

COMMUNIST ORGANISATION OF BRITAIN

New Year Message for 1996

January 1st 1996

On behalf of all members and supporters of the Communist Organisation of Britain, we send revolutionary greetings to the world's working and oppressed peoples for the New Year 1996, wishing them success in the struggle against imperialism and all oppression in the coming year.

The essence of revolutionary tactics in imperialist society

The Communist Organisation of Britain (COB) exists to contribute to the task of laying the basis for a party to lead the struggle for revolution in this, the oldest imperialist country, the country whose rulers are the most vicious and subtle practitioners of old and neo-colonialism, the country whose society is more deeply infused with chauvinist and racist ideology than any other on the globe.

We face the new year of struggle in conditions where the communist cause is only beginning to revive after receiving its greatest setbacks, and confusion and disunity still afflict many of the remaining revolutionary forces. This is a time to recall the words of Lenin, who called upon comrades facing conditions of revolutionary ebb to follow two fundamental principles, first to go 'lower and deeper among the masses', and secondly to intensify the study of revolutionary theory. We can link these two tasks in the conditions of Britain today if we firmly grasp the continuing relevance and contemporary application of Lenin's demonstration of the link between opportunism and imperialism. He showed that the compromise and treachery that constantly gnaws away at all efforts to sustain an independent and fighting working class movement have their social roots in imperialism and colonialism.

This fundamental teaching of Marxism-Leninism has been powerfully defended in our own time by the great leader of Korean and world revolution, Comrade Kim Il Sung, in the following words:

In order to increase their plunder and exploitation of the people of the colonial and dependent countries, the imperialists make every effort to estrange the working class of the metropolitan countries from the peoples of the colonies. They manoeuvre to poison the working class with the stinking ideas of racism and national chauvinism and to disorganise the militant ranks of the working class from within by bribing the labour aristocrats with a portion of the super-profits they have raked in from the colonies.¹

How sharp these words bite as we survey the forces for working class advance in Britain today! The Labour Party leadership has finally and totally renounced the red banner of socialism. As we sing in "The Red Flag":

*It suits today the weak and base,
Whose minds are fixed on pelf and place,
To cringe before the rich man's frown
And haul the sacred emblem down.*

At this time our Organisation therefore turns to the most oppressed layers of the working class -- the unemployed, the part-time and low-paid workers, workers of third world origin, the women workers -- all those who face the double oppression of wage slavery plus discrimination or prejudice.

We turn to the anxiety-ridden and desolated communities on the uncounted housing estates of Glasgow, Edinburgh, Cardiff, Manchester, Newcastle and Sunderland, Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham, Bristol, Southampton, the vast suburban areas from Camden to Luton, from North

Kensington to Slough, from Southwark and Lambeth to Croydon, from Tower Hamlets and Bermondsey out along the Thames Estuary -- the non-metropolitan areas excluded from the political discourse of the London-based political groups, unexposed to the international media, which are seen in our ruling-class dominated world as a periphery. We aim to change them from a periphery to the centre.

We turn to the women, whose growing proportion of the workforce has been such a feature of the country's new-style restructured capitalism based on services instead of industrial production.

We turn to those whose culture or lifestyle rebels against conformity and prejudice. We turn to the youth whose culture has brought its own sounds of rebellion, from the Republican Bands of Glasgow to rap.

We turn to the many hundreds of thousands of the workers and the oppressed who are lesbian and gay and who face life as outcasts under capitalism.

Only a party with roots among the most oppressed can honestly claim that it can guarantee resolutely to defend the working class outlook against the corrosion and corruption by labour aristocratic ideology to which Comrade Kim Il Sung referred.

This is indeed the central ground where we have always sought to set the roots of our Organisation throughout the 23 years of its existence. We aim to become one with the working and oppressed people in their daily struggles against poverty, the corrosion of their community and family life by drugs, the criminalisation of their youth, the medieval cutbacks in educational and welfare provision, the mushrooming of the penal system as the state's only response. For we know that the cities in this homeland of the world's oldest imperialist power are in fact seething with potential for proletarian revolution, each one a 'Los Angeles' waiting to erupt, and each one crying out for revolutionary organisation.

