

Dear comrade,

I write to you with bad news, but not in despair.

Briefly, I must tell you that ode KA, Editor of CS and also responsible for most central leadership of Irish solidarity work and the handling of our international relations, has resigned from the League. No doubt word of this has already reached many members, so before too many rumours get going about what has happened, I decided as National Secretary to take the extraordinary step of writing to all members, setting out the facts, indicating the problems which require resolution and some of the ways in which we may grapple with them. I write in advance of the CC where K's resignation will be discussed, because this is necessary in the present situation and because I believe that the CC will consider this course of action to have been correct.

For some time, K has been fairly demoralised about the League. There were many reasons he gave for this; lack of confidence in the ability of the League to take a good political direction; exasperation at comrades not promoting CS, but being ready to criticise it at any time; a lack of commitment on the part of others in doing ~~League~~ mass work; a hidebound approach to theory, where theoretical work was taken seriously, (although generally, being "serious" about theoretical work didn't lead to action.). He made remarks about these things on a number of occasions, and I personally considered that his remarks were often not without substance. The point was; why did such a situation exist, and what could be done to resolve it, and on these things, we disagreed. It should be pretty obvious that we viewed the recent past of the League differently, and particularly the role of HG in our organization, I consider that K's approach to leadership was commandist, so that he was ready to put a new line in the paper without the organization agreeing it, and was ready to try to get policies taken on board in the RCL without winning comrades' conviction for them; this trait had received encouragement from HG, who acted in a similar, but far worse way as a member of the CS Editorial Board.

I have consistently argued that he should ~~argue~~ ^{put} his line openly and struggle with comrades to win their conviction; this is the only solid foundation for the establishment and implementation of new lines. It is not only a matter of members' democratic rights; people who are won to a line through argument and struggle can implement it well, and an organization which is won by such means can generate the enthusiasm and determination to enable it to achieve as much or more than most organizations ten times its size. The difference in approach came out at the Weekend School, where we represented the same political platform-RTL- and I argued for it and K, who authored the great majority of it, did not speak for it once.

Korea Visit

At the beginning of July, K went to Korea in his capacity of CS Editor. Upon his return, he told the SC and CC that HG had also gone. The Koreans had asked him to help them get in touch with HG before he went, and he'd put them off, but eventually thought that he had to give them H's phone number, and address. Needless to say, I could only view the renewal of ties between K and H with suspicion and foreboding as something which would be harmful to the League.

The next CC meeting took place on the weekend of 30-31 July, where K delivered an enthusiastic and inspiring report on his visit. At the end of this report, he proposed that a series of meetings should be organized on Korea, at which he'd speak. Some would be organized with other organizations (e.g. GIFAC in Glasgow, RCG in Edinburgh) and where the League had members, they should be asked to organize meetings, if possible. K also specifically proposed a Korea National Day meeting

for Friday, September 9th, to take place in London as a national RCL meeting. These proposals were supported by the CC.

Pretty quickly, notes were sent out by K asking various people about organizing meetings, and provisional dates were soon fixed by League branches in Manchester, Leeds and Yeovil. I was also under the impression that the cdes in Liverpool had been particularly quick off the mark, as a meeting there was advertised in the August-mid-September issue of CS. I didn't think of asking K about it.

A few days later, I received an angry letter from the secretary of the Liverpool branch. Addressed to the SC, it pointed out that there was a Liverpool branch, and rebuked the SC in strong terms for ignoring it. I didn't know for sure what this meant, but I had a pretty good idea. I asked K if he'd arranged the Liverpool meeting without consulting Liverpool RCL, and he confirmed, rather uncomfortably, that he had. He said that WD and WP had contacted him a long while before and asked him if they would arrange a meeting and he had agreed, but had told them that they should invite a list of organizations which he gave them. My response was that this was wrong, and he should have contacted the Liverpool branch before anyone else was approached; only if they felt unable to organize a meeting should an alternative have been considered. Furthermore, he knew what the attitude of the Ws towards the League was, so it was particularly inappropriate to work with them. He made an evasive reply criticising our Liverpool comrades, but at least seemed to be considering these points. I then asked if anything was yet organized in London, and when he said that it wasn't, I asked him to let me know what needed doing and when, and I'd help.

I had two weeks holiday to come at the end of August/start of September, but on Monday 22nd August, (I was in London for the first week), I again said that I'd help organize the meeting, and specifically suggested that I could do artwork for a leaflet that Thursday. Later that week, K phoned me and said that he'd take care of everything with the other member of the SC (who'd been on holiday up till then).

