

INTERNAL STATEMENT ON THE HISTORY OF THE RCLB

After the 20th April Conference, the amended document was taken under consideration by the Central Committee and again subject to some revision as seen in the document dated 19.5.80. The CC invited other amendments for discussion at the forthcoming Unity Congress : the 'Collected Amendments on the History of the RCLB' were then circulated (document dated 3.6.80) for wider discussion.

INTERNAL STATEMENT ON THE HISTORY OF THE RCLB

At its recent meeting the CC amended the draft history of the RCLB and approved it for submission to the Unity Conference on 31st May in its amended form.

We regret that it is beyond our cadre resources to retype the whole of the history before the conference, and therefore we must ask comrades to bring with them both the draft and the following amendments passed by the CC, which together form the text in front of the Unity Conference.

The history was discussed at the RCL conference on 20th April and the general outlines were supported by a very substantial majority. Time can be taken at the Unity Conference only to vote rather than discuss any major amendment of principle that comrades still wish to move. At most it will probably be possible to speak for only a couple of minutes to an amendment and perhaps have a contribution against of a similar length and then move to a vote. That said, provided the amendment is an important matter of principle, we urge comrades to put it.

Advance notice of amendments would be helpful. At the latest comrades should hand them into the chair in writing at the meeting.

The final text of the history statement will be typed up and circulated to comrades after the Unity Conference.

List of Amendments Incorporated into the Text By The CC.

(Note paragraphs are numbered from the first new paragraph on each page.)

P1 para5: Replace second sentence with, "After a long struggle over some questions of political line the J.C.C. agreed a document called 'Origins and Perspectives of the Marxist-Leninist Movement in Britain', and renamed itself the 'Communist Federation of Britain Marxist-Leninist' in September 1969."

P2 line 4: Change "dogmatism" to "left idealism, dogmatism, and sectarianism,".

P2 : Replace the second paragraph with, "The C.U.A. was formed following the resignation of members of the London and Grimsby branches of the C.F.B. in 1971 after two members of the London branch were suspended. The suspensions were effectively an expulsion and they followed a long period of struggle over questions of line, ideology and organization. The comrades who were suspended and those who resigned later, formed the Communist Unity Organization. The C.U.O. later became the Communist Unity Association Marxist-Leninist after unity with the Marxist-Leninist Workers' Association."

P2: Add to para 3, "The C.U.A. made an excellent contribution to the theoretical and political struggle to rebuild the party through its weekly bulletin, "Workers' Unity" and through its theoretical publications, "particularly 'Imperialism & the struggle for a revolutionary party'"

P2 para 6 : After the fourth sentence insert, "In September 1978 "Class Struggle" was increased to a fortnightly publication, developing the quantity and scope of the R.C.L.'s propaganda and agitation, and the paper's ability to act as a collective organizer, as well as improving its topicality."

P3 para 1 line3: Change "having only weak links with mass work" to "the R.C.L.'s mass work was weak".

P3 para2 line3: Change "In particular" to "Among other errors".

P3 : Add to the end of para2, "At the time of the founding of the Revolutionary Communist League the wrong tendencies in its ideological outlook and in its orientation in mass work were primarily those of an ultra-left character, although errors in political line and practice of both right and left opportunism existed."

P3 para3 : Add to the end, "and in underplaying the national liberation struggles within third world countries."

P3: After para 3 insert new para, "Also in hindsight a negative aspect of the increased publication of Class Struggle to a fortnightly was that adequate conditions were not laid or planned to establish it on a sound basis. Decisions were made too quickly and consideration was not given to the all-round development of units producing it."

P4 : Add to the end of the para carried over from the previous page, "Some important questions of line and the role of the leading committees in the two-line struggle still need to be summed up."

P4 para 2 line 5: after "leadership" insert, "and particularly to continuing errors of idea-lism in the leadership of the campaign,"

P5 line 2: Change "led^{to}/the RCL being founded without any deep links with mass work!" to, "had continued to restrict the scope and depth of the mass work of the RCL."

P5 para 3 line 6: delete "much".

P5 para 3 penultimate line, change "given" to "begun to give".

P5 para 4 : Change the first clause of the second sentence to "We reaffirm the importance of giving special active support to those struggling against British imperialism and its agents in southern Africa, Ireland and elsewhere,"

P5 : Insert new para after para 4: "Changes in CS have moved the RCL away from a dogmatic and left sectarian stand where all articles in CS were seen as official statements on behalf of the Central Committee."

P5 para 5: afterwards insert two new paras as follows.

"The question of women's emancipation has been neglected. The incorrect over-concentration on industrial work negated the importance of women's struggles other than at the^{work}/place, and putting this right has not been an aspect of the rectification campaign. It is vital to strengthen both the line and our practice on this issue."

"The rectification campaign has also not yet solved the problem of study throughout the organization. The Central Committee should pay attention to study of theory, history and concrete conditions on the basis of integrating theory with practice at all levels of the RCL."

P5 para 6 line 1: change "questions will" to "other questions will also".

P5 para 6 line 2: delete "very".

P6 line 12: delete "much earlier".

P6 line 16: After "stage" insert "particularly the failure to solve the problems of study throughout the organization."

19.5.80

COLLECTED AMENDMENTS ON THE HISTORY OF THE RCLB

Submitted to the Unity Conference on 31st May and circulated for wider discussion.

Please refer to the "Draft Internal Statement on the History of the RCLB" of 8.4.80 as amended by the CC in the document "Internal Statement on the History of the RCLB" of 19.5.80. Page references will be to the first of these.