As Frederick Engels said of the labour movement in Britain in 1890:

Under the surface the movement is going on, is embracing ever wider sectors and mostly just among the hitherto stagnant strata. The day is no longer far off when this mass will suddenly find itself, when it will dawn upon it that it itself is this colossal mass in motion.²

Commenting on this insight of Engels, Lenin said on the eve of the October revolution:

Engels draws a distinction between the 'bourgeois labour party' of the old trade unions -- the privileged majority, and the 'lowest mass', the real majority, and appeals to the latter, who are not infected by "bourgeois respectability". This is the essence of Marxist tactics!³

New turning point in our Organisation's history

As we survey the work of the Communist Organisation of Britain during this past year, we may justly say that 1995 has marked a turning-point for us, bringing COB comrades to centre stage both in the movement for communist rebirth and in the movement for anti-imperialist solidarity based on proletarian internationalism. We are beginning to forge close working links of co-operation with the rich seams of anti-imperialist life that honeycomb the multinational working class and other oppressed sections of society in Britain.

In particular we may note the contribution made by COB comrades to the success of the August 1995 London Conference of the International Commission of Inquiry on Economic Sanctions, which marked a turning-point in the struggle to build a united anti-imperialist front in Britain. This historic event gathered an unprecedented panel of international statespeople, and was attended in all by over 600 participants.⁴ Furthermore, it was only one of the mass activities organised by that Commission during 1995, a year which saw it organise three street demonstrations, two meetings in parliament, and numerous other activities, as well as initiating the group Women Against the Blockades.

Economic sanctions, to use the words of Tony Benn MP at the August Conference, are "the ultimate weapon of the rich against the poor." They are an attempt by the US to universalise its

policy of the blockade of Cuba; as the delegate of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba said on the same occasion, the sanctions policy is an attempt to “intensify this policy and turn it into an international matter and impose US law not only on Cuba but on the rest of the world as well.” The undeclared blockade of People’s Korea has been of even longer duration than that on Cuba, and indeed the decades-long history of capitalism’s efforts to strangle the Soviet Union from the end of World War 1 to the end of the 1980s may be seen as the great prototype of the blockades of the 1990s. This weapon of mass destruction which has already been responsible in Iraq alone for seven and a half times the deaths resulting from the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, thus has a special meaning and resonance for communists, and the COB warmly congratulates the International Commission of Inquiry on Economic Sanctions and Women Against the Blockades on their campaigning successes during 1995, and pledges to sustain the contribution of its comrades to their continuing work in the period ahead.

Nor are our comrades ‘foot soldiers’ only in the anti-imperialist movement, but have distinguished themselves also in the fields of theory, ideology and revolutionary culture. Notably, they have made vigorous contributions to the work of the Institute for Independence Studies. This Institute aims to study the theory and practice of independence, and to propagate it among working and oppressed people and progressive intellectuals and others in Britain, and in particular to propagate the study of the works of leaders of independent anti-imperialist states and other revolutionary nationalist leaders throughout the world who have contributed to the development of independent anti-imperialist ideology. It has become established as a leading centre for the study and propagation of the Juche idea and the works of Comrades Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, for the revolutionary anti-imperialist theoretical achievements of Brother Moammer el-Gaddafi, leader of the Great September First Al-Fateh Revolution, and takes all possible opportunities to further the appreciation and dissemination of the contribution to world revolutionary theory and practice of James Connolly, great revolutionary leader and theorist of Irish Republicanism.

Since the passing away of Comrade Kim Il Sung in July 1994, the Institute for Independence Studies has hosted no less than six seminars on that leader’s contributions to revolutionary thought, a number of them having been attended by 50 or more participants.⁵ These events saw an unprecedented and impressive display of profound and serious ideological and political discussion among literally hundreds of representatives and individuals from an extremely wide range of organisations, communities, and walks of life, including three important keynote speeches from Keith Bennett, Political Editor of Asian Times. The Communist Organisation of Britain warmly congratulates all those associated with the achievements of the Institute for Independence Studies during 1995, and pledges itself to continuing its comrades’ contribution to its work in the new year.

