

# OCTOBER



THEORETICAL JOURNAL OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST LEAGUE OF BRITAIN (MARXIST-LENINIST)

## *Editorial*



*The CPGB and "The Colonial Question"*



*The Struggle of National Minority People  
and the Line of the RCL*

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EDITORIAL

*October* is the theoretical journal of the Revolutionary Communist League, (RCL) and it replaces *Revolution* which has not appeared in any meaningful form for over two years. At a time when the international communist (Marxist-Leninist) movement is in a state of theoretical, ideological and political crisis, this has been a big handicap. However, the reasons are complex and they show that the RCL has been, and still is, affected by this crisis. An ideological and theoretical vacuum has certainly contributed to the confusion which is causing some comrades to lose confidence in Marxism-Leninism and the works of Mao Zedong as guide to practice.

*October* will be guided by Lenin's profoundly correct statement that "without a revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary movement". We are strongly of the view that Marxism-Leninism must be used to analyse concrete conditions and as a guide to practice, and not regarded as a sterile dogma, ossified and devoid of life. Marxism is enriched with every successful application in solving problems of the class struggle for socialism and communism, both nationally and internationally. We are, however, equally intolerant of the current fashion, and it is a fashion, to tacitly throw Marxism overboard and start behaving like a movement of radical "free-thinkers" trying to devise some new theory (under the signboard of combatting "dogmatism") to magically transform society.

Theory and the theoretical struggle must be seen as one of the three components of the workers and oppressed peoples' struggle for emancipation. As Engels pointed out, the working class must struggle on not only the economic and political fronts, but the theoretical front also. Practice is blind if it is not guided by the most advanced revolutionary theory. Theory is sterile if it is not used as a guide to practice. The two, theory and practice, are inseparably linked.

However, they do not develop evenly together. At a specific juncture one or other, either theory or practice, is primary. Because of the pre-eminence of opportunism in imperialist Britain, Marxist-Leninists have a two fold task. Marxist-Leninists need to not only apply marxism to the concrete conditions of Britain, but also wage a merciless struggle against opportunist distortions of the basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism in the era of imperialism. It has particular relevance for communists in the imperialist heartland, because of Lenin's insistence on supporting and aiding the struggles of peoples and nations against colonial and neo-colonial domination. Yet after over 60 years since Lenin's profound analysis, the workers movement remains politically impotent and crippled by Bennite and other variants of the national socialist concept of socialism.]

UPTURN IN REVOLUTIONARY SENTIMENT EXPOSES SORE OF OPPORTUNISM

The class struggle may not be at a peak at present, but it is certainly happening. To outline what we mean, contrast now with Christmas 1973, the time of the last miners' national strike. The Tory Government was forced to the polls. Industry was put on a three day week. At that time no communist would dispute that the class struggle was sharpening. But today, only a few months after the uprisings which not only rocked the Government but shook the whole bourgeois state apparatus, there are few comrades who have a good word to say about the state of class struggle in Britain. Evidently, violent rebellion fill some comrades with less optimism than the traditional form of trade union struggle in Britain. The events of summer 1981 exposed the ugly sore of opportunism in British working class politics. A multitude of arguments for condemning the revolt of black and white youth against state repression was found. But more than this, the uprisings brought home with a bang that

communists, if they are to deserve the name, must recognize that we are witnessing the ending, if it has not already ended, of the post-war period of peaceful forms of struggle. We are entering a period of revolutionary outbursts and revolt. The uprisings have introduced new forms of struggle and resistance in conditions where the old slogans and methods proved useless against state violence and repression. This is, of course, of great significance to communists. But it affects not only the work of a communist organization. The Labour Party and other reformists are less able to win support through promising reforms which they are either unwilling or unable to meet. Reformism is in crisis and the numbers in the various "left" groups is declining too.

Communists need to evaluate mass work and ensure that we are not in our practice treating the revolt of the most oppressed in Britain as peripheral. The problems of giving good political leadership in factory and community are best understood by comrades involved. But there is an ever present tendency to drift into trade unionism and economism because these are so well established in Britain. It is the line of least resistance and it continuously reinforces opportunism. Grasp the nettle. Take up the controversial political issues - the democratic rights of national minorities; British domination and occupation of north of Ireland.

The most important thing is to establish a genuine and consistent anti-imperialist current in Britain. Our immediate allies will most certainly be the national minorities who understand imperialism best and receive the brunt of its jackboot in Britain. But such a movement which is capable of winning victories over the British state will attract the most class conscious among the mass of the white working class.

#### IDEOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL "LIQUIDATIONISM"

For communists, now should be a time of opportunity, instead of the ideological and theoretical vacillation which is tearing us apart. To describe this backward trend we use the term "liquidationism". It has also been coined by the Canadian comrades who have taken a firm and consistent stand in defence of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought. However, the inadequacies of the word liquidationism in describing our conditions are many. Lenin used it to describe the trend which sought to liquidate the RSDLP underground party apparatus and illegal means of struggle in favour of a legal parliamentary party. We, in Britain, do not have a Marxist-Leninist Party and the RCL is certainly not engaged in illegal forms of struggle yet.

The "liquidationism" which *October* will direct its fire at is the kind which regards Marxism-Leninism as out of date and Lenin's concept of a vanguard party as incorrect for western conditions. In this edition we will make a lot of reference to the polemic inside the CPML of the United States because we feel that the current trend is and has been most clearly expressed in the pages of the *Call*.

#### JIM HAMILTON FIRES THE FIRST SHOTS

Over a year ago in February, 1981, the *Call* carried a statement by comrade Jim Hamilton, called a "Message to the movement". The statement sees itself as breaking with "dogmatism" and appeals to every thinking communist who desires to sum up historical experience, but it succeeds in leaving readers high and dry and in a worse state of confusion than before. The statement begins:

"The process of re-examination is not an isolated phenomenon in the world wide revolutionary movement. Especially in the advanced capitalist countries communist and other 'left' parties are coming to grips with a number of major problems in their work. Chief among these problems, or questions, is why has there never been a successful socialist revolution in the advanced capitalist world?"



Comrade Hamilton seems to have discovered this fundamental question in a blinding light of inspiration, as if no communist had ever pondered this point and made some relevant observations. Comrade Hamilton shows that he totally fails to understand what contradictions come together in the modern world to bring about the centre of revolutionary storms. We are forced to come to this conclusion because the question is not asked in order to explain Marxist understanding on the matter. It is left unanswered. Marx and Engels understood the socialist revolution to take place where capitalism was most developed. However, the development of capitalism into imperialism and the experience of the 1917 October revolution fundamentally altered this analysis. Revolutionary storms and opportunities for the proletarian party taking power occur at the weakest link in the chain of imperialism. Since the October revolution history as shown that the conditions have not matured sufficiently, although it is true that there were lost opportunities because of revisionism in the western parties during and after the 2nd World War, in the countries of Western Europe and America to create a revolutionary crisis. The centre of revolutionary storms has been in the colonies and in now what has emerged as the third world. The present crisis, political and economic, may be producing the conditions in which the centre of revolutionary storms may move to the heart of capitalism. But this cannot be said yet. Western capitalism is bolstered by imperialist super-profits and this as created situation where the working class of the metropolitan capitalist countries is cushioned against the worst affects of capitalist/imperialist rule. The working class has been corrupted by a relatively high standard of living, and decades of peaceful parliamentary democracy has been fertile ground for reformist misleadership and mis-education of the working class.

This is how a communist must begin to understand the answer to comrade Hamilton's question, which he makes no attempt to study in a Marxist i.e. revolutionary way.

Having failed to answer the 'question' asked above, Comrade Hamilton goes on to describe the CPML's failure to transform the unions. Now, this is an old cry, often used to gauge the success or lack of it of communist work. However, if we really do intend to seek truth from facts we must state categorically that this will probably not be achieved in bourgeois imperialist society i.e. this side of socialism. It seems likely that the well established trade unions in the western capitalist countries will be a strong positive factor in continuing to represent workers against mis-management and bureaucracy in socialist society. However, the trade unions under capitalist rule remain organs of economic struggle and economic struggle is not the linchpin of communist activity. Communists must work to unfold the struggle for political power and strive to draw as many class conscious workers into political activity and awareness as possible.

