralyse the League giving concrete support to China, and to accentuate the danger of the League taking up a totally vacillating position on the question, with large elements of scepticism and even cynicism in it.

One striking thing about the critique is the way it proceeds from quotations rather than proceeding from reality. This is part of its fundamentally dogmatist distortion of Marxism-Leninism. Although the author roundly condemns "petty-bourgeois baton-following" it is evident that he simply has not taken time to think through the questions in the necessary depth.

One example of this is at the beginning of the critique when, in briefly stating his position on China, he says, "the Chinese have been forced to take a step backwards on the economic front ... in order to rectify the severe damage done by the gang of four in the cultural revolution". This completely misses the depth of the Chinese re-appraisal of their economic policies. One has to assume that the author himself is "baton-following the formulas of certain articles of a couple of years ago, which emphasised the damage done by the gang of four in order to complete their exposure and in order to unite the people. But it really cannot be imagined that four individuals on their own could disrupt a vast nation's economy. If our critical comrade would claim that his phrase meant the gang of four and their supporters, this would only beg the whole question, why did they have such support? Why were they able to be so powerful? It is a question the Chinese believe, of summing up a substantial "left" deviation in the party as a whole stretching over a number of years. It is not a matter only of the period of the gang of four's hegemony, it is a question of economic problems developing since as far back as 1958. If the author of the critique mechanically and unthinkingly accepts a formula about the damage of the gang of four he is of course unable to understand the depth of the economic summing up that has been necessary.

This is also very evident on page 7 of his critique where he talks about "The continued struggle to transform the relations of production; the struggle against bourgeois right, the law of value ..." Has he simply overlooked or has he chosen to ignore that the Chinese have consciously stopped campaigning for the restriction of bourgeois right at present? As for the law of value has he overlooked or has

he chosen to ignore the fact that they are stressing its application must be extended, not restricted, under conditions in China today? Detailed and serious arguments have been presented by the Chinese comrades on this important economic summing up. What is our comrade's purpose in ignoring them while thundering against "vulgar determinism of the worst kind"? Or is he simply trying to speak out authoritatively without making the necessary investigations?

The comrade quotes the circulated document as saying, "Because the economic base more or less directly determines the superstructure ..." and does not finish the sentence in the original which continued, "we will keep our feet on the ground better if we look first at certain important questions in the economic base." The point is that this sentence did not claim to be a definitive statement on the relations between the base and the superstructure but was merely an introductory sentence to the economic section of the circulated document.

It is typical of the "left" sectarian style of the critique which is constantly striving to nose out revisionism in the manner of the worst features of the cultural revolution, that it should pounce on a phrase like this and denounce it as "vulgar determinism of the worst kind".

It is true that the concept is phrased loosely: between "more or less directly" there is a wide range. But the formula is really not so different from Marx's famous statement in the "Preface to 'A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy'" -

"In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness."

The quote from Engels used by the comrade in the critique says, "the determining element in history is ultimately the production and reproduction of real life", but it goes on to deny that the economic element is the only determining one. Between "ultimately" and "only" there is also a wide margin. For the author of the critique to imply that the circulated document treats the economic element as the only determining one is quite arbitrary as the section in it on politics shows.

What was implied in the circulated document is completely consistent with Engels statement in the same quotation used by the comrade, that the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary. And isn't that exactly what happened in China after the years of ultra-leftism? The economy was stagnant and the masses were discontented. In many ways they made it clear that they were not prepared to accept the idealist and ultra-left politics of the gang of four anymore. So in the end economic realities reasserted themselves! Isn't that exactly the sort of process that Engels described?

The author of the critique however hastens to add a note to Engels at this point to the effect that "in society as a whole there are no final movements". In principle this is quite correct, both in application to economic movements and to political movements, but what is the purpose of the addition here? To use the quote from Engels as a justification for the comrade's obvious desire to see "political and ideological struggles", including the campaign to restrict bourgeois right, continuing in China as the main form of building socialism.

The assertion in the critique that the circulated document ignored "the political and ideological struggle" is quite false: on the contrary it argued why the "political and ideological struggles" of the cultural revolution were so harmful. It should also be stressed that the CPC is paying considerable attention now to ideological work and education, although there was a period of over-reaction against ultra-left ideological struggles after the fall of the gang of four.

The critique makes heavy criticisms of the opening sentences of the circulated document, which read:

"We supported China in the past as the best example of a socialist state in the world. Summing it up broadly, we supported China as a democratic model of socialism in contrast to the internal repression and external oppression of the Soviet Union."

Some might express the matter somewhat differently, stressing admiration for the revolutionary spirit of China, but the sentence was deliberately intended to be expressed broadly, and was not counterposed to the spirit of the Chinese revolution.

There is no justification for the insinuation in the critique about "petty-bourgeois laudings of democracy" which ignore the question of class. It is true that the question of class is not referred to specifically in this passage but it is dealt with quite systematically in the section on politics. Yes democracy does indeed have a class nature and should be understood not in a bourgeois abstract way but in a concrete proletarian way. It was in that sense that the writer of the circulated document meant it. The passage was intended to answer the fundamental question: if we supported China during the cultural revolution and we still support China today, what is the consistent thread that runs throughout this period despite all the changes? I believe that we supported China then and support it now as a socialist country in which the Party conscientiously tries to serve the people and makes sure that the state serves the people. Although the methods are very different - from rousing the masses in their thousands to overthrow capitalist roaders, to promoting democratic accountability in a much more systematic way these days, the aim is the same one of serving the interests of the mass of the people.

The author of the critique completely misses the point by repeating in a dogmatic fashion that the essence of the question is "what class is in power". What class holds state power is an extremely important question, and for us the crucial one as we strive for socialist revolution. But does it give the simple revolutionary answers to the problems of building socialism that the critique implies? What class held state power in China when the gang of four and their followers had hegemony and were exercising a semi-fascist dictatorship over the masses? The proletariat? The bourgeoisie? What class holds state power in Albania at present? The bourgeoisie? The proletariat? The author of the critique seems to imply that it is the mark of a bold proletarian spirit to answer these questions with dogmatic certainty, and the mark of a revisionist spirit to try to think them through more deeply. This is a gross "left" distortion of the true Marxist method of analysis.

Certainly the line and conduct of a socialist state should be judged in class terms, in terms of which class is served by its actions. But if it is implied that this is a simple judgement, then that ignores the amount of experiment and trial and error that still has to take place in building socialism. Is it so obviously a red-blooded socialist line that each province should be fundamentally self-sufficient, and a bourgeois line that the provinces should make differing contributions to the socialist economy according to their differing conditions? Is it a proletarian policy, to have a people's army fundamentally relying on guerrilla war to deal with a nuclear attack, and a bourgeois policy to have more technologically complex defence systems? Is it a bourgeois policy to advertise the availability of goods which can be produced better or faster by more modern techniques, and a proletarian policy to ban advertising altogether?

The critique completely fails to understand this point in the circulated document that "what socialism actually is, cannot be dreamed up in the mind of any individual." Instead the critique strikes a pose by quoting Marx and Lenin on the general principles of socialism (not the actual concrete form) and militantly declares, "We are Marxist-Leninists and we can decide what socialism is." (thereby dropping from the ringing declaration the word "actually" - which is the whole point at issue!). The critique also insinuates that the circulated document suggested that "we no longer have any criteria for judging ... what socialism is", and thunders that "Our comrades argument is liquidation of Marxism-Leninism". But what socialism actually is, and the criteria for judging different approaches in building socialism are not identical questions. The fact that the comrade runs the two together merely illustrates his dogmatist inability even to begin to think through the issue.

It is "our comrade", the author of the critique, who has liquidated something Marxist - the Marxist method of analysis.

In a sarcastic passage, with references to "Marxism-Masochism", the comrade accuses the circulated document of implying that "there is a new phenomena in the political heavens, democratic and undemocratic socialism". One of the idealist distortions of the cultural revolution was to talk only in terms of the essence of socialist democracy, and not to pay attention to the necessary forms and procedures of socialist democracy. There is no doubt that as a result socialist democracy was significantly weakened and distorted during the cultural revolution, despite the subjective desires of the overwhelming majority of the masses and of the party. Today the fact is that our Chinese comrades consider that the present Chinese socialist state is substantially less democratic than they wish, although it will take time to correct this. It is also a fact that at times when the Soviet Union was a socialist state, socialist democracy was significantly distorted, particularly in the absence of a reliable socialist legal system for protecting the rights of the people both individually and collectively. Unless we accept the mechanical, metaphysical style of reasoning of the author of the critique, we have to recognize the possibility of socialist states existing for a time with severe weaknesses of democracy either through lack of attention to necessary democratic procedures, or due to the leadership treating contradictions among the people as contradictions with the enemy.