Ireland and communists in Britain

The bright star shining above all genuine anti-imperialists in Britain is the continuing history of magnificent achievements of the revolutionary patriotic movement of Irish Republicanism, whose brilliant and creative work to build a united front of all patriotic forces has shaken the unity of the imperialist camp and brought the struggle against British colonialism to a new stage.

The unity of the masses of the occupied six counties of north-eastern Ireland around their revolutionary leadership is the beacon of hope for the oppressed of Ireland and of Britain as well for the consolidation of a revolutionary mass movement that can for once and for all shatter the foundations of the British imperialist state and rid the peoples of the world of this, its oldest and most hated enemy.

The creativeness, determination and patience with which Ireland’s Republican leadership has worked to forge an Irish national united front has written the most positive and distinguished chapter in the history of anti-imperialism in Europe in the post-war period. It is an achievement based on the solid foundations of the heroic self-sacrifices of Ireland’s freedom fighters in the course of the quarter-century resistance movement since 1969.

Against all the wile and cunning accumulated by the British state during centuries of colonialist rule, the three-way unity of the Republican Movement, northern Irish social democracy and the 26-county state has been preserved though all the complexities of the 16 months of cease-fire. Confronted by this unity of all Irish people who aspire to justice and self-determination, the British state has no choice but to sit and negotiate, and the more obdurately it refuses to talk to the Republicans, then the worse its negotiating position and the lower its moral stature in the full glare of international public opinion.

At the international level, the Republican leadership has brilliantly forged links with the Irish communities of the USA and their representatives at all levels. The support of Irish America for the reunification and independence of their country of origin is one of the great fault-lines of international imperialist unity. It is the most concrete surviving element of the 'American dream' that a social order free from the feudal oppression of the Old World could be built beyond the Atlantic. Even those Irish Americans at the heart of the US establishment carry with them the living memory of the starvation and desolation of their ancestors forced from their homeland by the criminal and genocidal depopulation policy of British colonialism, which reduced Ireland from a country of 8 million people in the early 19th century to around 3 million during this century.

Particularly following the setbacks to the socialist bloc of countries in recent years, the descendants of this massive Irish emigration form, as they did in the time of the Fenians in the 1860s and 1970s, the most powerful reserve of international support for Irish freedom.

Our Organisation takes the opportunity of the New Year to renew its pledge of unconditional support for the struggle being waged by the Irish Republican leadership to sustain the unity of all decent Irish people both within Ireland and throughout the world in the historic tasks faced by the Irish peace process at this tense moment of its greatest test. All our resources, all our energy, all our determination and commitment, are at this and at all times offered for the disposal of this movement whose achievements tower over those of all other anti-imperialist and progressive forces in Ireland and Britain in the modern period.

We salute Ireland's prisoners of war and call for their immediate release from Britain's jails. We call upon the British government to engage immediately in all-party talks including talks with Sinn Fein. We call for serious discussion of the all-round de-militarisation of Irish affairs, focusing primarily on the withdrawal of the main armed force in the six counties, namely the British forces of occupation. We call on the Mitchell Commission on decommissioning of arms to report fully, honestly and accurately on the militarisation of Irish politics for which the British occupying forces are fully responsible, and to make constructive and feasible recommendations accordingly, such that the peace process can resume its progress in the interests of the suffering people who aspire to justice and peace.

In areas throughout Britain the Irish lie at the very heart of the industrial working class and constitute a powerful social base for proletarian internationalism here. In particular we may mention the example of Glasgow, where the Irish nationalist presence has constituted a thorn in the side of British imperialist political control of its 'home' territory throughout this century. We pledge our continuing solidarity and co-operation with these Irish communities.