Comrade Hamilton speaks despairingly of the CPML's failure to support Ed Dadlowski's reform campaign in steel. We must trust in our American comrades involved to make points for and against on this point. However, Comrade Hamilton gives only brief recognition of the achievements scored in the struggle of oppressed nationalities and the anti-racist work to free Gary Tyler. It is precisely such political activity against racist and national oppression which needs to be praised and built up because it hits right at the core of imperialism and its ideology justifying the enslavement of peoples and nations. It is a concrete expression of the unity of workers and oppressed peoples. If this means neglecting tactical considerations towards reformists and opportunists, then so be it. Building the party amongst the most oppressed and down-trodden will give it a firm foundation against opportunism and social-chauvinism which is continually eroding the revolutionary spirit of white communists in imperialist countries. British Leyland workers were unable to withstand the threats of

Leyland boss Edwards and, of course, reformist misleadership takes the greatest share of the responsibility for this. At the same time youth and oppressed national minority youth in particular, most of whom have never held a union card, rebelled in cities throughout Britain. To be sure we must get out of the habit of seeing the workers' movement through trade unionist glasses. Trade unions, especially given the present social democratic leadership, will not be able to win significant successes in the economic struggle during the present depression. Political struggle which supports the struggles of the oppressed nations and peoples is the urgent priority if the working class is to be capable of independence and strength in the struggle against the bourgeoisie.

However, Comrade Hamilton is clearly arguing against the healthy spirit, which no doubt exists among class conscious workers and communists in the USA, of putting the political struggle and revolutionary education first. He argues:

*"I believe our past practice in the trade unions also demonstrated a view that economic struggle is inferior to political struggle, that mass organizing is inferior to revolutionary education, and that united front tactics are inferior and antagonistic to the tactic of drawing lines of demarcation between ourselves and those who don't share our views" (Ibid).*

How terrifically profound all this is. So deep, it leaves communists totally without a clue as to what they should be doing and accelerates the decline and disintegration which is under discussion. If communists are not promoting revolutionary politics and education, then who is going to do it? Comrade Jim Hamilton writes his appeal to the movement as his contribution to a "strenuous" re-evaluation. But in doing so he pours scorn on those who would draw clear lines of demarcation with him and muddles this up with united front tactics. What "united front" and on what basis? We are firmly against treating the mass of workers as the enemy, but it must be expected that a young Party attempting to establish itself as a revolutionary organization and bring Marxism-Leninism to the countries of decadent Western imperialism is inevitably going to display intolerance to attempts to submerge it in the morass of opportunism.

#### VETERAN COMMUNIST CONDEMNS CPML'S SECOND CONGRESS REVISIONISM

It is hard for us on the other side of the Atlantic to understand in detail the nature of the American polemic. However, the polemic in the USA Marxist-Leninist Movement is not their property alone. Marxism-Leninism is internationalist and draws its strength and universal application from shared experience and international communist unity, whilst insisting that it be applied to the concrete conditions of each country. What is under debate in the American movement is not a tactical line specific to American conditions. Although even tactical questions have been commented on in the history of the international communist movement. What is under debate are the basic principles of Marxism. We feel justified, therefore, in allying ourselves with the trend which is running counter to the CPML's ideological and theoretical liquidationism.

In this issue of *October* we reproduce Harry Haywood's "Remarks prepared for the 2nd Congress". Comrade Haywood apparently was unable to deliver his speech in full to the Congress because of a move to limit debate. Nor was he able to have his views published later in full. Comrade Haywood's speech was edited deleting reference to the ideological struggle in the CPUSA in 1956. The November/December issue of the *Call* carries a big spread debating whether the USSR is capitalist or socialist. Comrades must be aware that in the British ML movement too this question is constantly debated.

At the same time, very little is done to trace the roots of revisionism in the CPGB. Our American comrades are quite wrong in down-playing, in fact ignoring, the historical lesson Comrade Haywood relates. In order to know what rots the revolutionary will of communist parties in the metropolitan capitalist countries, it is essential to trace the errors and study the ideological, political and theoretical disputes. We are not able to reproduce Comrade Haywood's points. However, *October* beginning with this issue will publish articles dealing with different features of the CPGB's degeneration or failings. In this issue we take up the CPGB's stand on the national and colonial questions.

#### CHINA A BASTION OF PROGRESS

We have deliberately left the question of current policy of the CPC (Communist Party of China) until last in this editorial. It is a complex question, but in considering the confusion and the tendencies to liquidationism in the Marxist-Leninist movement, we quite deliberately do not make our starting point what we consider correct for China. The Chinese Party has a great history and it continues to lead the arduous and difficult struggle to build socialism in a developing socialist country of the Third World. Whatever political and ideological struggles are taking place in the Chinese Party, they can only temper it. They certainly influence developments in the Marxist-Leninist movement and parties throughout the world, but they do not and cannot guide the revolution in each country. When communists in Britain, America and other countries make errors, the reasons for these must be sought in the parties or organisations of the particular country. This is consistent with Mao's analysis of dialectics in "On Contradiction". External factors constitute the basis of change; however, the reason for and cause of change is internal and due to the struggle of contradictions within a thing. Warmth may allow an egg to hatch into a chicken, but no amount of warmth will get a chicken from a stone.

So, as communists in a decaying imperialist country we look to the weaknesses and strengths in our own ranks, which have to be overcome or built up. We support China as a developing socialist country of the Third World and a force for progress in the world.

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"REFORMIST WORK OR REVOLUTIONARY WORK"

(HARRY HAYWOOD'S REMARKS PREPARED FOR COMMUNIST PARTY (MARXIST-LENINIST),  
CPML, SECOND CONGRESS MAY 23, 1981)

My comments were not delivered in full to the CPML's Second Congress due to a move to limit debate. I have submitted them in full here.

The Congress confirmed many of my worst fears. A set of revolutionary principles was adopted by the delegates. But the majority expressed the sentiment that such principles were "of little or no consequence to our work." With such an attitude even the best set of principles will not be taken as a guide to action.

The Congress elected a Central Committee which, in its majority, shares this approach and is relatively blinded to the pitfalls of American exceptionalism and reformism.

It is therefore no accident that little practical unity could be reached on communist tasks in the present period. It seems to me that the CPML's Second Congress represents a detour from - rather than an advance towards - genuine communist unity and party organization in the United States.

(Harry Haywood, Georgia, June 1, 1981)

*Harry Haywood's speech has been edited. The section recounting the ideological struggles of the Communist Party USA in 1956 was deleted. All his remarks on the present situation are reprinted here.*

When we formed the CPML four years ago, I was very happy because the next generation seemed to have absorbed these lessons.

But evidently this was not so. Mistakes were made - serious ones needing genuine rectification. But this experience seems to have led many to lose their bearings.

For example, the West Coast Committee has submitted a set of "principles." I found them totally unacceptable from a communist point of view. They make every error I spoke of earlier.

I am very heartened to see that the Afro-American Commission has done its part to combat this turn towards right opportunism.

But I must say that the Interim Political Committee has done us a great disservice, though. Instead of taking a forthright stand in opposition to the West Coast principles, it hurriedly devised a new set which contains many of the same flaws. You give us back self-determination and in exchange you think we will buy a shameful position on the State?

I don't like all of this fiddling around with and crude compromising on principles. This has been a hinderance to democratic debate - not a help.

Another comrade has written an article in *The Call* which calls for communist unity to be based primarily on "opposition to ultra-leftism" and a "to the masses" approach. It is a well-known fact that revisionists, too, will "unite against ultra-leftism." Shall we drop any lines of demarcation with right opportunism? This is a very dangerous business. It covers up the large danger of rightism and it is precisely that right danger which has emerged so pronounced in our own ranks during the past year or so.



The only durable basis for communist unity is upon communist principles which, of course, must be concretely applied to our specific conditions. Any other sort of unity will not stand the test and is based on the whims of the moment.

These principles have everything to do with how you conduct yourself among the masses. As I pointed out in response to a similar call during the '50s - the call to "Get To Work!" I said:

"Yes, but what *kind* of work? Work towards what end? What must be the features of this work? Against whom must it be directed? What must it accomplish? Unless these and other related questions are answered in detail, without confusion or ambiguity, our work can go for naught, and actual damage can be done. For there is reformist work and revolutionary work; there is work that aims to unleash a mass movement, and work that aims to quell it; work that leads the oppressed masses and work that tails along behind them; work that succeeds in linking the economic and political issues and work that separates them; *work that builds the communist party as a vanguard, leading and indispensable force, and work that liquidates the party, considering it of insignificant importance.*" (from *For a Revolutionary Position on the Negro Question*, 1958).

Some people have played a role in shielding this rightward move and done a lot of double-talk. They have blocked with the Right to defeat those standing up for Marxism-Leninism. These blocks have contained little in the way of principles of their own. Please take a second look at this kind of conduct.