Even more perverse is the critique's assertion that the circulated document actually floated the argument that the Soviet Union today is a socialist country. So ultra-left and sectarian is the comrade's style of inner party struggle that he refers to (but significantly does not quote) the following passage, and then describes it as a "smokescreen to cover the main thrust of the argument". The thrust of the passage is however perfectly clear:

"The core of the theoretical and the burning practical problems raised by the theory (of "continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat") lies in the question of the "new bourgeoisie". If it is correct to say that a new bourgeoisie emerged in the Soviet Union, how did it get there and how can it be prevented from arising in China? It is a mark of Mao Zedong's greatness and dedication to the cause of Communism that he tackled this question as energetically as he could. The fact that he could not guarantee a completely satisfying answer serves to show that social practice is the sole criterion of truth.

"Once an opportunist clique has seized control of a Communist Party in a socialist state there seems a strong case for saying that they and their allies in the government and administration occupy a definite relationship of control over the means of production and the armed forces of the state, such that they and their allies fulfil the objective economic criteria of an exploiting class. This would seem so despite the fact that their origins and their form of organization are different in important respects that must be analyzed concretely from the bourgeoisie and monopoly bourgeoisie of the west."

The circulated document aimed to summarise the substantial changes that had occurred in China and no apology is due if it did not present a completely scientific statement on the Soviet Union. What is significant is that the author of the critique thinks the matter can be handled so dogmatically. Yes the Soviet Union is a social fascist state internally and social imperialist externally and is ruled by a new bureaucrat state monopoly bourgeoisie. The circulated document deliberately never described it as a socialist state. But we have to recognize that there are certain similarities of forms between the Soviet Union of the past and the Soviet Union of today, and that the Soviet Union can appear to be a model of a certain sort of socialism on superficial analysis. We have to deal with the fact that many of the more conscious people in the working class movement, partly under the influence of revisionism, but also partly spontaneously do see the Soviet Union superficially as a model of socialism, although a very unattractive one. What makes this a particularly serious problem for us is that they are therefore prepared to cover up or overlook its actions internationally to a considerable degree.

This is not just the work of the revisionists, although revisionists have a

lot to answer for. The Soviet Union was once a socialist country and now retains many of the forms of socialism although its class nature is social imperialist. It is a fact that the highly centralised socialist economy of Stalin's time was father to both the Chinese socialist economic system and the highly centralised state bureaucratic economy of present day Russia. It is a fact that a Communist Party played the leading role in Stalin's day and that the linear descendant of that party plays the leading role today: in its class essence it is the antithesis of its former self, but in form it cannot be denied that it is the linear descendant.

What has happened? All Marxist-Leninists would agree that there is a close inter-relation of the problems of bureaucracy, commandism and distortions of socialist democracy, with the take over of the party by a new bureaucrat class. It seems more correct to see the process of the take over a Communist party dialectically, in terms of quantitative changes accumulating to the point where they lead to the qualitative class change. The danger of such a set back is always there and must consciously be guarded against by genuine Communists. It is a mark of Mao Zedong's greatness that he tried to tackle this problem head on. Yet in the light of the set-backs of the gang of four, we can no longer say that the "theory of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat", certainly as it was conveyed to us, can be defended as a satisfactory theory. Rather it would seem that unless and until the qualitative set-back occurs (a clique seizes power so preparing for the establishment of a new bureaucrat bourgeoisie) the better way to build socialism politically is to build socialist democracy. Bureaucracy should be restricted by stressing public accountability rather than by promoting mass movements of "class struggle/ against the "bourgeoisie in the party", which can so obviously be distorted by left-opportunists and demagogues.

It was this of course that was meant when it was said in the circulated document that "Democracy is not ultra-democracy, and reliance on mass upsurges of emotion rather than systematically developing democratic methods, may provide the conditions for demagogues to establish a semi-fascist system of power." The critique's sarcastic remarks on this passage completely fail to see that what is being talked about is not the anger of the revolutionary masses overthrowing the bourgeoisie in a capitalist state, but the erroneous policy promoted in the cultural revolution of stirring up one mass movement after another. As if delivering a knock-out blow, the critique asks, "Would our comrade be opposed to reliance upon 'emotional' upsurges such as the Tien An Men incident?". The Tien An Men Square incident was a decisive mass struggle against the gang of four of a spontaneous nature. In the historical context such a spontaneous mass struggle was very necessary and in a future historical context it may be necessary again. But that is not the same thing as the party deliberately striving to stir up large scale mass demonstrations for years and years as an end in themselves.

In fact the author of the critique specifically advocates and attaches particular importance to "large scale mass struggles". Was he simply ignorant of the fact that on the basis of a wealth of negative experience the Chinese have rejected this policy? Or did he consciously choose to ignore this fact?

The critique criticises the CPC for the way and the forms of its "recognition" of the Italian and Spanish CP's, "on which the RCLB should state its disagreements publically but not make a great fuss over." This present writer certainly assumes that there are at least significant revisionist features in the Italian and Spanish CP's, and agrees that the CPC could have made an important mistake. But it is also possible that they have not.

The critique says "We can also state that the CPGB, the Spanish and Italian CP's are not socialist (Marxist-Leninist) Parties", by which it means that we can state this without investigation. That is a dogmatic approach that does nothing to strengthen Marxism-Leninism.

I do not accept that differences of principle were glossed over by the CPC in its exchanges with the Italian and Spanish parties, if that is what is implied. But what the critique mainly seems of call for is public polemics in the international Communist movement which is a policy that the CPC has not followed for

almost 20 years. There is little evidence that it is an effective way of strengthening opposition to revisionist errors within the particular party under criticism. The example of the Party of Labour of Albania and the organizations around it, illustrates what sort of "international Communist movement" is created by such methods. Has the author of the critique really thought this through?

It is for the genuine Communists within each country to combat revisionism in the course of integrating Marxism-Leninism with the actual conditions of their class struggle. No-one else can do it effectively. Nevertheless if the CPC's re-establishment of relations with the Spanish and Italian parties has been a factor in their recent strong opposition to Soviet hegemonism towards Afghanistan and Poland, it may already to a small degree have helped to postpone an invasion of the latter country. And when the inevitable Soviet invasion occurs, it will strengthen the probability that the two parties (one of them the largest in any country not holding state power) will split decisively with the CPSU. Quite apart from these short-term considerations, in the long term it seems quite arguable that such developments would on balance improve the prospects for a genuine revolutionary Communist line in the two countries concerned.

Of course the CPC may be wrong, but it may also be right. I see no necessity to make public criticisms between our two organizations, when our doubts and reservations can be expressed quite adequately in private. We do not have to promote the Italian and Spanish parties in our publications unless we decide we should, and it is unlikely that large numbers of Spanish and Italian immigrant workers in Britain would be recruited to these parties on the strength of reported contacts with the CPC.

As for the CPGB, the subtitle in the critique, "Where is it All Heading, or Should the RCLB Join the CPGB?", is a silly piece of sarcasm. It is unlikely that the CPC would attempt to re-establish relationships with the CPGB unless the latter took a far more principled stand against Soviet hegemonism than it has shown any sign of doing so far. And even if relations were restored, I see no reason why we should not take that situation in our stride, and strive more effectively to win honest comrades over to a revolutionary Communist position by firm reasoned criticism. Workers simply do not flock to support a Communist Party because it has fraternal relations with a party in another country on the other side of the world.

The issue of the Italian and Spanish parties is on the surface the only one on which the author of the critique has stated that he wishes us to criticise the CPC. But as I have argued, in many respects politically and economically he is still a supporter of the theory of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat, and simply does not recognize the depth and principled nature of the reappraisal that the CPC is making. If the change in CPC policy were an opportunist flip we should be alarmed, but it is not. It is a reappraisal that in due course will add to Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought as an all-round system, and will add to our confidence that socialism can not only be won but can be maintained and built.

I want lastly to return to the comrade's style. Obviously I regret that he has taken the position he has against the arguments in the circulated document, for I do not believe we should spend an enormous amount of time struggling over the details of the Chinese revolution, which the Chinese are in a better position to sum up and carry forward than we are. There is enough evidence to place fundamental support and confidence in the Chinese Party, and we should be concentrating instead mainly on the revolutionary line for the British revolution.

But if in all sincerity he has to oppose the case argued in the circulated document, can he please improve the style in which he does so? The present style does little to clarify the issues and to draw lines of demarcation militantly but scientifically. There is too much sarcasm in the article and too much of the style of finishing off people with a single blow. There is also frankly what Mao called striking a pose in order to impress. What is the purpose of bringing up a quotation by Mao Zedong from "On Contradiction" when the quotation has nothing to add in connection with the word ("teeming") that the author of the critique took such exception to? What is the purpose of bringing up a quote by Engels on anarchy of production in a capitalist economy when the point made in the circulated document was that there is in principle a danger of economic anarchy if decentralization

goes too far in China's socialist economy? (A point that the Chinese seem to be vigilant about.)