We also salute the just struggles of the oppressed Scottish and Welsh nations for national self-determination. The history of revolutionary socialist struggle stretching back to the Red Clyde of the time of John Maclean lends the recent militant union struggles in Scotland, and indeed the recent debates among organisations and individuals of the communist movement there, an important resonance. Our Organisation's history has been at times closely involved in the attempts to build links with revolutionaries in Scotland including those supporting separatist policies, and indeed during the 1983 to 1986 period we adopted a federal structure and conducted our activities under the name of the Communist Organisation of Scotland and England. We aim to resume our relations with revolutionary forces there at this time of intensified class struggle and ever-firmer consensus in Scottish society for independence or at least genuine devolution.

In assessing the prospect for the final territorial break-up of the British state, we take the standpoint of internationalist revolutionaries, and take fully into account the fact that millions, even billions, of people the world over would dearly love to see a day when the hated name of the United Kingdom disappears from the world map for once and for all, and with it the economic, political and military power of British imperialism throughout the world.

Restructuring the labour movement

Here in Britain we face a period when the restructuring of capitalism is being faced by a restructuring of the labour movement. The massive shift from industrial production to the services sector of the economy has meant the erosion of the base of the old unions, and the emergence onto the employment scene of an increasing proportion of the doubly-oppressed - workers of third world origin and women of all nationalities. In the USA a corresponding economic shift has seen the replacement of the traditional labour-aristocratic leadership of the AFL-CIO by a new leadership drawing its support more from the super-exploited sections. In Britain the equivalent process likewise presents enormous possibilities for the rejuvenation of the labour movement.

The trades union leaderships include uncorrupted elements of the traditionally militant sections of the working class, symbolised by the leaders of the National Union of Mineworkers. New relations of power are emerging in unions such as the Transport and General Workers Union, where an attempt to replace Bill Morris as General Secretary was last year foiled, relying on support from many of the country's lowest-paid workers.

We now face the strong possibility of a Labour government in Britain, possibly even before the end of 1996. The ruling class may now be seriously considering the option of promoting what it feels will be seen as a face with a more attractive form of smile than the death's head grins of the Lilley-Portillo right which Major currently allows to dictate Tory policy. This is of course not an act of spontaneous humanisation by the state, but a response to the situation faced by capitalism at this time, including the threat of popular struggle. It is a matter of down-to-earth calculation of how capitalism in Britain can best face up to the likely stresses and strains of the coming years, including the possibility of the kind of labour movement storms capitalism has been facing in France in recent weeks.

Many on the left, even in anticipation of such an outcome, are already over-powered by the "stink" of labour-aristocratic chauvinism which will doubtless leak out from under the front door of Number 10 Downing Street. However, as responsible working class revolutionaries we must take account of the wider scene, including the world scene.

If any mitigation in state racism, barbarism and medievalism results from the coming to power of Labour, then the proletariat can and should claim such concessions as their right and as the fruits of victory, while sustaining the struggle for them not to be withdrawn. To quote Hardial Bains, leader of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist): "Working class welfare is not a policy matter, it is a fact of life."⁶ Furthermore, on the international level, if the coming to power of a Labour government positively affects, say, the context of the Irish peace process, or the prospects for opening diplomatic relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or improving relations with Cuba or other blockaded countries, then the comrades of our Organisation will have a duty to the oppressed peoples of the world to keep our lines open to the Labour leadership and to find ways of working honestly and sincerely with them for genuine progress on these issues.

As for its inevitably more intimate relations with the left of the labour movement, our COB comrades have taken great strides forward during 1995, and have shown themselves ready to work sincerely and constructively with the broad forces of the left. It has been a year when we have forged enduring links of comradely co-operation with Labour Members of Parliament, trades union leaders, and rank-and-file activists of all parties and of none. Our comrades have shown that they are dependable and determined in the struggle for international solidarity and the cause of working class unity, and that we regard our comrades and friends from other parties and organisations, including

those from other classes and strata of society, not as temporary fellow-travellers only, but as permanent comrades and friends in the struggle for social justice.