All sorts of anti-communist slanders have been thrown around and very few comrades have spoken up against them. Charges of taking "Peking Gold," charges that the CPML was out only "for its own ends" as opposed to the masses. Think about it-aren't these the exact sorts of things that the FBI says that we communists are up to? There have been all kinds of underhanded, factional and personal slanders against good comrades - something which we are supposedly trying to get rid of in Party life, The Emergency meeting made an illegal purge of the old CC, which in actuality was a purge of primarily its Left members.

As far as principled, ideological struggle and democratic debate - some people will have to do a lot to convince me that this is what you are really committed to.

I will conclude now with these thoughts. The mass movements are once again stirring. Some are re-grouping and beginning to crawl, others seem to be preparing themselves to stand up and walk. Where will we be when they get to run?

At this moment we find ourselves not only without revolutionary principles. *Another direct result of this rightward drift is that we have no common revolutionary immediate program to guide our work in this period.*

I'm afraid this is where we are going at present. It can be reversed with serious efforts and a fight against this rightward drift - *but not without such a fight!*

## THE CPGB AND "THE COLONIAL QUESTION"

As we attempt to understand the nature of opportunism and chauvinism today, it is important that we also understand how the developments within the revolutionary party in the 1920's and 30's objectively helped these ideologies to take root within the working class. This article outlines those developments, from the growing chauvinism of the CPGB, (Communist Party of Great Britain) to the adoption of chauvinist and social democratic policies and an incorrect analysis of imperialism.

### GROWING DISREGARD FOR THE COLONIAL QUESTION

The struggle for the Bolshevisation of the CPGB required a break with pre-Leninist views on the colonial question. There were sharp struggles within the CPGB over the importance of winning support for struggles in the colonies; but, throughout the crucial years of the 1920's and 30's, during which time the CPGB should have had many years of experience in implementing a revolutionary line, social democratic ideas and pre-Leninist conceptions were clung to stubbornly.

At the 7th Congress held in 1925, the first "Thesis on the Colonial Question and the British Empire" was presented. It summarised the situation for imperialism as follows:

*"Imperialism is faced by growing difficulties and contradictions for which no solution can be found.*

*These contradictions are:*

- 1. The growth of native capitalism, particularly manufacturing industry, in the underdeveloped countries - a growth largely caused by the very export of capital that is the era of imperialism.*
- 2. Growing revolt amongst the masses of the exploited countries.*
- 3. Resulting from these two, a decline in the privileged position of the workers in Great Britain."*

The thesis went on to say, that whilst supporting "every revolutionary nationalist movement" and "honest sections within the dominions seeking secession independence would have no meaning until imperialism is overthrown throughout the empire".

It is not merely a question of the CPGB drifting into a fundamentally incorrect position. The year is 1925, five years after Lenin's thesis on the national and colonial question was adopted at the 2nd Congress of the Comintern. Certainly Lenin's position has since been further developed by Mao Zedong, but, if the authors of the CPGB thesis had paid attention to the responsibilities of communists in the oppressor nations, i.e.

*"...All communist parties must assist the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement in these countries, and that the duty of rendering the most active assistance rests primarily upon the workers of the country upon which the backward nation is dependent colonially or financially."* and grasped the essence of imperialism, the CPGB would never have come(\*1) to these conclusions.

There are at least two things which can be said about point one of the 1925 thesis. First, in its exploitation of the resources of a colony or neo-colony, imperialism needs roads, railways and the basic plant and equipment for the mining and extraction industries. Imperialism will even develop and build some factories, but what is built in the way of industry and railways is tied to the requirements of the oppressor nation, of imperialism. Palme Dutt himself, (although writing in 1940) sees the opening up of India for commercial penetration in the first part of the 20th century, as the emergence of new forms of exploitation, not a general process of industrialisation. A small proletariat is brought into being, but in countries like India, where the economy is predominantly feudal, the

masses of people are peasants, tied to the land. The emergence of a proletariat and the national contradictions of the petty-bourgeois and peasant masses with imperialism will certainly be its grave diggers, but what is not taking place is the bourgeois democratic revolution under the tutelage of imperialism. Monopoly capitalism props up all the old feudal institutions and the power of the landlords, precisely because land reform and democratic revolution must grow into socialist revolution in order for the oppressed nation to free itself from imperialism. The development of capitalism in Third World countries, as it developed in the West throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is impossible in the era of imperialism. ✓

The second conclusion, which became fully defined in CPGB policy two years later, is that imperialism is industrialising the colonies. Clearly such misconceptions are absolutely consistent with what the imperialists say about their so-called "civilising role". To use the example of India again, it would appear that the CPGB had swallowed the British imperialist's own propaganda. "Industrialisation" was official aim of the Government in 1916. For a communist party to propagate such a view, rather than exposing the rapacious rule of imperialism and arousing the working class against it embellishes imperialism and prompts workers to puzzle over the justification of anti-imperialist struggles.

The thesis asserts that self-determination is meaningless until/over-thrown throughout the empire. This later developed into the implied belief that liberation of the colonies will only come about as a result of revolution in the imperialist heartland of Britain. This Euro-centric view extended to the sending of British revolutionaries to the colonies to organise the revolution, whilst at the same time, the importance of the national liberation struggles in the colonies was underplayed in Britain and the working class were not mobilised to support those struggles.

Most interesting of all, however, is the conclusion that the privileged position of workers in Britain is declining. It would seem from this that the CPGB was taking full account of the effect of imperialism on the working class. In fact Harry Pollitt, in 1932, referred to the affect of imperialism on the British working class. However, apart from the fact that the CPGB did not address themselves to this problem, the CPGB studiously avoided singling out the Labour Aristocracy as the trojan horse of opportunism in the working class movement. Where the Labour Aristocracy is referred to, the analysis of Marx and Engels describing the Labour Aristocracy when Britain was the workshop of the world, is stressed. But this analysis of the Labour Aristocracy is insufficient and does not take into account the privileged sections of workers that exist under imperialism. Lenin described the Labour Aristocracy under imperialism, as existing and receiving a higher income drawn from the super-profits reaped from colonial plunder. The fact that British imperialism was still able to buy off labour leaders etc, was never taken seriously by the CPGB. It continually repeated that the Labour Aristocracy was declining in importance, but did not analyse it. Tom Bell, a founder and outstanding ideological leader of the CPGB understood the role of the Labour Aristocracy very well, and opened his short History of the CPGB with a quote from Marx on this question. He also deals very briefly with the Labour Aristocracy in the era of imperialism, however, even he regarded it to be of declining importance.

This thesis of the 7th Congress in 1925 remained policy until the question was again debated in the Comintern at the 6th Congress in 1928. At the 9th Congress of CPGB in 1927, the position adopted at the 7th Congress of the CPGB had developed to its inevitable conclusions. The theory of what was termed "decolonization" had become fully defined.

Tom Bell describes the theory of "decolonization" as follows:

*"The Congress characterized the existing economic situation in the following way: While recognizing the depressed condition of the basic*



industries, it put emphasis upon the parasitical character of British capitalism, upon the increasing industrialization of the colonies, and attached great importance to the growth of the new industries as being one of the chief source of profit.

If we study these expressions closely, we can see how they are linked up with the theory of "decolonization" which ultimately found open expression at the Sixth World Congress. It is clear that if we deny that the basic export industries must still be the main source of extraction of profits and super-profits and the basis of the capitalist system in Britain, if we maintain that the depression in the basic industries is leading the British capitalists towards becoming only a rentier class and see the chief source of profits only in light industry - we arrive at the theory of "decolonization". (\*2)

This quote raises some interesting questions but it does not expose the essence of the theory of "decolonization". The theory of "decolonization" arose from an incorrect analysis of the colonial question and subjective conclusions drawn about the future of industry in Britain after the defeat of the miners in the General Strike. It was the debate at the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern which exposed the essence of the theory of "decolonization".

During the discussion the only member of the British delegation to emphasise the plunderous and dominating features of imperialism in the colonies was J.T. Murphy. Palme Dutt who was in the leadership with Pollitt in the struggle against the party's right line and leadership argued the "decolonization" theory. Or, at least, did not make a break with it.

"While I do not support the simple view that British imperialism put 'impossible obstacles' in the way of the development of Indian industry I do not think either that the contrary is true, that British imperialism makes every endeavour to develop the productive forces of India, that all kinds of industry are developed, or that there is an independent development of Indian industry in the interest of the Indian bourgeoisie as considered from their point of view...