The comrade's readiness to suspect and nose out revisionism in all sorts of places rather than making a clear-cut criticism for what he considers to be weakly formulated passages (and in some cases probably are) is symptomatic of the influence of the worst sorts of thinking of the cultural revolution. The statement that "I am convinced that if the RCLB accepts the comrade's statements as correct theoretical positions then we would be in serious danger of changing the class orientation of the proletariat for the bourgeoisie over a period of time" is overstated to a quite sectarian degree at an early stage of polemic.

Yes the struggle between ideas in the party is ultimately a reflection of class struggle within society. But I would add that the main danger for us in practice comes not from the ideology of the bourgeoisie but from the ideology of the petty-bourgeoisie and intelligentsia, which has a large social base in our ranks. Although rightist errors of reformism are the greater danger in the working class movement as a whole, within the revolutionary ranks the influence of the petty-bourgeoisie has made "left" opportunism the greater danger for the time being. I believe the critique illustrates this strongly.

Ideological struggle is not academic struggle. The concrete political situation demands that we accept the responsibility to give proletarian internationalist support to the CPC and PRC. That does not mean abstract declarations of support in principle and scepticism in practice. I call on comrades to take a concrete stand on this question.

May 1981.

Re-Affirmation of the Fundamentals of Marxism is Essential at the Present Time.

It seems that once or twice in every generation of Communists, a particularly acute struggle must be waged between Marxism and anti-Marxist trends arising within the communist ranks. Each time, the anti-Marxist trends have caused some damage, yet in the end, Marxism came through and demonstrated its continuing vitality and revolutionary force with new successes, as when the Bolsheviks led the Russian proletariat in the October Revolution after fighting the Mensheviks in the RSDLP and international revisionism, or the CPC led the Chinese Revolution to success after defeating right and left opportunist lines.

Today, the imperialist order is in crisis; communists in the First and Second World Countries face both new problems and new opportunities. But the problems they face in society at large and the opportunities the present situation offers for expanding communist influence and building revolutionary organization will be beyond them if they do not put their own ranks in order and uphold Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought in determining what they must do at the present time. Yet some organizations internationally, notably the KPD and CP(M-L)US, have reacted to the more testing conditions which they face now by an abandonment or serious questioning of basic principles of Marxism-Leninism. This has only made things worse, leading to their collapse or decline.

It is not a co-incidence that these problems have arisen in the M-L movement at a time of imperialist crisis. In most developed countries, that movement was drawn in large measure from the intelligentsia, and had a weak base in the working class; it was not deeply integrated into the struggles of the masses in these struggles, and had not applied Marxism-Leninism well in the specific conditions in each country. The movement grew during a period of relative stability in the imperialist order, but now that has ended, ^{this has} brought about a crisis within the international communist movement. Reflecting their class position, quite a few of the intellectuals have taken a defeatist attitude to the new problems, blaming Marxism-Leninism (or some basic parts of it) for the failure of their organizations to make progress, when the problem really lies with their weakness in applying Marxism-Leninism and with the genuine difficulties of the objective situation. These people have looked for short-cuts to socialism, and for softer options in the class struggle. It is notable that organizations such as the Canadian WCP, or the Norwegian AKP(M-L), which have held to M-L principles and made a determined effort to build a base in the proletariat and apply Marxism-Leninism creatively to the conditions of their countries have not disintegrated, but have continued to grow in strength.

It should be emphasized that the problems these have led to the disintegration of organizations such as KPD and crises in others have primarily been ones of political line; organizational collapse followed political degeneration. The lesson for us should be that the emphasis in the fight we need to wage against liquidationist tendencies should focus on the danger of ^{the} attacks ^{on} or undermining of basic Marxist-Leninist principles and policies, rather than organizational matters which are extremely important but secondary.

Some comrades may question the view that the main reason for the crisis in the M-L movement at the present time is the imperialist crisis, and say that questioning of developments in China is more important. That is a factor, but the evidence from most other ^{major} organizations and our own suggests this is not the case. But where it is a factor, it surely points to an unhealthy state of affairs anyway; the main job of communists everywhere is to make revolution in their own countries, and they should not be so politically dependent on any sister organization (even one as prestigious as the CPC) or socialist country as to be thrown into deep confusion by what it does at any time. This really speaks volumes, where it has been the major influence in making ^{major} people lose faith in socialism and conviction for Marxism-Leninism, about those comrades lack of integration with the

class struggle in their own countries.

Some may question whether what has been said about adhering to the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism is not dogmatic. But that is a word that has lately been much misused. It is dogmatic to fail to proceed from material reality, but to try to make reality fit in with analyses, etc., taken ready-made from Marxist classics; it is dogmatic to mis-apply specific Marxist policies, analyses, etc., to conditions where they plainly do not apply, or to make analogies between different situations where the analogy simply does not apply; it is not dogmatic to uphold Marxism-Leninism as a tried and tested guide for tackling the problems we face, nor is it dogmatic to defend basic Marxist principles and policies which have been proved correct in theory and practice. There is a world of difference between dogmatism and holding to Marxism-Leninism.

Imperialist Countries: Left or Right Opportunism the Main Danger?

Once Stalin was asked whether "left" or right opportunism was the more dangerous; he responded by saying that the more dangerous was the one communists had stopped fighting against. There is a lot of truth in this, and it should be borne in mind at any time one or the other is targetted for criticism.

Still, specific conditions in different countries tend to favour the emergence of one or the other as the main opportunist trend overall. In the imperialist countries, particularly in Britain, the main one is right opportunism. This is because super-profits from the oppressed countries enabled the monopoly capitalist class to buy over to its service a tiny upper stratum of the working class—the labour aristocracy, and to concede to the mass of the proletariat a few concessions (essentially a larger amount, though not necessarily a larger proportion) of the value it produced), thus creating both a social basis for right opportunism, and some material grounds for illusions about reforming capitalism into socialism.

This is not to say left opportunism poses no danger; at times in the past, it has affected the British M-L movement quite seriously. This is because of its social composition, it having been drawn largely from the intelligentsia. Thus, while the main danger overall has been right opportunism, within the M-L movement, there have been times (such as during the late '60's) when leftism has been the more dangerous. Still, overall, in the conditions in which we work, we should see right-opportunism as the main danger strategically, and retain this orientation even though we must rebuff "leftist" tendencies from time to time.

Grasp Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought as a System, Uphold its Basic Principles and Fundamental Lines, and Integrate with the Proletariat.

We should strive for an all-round grasp of Marxism-Leninism; in particular, we need to try to understand and use the philosophy of dialectical materialism. This is necessary if we are to master the Marxist method of analysis. It is for years, idealism has been rampant in the M-L movement; in Britain; if the League's old line on Ireland was social-chauvinist it was also idealist, in that it didn't recognize the revolutionary character of the struggle going on against "our" imperialists in the country next door. We should work to grasp dialectical materialism as a foundation for a good all-round grasp of Marxism; we must try to grasp Marxism-Leninism as a system in order to apply it and in the course of applying it.

The basic principles and fundamental lines worked out in the international communist movement over a long time must be upheld. These were defended in the early '60's by the Chinese and other comrades when the revisionists attempted to overthrow and bury them. The same questions are coming up again, as well as some other old familiar ones upon which the communist movement has already delivered its verdict. In opposition to this trend, it should be affirmed:

****Revisionism is not just a word we use for people we don't like; revisionism uses the forms of Marxism, but seeks to deprive Marxism of its revolutionary essence. It masquerades as Marxism, but is its deadly enemy, at the present time (in Britain) partly serving Soviet social-imperialism

and partly British imperialism. Tactically, we should take advantage of contradictions among the revisionists, but strategically, we must continue to treat revisionism as an enemy.

****Social-democracy is not the lesser of two evils and the Labour Party is not a working class party, but a bourgeois party (first and foremost, by reason of its line).

****Opportunism is bourgeois politics and ideology within the working class and among working people. It does not represent a "middle force". In dealing with particular opportunist groups or individuals, we must distinguish between the most thoroughgoing opportunists and those who have some redeeming features, including ones who vacillate between correct and wrong positions, but our strategic orientation must be towards a firm and persistent struggle against opportunism as the main enemy within the working class.

****There is no peaceful road to socialism or to full national liberation. The central question of every revolution is that of political power; in the capitalist countries, the proletariat can only seize power by smashing the bourgeois state with revolutionary violence, and then it must maintain that power through the dictatorship of the proletariat. The violence with which British imperialism has repressed the Irish people right up to the present time and the way it has developed its state machine as a more efficient, more powerful instrument of repression can leave no doubt that the Leninist view on the state and the need for violent revolution fully applies to contemporary Britain.

****The focus of the contradictions of imperialism is in the oppressed countries of the Third World. That is where the conditions are most favourable for revolution. The Three Worlds Theory is fully in line with this truth.