The past year has been a momentous one for the labour left, as the various trends take up their positions on how to confront the new realities posed by the desertion of the Labour Party leadership from the last vestiges of socialist ideals. The response of Arthur Scargill has been to call for the foundation of a Socialist Labour Party in 1996. This event cannot fail to be a momentous one for all those on the left. Arthur Scargill's direct experience of waging organised working class mass struggle is incomparably greater than any other such body of experience in this country, and is a factor of the class struggle in Britain that goes far beyond the question of alliance with social democracy, and indeed lies in the sphere of proletarian struggle of a potentially revolutionary nature.

At the same time, our Organisation deeply cherishes the working relationships built up by its comrades in a number of capacities with labour leaders who intend to remain inside the Labour Party. In particular, Tony Benn's experience and his grasp of the relation of the Labour left to popular struggles is an invaluable resource of the left as a whole and a major force for left unity. He argues that the lesson of history is that the task of the left of the Labour Party is to defend its ideals from within, and that the right will abandon the Party in the long run.

Our Organisation will seek to sustain and develop all links which have been forged by its comrades with all uncorrupted elements of the labour movement. We reject hasty and factional moves by some communist organisations to support 'either' Scargill's new party, 'or' to repudiate it. Communists, particularly those of the smaller organisations such as ours, are only going to look ridiculous if they seem to be trying to preach to Arthur Scargill about how to lead labour struggles or to Tony Benn about how to sustain the left in the Labour Party. It will be rightly said that communists should first set their own house in order and secure their own unity. The task of communists should be to work in all ways possible with all who will work with us, and the possibilities for us to do this are not impaired by the fact that other forces on the left with whom we wish to work are at any given moment at variance with each other over their own organisational moves. Ultimately durable unity of the labour movement will be based only on working class unity in mass struggle, and so long as we contribute to that then we are making the best contribution we can.

Communist and anti-imperialist unity in Britain

We salute the communists of other organisations in Britain and their main visible presence, the Morning Star, Britain's communist daily newspaper. We welcome the comradeship of a number of Morning Star supporters during 1995, and look forward to deepening our links and practical co-operation with them in 1996.

The Morning Star provides a means of communication not only for the organisation with which it is most closely associated, the Communist Party of Britain, but also for communists of other organisations and perhaps above all for the trades unions and the Labour left in general. It is a consistent and reliable propagandist for solidarity with Cuba and a number of other internationalist causes. The determination and self-sacrifice shown by the comrades concerned in sustaining the paper's publication on such meagre resources through thick and thin is itself precisely the kind of example of proletarian commitment which communists exist to provide. Consequently, while it is self-evident that the ideology and politics of our Organisation are in a number of respects at variance with those of the comrades who sustain the Morning Star, we nevertheless reject all sectarian and dogmatic attacks on that paper.

The aspects of the work of the Morning Star with which revolutionary anti-imperialists are impatient are in our view the consequence of the paper's social and functional base in the unions and labour left at a time when these forces are still strongly characterised by the labour aristocratic outlook. As the most oppressed sections of the working class increasingly come to dominate the unions, then this historical process is bound to become more sharply reflected in the paper, and it will

come nearer to linking arms with comrades such as those of the COB who consciously aim to reorientate the communist movement in Britain along consistently anti-imperialist lines.

In a society that has evolved its characteristics in the context of colonialism and imperialism, and in which the working class is multi-national, our Organisation sees the struggle for communist unity and for anti-imperialist and anti-racist unity to be inextricably linked. We consequently link our New Year wishes for communist unity with the warmest salutations to the revolutionary anti-imperialist organisations based among the communities of Irish, Asian, African and Latin American origin living in Britain.

We pay tribute to the distinguished international solidarity work undertaken by the Irish in Britain, symbolised by the magnificent series of James Connolly-Bobby Sands Commemoration rallies organised in London during the past decade and more by the Wolfe Tone Society Irish Republican Support Group. We once again offer our thanks for the numerous instances of generous and unstinting help and assistance which we have received from the Irish Republicans in Britain even in the midst of the urgent and demanding duties of their own revolutionary struggle.