It is quite true to say that British imperialism in certain directions under certain conditions retards the development of Indian industry. Of course, Indian industry under independence would develop at a greater rate than under present conditions. But the question... is, does industrialisation and its development present new problems with which the British bourgeoisie are faced? I think the only correct formulation is to say that the development of capitalist industry is inevitable, and that British imperialism seeks to control it in such a way as to receive the maximum profit". (\*3)

The last sentence of this quote is the essence of Palme Dutt's view, all other considerations apart. It is fundamentally incorrect, like a liberal he stumbles through "on the one hand this" and "on the other hand that" giving an apparent position of many sided deep analysis. But on the crux of the matter he cops out and declares the middle of the road general position which in this case is absolutely wrong. Imperialism will build industry where it is needed for grabbing raw material and even some manufacturing industry. But independent economic development is prevented and the oppressed nation impoverished. This can be witnessed most strikingly in Third World nations today. The form of imperialist rule varies but its essence is the same.

On the issue of "decolonization" J.T. Murphy was profoundly correct and in agreement with the Comintern thesis under discussion when he said:

"The normal development of capitalism in general means eventually industrialisation of a country, but the imperialist exploitation of the colonies forbids normal industrialisation of the colonies, such as occurred in the metropolis. Instead of imperialism playing the liberating role to the inherent forces of production in the colonies, it adds its own contradictions to the contradictions within the colonies, whilst sucking the life blood from them by its monopolistic control." (\*4)

Murphy however, stood alone amongst the British delegation in supporting the Comintern line on the colonies, a fact which prompted a remark by a member of the Comintern secretariat:

*"Yes comrades, industrial development is taking place in the colonies but very slowly; comrades, very slowly. In fact, just as slowly as the Bolshevisation of the British Party Politburo under the leadership of Comrade Petrovsky". (Comintern Representative to Britain) (\*5)*

At the 11th Congress, by which time Rothstein (BSP), Wilson (ILP) and Inkpin (BSP) had been removed from the political bureau, a line of detailed and militant support for colonial struggles was outlined. The line of the Sixth congress of the Comintern had been adopted at the 10th congress but was not being practiced. However, in concluding on this aspect of the period up to 1929, it would be incorrect to say that agitation for anti-imperialist solidarity did not take place. British intervention in China, the Versailles treaty, anti-communist trials in India, Ireland etc were all given some attention. But not enough and what little that was done was treated somewhat suspiciously on the grounds that it detracted from revolution or workers struggle in Britain.

Following the 11th congress demands of support for colonial struggles (in words only, for the need for support expressed at congresses was never realized in practice) were trimmed, distorted and abandoned.

The relationship of the CPGB to the struggle in Ireland needs to be analysed separately. Certainly a British communist was dispatched to Ireland to form a Workers Party, and it would appear that little attention was paid to the national question in Ireland by the CPGB. However, we feel that research needs to be done on this topic, and a further article published. We have no reason to believe that the CPGB was significantly less chauvenist towards Ireland, in fact probably the opposite was the case, but because of Ireland being Britain's oldest colony, and the crucial importance of the struggle in Ireland to the British revolution, we feel that the complexity of the relationship needs to be analysed.

#### THE RISE OF FASCISM. THE UNITED FRONT AND DISTORTION OF THE DEMAND FOR SELF-DETERMINATION OF THE COLONIES.

Distortion of the demand for self-determination took a particular form during the thirties. The threat of war loomed larger every week, month and year. Demands by the German Nazis and Mussolini fascists for a re-division of the world were the headline news. The Japanese imperialists invaded China in a desperate move to realize Japanese domination in the Far East. British and American imperialism strove to turn the German Nazis East against the Soviet Union. To this end direct assistance to build up the German War machine was given by the British and American imperialists. The "democratic governments" of Britain and America were helping the fascists. Every country in Europe and the Americas had the beginnings of, or a full fledged fascist movement. Defence of bourgeois democracy against bourgeois fascism became a major part of the platform of communist parties. Unfortunately, the correct Comintern policy of a united front against fascism was distorted to justify all kinds of revisionist tendencies. ✓

This was particularly the case in the policy of the CPGB which used the United Front policy to blur the differences between the Communist Party and the Labour Party and deny the vanguard role of communists. It is against this background that we must understand the drift of CPGB policy and the increasing adaption to opportunism.

Little was done by the CPGB in the 30's to assist the struggles in the colonies, either ideologically, in the form of the exposure of what imperialist plunder means for the masses of subject peoples, or direct assistance to liberation struggles. CPGB congresses ritually noted that more needed to be done. At the 12th Congress in 1932 the "colonial freedom" clause in "The Way Out - A Manifesto" speaks for the first time of mutual assistance after the revolution. It is assumed that the colonies will advance towards socialism after the revolution in Britain has granted independence.

It was Harry Pollitt on behalf of the Central Committee who raised the following questions in his report entitled "The Road to Victory":

*"How can England feed itself after the revolution? ...Where will England, as a highly industrialized country, get the markets so that it can set its factories going after the revolution?"*

At the thirteenth congress the line of "mutual assistance after the revolution" was defined more closely. In a programmatic resolution entitled "For Soviet Britain" the question "Can Britain Feed Herself" was "answered": Britain could live on stocks of essential food for from four to eight months, says the resolution. But in the long run, Workers Councils will have to arrange to import large quantities of food also raw materials. It is clear from this that the CPGB did not understand the economic relationship that exists between British imperialism and say India and Africa. And it is clear from the following quote that any fundamental change in this plunderous relationship is not really expected. Instead there seems to be some unstated belief that under workers power, the operation of the same economic laws will not mean the same exploitative relationship of oppressor and oppressed nation. What if the colonies or ex-British colonies do not wish to sell their raw materials or food stuffs? If the workers power is thinking in terms of markets, at what prices will the Workers Councils be prepared to pay for these raw materials and foodstuffs?

*"The British Engineering Industry under workers control will be able to propose co-operation 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. (\*6)*

The nominal independence of Third World countries since the war has proved that the imperialists are not averse to such a relationship of "mutual co-operation". The extent of the influence of opportunism was now being revealed as leading members of the CPGB began to fear the consequences of self-determination for colonies, which the bourgeoisie argued would mean loss of markets and unemployment in Britain.

Imperialism distorts the economies of Third World countries turning them in producers of a few or even one basic raw material or foodstuff. This also distorts the economy of the imperial metropolis although in a completely opposite way. Whole industries producing unnecessary luxury goods are given precedence over a programme to ensure a varied and self-sufficient agriculture. Raw materials such as coal lie untapped because it is more expensive to mine than oil pillaged from Third World countries. Clearly the main concern of communists is not how to maintain the inflow of raw materials and foodstuffs in a revolutionary Britain, but how to reorganize the economy on a socialist basis. The victorious working class in Britain would have no interest in continuing the super-exploitation of colonies and neo-colonies. Repudiation of colonial status is obligatory. But neo-colonialism is far more subtle. Only a Marxist-Leninist analysis of the problems of socialist reorganization can ensure that necessary trade with all countries is on a completely equal basis. In fact Britain should expect to pay more than necessary.

"For Soviet Britain" does clearly say that a Soviet Britain will proclaim "the right of all countries now forming part of the British Empire to complete self-determination up to and including complete separation". However we do not consider that we are being too harsh on the CPGB when we dwell on their insistence on being able to continue to import the raw materials and foodstuffs of these countries. In a section headed "Relations



with other (capitalist) countries" the pamphlet boasts that the capitalist countries will be forced to trade with Britain. The example that is quoted is Argentina which is in fact an oppressed nation. The following truculent statement of Argentina's position is made:

*"For example, the Argentine would face immediate ruin if it interrupted its trade with Britain in foodstuffs and raw materials in return for British manufactured goods". (\*7)*

However, even this, to say the least, shaky position on the colonial question was undermined to the point of dropping all reference to the demand for "self-determination". By the 14th Congress the resolution in support of the struggles in the colonies had become in practice inadequate and a matter of routine. The Congress report regretted that little had been done in support of liberation movements. The 15th Congress went a step further, by trimming demands to "Full democratic rights for the colonial people including trade unions etc...". Support for liberation struggles had thus been removed from the agenda of the CPGB. It now became a matter of moralizing demands on the British Government to legislate reforms via their system of colonial governors and puppets.