****The rise of revisionism to the dominant position in a communist party means the conversion of that party into a reactionary, bourgeois party: the rise of revisionism in a socialist country leads to the restoration of capitalism. The Soviet Union became an imperialist country following the triumph of revisionism within it. It is not socialist internally and imperialist externally; its foreign policies are the direct outcome and expression of its inner corruption. In this connection, it has to be emphasized - imperialism is a stage of capitalism, not a policy!

Towards the end of his life, Mao Zedong made some errors of judgement, on important questions; in particular, though he correctly pointed out the need to continue the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat in order to prevent the restoration of capitalism, the cultural revolution which he launched proved to be counter-productive in the long term so far as realizing this objective was concerned. However, this does not mean that Mao was not the most outstanding revolutionary of our time, nor should it lead us to negate Mao Zedong Thought, which represents a further development of Marxism-Leninism, as well as the application of Marxism-Leninism to Chinese conditions. Of particular value to British revolutionaries are three of Mao's theoretical contributions: his distinguishing between antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions, his views on the correct handling of contradictions among the people, and the mass line.

We need to work to integrate with the proletariat, to re-educate ourselves and learn from its strengths. Our policies will be tested and strengthened in our doing this, and our class character further transformed. Our organization is still predominantly composed of comrades of intellectual or petty bourgeois origin; they have made, and will continue to make, an important contribution to the League, but their origins will still make their effects felt negatively. We not only need to build up the mass work which, in a small way, is beginning to draw advanced elements of the proletariat to us, but also need to build up a healthy internal life which encourages the participation and development of working class comrades. Then we may hope to build a proletarian party which is a true vanguard of the working class.

14/6/'81.

The Irish Struggle, the CFB and the RCL.

1. A series of articles published in Marxist Leninist Quarterly, the theoretical journal of the Communist Federation on Britain, in 1974 showed that there were two sharply demarcated lines within that organization concerning the nature of the struggle in Ireland and the associated solidarity tasks of the British communists. One line argued that the Protestants of Northern Ireland had been assimilated into the United Kingdom and that there was no material basis for the ending of partition. That line identified the main and principal content of the struggle in the Six Counties as being the fight for civil rights. That same line also attacked the Provisional IRA on the grounds that they were terrorists and that, as there was no national democratic revolution, their actions divided still further the people of "Northern Ireland".
2. A second line was that the struggle in the Six Counties was an integral part of an overall Irish national democratic revolution. This line argued that the partition of Ireland was a device used by British imperialism to halt and divide the Irish national democratic revolution and to deepen the divisions of the Irish people.
3. Both lines opposed the Provisional IRA. The national liberation school at that time took the view that the Official IRA was a more genuine national liberation movement. Both these lines coexisted within the CFB(ML) which did not practice democratic centralism, permitting different local groups to implement their preferred lines.
3. The struggle between these two lines was effectively halted at the time of the formation of the RCLB. As a result of the struggle for unity between the CUA and the CFB(ML) several "developments" were made in the line on Ireland. The positive side of things was that the manifesto of the new RCL stood for supporting the Irish national democratic revolution and for re-uniting Ireland. A self-criticism was made for the previous view that there was not a national democratic revolution. However, this "self-criticism" was not made systematically, nor was it made in public. Then came the negative developments. It was declared that the RCLB would build branches in the North of Ireland to help further the Irish national liberation struggle. This was supported by the contention that "one party - one state" was a "Marxist-Leninist principle". Given the idealist atmosphere prevailing in the League at that time this contention was sufficient to silence or confuse most of the opposition to the new line. It was further argued that, as party-builders, it was to be the RCL's responsibility to struggle against opportunists in Northern Ireland. Foremost amongst these was named the Provisional IRA, who were declared to be "the foremost props of imperialism within the Republican movement". This set the scene for a two-year period in which the RCLB vied with the bourgeoisie in the vehemence of its denunciations of the Provisional IRA.
5. During the struggle for unity between the RCL and the CWM, the RCL line on Ireland was the major line of demarcation. In general the CWM held a national liberation line, was opposed to building of a section of the British Communist Party in Northern Ireland, and understood the re-unification of Ireland as the strategic goal of the present phase of the Irish national democratic revolution. The CWM also understood the significance of the Irish revolution for the class struggle in Britain, a factor that was not grasped at all by the RCLB. The struggle between the two organisations on this

question stretched over a period of two years. The exchanges were conducted in private, and on the RCL side, they were not reported to the rank and file. or to the Central Committee in any systematic fashion.

6. At the end of the struggle, the RCL surrendered its position on party building in the six counties. All of the other lines of demarcation remained blurred and confused. The Unity Committee could not decide who constituted the leadership of the Irish revolution, what importance to attach to partition how to evaluate the Republican movement, and what attitude to take to the Loyalists. In fact, by now deep divisions existed on these questions within as well as between both organisations. At the Unity Congress of the new organisation, formed by the amalgamation of the RCL and the CWM, the Unity Committee presented a document which attempted to gloss over all these contradictions. Quite rightly, the founding Congress refused to vote on this document and referred it back to the new Central Committee. The Central Committee in turn referred it back to the Irish Commission.

7. It quickly became apparent on the Irish Commission that we were dealing with deep-rooted differences, and that in many instances, we had to argue over the ABC of Irish solidarity. Many of the lines of demarcation have been deep-going. In criticising the minority position in this document we wish it borne in mind that many individuals in the Marxist-Leninist Movement have held reactionary views on the Irish question. This is a result both of the imperialist ideology of our own ruling class and of those privileged sections which support it and it is also a product of our extremely weak and dogmatic grasp of revolutionary communism. Only a few have any cause for pride. However, the past ten years in Ireland have been momentous. The struggle has been more deep rooted, had more widespread effect and has achieved greater advances than at any time since the Irish civil war. The Unionist monolith has crumbled, the ruling classes in Britain and Ireland are forced to take account of the Irish revolution, and the Republican movement, with mass support, daily forges on its armed struggle against British imperialism. As we write, the hunger strikers in H-block, with massive nationalist support in Ireland, openly defy the attempt of the British state to name them as criminal. It is under these circumstances that the Irish commission calls on comrades to support the Irish national democratic revolution and its republican leadership. In this view we will attempt to thoroughly criticise the minority point of view.

8. The Commission, like every other body of the League, has been short of resources. As well as having to pay attention to other aspects of the internal life of the League, its members have also been engaged in practical solidarity work. On the whole we have been in a position to do very little new research or investigation. Instead we have seen it as our job to make clear the lines of demarcation on this question. This is the first time it will have been done in the RCL. We have had six meetings. We have studied the ISTP document (and recommended it as an official League publication with some improvements), and we have studied the Unity Conference document, as well as circulating some documents and articles amongst ourselves. We have voted a series of amendments to the Unity Conference Document to bring it into line with the majority position. This has been circulated and in the main our comments follow the general layout of that document.

Is there a Revolution in Ireland?

9. The minority line does not take the view that the present struggle in Ireland is revolutionary. It was proposed that we should delete the word 'revolutionary' from the first sentence of our resolution. Here is the proposed amendment: "to para I, a) line I. Delete 'revolutionary'. (This confuses the present concrete struggle, which is not in itself revolutionary, with the potential long-term struggle.)" This small deletion lies at the very heart of the two-line struggle, and do we will consider the question at some length.

10. Exactly why is the present 'concrete struggle', not revolutionary? Because, we are told, the present fight in Northern Ireland is one for civil rights. Because the people there have supposedly not moved beyond the consciousness of the struggle for civil rights, and because there can be no revolutionary advance until a significant section of the one million Protestants have been either neutralised or won over. Thus to talk of revolution now is simply to build sandcastles in the air. We are told that this is a scientific question of the relative balance of forces. To deal with these arguments, which have been used many times, many times before, is to get to the roots of the struggle in Ireland.

11. The Northern Ireland state was created in 1921, but its origins go back further. As is well known the Protestant community in Northern Ireland is there as a result of the English policy of plantation in the Seventeenth century. This plantation, similar to those in Australia and North America, drove the natives off their land and replaced them with settlers. This difference between native and settler was strongly accentuated during the nineteenth century when Belfast industrialised rapidly, its ship-building, linen and engineering industries operating as a practical adjunct of British imperialist expansion. The settler system was carried into industry. Protestants filled the skilled and semi-skilled positions and Catholics the unskilled. The Protestant labour aristocracy in the North East of Ireland was considerably more highly paid than its English equivalent, and the unskilled workers considerably more badly paid. The situation was thus more equivalent to that in South Africa than to the rest of the United Kingdom. (With the possible exception of Glasgow where a similar situation was reproduced with a strong predominance of Catholic Irish in the lower stratum of the working class.)