We salute the Kurdish and Turkish communities of Stoke Newington, Hackney and other areas of London, communities whose members have close and living links with struggles that are at a high level including insurrectionary struggle. We warmly thank them for the numerous acts of magnificent internationalism through which they have supported comrades of our Organisation and the revolutionary anti-imperialist cause in general during the past year.

We salute the comrades of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) who are active in Britain, and of the Association of Indian Communists in Britain. We are proud to have worked for over ten years with these comrades active in the working class.

We salute the comrades of the All African People's Revolutionary Party whose Chapter in Britain has consistently and unstintingly supported activities in which the COB has been involved, particularly in activities initiated by the Institute for Independence Studies.

It is our deepest aspiration of our Organisation to participate with such forces as these in building a new world of internationalism that can present the working and oppressed people even in this imperialist heartland with an alternative vision to the prejudice, racism, and chauvinism offered by imperialist society.

The international communist movement and the international united front against imperialism

As part of our duty in furthering these goals, our Organisation aims to contribute to all activities which further the noble cause of unity, co-operation and good will among communist, socialist and anti-imperialist forces, and beyond them the great cause of building a united front with all decent people who work for peace and justice in the world.

A central task in building such a united front is to build powerful and active solidarity with the revolutionary countries who are advancing a standpoint of world anti-imperialist unity.

We convey our New Year greetings to the leaders of the socialist countries and of the international communist movement: Comrade Jiang Zemin, General Secretary of the Communist Party of China, President of the People's Republic of China, and Chairman of the Central Military Commission; Comrade Fidel Castro, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, and President of the Council of Ministers of Cuba; Comrade Kim Jong Il, Great Leader of the Korean People; Do Muoi, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam; Siphandon Khamtay, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party and Prime Minister of the People's Democratic Republic Of Laos; besides the leaders of these five socialist countries, we also send special greetings to Comrade Madhav Kumar Nepal, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Nepal Communist Party (United Marxist-Leninist), a party whose recent period in office has destroyed forever the idea that the socialist camp can no longer expand.

We make no pretence to address these communist leaders and statespeople as a major contingent of the communist movement in Britain, merely as one of a number of committees and small groups lying to the left of the Morning Star/CPB. Nor do we aim to establish predominant, let alone exclusive, relations with any overseas organisation whatsoever. On the contrary, we have a positive record in the past of facilitating, not obstructing, the development of relations of overseas forces known to us with other organisations in Britain, even at times when these have been at variance with us. This is our consistent policy -- a policy of good will, constructive co-operation, and free exchange of views and opinions. The more friends the communist and other progressive organisations in Britain have internationally, then the stronger the dynamic towards unity here.

We hope that at this time of re-grouping of the communist movement internationally, and in view of the importance of the question of how to build a revolutionary movement in this imperialist heartland, the international communist leadership will take note even of a small organisation such as ours and of its views, and will even exchange discussion and plans on the road to communist revival. It is our belief that no all-round assessment of the history and prospects of the communist movement in Britain can be made without taking account of the Communist Organisation of Britain. For no matter how small the scale of our work in global terms, it has nevertheless become a significant strand in the anti-imperialist movement in Britain and even internationally. Many people in many countries like to see a well-organised, united and disciplined organisation such as ours functioning in the heart of the imperialist state from which they have suffered so long. We consequently conduct our activities amid the enthusiastic expectations of people in many countries, and our sense of responsibility in our work is heightened accordingly. Encouraged by this support in many lands, we pledge to all our comrades around the world that we shall persist in our work until we take centre stage in the political and social conflicts in Britain and fulfil the trust they have placed in us.

We salute the comrades of the Workers' World Party of the USA with whom we have worked so closely in recent years. Though their revolutionary anti-imperialist communism derives from different political traditions from those from which the COB originates, we have nevertheless built ties of practical co-operation across the Atlantic whose effects may prove to be momentous. In the New Year we aim to invite Monica Moorehead, WWP candidate in the 1996 US Presidential elections, who is an African American woman, to Britain. Certainly we shall introduce her to Members of Parliament and other established political personalities, but we shall above all introduce her to the communities and anti-racist activists of Brixton, of Broadwater Farm, and (time permitting) of Bristol, Liverpool and elsewhere, to the most oppressed sections of the working class in fact. We aim in such ways to build new-type proletarian internationalist relations with the powerful revolutionary traditions of the US including those of Black America which mean so much to the dispersed and oppressed of African origin in Britain.