The study of the CPGB's application of the united front against fascism involves some very complex questions. The CPGB's interpretation certainly needed to be criticized for its failure to expose British imperialism and the Labour Party. Trotskyites, however, prattled with "left" phrases and arguments to justify sabotaging the united front movement. In this situation only a thorough Marxist-Leninist stand using revolutionary tactics of unity and struggle could criticize the weaknesses of the CPGB and avoid slipping into the mire of Trotskyism. The slogan of "Peace and Democracy" was not a bad slogan. But in no way can it be considered a strategic one. It was a good slogan which concentrated opposition to the growing threat of imperialist war. But imperialism is not going to suddenly become peaceful or democratic as far as the working class is concerned. Applied to the "colonial question" as it was from the 14th Congress it directly conflicts with what should be the strategic position of communists. It replaces demands in support of national liberation with criticism of the form of colonial rule. The hopeless line of democratic rights for the oppressed and super-exploited masses of India and Africa misled the working class with illusions that this is possible. It gives credence to imperialist propaganda that the future of colonial territory is bound up with the future of British imperialism. In fact the slogan embellishes British imperialism. There can be no justification for ignoring the main question of economic plunder by imperialism in order to construct a neat, nice sounding but none-the-less opportunist demand which is "practical" or "realistic". Certainly not by a communist party. Such slogans coined by democrats and non-communists in the anti-imperialist movement give communists the chance to explain the main demands whilst giving support for such aspirations for democracy and freedom in the colonies.

Maybe this is all part of the belief on the part of CPGB leaders that British imperialism is magnanimous, "civilized" in its treatment of Indian and African peoples and of course capable of bringing "Full democratic rights for the colonial people including (no less) trade unions etc..." Self-determination is, of course, a democratic demand but it is clear that this is not what the CPGB had in mind. Such ridicule of social-democratic philistinism and smug self-satisfaction with such careless formulations of the "colonial question" is not too harsh. The fact is, in this period and today to a less extent, little thought was given to criticizing chauvinism and training the working class to bitterly hate the robbery and starvation caused by British and other imperialism in the Third World.

The Trotskyists in their attacks on the CPGB never made this point. They refused to support the united front against fascism and thereby helped

the fascists. Their argument being that there was no difference between capitalism headed by German fascism and British capitalism. It seems from this that the Labour Party and ILP 'Leftists' also assumed that to unite against fascism meant abandoning the struggle against British capitalism which had not yet turned to fascism. Not that these Trotskyists and 'Leftist' did ever threaten the interests of British capitalism. However, the point is that uniting against fascism which is the most bellicose in its anti-communism or war-mongering does not mean ceasing to expose British imperialism.

As noted earlier when dealing with the 'decolonization' controversy at the 6th Congress of the Comintern in 1928, R. Palme Dutt equivocated on the question of imperialism developing or underdeveloping the colonies. Palme Dutt was a very capable theorist able to go into very minute detail in analysing British imperialism in India. A book published in 1940 called *India Today* is excellent in the weight of information on India that it reveals. For example Palme Dutt clearly describes the role of imperialism in India:

*"...modern imperialism in India stands out as the main obstacle to advance, of the productive forces, thwarting and retarding their development by all the weapons of its financial and political domination."*

*"...The role of modern imperialism in India is fully and completely reactionary". (\*R)*

But for all this its method of analysis is eclectic. On the important question of the road to India's emancipation two main points are made. In the course of refuting the Gandhists who presented industry and Western technology as the Indian people's enemy, great emphasis is placed on the need for India to be industrialized. Which is fine. But coupled with the mere recognition that national independence must come first, the achievement of which is envisaged as the result of revolution in Britain and maybe even an act of legislation from Westminster, the reader is given a distinct impression that India's role in achieving this industrialization need only be a passive one. This is the only conclusion that one can come to. Especially since the line of the CPGB on self-determination and the raw materials and foodstuffs plundered from the colonies, envisage no fundamental change in this relationship after a victorious revolution in Britain has granted independence. The whole argument of the CPGB is nonsense. Whatever facts are pointed out by Palme Dutt are dealt with in an undialectical way. This is an important point because Palme Dutt does not deny that British imperialism plunders India and is the cause of starvation. In *India Today* the parasitic nature of British imperialism in India is clearly pointed out. In fact, all the information on which one could make a correct analysis is present. But when it comes to the conclusions, Palme Dutt and the CPGB still show themselves to be trapped by the same chauvinist and imperialist assumptions.

In 1942 after the Nazis attacked the Soviet Union and the formation of the International United Front against fascism, the CP's line regarding India changed. It became a line of moralizing appeals to the bourgeoisie to grant a promise of independence after the war to the oppressed peoples so that they would fight under the orders of British Generals. The fact that British imperialism allowed colonial territory to fall to the enemy rather than arm the people to fight the Germans or Japanese was something which Palme Dutt exposed but did not draw any conclusion from. One would think that it was merely a question of mismanagement or bungling. No! This fact alone shows that British imperialism had not changed its character in the war against fascism. Weapons in the hands of the Indian people would not just be direct against the Japanese, the Italians or the Germans but the British imperialists as well.

REFERENCES \*

- 1) V.I.Lenin: *Preliminary Draft of Thesis on the National and Colonial Questions.*
  - 2) Tom Bell: *History of the British Communist Party.*
  - 4) Comintern Thesis:  
    "...the ruling strata of the previous social structure... allies itself with imperialism..." "Everywhere imperialism attempts to preserve and to perpetuate all those pre-capitalist forms of exploitation... which serve as the basis for the existence of its reactionary allies... the 'cultural' role of the of the imperialist states in the colonies is in reality the role of an executioner... In its functions as colonial exploiter, the ruling imperialism... acts primarily as a parasite sucking the blood from the economic organism of the latter... Just as the 'classical' capitalism of the pre-imperialist epoch most clearly demonstrated its negative feature of destruction of the old without an equivalent creation of the new precisely in its economy of plunder in the colonies so also the most characteristic side of the decay of imperialism, its essential feature of usury and parasitism, is clearly revealed in its colonial policy.
  - 3) Quoted by the B & ICO from *International Press Correspondence DEC 1928*
  - 5) Harry Haywood: *Black Bolshevik*
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THE STRUGGLE OF NATIONAL MINORITY PEOPLE AND THE LINE OF THE RCL

The 2nd Congress of the RCLB took place in July last year: a year marked by great movements of oppressed people against British imperialism, in the form of the Hunger Strikes by H-block prisoners in Ireland and the struggles of black people in Britain. It is on these two questions relating to our stand against British imperialism, that the RCL changed its position at the July Congress. The adoption of a principled stand of unconditional support for the Republican Movement in Ireland and a self-criticism for the previous social-chauvinist line are dealt with elsewhere. But it is important to link this change with the adoption of a position of the revolutionary alliance between the working class and the oppressed national minorities within Britain. Whilst our present stand marks some progress from our previous position, outlined in the RCLB Manifesto, the line is still being developed and we have much to learn. The aim of the first part of this article is to show what progress we have made. But the second part is an important qualification: it points out serious contradictions and weaknesses which have yet to be resolved.

I

The history of black people's resistance to oppression is long and varied and in the past we have often ignored these struggles. Whilst not attempting an all-round analysis, we would like to highlight some of the key struggles against the British state which we have ignored or underplayed in the past.

Over recent years, much of the struggle against racist oppression has been focussed against immigration controls and laws. The Asian communities in particular have mounted well organised resistance. The immigration laws racist at their inception, have been made increasingly oppressive by both Labour and Tory governments, in a way which amounts to a wholesale attack on black people. The enshrining of the racist concepts of the immigration laws into the new Nationality Bill last year gave rise to a massive demonstration in protest. Thousands of national minority people marched, uniting old and young Asian and Caribbean, political and religious organisations. 1981 was also a watershed for another, newer aspect of struggles against immigration laws - the individual campaigns against deportation or split families. Anwar Ditta's 6 year struggle to be united with her children has inspired many others, such as Nasira Begum, Cynthia Gordon and Jaswinder Kaur. These campaigns were also important in marking the rising resistance of black women.

The Day of Action organised by the New Cross Massacre Committee marked an important step forward in black resistance and organised demonstration of anger. Ten thousand black youths, mainly Caribbean, marched in protest at the racist murder of 13 black children. This was not just a protest against the individual murderers, but against the police who have failed to give any protection against racist attacks, against the courts who uphold the actions of the police against black people and against the main political parties who ignore the deaths of 13 black youngsters. The massive power of this particular demonstration did not arise suddenly, but comes from many years of resistance and organisation within the black community.

The Uprisings were a new stage in black resistance, focussing on a section entering the struggle in force, the dispossessed, the workless and criminalised youth. Black youth in Bristol and Southall confronted the police. During the summer, black youth in all main cities, rose up against

the police, the most immediate target and symbol of racist oppression. In some places, such as Toxteth, other sections of society were united behind their leadership. As forms of rebellion spread from one city to another, the State could no longer treat each as an isolated and particular incident.