On my return to London on Monday, 5th September, it soon became clear that something was seriously wrong. There was no publicity for a meeting at NEB. Then a friend of K's phoned up, and mentioned in the course of conversation that she "thought he would see Hugh over the weekend." K normally came into NEB most days of the week, but he didn't come in or phone up throughout the week. Meanwhile, BH, the person who lives above NEB, was pretty evasive all this time. My suspicions were confirmed when K phoned the other SC member about a financial matter, and admitted when he was questioned that he'd organized the meeting with the "Korea Friendship Society" (i.e., a group organized by H; though containing honest members who are only there as friends of the Korean people). The speakers were K and H.

Decision at the SC

This open disregard of a CC decision, in association with a person who, there can be little doubt, harbours only malice towards the RCL, was unacceptable. At worst, it indicated that K had entered into an alliance with H some time before, and never intended to abide by the decisions made by the CC on his proposal; at best, this showed that he had little commitment to the League and didn't much care about the opinions of its members. On Monday, 12th September, I put these points to him at an SC meeting.

He did, in fact, offer some defence, saying that the League in London was not in any state to organize a successful meeting, that if he lacked commitment, he was not the only one. I made the point that this was not simply a matter of a meeting or two that had been wrongly handled, but a question of basic commitment to building the League; after the Reorientation Conference, we had to have an organization of people dedicated to party building and fully committed to the RCL. If K could not make a firm commitment to the RCL, then he should resign.

K said that he could not see any way forward for the RCL; he'd thought that if it adopted RTL, then it might have succeeded, but now, he had no confidence that it would. He thought it best to resign.

We agreed that we should meet the following Monday, after we'd taken time to think about everything, but at that meeting, the conclusion was the same. K said that he would work on Ireland and Korea, and that he would not oppose the League. (Incidentally, he did insist that he had only decided to organize the meeting with H after saying to me that he'd fix things with the other SC cde, and that he'd not intentionally misled me).

I ensured that CC members were alerted to what was happening, so that they would be ready for any emergencies; right from the time when it had become clear that something bad was going on, I'd started contingency planning to deal with any crisis. It was very much a matter of improvisation, but we got through the most immediate problems. However, if the latest issue of CS left a lot to be desired, then I hope comrades will understand that most of it was written in three days, and it was produced by fewer people than normal—we were minus K for most of the time (he didn't pull right out straight away) and BH, who was still "off sick" and only returned to London after all the work on the paper had been done.

Irish Solidarity Work

K had been our main organizer in Irish work in London. BH had also been closely involved. Neither had kept us informed of what was going on around the weekend of solidarity activities on October 1st-2nd. In the case of K, this seems to have been mainly due to the crisis that was going on; with B, he was out of action for some time. However, B was back well before the conference, and did nothing to tell us about what was happening.

I sent out an IB to remind cdes about the demonstration and conference, and arranged a London Irish squad meeting, where, on the Tuesday before the weekend of events, we discussed what we should do there. We were only able to discuss one notion—that from the Glasgow Irish Freedom Action Committee—in a concrete way, but that was an important one, stating that "the United Irish Solidarity Movement will not place any political demands on and will not attack, criticise or try to pressurise any section of the Republican Movement" and, "This conference believes that recognizing the right of the Irish people to self-determination carries with it a duty... to support the methods used by the Irish people to achieve self-determination and to support the movement chosen by the Irish people to lead this struggle—the Republican Movement (IRA/INLA/Sinn Fein/IRSP). We therefore agree that the Irish Solidarity Movement will give full, wholehearted, unconditional, uncritical support to all sections of the Republican Movement."

Cde R argued forcefully for support for this notion, and we decided to give it our backing; it was in line with our stand; it was something on which we thought a firm anti-imperialist solidarity movement should agree; lastly, we were aware that this notion was being put forward in a context where the RCG, the major force in the ISCs, was weakening its stand in solidarity with the Republican movement, and we considered ourselves bound to support this in the ISCs.

Our stand was to be supported by about 20% of the participants at the conference—RCL, Red Action, some IRSP members and independents supported this resolution. However, because of the RCG's handling of their proposals and other factors, GEFAC, the Dundee Irish Solidarity Committee, Glasgow October 1/2 mobilizing Committee and Scottish Republican Socialist Party withdrew their sponsorship from the conference. They were joined in doing this by Mosquito Press, whose letter was signed by "Keith Anderson, Political Director" of Mosquito Press. K had joined up with H in a close alliance. When the demonstration took place on October 1st, H turned up with some people he'd kept as personal contacts. K and BH both marched behind the "Mosquito Press" banner.