The Communist Organisation has since 1980 prioritised the task of rallying around the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its leaders. It is a matter of great pride to us that we are signatories of the Pyongyang Declaration drawn up by the Worker's Party of Korea with the guidance of its late great leader. This 1992 Declaration, entitled "Let us defend and advance the cause of socialism," has played a prominent role in rallying the forces for the task of rebuilding the international communist movement and reorganising the world socialist forces. It has been signed by well over 200 parties and organisations in all parts of the world, including in Britain not only the Communist Organisation of Britain but also the Communist Party of Britain, as well as other organisations including the New Communist Party of Britain and the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist).

The high point of the year for promoting the issues raised in the Pyongyang Declaration along with constructive discussion of communist unity and policy was the November 29th 1995 Roundtable discussion hosted by the Institute for Independence Studies in association with the Communist Organisation of Britain, which took place in the presence of a representative of the Workers' Party of Korea. At this significant event, over 50 comrades and friends debated the road ahead, including representatives of the Communist Party of Britain and numerous international organisations and individuals.

Likewise, we approve those forces supporting socialism, independence and democracy who participate in the work of the Sao Paolo Forum, in whose work the Communist Party of Cuba plays a central role.

The great continent of Africa has similarly provided powerful impulses to the cause of world freedom. We warmly endorse the call for a mataba, or gathering, of world liberation forces as advanced by Brother Moammer el-Gaddafi of the Great Socialist People's Arab Jamahirya, and which has been endorsed and worked for by such close friends of ours as Kwame Toure, leader of the All African People's Revolutionary Party, and Rosie Douglas, leader of the Dominica Labour Party, and Wabun Inini and other representatives of the native nations of the Americas, to name only a few individuals well-known to our comrades.

These calls originating in Asia, Africa and Latin America for international anti-imperialist unity stand in the tradition of the greatest united front in history, the world front against fascist aggression whose 50th anniversary we celebrated last year. We may also recall that the coming year will see the 80th anniversary of the Easter uprising in Dublin in 1916, whose great leader James Connolly provided a brilliant example of the of building a united front of all anti-imperialist forces, an example being followed with such distinction by Connolly's successors in their struggle to defend an Irish united front today.

Such is the rich heritage and contemporary basis on which we can relay in contributing to the great task which history places before us - the task of building a united front against the war-mongering and colonialist policies of British and world imperialism.

Our party-building tasks

The Communist Organisation of Britain is a hard-core organisation which has not yet reached the stage of recruiting a mass membership.⁷ Yet even at this stage we have our lively internal organisational life that assures the strengthening of our unity, which is the sole guarantee of the progress of our work. Our unity is based upon deep comradely loyalty, in which our members share rain and shine with each other. For we know that intellectual ability, organisational skill and loyalty are three great talents, but the first two are as nothing if we lack loyalty to our class, and in the first instance to our own comrades and our own Organisation which is our concrete expression of loyalty to that class.

Addressing the question of organisation, Comrade Stalin said:

After the correct line has been laid down, organisational work decides everything, including the fate of the political line itself, its success or failure.⁸

Mao Zedong expressed the same thought in terms of the development of cadres:

Cadres are a decisive factor, once the political line is determined.⁹

We are taking the opportunity of the New Year to launch the COB One-Year Associate Programme, which offers to the numerous comrades who have witnessed our work the opportunity to forge closer links with us, to participate with us in the challenging work we face in 1996, and perhaps to join our ranks. Our aim is to take practical steps towards building the first communist organisation in Britain with a majority of women members, and a majority of comrades of third world origin.