These three examples illustrate the mass resistance to racism by black people, but there are other important areas of struggle, such as calls for self defence in response to the physical attacks on black communities and the organised response of black people to these attacks, as in Brick Lane in 1977. Another area is at the work place where black workers have consistently fought for basic democratic rights, often without the support of their fellow white workers and often against the official union. We have to do much more work to learn from the rich experience of national minority people here.

The state has made a dual response to black people's resistance culminating in the events of last summer. On the one hand, direct repression by the police, armed to the teeth with counter revolutionary gear, backed up by the courts and the legal system. On the other "buying off", "official inquiries" "community policing" etc. 2 approaches complement and re-inforce each other.

During the summer, 3,500 people were arrested. Many were denied any semblance of democratic rights by being held in remand until the trial, forced by the police to make statements, refused access to solicitors or friends and family and pressured to plead guilty under threat of no bail. In some cases where there has been an organised defence committee, police frame ups have been exposed, as in Southall, where a notorious P.C. Webb had claimed to be arresting two different individuals for throwing petrol bombs in two different places at the same time.

One of the most significant trials arising from the summer is that of the Bradford 12. These 12 black youth were all arrested in Bradford last year and charged with making an explosive substance with intent to endanger life or property, and conspiracy to make explosive substance. However, there were no major disturbances in Bradford last year and no petrol bombs were thrown. This is clearly a political trial, an attack not just on the 12 youths but an attack on the whole black community. The state is using this trial as a means of revenge and repression against the whole black community, particularly the youth who challenged the state in the uprisings: and the real reason why these 12 were arrested is that they were nearly all members or supporters of the United Black Youth League, some of them with a long history of struggle to defend the black community. The Bradford 12 are part of a new trend arising from the young people who have grown up in this country, who are taking up struggles in a militant way and building mass support in their communities. The UBYL took a consciously anti-imperialist stand, shown by their struggles against the state in Britain and their support for the Republican movement in Ireland. The fact that the Bradford 12 trial is a political trial is further shown by the use of conspiracy charges, which the British state has consistently used against political activists. On such charges their political beliefs can be used as evidence. The political nature of the trial is also shown by the Lail conditions which effectively "gag" the 12 and prevent them from taking part in the campaign for their own defence. The real aim of the trial is not only to get the 12 sent down and to silence them, but to intimidate all those within the black community who take a stand in defence of their community. The aim is to make criminals of those who take a political stand against the British state, along with the criminalisation of black youth in general.

At its 2nd Congress in July 1981 the RCL took the first step away from its previous political statement in the Manifesto of 1977 and its resulting practice. We do not claim to have a full understanding or analysis but we have recognised the importance of the struggles such as those mentioned above and for communists to give priority to building support for those struggles.

The RCL Manifesto of 1977 only paid lip service to the fact that Britain is an imperialist country, once the most powerful imperialist state in the world. It adopted a social chauvinist line on the struggle in Ireland and the struggle of national minority peoples in Britain.

In Section C of the Manifesto, dealing with the Class Struggle in Britain the struggle against racist oppression merits only four short paragraphs, which shows the low priority and lack of importance attached to that area of struggle by the RCL at that time. Some correct points are made in these paragraphs: the term national minorities is used - a term which we would still defend. The struggle against the immigration laws and for self-defence organizations are pin-pointed as important. But the points are sketchy at best and also contradictory. The most important contradiction is the statement that "we should fight racial discrimination, particularly at the place of work." This requires some explanation.

At this time in our history the RCL held a dogmatic view on where we should work as communists. Because we rightly believed that party-building was the central task in Britain and that the party should be built among the working class, we decided to concentrate exclusively on work in industry and ruled out any other form of mass work. In practice this meant that we did no anti-racist work and dismissed as secondary and therefore unimportant, struggles that were not based on the work place.

This is not simply an organisational point. It derives from our line on British imperialism and reflects a dogmatic assumption that the struggles of the working class in industry are the highest form of struggle. This ignored the whole national question in the history of British imperialism, the importance of national struggles against British imperialism abroad, the struggles of national minorities in Britain and the national question in Wales and Scotland. We still held that the working class in Britain is objectively a revolutionary class, but at the time of the Manifesto we ignored many different factors relating to the internal effects of opportunism on the struggles and consciousness of the working class. We did not understand the complexity of the different forces who will carry out the revolution in Britain. In particular we did not understand the revolutionary essence of the struggles of national minority peoples, the most oppressed sections within the British State, whose understanding of imperialism both here and in the Third World is far greater than that of most white workers, and whose struggles against British imperialism directly confront the power of the state.

Racism was dealt with in the Manifesto in 5 paragraphs on opportunism. The importance of the ideology of racism and its origins in imperialism were correctly pointed out. However it limited the question to one of building unity between black and white workers, thus ignoring the specificity of the struggle of national minority people, both workers and non-workers. It failed to support the specific struggle of the most oppressed and relegated that struggle to a role subordinate to that of the working class at the point of production. In paragraph 21 it implies the economist view that the oppression of black workers is simply a question of equal pay and conditions, and paragraph 22 talks about "working at it (the working class) from both sides", meaning that "attitudes of white racism and white superiority" and of "narrow black nationalism" were equally important targets for communists. For an organisation of mainly white comrades, to target narrow nationalism clearly demonstrated our chauvinism. We had an incorrect understanding of the struggle against racist oppression, we negated the whole Black Power movement and demanded that the oppressed change their attitudes towards their oppressors.

The practice of the RCL at that time was to concentrate on industrial work. With no understanding of the struggle against national oppression, much of this work was inevitably economist and failed to take up the question of British imperialism. One major example of our chauvinism at the time was our reply to an invitation to take part in the demonstration against racialism organised by the Anti-Racialism National Demonstration Committee in 1976:



"...We warmly support the aims of the demonstration. We would therefore have very much wanted to be present on July 11th. However in order to make progress on what is the central task in Britain today, building the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party, it is necessary to concentrate our limited resources on certain particular tasks in order to do them well. We have made some progress already and hope to make more until we are able to contribute effectively to the struggle against racialism and fascism as part of the overall struggle for the proletarian revolution in Britain..."

During this whole period when attacks by the state and by fascists were intensifying, we effectively did nothing to support the struggles of national minorities and justified this with our dogmatic line on party building. Struggles in the real world went on, and with increasing repression from the state and fascists, resistance grew. Comrades within the RCL began to recognise the errors in our position and comrades from the CWM and BCA joined the organisation. These two organisations had consistently taken part in anti-racist work, as in fact had one newer branch of the RCL. We recognised the importance of anti-racist work and agreed to reverse the decision of the Manifesto on this. We began to develop an analysis of national minorities in Britain and their struggle against the British state and their special position in relation to British imperialism. The theoretical basis of this position was argued in an article "The Roots of Resistance". The second Congress marked a first step forward in changing our old chauvinist position and began the process of developing our understanding between the relation between national and class struggle in Britain.

The key concepts in the new position adopted by the RCL\* is the revolutionary alliance between the working class and the national minority peoples. This concept recognises that British imperialism depends both on the class exploitation of the proletariat as a whole and on the national oppression of nations and national minorities. Resistance, aimed, in the last analysis, at the overthrow of imperialism, also takes distinct, though essentially complementary forms. The struggle of the working class against their exploitation and the struggle of the oppressed national minorities against their oppression are twin streams of resistance. The strategy for Communists should be to forge an alliance between these forces, as the only means by which British imperialism can be defeated.

This strategy rests on an analysis of a specific form of oppression directed against black people in Britain - national minority oppression. This oppression derives from the imperialist exploitation and oppression of the nations from which the black people have come. Imperialism itself perfected the ideology of racism, which originated in the slave trade of developing capitalism. The resistance of the national minority people consequently takes a specific form, which must be recognised and supported in its own right. More than this, Communists must actively fight for full democratic rights for national minorities and against all national oppression, and must aim to draw the working class into this struggle.

A sincere and militant implementation of this strategy can enable British communists to begin the task of eliminating their social chauvinism. It can enable us to avoid attitudes, current in the past, which denied reality and were patronising, cynical or critical towards the black resistance. It is fundamentally wrong to attempt to force a mould onto history which suits the short term interests of the white working class in the metropolitan countries. As the Congress correctly decided: "Coming from the Third World, which is the main force against imperialism, black and Asian people are in the vanguard of the fight against imperialism in Britain".

\*The position is set out in the "Rights of National Minorities" at the end of the article.

II

The Contradictions in the Line of the Second Congress of RCL

The Congress Document clearly incorporates 2 lines of analysis and strategy, most clearly seen in contrasting the section on democratic rights paras 62-69 with the section of rights of national minorities paras 70-78.\* But apart from this obvious contrast, the previous sections demonstrate some of the elements of the difference, and some attempts to bring them together, which seem to say the least, unsatisfactory.