12. Throughout the greater part of Ireland the rising Catholic petty bourgeoisie wished to break the link with Britain and form an independent republic within which native capitalism could flourish. In this they had the support of the Irish peasantry, groaning under the weight of rents and taxes. However, the Protestant capitalists of the North East with their close connections with British manufacturing and imperial trade were opposed to any independence of Ireland. In their opposition they were supported by the Protestant workers who saw their privileged position could not be maintained if they were a minority within an independent Ireland.

13. The Ulster 'Unionists' at first thought to oppose Home Rule altogether. Then, seeing the weight of the Irish nationalist movement, they thought that all Nine counties of Ulster could be excluded from a Home Rule Ireland. In this desire they had the support of the British Conservative Party, the British Army, and a large part of the Liberal Party. This was at a

time of profound political re-alignment in Britain when the Conservative Party were prepared to wage civil war to topple the Liberals. Their open support for Unionist war preparations in Ireland and the Curragh mutiny are instances of this. During the First World War, and after the Easter Rising, Lloyd George, anxious to pacify Ireland and open the way to conscription there, proposed the partitioning off of the Six Counties and the passing of a Home Rule Bill for the rest of Ireland. Now, the rebellion in Ireland intensified over the following years and the nationalist forces won a Free State and eventually a Republic, in considerable advance of a Home Rule settlement; but the Six Counties were partitioned off from the Free State. Thus in the North of Ireland, the balance of forces was in favour of the Unionists and they could build what their first Prime Minister proudly referred to as, "A Protestant state for a Protestant people".

14. The resulting partition was disastrous for the Irish people. The 26 Counties were conceded virtual constitutional independence, but only as an element in a wider scheme through which British imperialism aimed to ensure the continued subservience of the Irish economy to its needs. For the industrial areas of the North-East were still incorporated directly into the British imperialist state by means of the institution of the Six-County State entity. While a ~~Twenty~~-Six County economy produced ships to sail the seas ruled by Britannia and shirts for the backs of all who sailed in them, the Twenty-Six Counties remained an agricultural backwater more helplessly dependent on the vagaries of the British imperialist market for agricultural goods than it had been even in the days of the great famine of the 1840s.

15. Only a unified Ireland held out the prospect of building an integrated economy in which agriculture and industry could give each other mutual support for their further development, instead of each separately serving an aspect of British imperialism's needs. Partition thus constituted the central obstacle to the development of the productive forces in Ireland and to the achievement of economic independence from British imperialism.

16. In the North-East, in the Six County State, partition put a state machine into the hands of the Orange/Unionist alliance, guaranteeing that the privileges of the Protestant workers would be reinforced at the expense of the Catholics. Situated on the periphery of the British manufacturing area, the Six Counties experienced far more acutely than the mainland the protracted decline of British manufacturing during the inter-war period. High levels of unemployment made sectarian methods of distribution and patronage more important than ever. The prospects of building unity between Unionist and Nationalist workers became worse, not better. This was exactly as envisaged by Connolly who pointed out that so long as partition lasted no class unity would be possible and that partition would therefore usher in "a carnival of reaction".

17. Since that time, in both parts of Ireland, the struggle for political and economic progress has been bound up with the struggle against the partition system. The fundamental nature of the partition system is that politically it divides the people of Ireland, North and South, and in the North it is the only means of guaranteeing the supremacy of the Unionist bourgeoisie. It is in this fundamental sense that the struggle against partition is revolutionary; it is a necessary and intrinsic part of the struggle against the imperialist domination of Ireland.

18. Now we must see whether or not the present struggle in Ireland constitutes an integral part of the struggle against partition and the imperialist domination of Ireland; we must see whether or not it is a revolutionary struggle. The present phase of the struggle in Ireland started with a Catholic demand in the Six Counties for civil rights. However, it soon became clear to the most oppressed sections of the Catholic people in the North that the struggle was a national one. The immediate manifestation of this was the fact that the civil rights were beaten back into their own ghettos by the weight of the RUC, 'B' Specials and their Paisleyite supporters. The Paisleyites and the Unionist ruling class knew that a demand for civil rights in an economically declining sectarian statelet could only be met by taking privileges away from Protestants. Sectarian privilege and its defence was the *raison d'être* of the Six County State. So the Paisleyites understood, even if some Marxist Leninists did not, that the demand for civil rights was a demand which challenged the existence of the Northern Ireland state, ie a national and revolutionary demand.

19. Now, is it true as the minority line says that the consciousness of the oppressed nationalist people is still at the stage of civil rights? Over the past ten years, the British government has tried every conceivable piece of fake reform that their experienced minds could dream up. At the end of that time the modal Protestant worker is still skilled, and the modal Catholic worker unskilled, and every other statistic and social index shows no improvement in the position of the nationalist population. During that ten years the Republican movement, with the support of the nationalist section of the people in the North and with considerable support in the rest of Ireland, have overthrown Stormont, atomised the Unionist Party and sustained ten years of armed struggle in the face of Europe's most experienced "counter-insurgency" forces - the British Army. Every family living in the ghettos of Northern Ireland has suffered directly or at second hand, murder, torture, imprisonment. If the same struggle were to take place in Britain, the corresponding figures in 1978 would be (pro rata) over 4 million unemployed, 100,000 anti-imperialists in gaol, (150 of them having been killed in gaol), 75,000 workers a year being tortured in police stations and some 500,000 homes raided and ransacked. There would be one and a half million troops working in working class areas. Faced with corresponding conditions, the nationalist people are still giving their support to the Republican movement.

20. The Republican movement are fighting for a united Ireland, they are directly opposed to partition. And in the immediate context they are fighting for the destruction of the Northern State. It is true, as the Republicans themselves point out, that their have been weaknesses in their political work that have allowed the SDLP and other reformist parties to maintain an electoral dominance. But, despite that, what is the situation? It is that the most oppressed sections of the people are pursuing a struggle with revolutionary consequences under the armed leadership of a revolutionary movement with a revolutionary programme against opponents whose main concern is to stabilize and protect their own class rule. Is that not a revolutionary struggle?

The Wrong Revolution?

21. As far as the minority line is concerned, the foregoing arguments fall on deaf ears. When forced to consider the question it concedes that there is a revolution to be made in Ireland, but not the one that is going on now. Their argument is that the sectarian state cannot be broken, and the road to Irish unity opened up, unless and until a significant section of the one million Protestants in the North East consent to it. Until that happens, the present fight can be no more than a diversion and a guarantee of further divisions.

22. This is a line of argument with a long, reactionary and counter-revolutionary pedigree. Its most recent adherents have been the Official IRA (now known as Sinn Fein, the Workers Party, SWP) and the revisionist Communist Party of Great Britain. This line argues that the Republicans must put away their guns and unite with the Protestants on 'bread and butter' issues. Only when the Protestant worker sees that the Republicans have his interests at heart will he be prepared to consider a United Ireland. James Connolly opposed and exposed this line at the turn of the century in his polemic with Walker, the Belfast socialist, describing it as "gas and water" socialism. (The material of this polemic is available in the Cork reprints series.)

23. It is a false line of argument on three counts. First of all, it is not materialist. The Protestant working class contains a large privileged section who are tied to the Union because, and only because, it protects their position vis a vis that of the Catholics. At the point at which the Union appears unreliable their 'Loyalism' quickly turns to naked sectarian separatism a la Paisley. If the nationalist people are to unite with the Loyalists when the Loyalists surrender their privileges, then they will have to wait forever. In precisely the same way, if the black civil rights campaigners in the Southern United States had to tail their demands to the consciousness of the white majority they would cancel their own progress.

24. Secondly, this line of argument targets the wrong enemy. It idealistically places the responsibility for the continuation of partition on the Six County Protestants, and ignores that partition was devised by a sector of the British big bourgeoisie. The existence of the Northern Ireland state and its economic and military viability is, in the final analysis, in the hands of the British state. It is against the British state that the Republican movement directs its fire. Since the fall of Stormont, the Government of Northern Ireland is in the hands of the British state directly. When that British state is forced to give ground and is compelled to allow for an all-Irish settlement, then there will be the possibility of disintegrating the loyalist alliance, (in just the same way that ZANU (Patriotic Front) could deal with the settlers in Zimbabwe once it was clear they were the dominant force). As that possibility approaches, the loyalist alliance is increasingly consolidating under the leadership of its most reactionary elements. To give up the struggle now, to surrender ground now, would be to expose the Catholic community to the worst setbacks and pogroms since the Twenties. Let anyone who doubts that consult the historical record, or read a few current loyalist papers.