Those who know anything about our Organisation's history know one thing well, and that is that those who join us or even work in association or friendship with us receive our loving care as members of our own family. We work to make their voices heard and to gain them influence in their own fields of struggle and beyond. This is our policy for building cadres, for building revolutionary activists who can withstand the complex ebb and flows of the revolutionary currents in unity. Without such unity our Organisation could easily have become a ramshackle federation, based on agonising and tortuous alliances. If we had become such a group, we could never have performed our vanguard function properly, let alone prepared our members for the struggles to come against our vicious enemy, where even the slightest wavering from unity could give the enemy the opportunity

to foster factional strife at crucial and even dangerous moments. Thus, what is important for us is not to hold on to all the members we can, but to ensure unity of ideology and will amongst those who remained committed to our Organisation's cause.

The essence of the life of an organisation is organising, and the heart of our organisational work is the building of our own independent organisational capacity. That capacity is to us more important than our physical lives, and our comrades are precisely those who share this experience which makes us a single organism in which we all function with a single will and unity of purpose, consciously applying Juche-type politics in Britain for the first time. Our independent organising capacity is in fact a new life which we live now and did not possess before, a life more valuable to us than our physical life, an eternal life which the revolutionaries who have passed away before us still share with us. Our comrades' fearless and unquestioning unity for all to see is the guarantee of our immortal organisational life, the banner of an independent path, their badge of honour in the complex and difficult struggle.

Our revolutionary traditions

Though still at the initial stage of party-building, the stage of building a hard core, the Communist Organisation of Britain nevertheless has quite deep historical roots. It was in 1970 that we turned to the working class and merged our life with that class, undertaking our first revolutionary propaganda among the youth, including the youth of African and Irish origin, in the Tower Hamlets area of the East End of London. It was on the basis of that practical work that in 1972, when our Organisation was founded and established its first working group, we were able to pledge that we would remain loyal to the working class stand. We may proudly and truly say that this is what has ever since distinguished us -- that what is distinctive about our work is its loyalty to, and roots in, that class.

By the end of 1981 we had developed an independent anti-imperialist guiding idea based on the works of James Connolly and Kim Il Sung, a guiding idea that was enriched in the stormy events of that year when the youth led by black youth took to the streets in a number of towns in Britain, in a context where the Irish struggle, symbolised in the martyrdom of Bobby Sands and the other hunger strikers, reached a stage, where it has remained, of unrivalled influence over all revolutionary forces not only in Ireland itself but in Britain also. Our guiding idea enabled us to break with flunkeyism, dogmatism and every other trend of outdated ideas, and to learn from the historical experience of the Workers Party of Korea and other vanguard forces in the struggle for world revolution.

Every force of factionalism, every impulse based in the political traditions of chauvinism and the tactics of neo-colonialist divide-and-rule has sought in vain to knock our Organisation down. Undeterred, we have persisted in the organisation, unification and training of young communists to be competent and respected activists. We have never been discouraged or deterred by twists and turns or setbacks from our essential task of developing revolutionary cadres in the context of work among the people. For on our success in this respect rests our ability to fulfil the great tasks to which the oppressed people of the world turn to us to fulfil.

The coming year will be a time when the fortunes of capitalism can hardly be expected to take a turn for the better, and indeed may well take a turn for the worse, opening up new opportunities for proletarian revolutionary advance. In the complex and demanding tasks that face us in the year ahead, let unity remain our watchword.

Long live communism! Long live proletarian internationalism!
Long live Marxism-Leninism, Connollyism and the Juche idea!
Long live the Communist Organisation of Britain!

References

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 - July 5th 1995.* The memory of President Kim Il Sung will live forever. A seminar on the first anniversary of the passing away of the great leader on July 8th 1994.
 - September 7th 1995.* Seminar to commemorate the 47th anniversary of the founding of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.
 - November 29th 1995.* Roundtable discussion in the presence of a representative of the Workers' Party of Korea. Co-hosted by the COB.
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- 6 Speech commemorating the anniversary of the foundation of the Internationalists. Dublin, 1995. Reported in *Workers' Weekly*, December 1995.
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