Thus in para 17:

*"The essential political task of the revolutionary movement in the first historical stage of party building is to rally the advanced elements to Marxism-Leninism through building a real working class anti-imperialist mass movement. ... The advanced elements are those who grasp the true nature of imperialism and its state and have begun to fight it. These are the elements with whom we will work openly as communists..."*

Here we have a definition of the advanced and a prescription for work. We are also told where to look for the advanced elements:

*"...At this stage of the struggle, the advanced trend is overwhelmingly located amongst black people and Welsh, Scottish and Irish workers because of the varying forms of double oppression suffered by them."*

This is repeated in para 22:

*"...National minority people are in the vanguard of the struggle against the British State..."* And in slightly differently in para 43:

*"...The black and national minority workers will provide a large number of advanced workers from their ranks..."*

This clearly raised two questions. Firstly, what is the analysis of national minorities which makes them in this vanguard position? This can only be answered in the "Rights of National Minorities" section, (A problem is also raised by conflicting terminology of "workers" and "people"). Secondly, why is it that from the relatively larger proportion of the population with revolutionary potential, so relatively small a proportion of the advanced should come? This is answered, although not necessarily in satisfactory manner, in para 31:

*"Despite the relative decline of British Imperialism this century, particularly during the last 30 years, the superprofits entering Britain are still very high, and continue to provide the material base for opportunism. These superprofits have enabled the bourgeoisie, under pressure from the working class, to concede to them a much higher standard of living than is found for the mass of the peoples of the Third World, most of whom continue to suffer bitterly under neo-colonial exploitation. This has established the conditions for the influence of opportunism within the working class as a whole, though it remains a revolutionary class and is not bought off by imperialism." and para 51:*

*"British imperialism's plunder of the Third World has provided workers in the metropolitan country with a higher standard of living than their colonial and neo-colonial brothers and sisters, and is the material reason why opportunism is so influential in the working class. The reformism and economism arising from this has allowed the opportunist trade union leaders to firmly entrench themselves at all levels of leadership. This development has been particularly marked over the last 30 years or so - although the basic conditions for it have existed much longer - and has created the situation where the top trade union leaders, particularly the TUC General Council, are not just conciliators of the monopoly bourgeoisie but in essence form part of the monopoly bourgeois state machine."*

A possible contradiction is found with this trend of analysis and strategy, and is indicated in para 23:

*"...Building factory cells must be the focus of our party building work in the first historical stage..."*

The reasons why this may be contradictory are:

1. because it indicated that we will work mainly among the section who are, by previous description, more backward;
2. because reasons why we should do this are not given in a way which relates this to the previous description;
3. because the contradiction of workers and people is not faced up to.

Nonetheless, the context of this statement appears to be one which attempts to resolve this problem. Two contrasts are drawn first between anti-imperialist work and industrial and factory cell building work, second between community work and factory work. On the surface, these would not seem to be the same contrasts, but the context indicates that they are probably meant to be, and it will be useful to put them together, Thus para 23 says:

*"Anti-imperialist politics and building a working class anti-imperialist mass movement are not antithetical to industrial work and building factory cells. Factory work and work in the community are mutually re-inforcing..."*

Para 26:

*"Work in industry and in the community are complementary and inter-related, and can fuel each other's development..."*

Para 25 indicates that anti-imperialist community work includes the question of the oppression of national minorities.

The difficulties with this attempted reconciliation are i) even if these areas of work are complementary and mutually re-inforcing, why should one be the focus and the other, presumably, peripheral? ii) why should the peripheral one be the one which includes the issues (understanding of imperialism, double oppression etc) which seem to make the difference, according to the previous description, between those who are largely represented in the vanguard and those who are not? iii) if they are complementary what is the relationship between them - how do they complement one another? iv) How does the focal point (building factory cells) serve the task of working openly as communists etc, with the advanced elements who are overwhelmingly located among black people. Scottish, Welsh and Irish workers? (See para 17)

There are several possible interpretations of this attempted reconciliation. One is that it mainly wishes to sweep under the carpet the previous description, and provide grounds for replacing it with the view that the real vanguard are the working class in general, now and at the present historical stage, because this is what orthodox Marxism seems to tell us should be the situation. Another is that it's a fudge, an attempt to be all things to all comrades, and sweep the real contradiction under the carpet. A third view is that it represents the result of an unstated thought process - the national minorities are in the vanguard, but we have the main responsibility of working among the white working class, although, and because, they are more backward, so our focus must be on the factories where they are. Within this preferable view, there are two possible analyses also:

i) That through developing an advanced worker movement in the factories we can eventually come to lead both the majority and minority workers in the same struggle against imperialism.

ii) that the struggle of the working class in the factories must be developed as a particular stream against British imperialism, while the national minority people must develop their particular stream of the struggle



against imperialism along their own lines and with their own leadership.

These 2 contrasting analyses appear to represent the main underlying difference between the sections on Democratic Rights and National Minority rights. It is inevitable that there will be contradictions between these sections, because each is product of one of the main lines on the question competing at the Congress.

There are great difficulties in contrasting them. For a start, their relationship, as seen by their titles, should be, essentially the relationship of the part to the whole. And this is reflected to some extent, by the way they proceed. The Democratic Rights section, which is based on the Reactionary Strategy for Survival concept, does work essentially from an analysis of the whole to the analysis of the parts, and the National Minority Rights section, based essentially on the strategic alliance concept, works from the part to the whole. The difficulty, of course, is that the parts towards which "Democratic Rights" works do not include what is expressed in "National Minority Rights", nor is the whole envisaged by "National Minority Rights" that expressed in "Democratic Rights". More important each analysis makes a number of assumptions, in the course of trying to explain the facts none of which are thoroughly explained and argued. In each case the assumptions tend not to contradict the assumptions of the other section directly because they are not working on the same ground, but they certainly involve indirect contradictions.

From this there would appear to be questions of 3 different orders. 1) How to resolve the major difference between them. 2) How to test the assumptions made in each section and find out if they are valid 3) How to approach the more specific contradictions.

In relation to 1) the connection should be noticed between these 2 sections and the contradictions already noted in the earlier part of the document. On a general level, "National Minority Rights" does attempt to analyse the reasons why national minorities are in a vanguard position. "Democratic Rights" on the other hand, seems to give strength to the strategy of putting emphasis on factory work, in that it treats the question of the struggle against racism as part and parcel of a more fundamental struggle of the whole of the working people against fascism. More particularly, "National Minority Rights" relates to previous and subsequent sections on the Welsh, Scottish and Irish questions whereas "Democratic Rights" does not take them into account in its overall analysis of the struggle for democratic rights.

Question 2 is a question of investigation and analysis - and it seems that the assumptions thrown up by the two sections should be the main subject matter of the theoretical and factual questions that comrades concerned with developing anti-racist work should investigate.

On question 3 the main difficulties alone will be pointed out. They are i) the analysis of racism ii) the relationship between racism and fascism iii) the strategy for resistance.

#### Analysis of racism

"Democratic Rights" section says the aim of racism is to divide the working class (para 64) and that the most far sighted section of the ruling class see the day when racism will no longer do this (para 65 precis). There is an inconsistency between these sections but more importantly there is a clear difference with "National Minority Rights" which says the division results from the oppression of national minorities (para 75) and that racism which is a total ideology becoming fully defined with imperialism and having a specific economic base (para 70) is used to promote and exacerbate this existing division (para 75). The fundamental difference is the view on the one hand that racism is based on a fundamental historical development and is used to perpetuate an existing division and the view on the other that it is a method used to create a division. The ramifications are widespread.

Relationship between racism and fascism

"Democratic Rights" section says that racism is the main weapon to prepare for fascism (para 67) whereas "National Minority Rights" says the development of state racism is linked with the development of fascism (para 76). This suggests a difference between whether we must fight racism because it leads to fascism, or because it oppresses national minorities, recognising that fascism is both a result of racism's development, among other things, and that fascism is a means by which racist oppression becomes more intense.

Strategy for resistance

"Democratic Rights" poses the analysis Reactionary Strategy for Survival leads to mass resistance, which leads to erosion of civil rights of black and white workers and therefore we must play active part in mass resistance. (para 67). "National Minority Rights" poses analysis National Minorities are already fighting back (para 73). We should work toward revolutionary alliance (para 74) drawing the working class into struggle for national minorities rights and in support of the fight of national minorities.

These 2 lines derive from differing analysis of imperialism and the subsequent development of racism.