25. Thirdly, this line of argument conceals a fundamentally revisionist view of the national question. In essence, it puts the Unionist cause on a par with the Republican cause. It

becomes indistinguishable from the view that the Protestants are a nation whose political and economic development depends on their right to self-determination. This is not true. Fifty years of day-by-day practical historical experience shows that a Protestant state is inseparable from economic decline, political reaction, open fascism and naked sectarianism. Leave aside all arguments of what does or does not constitute a nation. The fundamental Marxist view of the national question is that the revolutionaries must do all they can to sweep aside those undemocratic and reactionary obstacles that stand in the path of the socialist revolution; that not for one minute than is historically necessary shall the suppression of one people by another stand in the way of the question of the epoch - the socialist revolution. Now, what is the historical evidence in Ireland? That the quickest and most economical way to open the road for socialist revolution is to confer nationhood and the right to self-determination on the shoulders of the Protestants of the North-East? No. Fifty years of practical historical experience shows this to be a reactionary dead end. The fight on an all-Irish basis for the democratic settlement of the question is the only realistic and revolutionary alternative.

26. Confronted with these arguments and facts, the minority line falls back on other diversions. We are told that now is not the time for armed offensive; that the struggle has to be put on an all-Ireland footing, and so on. We shall come back to some of these arguments later. At this point it suffices to say that we do not call on revolutionaries to be perfect, nor do we call on a people struggling for their freedom to achieve it without mistakes. Even if the present phase of the struggle was to bring no positive results in the foreseeable future; even if the Republican movement were to renounce and denounce all their present tactics (and we do not admit these at all as likely possibilities); it would still be right to give firm and resolute support to the struggle of the most oppressed against their oppressors, and to give it the name of a revolutionary struggle.

27. There is a vital general aspect to this question. Marx and Engels originally felt that colonialism was objectively progressive (while always denouncing its brutality) because of its development of the productive forces. He and Engels did not live to see the rise of imperialism as a world system, but they saw it taking shape in England and this led them to reverse their opinion. They revised their previous position on Ireland and said quite openly that the British revolution could only triumph subsequent to the liberation of Ireland. They became explicitly anti-colonialist and began to develop their analysis of the corrupting effects of colonialism upon the metropolitan working class. This view was opposed by the early revisionists such as Hyndman and Bernstein who called for a "socialist colonial policy". This revisionist line has knocked around on the British left ever since, today ~~xx~~ in the capable hands of the CPGB. One of Lenin's greatest contributions to the Marxist movement was to analyze imperialism and its effects on the working class. At the second congress of Comintern, in 1920, he fought for the Theses on the National and Colonial Question and the policy that the proletariat must support national liberation movements, and build a revolutionary alliance between the workers movement in the oppressor nations and the national liberation movements in the oppressed countries. Later that same year in Baku this line was dramatically put into effect in the Congress of the Peoples of the East which was organized by the Comintern and united Communists and revolutionary nationalists. Summing up and defending Lenin's contributions to Marxism, Stalin pointed out that even the struggle waged by the Emire of Afghanistan was revolutionary in that it weakened and undermined imperialism. In the same passages

he exposed and denounced those so-called socialists in the European labour movement who failed to support the liberation movements in the colonies.

28. The Sixth Congress of Comintern affirmed that the struggles in South Africa and the struggles of the black peoples in the United States were national questions, concerning the rights of people to self-determination. The triumph of revisionism in both the United States and South Africa were closely tied to the victory of the line that the black peoples struggles were merely civil rights struggles! In Mao's article, "On New Democracy", Lenin's and Stalin's analysis is developed further and Mao explicitly states that in the era of imperialism, the national liberation struggles are a component part of the world proletarian socialist revolution. The attitude to adopt to the struggles of the oppressed was a major factor in the anti-revisionist struggle waged by the CPC in the early sixties. The CPSU accused the CPC of sham revolutionism, war-mongering, anti-white racism and collaboration with reactionaries in what we now call the Third World - all because the CPC stood firm on the standpoint of Lenin, Stalin and MaoZedong on the national and colonial questions. Today, the Theory of the Three Worlds explicitly states that the countries and people of the Third World are the main force in the world revolution. This theory states that because of repeated splits in the workers movements in the First and Second worlds they can only remain at the stage of regrouping and accumulating strength for some time; it openly calls on the Third World to exercise its leading role even more vigorously. This thesis is argued within the tradition of revolutionary communist theory.

28a. Within Ireland this two-line struggle in the world revolutionary movement is reflected in two traditions; one stretches from Connolly through to the Provisionals and the other stretches from William Walker's "Gas and Water" socialism through to the "Better Life for All" campaign, the SFWP and even sections of the UVF. Similarly in Azania it is the PAC and the BCM that have picked up the revolutionary national banner raised by the Comintern in 1928 of the Black Republic, that has been discarded by the SACP. The history of the struggle between Marxism Leninism and revisionism has thus been bound up with the struggle between those who understand clearly and resolutely affirmed the revolutionary nature of the national question and those who sought to deny it.

28b. Here we are, in the heartland of a broken down old empire in a revolutionary movement that has yet to take its first ~~xxx~~ steps. And when the oppressed people rise up in the oldest British colony and demand the overthrow of the system that oppresses them, what ~~xxxxxxx~~ are they to hear? That it is all just a question of civil rights? Absolutely not. We must give the fullest possible support to their revolutionary struggle. As we shall see, that support is not just the expression of fine sentiments or a masterly grasp of revolutionary theory, but an absolute necessity for our own further advance.

The Irish Revolution, the Struggle in the World and the Struggle in Britain (Relating to para 1 amended UC resolution)

29. The oppression of the Irish people by the British ruling class dates back to the 11th century and since the invasions of Elizabeth 1st has involved the entire Irish nation. For the past two hundred years there has not been a single Irish generation in which there has not been a n armed uprising against British rule. At various times the British ruling class has benefitted from its mastery of Ireland in defferent ways. Unequal exchange, rent, tithes, taxes, forced co nscription, settlement, strategic gain. Located on the backdoor of British imperialism and tied to it by a thousand and one threads, the political stability and reliability of Irish political life is a matter of cardinal importance to the British ruling class. Ireland also remains an important market for Britain. The Irish stru ggle is thus a component part of the worldwide struggle against colonialism and imperialism.

30. The stru ggle in Ireland also has a bearing on the two su perpowers and particularly Soviet social imperialism. The unéqual and oppressive relations between Britain and Ireland and th e consequent divisions which exist within that Ireland, constitute precisely those 'troubled waters' that social imperialism looks for when plotting further advances. In seeking to further the fight against hegemonism we must unite with the desire of the Irish people for a united, free and independent Ireland. If Irish revolutionaries have the faintest doubts concerning the solidarity of the British revolutionaries (and they do), there is the wedge for social imperialism.

31. In the past the Irish revolution has been a great source of support for British revolutionaries. This has been so in at least two ways. Firstly, the Irish revolution attacks and weakens our own main enemy. In this generation, with the deepening of the world imperialist crisis, it is obvious that the 'Irish problem' is once again a running fore in the side of our rulers, causing division amongst them. It costs the British exchequer approximately one billion pounds per year to control Northern Ireland. It weakens the credibility of the British bourgeoisie all around the world. It is an open secret that at le ast one section of the bourgeoisie wishes to withdraw from Ireland.

32. There is a second s ense in which the Irish revolution is a source of support for the British revolution. In the past the periods of the most intense class struggle in Britain have coincided with the most forceful entry of the Irish question onto onto the British political scene. The activities of many prominent revolutionaries have spanned both countries (the Cha rtist leader Feargus O'Connor and the great s ocialist James Connolly, to name but two examples.) Now, at present, the revolutionary forces in Britain are pitifully weak. We have had a sectarian style of work and weak links with the mass movements that exist. A sectarian style of work that manifests itself in a superior attitude to the revolutiona ry movements of the oppressed has been fed by the mánority line on Ireland. The oppressed national minorities in this country contain literally hundreds and thousands of individuals with an understanding of the imperialist and oppressive nature of our ruling class. Many of them have experienced of struggle against it, either here or in their home country. The Irish people in this country stand in the ranks of the doubly oppressed. If we free ourselves from chauvinism, and are genuinely willing to learn, then we can indeed link up with an importan t reservoir of opposition to our own ruling class.

The minority line claims that we overrate this factor. We say that at this stage of party-building it is scarcely possible to over-estimate it.

33. If we chose the opposite course, if we wish to remain a small sect with pure reservations about the Irish struggle then it will be true, as the minority line claims, that we 'overestimate' the importance of the Irish revolution. There will also be no question of us playing any role other than a counter-revolutionary one in any British revolution.

34. In fact, this question of the relative strategic weight to place on the Irish revolution within the context of the British revolution has been a line of demarcation between the majority and the minority. The minority line (and this has been RCL policy) has repeatedly laid emphasis on the fact that we must be prepared for the possibility that the socialist revolution may triumph in Britain before the Irish win their freedom. Now revolutionaries must indeed be prepared for every eventuality. But let us think carefully. We live in a decayed imperialist country in which the mass of people, including the working class, are riddled with racism and great-nation chauvinism. So long as these prejudices are not overcome the masses will be tied to the racist and chauvinist Labour and Conservative Parties. What kind of "revolution" can we have without these prejudices being overcome? Will not the liberation of Ireland be a necessary step in the fight against that racism and chauvinism? Won't that be a necessary step on the road to socialism in Britain? The minority line falls into the revisionist position of ignoring the revolutionary significance of the struggles of the oppressed and therefore sees imperialist influence on the working class as either insignificant or unimportant. It is an essentially chauvinist viewpoint.