The Scottish organizations certainly seem to have much justice on their side, though here is not the place to go into the disagreements between them and the RCG. The point is that H is playing his usual divisive role, posing as the most "left" and trying to rally a group around him.

He apparently knew before anyone else in London that GIFAC were pulling out. After not doing any work with the ISCs since January, he reappeared in time to sponsor the Ireland Conference under the name of Mosquito Press, shortly before withdrawing sponsorship. A leaflet handed out on the deno in the name of all the organizations which withdrew sponsorship makes some valid political points against the RCG and the BISM organizing committee, but contains the sort of innuendos which have long been part of H's stock in trade; e.g., one criticism of the RCG is cast wider by the use of the phrase "especially the RCG," implying that the criticism applies to others. Shortly before the conference, H demanded the right to speak as "a supporter of Republicanism" i.e., implying that the others present would not be supporters of Republicanism and preparing the way for a statement, if he did not get the 20 minutes he demanded, claiming that the conference platform "suppressed supporters of Republicanism." ~~Th~~

The RCL will make its views on the handling of the Scottish comrades and the conduct of the conference clear to the RCG, but we must disassociate ourselves from the cheap trickery and dishonest tactics of H. It is a pity that he has been able to win K's support.

WHAT NOW?

A left opportunist alliance has been formed in England ~~in the shape~~ under H's leadership, linking the Ws in Liverpool, K, and BH. Opportunist is indeed the word for it. K has denied that the East European states are capitalist, or that the Soviet Union is imperialist; H apparently still holds that position. WD (unless he has changed since he left RCL) thinks that the main contradiction in Britain is the national one, whereas K believes it is the class one. BH should become a new unit of measurement for the quickest time in which it is possible to change one's political position, as indicated by his quick flip on "unconditional support" for the Irish struggle several years ago and his stand at the Second Congress, where he proposed CB for the new CC and then didn't vote for him. If Mosquito Press is giving out titles, he may be appointed Court Jester for all the seriousness with which he's regarded by his new colleagues.

I still hope that K will draw back, but I cannot be optimistic about it. The rest of the group will be united to a large extent by a hatred of the RCL, and we must be prepared for anything they throw at us, without falling into the trap of being diverted. I have described events over the past few weeks in some detail, both so that you know what happened with K, and so that you are forewarned in case we are faced with any more of H's dirty tricks.

This news may well depress you; we have had a succession of losses and setbacks and, though in my view K's qualities were not appreciated as highly as they should have been by all comrades, I'm sure everyone will see that we have lost a valuable comrade.

Nevertheless, there are two things which I think we should bear in mind. Firstly, the conditions faced by the great majority of people here are deteriorating day by day; the rise of the revolutionary movements of the oppressed peoples calls for the building of solidarity in this imperialist heartland; not for a long time has the necessity of building a vanguard party been emphasized so strongly by the trends around us. Sometimes we have to accept defeats, sometimes we have no option but to take a setback; no-one honest could judge us harshly for that. What cannot be contemplated is surrender in the face of all our problems. Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought can show the way forward to socialism in Britain, and if we fail to grasp and apply it, it will not only be us, but many, many people who will pay for our weakness.

Secondly, I do not wish to put a gloss on the bad situation we are in, but I actually consider that we have greater cause for optimism about the future now than we did a few months ago. There has been a shake out of members, among whom we've lost some good ones, but I'm certain that we will come out of the Reorientation Conference as an organization which still has a lot of internal disagreements, but which has a high level of ideological unity and a firm commitment to build the RCL. With that, we can win through.

I believe that between the Conference and the Congress, but for longer if necessary, we should have a vigorous campaign to restore Marxist-Leninist norms in the League. Proper relations of criticism and self-criticism within units and between higher and lower bodies should be rebuilt; our democratic centralist system should be restored; the mass line and the spirit of serving the people should be affirmed.

We will have to restrict ourselves to doing a few things, but doing them well, but even so, if the basic commitment of comrades is solid, as I'm certain it will be at the conference, we can still achieve quite a lot.

In conclusion, I say that adversity should feed our determination and our difficulties should turn our minds to thoughts of the countless revolutionaries who have given everything for the cause of liberation, as well as to the needs of the present day which only a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist organization can meet. Our steadfastness can overcome all obstacles.

Revolutionary greetings,

J. 3/10/'83.