

THERE IS A TWO LINE STRUGGLE IN LONDON DISTRICT

In my opinion, the GM of the London Branch showed that there is a two-line struggle in London the way forward for building the League. The two lines were not very clear and the meeting and the preparations for it were only a first small step in bringing the struggle out into the light of day. There must be a definite plan for carrying forward this struggle, or else it will hold back the work of the District. We are about to plunge into a period of very intense mass work, and if we have not made some progress in carrying forward the ideological struggle the problems will get bigger.

What are these two lines? The correct line stands for putting consciousness in command of the work of the League. That means studying and grasping theory, studying and grasping the lines of the RCLB, and it stands for active ideological struggle for correct ideas and against incorrect ideas.

The incorrect line writes of theory and lines as the business of the Central Committee and puts practice first to the extent of negating theory and threatening to turn practice into mere activism.

In retrospect it is possible to see that the revised branch report fudged over this two line struggle. It tried to nail the main error as "subjectivism", which is too broad a target. In the context of the London Branch naming subjectivism as the main error is like being opposed to sin; everyone is against it but it takes you no further forward. The general call from the District Committee, based on this wrong idea of what the main error is will not carry our work forward.

The Wrong Line

The branch report shows some knowledge of what the wrong line is. For example, paragraph 13;

"We have also been empiricist in study. Our study of Marxism-Leninism has divorced theory from practice. At the same time we have not studied C.G. lines in order to implement them, but left them to the initiative of individual comrades. As a result there is not good unity among comrades on the lines of the RCLB, we have not put policy in command of our mass work, and tendencies towards spontaneism have emerged. For instance, comrades have had different ideas about what forms of activity we should engage in, and of what should be the political content of those activities. They have been unable to resolve these differences because we have not put policy in command. We have not deeply grasped that the correctness or incorrectness of the political line determines everything."

This is a very bad state of affairs. As a matter of fact it is put rather complacently for example, the old Branch scarcely studied CC lines at all. First and foremost, democratic centralism centralizes correct ideas. But if we do not study CC lines and directives (Resolutions, Revolution articles, etc), we strike a deadly blow at democratic centralism itself.

And on the question of study, the report is somewhat complacent. The theory of the three worlds is the strategic line for the international proletariat; we got less than half-way through it. Our study of Marxism-Leninism as a system was too wide-spread and not directly related to our practice.

We must say that although we paid lip-service to the idea of theory being primary over practice, we did not properly grasp what that meant. What does it mean? Stalin said:-

"...if we were able, if we succeeded in giving our Party cadres from top to bottom, and ideological training and in steeling them politically, so that they could easily find their bearings in the internal and international situation, if we succeeded in making them fully mature Leninists, Marxists, capable of solving, without

serious error, the problems involved in guiding the country, we would solve nine-tenths of our problems". (Quoted p 12 CPSU(B) Propaganda supplement).

That is what we should be aiming at. We should study the lines and ideas of our CC and also basic Marxism-Leninism to back up this study. But we have not done that. We can see some bad results of this; Example 1 - when NEB cell and print cell came to study the article in Revolution self-criticising right tendency in RCLB on proletarian internationalism, it turned out that only two cadres really knew what national democratic revolution is! No wonder there was a right tendency. (On the question of RCLB policy on war and the super-powers I expect that less than 10% of our cadres are familiar with Lenin's writings on the communist attitude to war and peace).

Example 2 - there has been struggle on how to carry forward the work in the factory and how to combat economism yet there has been no systematic study in London of What is to be Done?, the basic text on this question.

So we have not properly grasped lines and theory. In London, we have not studied lines, and nationally, the lead on theory has been bad - nothing much more than exhortations to individual study. The lead to study Wages, Prices and Profit is welcome - but it is late in the day, and is still not part of a systematic plan for study. Study is the poor relation in the RCLB!

In my opinion, the above is the main error in the work of the London Branch. The question of seeking truth from facts is important, and failure to do this has led to some setbacks; but it is not the main problem as the report makes out.

We have done plenty of investigation; what we have not done is summed it up and struggled over it. And the reason for that is that comrades have not had a deep grasp of our lines and have not been encouraged to study problems for themselves and then thrash them out in their primary units. In that situation, no investigation will be done properly - it will be practice unilluminated by theory.

ROOTS OF THE WRONG LINE

What is the cause of all this? In London when theory and line have been pushed to one side it has been done, nine times out of ten, in the name of "getting on with the work". That is one aspect. There has also been an attitude that ideological struggle and discussions of political line happen exclusively on the PC and CC. That is why the old BC seldom came back with replies to criticisms. The roots of the error lie in part in the old CFB. The battle against individualism and intellectualism was a good fight; but one error covers another, and some of us ended up with the idea that being a good communist meant being 'given the line' and carrying it out unquestioningly. Finding your own bearings or studying classics was regarded as individualism and intellectualism! This attitude still exists.

We must drive out this attitude - in the rank and file it encourages either slavishness or spontaneism or demoralization, and all three of these tendencies exist in London. If the error is not rectified, these errors will certainly get worse and the contradiction will become acute.

What to Do

We have the means to correct the error. The error has been partly grasped by comrades already. The general line of strengthening Bolshevization will combat this error, as will the steps already taken in London to start regular public meetings and to start more regular study. But we must do some additional things.

(1) we must put this error in first place, and get a firm grasp of it. We must hammer out

a slogan and plan of work that puts study of line and theory in first place. We must win agreement for this. Mass work will continue to be the quantitatively leading factory, but it must on no account be allowed to push the study and struggle over theory and line to one side.

(ii) We must grasp the importance of combatting liberalism. As we saw in recent weeks, an understanding of our errors came through struggle. Comrades must say all they know, as many times as necessary. It is not a question of 'bombarding the headquarters's, it is a question of building a lively democratic-centralist organization. Related to this, we must have a District meeting before the end of October to struggle further over this question. The last meeting was too short, and one bite at the cherry was not enough. For example, we did not go through the personal evaluations and criticism and self-criticism of comrades - yet that is an invaluable point to grasp how well cadres are being developed as class leaders. The new District Secretary said at that meeting - "This is not Fanshe² we do not have twenty days to discuss a question". That is true, but it is complacent - we surely have one or two or three days to spare to sum up our work and lay the foundations for future work. If the CPC can spare some time for conferences and meetings, then I am sure we can!

iii) We must beware of creeping expansion of our mass work. The plans and targets we have make are good ones. There is pressure to do more, especially from the non-members. But spare capacity should for the time being be devoted to study and education, not to new projects.

BUILD A LIVELY DEMOCRATIC CENTRALIST ORGANIZATION!

STRUGGLE TO UNITE THEORY AND PRACTICE!

JB
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