The Present Situation in Ireland

(This section relates mainly to paragraphs 3 & 4 of the amended resolution. Most of the ground in para 2 has been dealt with in the first section of this article.)

35. In the past twenty years the Irish situation has undergone some significant changes that we have not analysed as yet.

36. Firstly, the relationship between the Republic of Ireland and Britain. Until the late 1960s Eire was primarily an agricultural country. It exchanged its primary produce for British coal and manufactured goods and was almost totally dependent on the U.K. Under progressive Fianna Fail administrations it made some limited progress building up a small protected manufacturing sector behind a tariff wall. However, the economy foundered and in the early 1960s the Irish bourgeoisie dismantled the tariff wall and allowed in foreign investment. An inflow of capital came from Britain at first, but then in increasingly large amounts from Europe, Japan and the United States. This investment has had dramatic effects. The industrial sector expanded rapidly and has overtaken the agricultural sector in volume of exports. Ireland's economic dependence on Britain has been significantly weakened by this, and this has been reflected and reinforced by Irish membership of the EEC. On the other hand the Southern Irish economy has become more closely tied to the world economy as successive governments have made concessions to multinational companies, along the same lines as many Third World governments. All this has been reflected in full Irish participation in the present world recession. In return for the close cooperation with

Britain implied by the dismantling of tariffs, the then Irish premier, Sean Lemass, made overtures to London for some improvement in the condition of the nationalist population in Northern Ireland.

37. Secondly, in the Six Counties, the decline of local industry was offset by inviting in foreign monopoly capital. Being a part of the United Kingdom, this meant relying heavily on the planning apparatus of the British state, and this in turn meant that the ~~devolved~~ devolved system of local government in the Six Counties was to some extent undermined. This system of devolved government was crucial for the dispensation of patronage in the Orange/Unionist system. This disruption led to Protestant working class suspicions of their new leader, Terence O'Neill, who presided over the process. The contract between the Protestant working class and the Unionist bourgeoisie was threatened and this destabilized the Stormont regime. O'Neill was trying to present a 'modernizing' and 'progressive' image to monopoly capital and to the British state, and he made a number of conciliatory statements about the position of the Catholic people in the Six Counties. This further enraged Protestant opinion, despite the fact that he did nothing at all to improve the conditions of the nationalist population.

38. It was in this conjuncture that the Civil Rights Movement appeared in the Six Counties. The British Government showed themselves more prepared to make cosmetic reform in the Six Counties than were the local bourgeoisie who were closely tied to their local sectarian base of support. Such cosmetic reforms did nothing to improve the actual conditions of the nationalist people, but they further undermined the power-base of the Unionist bourgeoisie whose political leadership was supplanted by Paisley and his petty bourgeoisie "loyalist" alliance. Thus the British state now rules directly in the Six Counties and the British Army is the main military instrument for the suppression of the nationalist minority.

39. These are some of the features underlying the crisis of British rule in Ireland. It is obvious that we need a better understanding of the modern economics of partition. However, one thing is apparent. The partition system remains the most reliable instrument of British rule in Ireland. An argument frequently deployed in the left press is that the invasion of monopoly capital in Ireland led to a demand on the part of monopoly capitalists or financiers for the dismantling of the partition system. There is no evidence for this. Capital is able to move freely throughout the two states and almost certainly benefits from competition between them. It may be the case that at the time of the Sunningdale agreement some sections of the British ruling class were prepared to contemplate a United Ireland. However, they were by no means a dominant trend and even the slightest suggestion of a move in that direction vanished completely at the first signs of Protestant protest. In fact even the cosmetic concept of "power-sharing" was dropped in the face of loyalist resistance. Since that time, the British bourgeoisie has spent ten years using every trick in the imperialist book to crush, cower, swindle or cajole the nationalist people into submission.

40. The minority line disputes the importance of partition. They maintain that the passing of the years has lessened its centrality and that the main questions are civil rights in the North and independence for the whole of Ireland; reunification is very low on their agenda. They will not grasp that Partition is still the key to British control of Ireland. The British ruling class cannot devise a better way of maintaining their class hegemony in Ireland. The Irish revolutionaries recognize this and so must we if our solidarity

is to be based on reality. That is why we agree with the Irish revolutionaries that the present phase of the struggle hinges on the destruction of the partition system. In our solidarity work, this should be carefully explained.

41. However, in the past the League has not wanted to put much emphasis on the question of partition because it was held that to do so would be divisive (!). But it is opposition to the partition system that unites republicans. Although it was never clearly spelled out, the idea behind this line was that the Protestants cannot be won over if republicans or their supporters mention partition. This line of argument thinks it is best to win the friendship of the Protestant people first and only later raise the question of a united Ireland. This is the height, the very pinnacle, of idealism. The very first thing any Protestant wishes to know concerning a political party or programme is "where they stand on the border". So both loyalists and republicans are united on what the central issue is in Irish politics. The Provisional Sinn Fein have bent over backwards in making concessions to the Protestants, proposing a four province federal structure for Ireland which would give them considerable local autonomy. But in the meantime the Republicans understand, quite as well as an Orangeman, the futility of pretending the war is about anything other than partition.

Should we Support the Republican Movement?

42. Should we support the Republican movement? The failure to deal straightforwardly with this question in the initial unity resolution was a glaring one covering up sharply opposed points of view. In the comments that follow our remarks deal exclusively with the Provisional Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA, the forces which have been the focus of contention within the RCL. We think that the Republican movement as a whole, definitely including the IRSP and INLA, should be given support; but our work and investigation so far has centered mainly on the Provisional section of the Republican movement which has undoubtedly played the main and leading role in the struggle over the past ten years.

43. The point of view most fundamentally opposed to the present majority line on the Commission is the one which states that the Provisionals are a group of isolated terrorists with no mass base. In the past this point of view has informed a number of articles in our newspaper, Class Struggle. For quite a long time, Class Struggle pointed to imaginary parallels between the Provisional IRA and the Baader Meinhof gang in West Germany. The stupidity and absurdity of this parallel indicates the lengths to which the League was prepared to go to blacken the Provisional IRA.

44. It is of course a fundamentally false point of view. The Provisional IRA as an organization is just over ten years old. During their entire life it has carried on armed confrontation with the British state and its allies in Ireland. During that ten years the British state has directed systematic torture, surveillance, terrorism, mass imprisonment, infiltration and intimidation against the nationalist population in the Six Counties. They have also tried fake or partial reforms, bribes and political deals of all kinds. The IRA are still there. Tens of thousands of people turn out on the streets to support them. The campaigns in support of the hunger strikers and political prisoners in H Block and Armagh prisons show that these prisoners are supported by the nationalist population as their finest sons and daughters. A blind man can see the Provisionals have a mass base. At the time of writing new confirmation of this fact arrives every day.

45. Have the Provisionals made mistakes over the past ten years? Yes, of course they have. (Although probably not as many as the British Marxist Leninists!) They say so themselves. Some of their earlier bombings did not allow sufficiently for the difficulty of conveying warnings. They have learned only lately the value of uniting all who can be united in the course of genuine and systematic struggle against the main enemy. Only recently have they begun to intervene in the labour movement in the Twenty Six Counties. Every lesson they learn is learned under fire and is paid for with blood. They are not able to discuss things calmly in political education classes in periods of relative political stability. The question which Marxist Leninists and all revolutionaries should ask is, "Do these fighters represent the most oppressed people and are they striking at their enemies?" If the answer is yes, then we are duty-bound to extend support.

46. Faced with the difficulty that the Provisionals have a mass base, the opponents of solidarity fall back on another line of attack. The Provisional Republican movement is not marxist, it is petty bourgeoisie. Their programme does not call for real socialism but for collectivism. And so on. Only genuine Marxist revolutionaries can see the national liberation movement through to the end, so how can we support these people? This may seem like a set of insuperable obstacles, and so it is, as long as we are guided by a set of sterile recipes and trotskyist formulae. Fortunately, genuine, living Marxism does not see matters in this way. The present stage of the revolution in Ireland is national democratic. Progress lies in the expulsion of imperialism and the re-unification of the country. We evaluate political organizations according to the vigour with which they pursue these objectives. Of course we think that a Marxist Leninist organisation with a mass base and a New Democratic programme would be a fine thing. In fact it would be a fine thing if the world was stuffed full of 'correct' organizations. Unfortunately it is not. The world is stuffed full of suffering humanity who, time after time, take up arms against their oppressors and learn revolutionary politics the only way, the hard way. Where the task is socialist revolution we look for communists. That is not so difficult to understand. The fundamental principle here is that we support the actual living movement that is taking place: not the imaginary one of our ideal desires.