Analysing the document in this way indicates a large amount of confusion and inconsistency within it. It is essential that detailed work be done to investigate the concrete historical and present facts on which the various conflicting assumptions are based. Specific statements and arguments which contradict one another must be isolated and their meaning spelt out thoroughly in order to discover to what extent they are reconcilable and to what extent they represent positions which cannot stand together. Above all the two major lines represented in the document must be developed and clarified, so that a principled struggle may be conducted over clear lines of demarcation. No theoretical clarity, concrete leadership nor practical guidance for work can be given by a vague and opportunist compromise. The question is of the utmost importance, because different positions on the meaning of imperialism are reflected in the document, and a failure to develop a correct position on this could reverse the progress which the 2nd Congress undoubtedly represents.

EXTRACTS FROM RCL PROGRAMMATIC DOCUMENT PASSED AT 2ND CONGRESS - JULY 1981

Defend and Extend Democratic Rights

62. The struggle to defend and extend democratic rights is a great school in which participation of communists is aimed at exposing the bourgeois state as a repressive organ on which the power of the ruling class of monopoly capitalists is based. Communists support reforms which aid the struggle of the working class and doubly oppressed national minorities. Our chief responsibility is to expose the façade of parliamentarism and bourgeois legality behind which the whole coercive machinery of the bourgeois state apparatus hides. Communists defend bourgeois democracy against trends and moves toward bourgeois fascism.

63. At the present time, there is a growing resurgence of great nation chauvinism in its most reactionary form - fascist terror. This is a direct product of British imperialism's reactionary strategy for survival where the main trend is preparation for fascism.

64. One law after another has been rushed through Parliament, restricting and removing basic democratic and trade union rights. The monopoly capitalists class is attempting to outlaw or render ineffective all the tried and tested methods of economic struggle developed by the working class over the years. A vital aspect of British imperialism's reactionary strategy for survival is the promotion of fascist ideology and organization, of which fascist terror against the black and Asian communities is the essential outcome. The monopoly capitalist class promotes fascist ideology in the hope that white workers will turn a blind eye to intensifying state racism and fail to see that the systematic strengthening of the state machine is aimed at crushing the struggles of all working people. The fundamental aim of racist oppression is to divide the working class, set white people against black people and undermine the resistance of working people even further to mass unemployment, attacks on living standards, education, health and welfare services, democratic and trade union rights. This will enable the bourgeoisie to super-exploit the black and Asian people even further and thus intensify the rate of exploitation of the working class as a whole. Working people want to defend themselves against this onslaught, but find themselves seriously divided by imperialist ideology, particularly racism, and therefore open to manipulation and demobilization by the opportunist misleaders.

65. Working people will not indefinitely accept the systematic reduction in their relative standard of living. The spontaneous fightback of working people against the onslaught of the monopoly capitalist class is constantly developing. The most far-sighted section of the monopoly capitalist class sees the day (and is systematically strengthening the state machine in preparation for it) when racism no longer succeeds in effectively splitting the fighting unity of the working class, when parliamentary methods no longer work in forcing the burden of the crisis onto the backs of working people, when control of the trade unions by law and the misleadership of the opportunists fails to restrict and divert the workers' fightback. At this point, the monopoly capitalist class will attempt to bring in fascism. As the British imperialist state imposed fascist rule on the colonies in order to extract superprofits and to suppress their resistance, so it will attempt to impose fascism at home in a last desperate bid to maintain imperialist rule and thus defend the economic interests of the monopoly capitalist class.

66. The racist ideology of black inferiority and white supremacy is



consistently and relentlessly being spread through the capitalist mass media. In this climate of growing race hatred and intensifying state racism, the open fascist organizations are promoted by the monopoly capitalist class and defended by the imperialist state. They are free to mobilize the most backward elements of society in order to carry out their reactionary tasks laid down by their political masters; the widespread dissemination of fascist propaganda to prepare public opinion for fascist dictatorship, the building of a social base for fascist and the organisation of secret terror gangs to terrorise the black and Asian communities. Experience in other countries shows this protective relationship between the state and the fascist organizations to be standard imperialist practice, where fascist groups carry out terror campaigns, including operating murder squads, which the monopoly capitalist class does not wish the state's forces to be seen undertaking.

67. Racism is the main weapon to prepare the way for fascism and to justify the use of fascist measures such as the 1971 Immigration Act. The monopoly capitalists' reactionary campaign against the national minorities has inevitably led to spontaneous mass resistance on the streets and thus provided the political justification for bringing in more repressive laws and more far-reaching powers for the forces of the state thus systematically undermining the traditional civil rights associated with parliamentary democracy. These powers will be used against all working people, black and white, when they fight back against the onslaught. The significance for revolutionary communists of this analysis of the tactics of the monopoly capitalists' reactionary strategy for survival is not to be mere onlookers but to play an active part in the mass resistance and struggle to give it guidance and direction towards unity and organization.

68. The ruling class is systematically strengthening the state machine as part of its preparations for fascism. The war in northern Ireland is providing the main training ground to prepare the army for its domestic role. The powers of the army and police are being extended, their numbers increased, and special training and equipment provided. The police are being increasingly used to combat "industrial unrest" and political "subversion" rather than fight crime. To this end the police are developing specially trained units - SPGs and tactical firearms units. They are effectively a para-military force. In addition, a specially trained riot police, the Police Support Units, has been formed which can be mobilized on a national or local basis. Under the Special Powers Acts, the state now has the powers without reference to parliament and the tried and tested machinery for launching a military coup.

69. Whilst supporting the struggle to defend and extend democratic rights, communists must be prepared for any moves by the bourgeois state to outlaw the activities of revolutionary parties. In the final analysis, a genuinely revolutionary party is illegal and must, therefore, be prepared to carry on its activities secretly. However, the right to free association existing under bourgeois democracy gives more favourable conditions for organizing.

#### The Rights of National Minorities

70. Racism is a total ideology originating in the slave trade of developing capitalism and only becoming fully defined with the development of capitalism into imperialism. Imperialism oppresses and super-exploits the nations and peoples of the Third World and theories of racial inferiority were developed in the late 19th century to justify the wholesale colonial enslavement of the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The economic basis to racist ideology continues to be national oppression by imperialism, although principally by neo-colonial means.

71. The oppression of national minorities is a marked feature of British imperialist society today. The oppressed national minorities in Britain are mainly, but not exclusively, from the ex-colonies of British imperialism.

72. The oppression of these national minorities is derived from the imperialist exploitation and oppression of the nations from which they have come. It takes the form of super-exploitation, violence, discrimination and the denial of their right to develop their national languages and cultures. Racist ideology was created by imperialism, and is particularly directed against the black and Asian communities in the most vicious and acute form. Coming from the Third World, which is the main force against imperialism, black and Asian people are in the vanguard of the fight against imperialism in Britain.

73. The national minorities are increasingly fighting back against their oppression. This increases their awareness of their national identities. Organizations of specific national minorities are taking the lead in the struggle, but unity is developing between different national minorities and between the national minorities and the working class of the national majority.

74. The continuation of British imperialist rule depends on both national oppression and the exploitation of the working class. A revolutionary alliance between the working class and national minority peoples, with the unity of the working class as its core is essential to overthrow the imperialist bourgeoisie. To help to forge this alliance, Communists must fight for the full democratic rights of the national minorities and for the abolition of all national oppression and inequality. The full democratic rights of the national minorities must include the right to develop their own languages and cultures.

75. The oppression of national minorities results in one of the most dangerous divisions within the working class and working people. This division is promoted and exacerbated by the use of racism by the monopoly capitalist ruling class through the state and the media. This division can only be overcome by drawing the working class into the struggle for the democratic rights of national minorities. We completely condemn all immigration laws which are a racist attack on national minority people, and support all struggle against deportation and the division of families. We thoroughly and unconditionally support the black people's fight against police harassment and brutality.

76. The development of state racism is intrinsically linked with the development of fascism. On the one hand, the state introduces such measures as the Immigration Laws and Prevention of Terrorism Act, on the other, the monopoly capitalist class promotes and defends open fascist organizations, which terrorise national minority communities. Both these means are used to prepare for the time when the monopoly capitalist class will need to prolong its rule through fascism. The struggle against national minority oppression is useless unless it is linked to the struggle against both these tendencies.

77. National minority people in Britain are of different classes, but the majority are workers. Because of their super-exploitation and their specific national oppression, they are among the foremost fighters for the rights of the working class against the attacks of capital.

78. It is essential to build a multi-national Communist party in order to build working class unity and the alliance between the working class and the national minorities. Only thus can the struggle against the imperialist state be carried through to the end. It is therefore essential to unite communists from the national minorities and the national majority into a single Communist Party.