47. In fact, the RCL has understood that principle quite well for a long time. We do not ask the Afghan fighters to be socialists. We do not throw up our hands in horror when our Kampuchean comrades say that socialism is not now on the agenda. We did not ask the Imam Khomeini to be a good socialist. So why then do we apply different criteria on our back door?

48. The answer is that it is on our back door. We live in an imperialist country where the great mass of people, including the working class, are inculcated with imperialist and racist ideology, and where the upper strata of the working class and substantial sections of the intelligensia benefit from imperialist superprofits. It can be a sticky business trying to get a hearing amongst the British working class if your support the Irish struggle. This is made especially difficult if the IRA bring the war to Britain. And it is made doubly difficult if either as a result of certain strategic or tactical conceptions, mistakes in work, activities of splinter groups or the work of British agents provocateurs, British workers are killed on the mainland.

49. However, solidarity with the Republican struggle means recognition of their right to bring the war to the British ruling class on its own territory. And the British working class will not be brought forward to socialist consciousness if its self-appointed educators are frightened to point out that the aggressors in the Irish war are the British ruling class and that it is to their advantage if their ruling class is attacked.

50. The strategy and tactics of the Irish National liberation struggle can and will only be decided by the Irish liberation fighters themselves.

51. Traditions of individual terrorism as an expression of anti-colonial resistance are deep-rooted in countries which are colonized. Communists engaged in national liberation struggles face the task of developing this spontaneous form of rebellion into more effective and organized forms of mass struggle and people's war. In doing this, they have drawn on the rich ideological heritage of Marxism-Leninism.

52. Progress in the adoption of the tactics of people's war by a national liberation struggle has the by-product of making it more straightforward politically and ideologically to build internationalist solidarity for that struggle in other countries. However, there is no way in which a solidarity movement, least of all one in the oppressing country itself, can intervene directly to hasten this progress in the liberation struggle. Much as some of those engaged in solidarity work might wish it were possible! For such political and ideological struggles can only be conducted in accordance with the objective laws governing the revolution in the country concerned - laws which can only be grasped by integrating theory with the practice of revolution in that country,

53. In Ireland there is a centuries-old tradition of individual terrorism as an expression of resistance to British rule. This tradition has been inherited by the republican movement. The main republican organizations still rely to a certain extent upon the spectacular acts characteristic of that tradition. Comrades in Britain frequently face political and ideological problems in promoting Ireland solidarity as a result of some of these actions - problems which have been particularly severe in cases where such actions have taken place in Britain and have injured or killed workers. However, we should not allow this fact to tempt our organization into trying to conduct facile beginners courses in Marxism-Leninism for Irish republican organizations. To do this could only associate the name of 'Marxism-Leninism' with the chauvinist chorus of British imperialism, and would be doubly contemptible in view of the extremely limited activity so far undertaken by British Marxist-Leninist organizations regarding Irish solidarity. The struggle for the hegemony of proletarian politics and ideology in the Irish revolution is the task of Irish revolutionaries, just as the progressive abandonment of aircraft hijackings by Palestine liberation organizations was the fruit of their own political development, not of the advice of outsiders.

54. Nor should we be blind to the fact that within the traditions and current practice of Republicanism there is also a deep and strong trend of mass struggle - a trend which is coming increasingly to the fore.

55. So let it be recognized that the people who have the right and the duty to decide their military tactics are the Republicans themselves. They debate and discuss their campaign as it develops and they have shown themselves prepared to face up to their weaknesses and admit their mistakes. Even if the present campaign should turn out to be a failure, we would still be right to extend our support and solidarity to the Provisional Republican movement. For long years the Chinese Communist Party persisted in the line of armed uprising in the towns before they developed the strategy of using the countryside to encircle the towns. This strategy was developed at the cost of the lives of countless ~~thru~~ thousands of revolutionary martyrs. Would anyone suggest that they should not have been given support until they had a correct line? Of course not.

56. The minority line take the view that the Republicans should stick purely to defensive use of arms, presumably meaning they should stick to defending the ghettos in the Six counties. It is difficult to comment on

military strategy as we have no experience of it. However, we offer these considerations. The present Provisional campaign is designed precisely to reach outside the ghettos in order to inflict damage on the British state and its allies. They have had some success in this. They have retained their mass base in the North, they are the fourth largest party in the Republic and they have forced the Southern Premier, Houghy to say that reunification is the central issue in Irish politics. The British Government have spent a fruitless ten years trying to crush resistance in the North and is forced to deal with the question politically. The armed campaign has therefore achieved some gains. (Also offensive and defensive strategies are not exclusive - for example, the early ~~XXX~~ bomb blitz in Belfast had a strong defensive aspect in that it took the heat off the ghettos and allowed time for reorganization. This was true despite the mistakes made and the heavy cost paid.)

57. In a revolution the enemy starts off strong and the revolutionaries are weak. All round the world wherever the state is challenged it arms itself to the teeth. The revolutionaries inside a country must decide the correct strategy and tactics at any particular time, but it is certainly not the job of revolutionaries in another country to look with horror at the strength of the state and start crying for a halt. But what, there is a special consideration. It is the British state that is arming itself to the teeth, it is the British army that has learned counter-insurgency, it is the British police that is learning fascist methods. This affects us.

58. The minority line return in this context to the question of the balance of forces. In mainland Britain the revolutionaries face a bad situation. The ruling class is making partly successful attempts to divide the people on racist lines and is condoning the growth of old-style fascist organizations. All around us democratic rights are being eroded. The working class is still mainly tied to reformism. We are very weak. As the British crisis intensifies the ruling class faces opposition at its weakest points, Ireland and the national minorities. What shall we do? Or shall we get on and organize all the support we can for the most oppressed, unite firmly with them to resist further attacks and start to plan our way forward? The Irish war will not go away. We cannot permit ourselves the point of view that uniting with the most oppressed is a fine and condescending thing for us, to do. As the crisis deepens the ruling class will attack its enemies. If we have any intention of staying in the ~~XXX~~ fight we must unite firmly with those who know how to struggle. Of course we can ignore them and no doubt the ruling class will leave us alone to do more 'party building'. That will be fine, so long as we stop pretending to be revolutionaries.

59. We thus call for support for and solidarity with the Republican movement.

60. Solidarity and the Protestants of the Six Counties.

We have laid emphasis in this article on the material position of the Protestant community in the Six Counties. In every section of social and political life, the Protestant worker is in a strongly privileged position relative to his Catholic counterpart. This position he holds and retains by virtue of the existence of the Six County State and its British backing. This is the material basis of the class alliance between the Protestant worker and the local bourgeoisie, and between them both and the British imperialist bourgeoisie. It is the basis also of the anti-Irish racism and sectarianism that runs through loyalist politics.

61 This state machine, located as it is in a declining backwater of a bankrupt and largely dismembered empire, requires the constant and active support of the British state. This has always been true but never more so than now when the local bourgeoisie is either bankrupted or is wholly dependent on British or other monopoly finance. There are no more local linen barons who would be prepared or able to equip a local U.V.F.. In this situation, each and every policeman and policewoman, gaoler, judge, soldier and spy is paid for and equipped by the British exchequer. So are all the roads, railways and factories in Northern Ireland. The entire infrastructure of the sectarian state is financed on a massive scale by British imperialism. Without that massive subsidy, the Protestant community would have to reach an accommodation with their fellow Irishmen.

62. Once we understand this question we can understand our solidarity tasks in this country. Our main aim is to oppose British support for the Six County State. So long as that state machine exists it is highly unlikely that the Protestant community will, in any numbers, take up a nationalist or even a neutral stand; no more than did the settlers in Zimbabwe. Thus our best contribution to the unity of the Irish people, and therefore to the Protestant of the Six Counties, is opposition to partition. We do no service to the Protestant working class by supporting Unionist or loyalist demands for the retention of partition. The minority line, which demands that the struggle tails behind the consciousness of the Protestant worker, only supports further divisions and greater sectarianism. If the Republican movement can find ways and means of neutralizing or winning over sections of the Protestant people, then so much the better. However, the minority line mixes idealism with arrogance in attempting to make this a condition for supporting the struggle in Ireland. As it happens, the republican movement includes in its programme proposals for a Federal four-county Ireland which would give the Protestants of Ulster a large degree of autonomy in Ireland. It is ironic that for their pains they have been criticized by some on the left for lack of determination in fighting the Orange forces.

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63. We therefore call for full and thoroughgoing solidarity with the Republican forces in Ireland. This article has attempted to explain and develop the main lines of demarcation that have existed in the RCLB for a long time. This has not been done from a neutral position. The minority line will reply to this article and there will be every opportunity for comrades and friends to fully discuss the question.

TROOPS OUT NOW!
SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE IRISH PEOPLE AS A WHOLE!

JB June 1981