Please will you attach to this present document the amendment to the history from a Leeds comrade (GL) which was circulated before the conference, to economise on typing. That amendment was to the beginning of the history.

Amendments handed in at the start of the conference:-

- a) Page 1 para 2 Insert before the last sentence, "Individuals and branches split from the CPGB forming an anti-revisionist movement. This movement saw the need to rebuild a genuine Marxist-Leninist Communist Party." (SB)
- b) Page 1 para 3 line 3 before "anarchistic" insert "sectarian and". (SB)
- c) Page 2 para 1 line 5 delete "first" and insert "exclusive". (SB)
- d) Page 2 para 1 Add to the end, "In May 1977, the CFB issued a call to the Marxist-Leninist movement to wage a struggle against small group mentality in order to unite to reform a revolutionary Communist Party." (SB)
- e) Page 2 para 3 After the amendment added by the CC (the fourth in the document dated 19.5.80) add, ", particularly 'Imperialism and the Struggle for a Revolutionary Party'." (RT)
- f) Page 2 para 5 line 9 delete "decisive". (SB)
- g) Page 2 para 6 line 2 delete "in a systematic way". (SB)
- h) Page 2 para 6 line 6 delete, "showed the high level of unity and dedication of comrades." Insert, "educated workers and intellectuals to fight against British imperialist exploitation of the third world and to materially support the national liberation struggles against imperialism." (SB)
- i) Page 2 para 6 line 6 after "showed the high level of unity and dedication of comrades" insert, "and had an overall positive effect of strengthening the organization ideologically and politically on the importance and special responsibility of communists in Britain, an imperialist oppressor nation, taking up the struggle to give direct assistance and aid to workers and oppressed peoples struggling against our 'own' bourgeoisie for freedom and self-determination. Despite the many shortcomings of the campaign of which the poorly written leaflets from the centre and the RCL's failure to form a broad front with other organizations seeing a need for a campaign in particular support of ZANU, are very important, the campaign for the above reason should be judged as overall positive." (WD)
- j) Page 2 para 7 insert at end of para, "The CFB campaign against the five errors had led to a dialectical swing into opposite errors. Errors of liberalism were now counterposed by errors of dogmatism, ultra-democracy by over-centralism and lack of leadership by commandism. The dialectical development of other errors is more difficult to define but can be seen in the general emergence of idealism, dogmatism and over-centralism. Idealism was present from the time of the Third Conference, and was consistently a major error." (former Lay-Out Cell, Liv.)
- k) Page 3 para 2 replace whole para with, "The League was correct to adopt a system of democratic centralism. In doing this it failed to understand the meaning of this communist method or organization, and therefore was unable to further develop it beyond a mechanical model. Democratic centralism was over-centralised from its inception. The centre monopolised the elucidation of political line and did not democratically educate cadres. This commandist style led to the passivity of the rank and file

and hence an employee mentality. Perfectionism failed to develop the tool of criticism and self-criticism and encouraged dogmatism. Structurally, the relations between the various levels were handled in a mechanical fashion that prevented democracy. An example of this is the practice of the SC speaking with a united face at CC meetings and the cell structure being initiated in a way that was inappropriate to our size and to our areas of work. Secondary features were a weakness in understanding the relation between theory and practice, perfectionism which led to the rank and file uncritically accepting leadership and a failure of the leadership to arouse the initiative of the rank and file cadres. Overcentralism encouraged the rise of a style of leadership represented by NR which had careerist errors. In such an atmosphere, these features grew unabated and stifled democracy even further. Leadership thus became dogmatically idealist in style, an error that was emulated throughout the League." (ex-LOC) 2

l) Page 3 para 3 After the CC amendment add, "On balance the decision was premature, short-sighted and rushed." (SB, London)

m) Page 3 para 4 Replace first two sentences with, "These contradiction emerged most sharply in the course of the two-line struggle which took place at the centre and which was abruptly ended when a faction was formed in December 1978. This faction consisted of N. Redfern, who had led the organization for the first half of 1978 but by this time was suspended from his position as secretary of the RCLB, P. Dixon, a PC member, and Pat Redfern, a rank and file member of the RCLB. The result of Redfern's leadership of the first half of 1978 was to disrupt the work of the CC and PC for much of that year." (WyD)

n) Page 3 para 5 1st sentence replace "the faction" with "Redfern"; third sentence delete "the leading figure". (WyD)

o) Page 3 para 5 Last sentence delete "without proper consideration" and insert, "and policies". (SB).

p) Page 4 para 2 Replace whole of para with, "Subsequently, the league undertook a rectification stage which tackled a number of important question, but a year after rectification was initiated there remain outstanding problems which need to be looked at and resolved in the united organization. These outstanding problems stem from the fact that ideological questions were largely divorced from political questions, the nature of ideological problems were not defined and the centre changed the orientation of the campaign. While it was correct to target the anti-League faction following the split it was incorrect to target them throughout the campaign and important errors at the centre have not been tackled. The centre did not sum up the campaign as an ongoing process, resulting in the divorce of the centre from the rank and file which became obvious at the April Conference which was to have concluded the rectification stage's second part.

The campaign's objectives were 1. to strengthen democratic centralism by repudiating splittism and factionalism; 2. strengthen ideological and political line by repudiating left opportunism and correcting right opportunist errors and 3. to strengthen the style of work of the RCLB by integrating theory with practice, practicing the mass line, and by improving criticism and self-criticism." (ex-LOC)

q) Page 4 para 2 1st sentence delete "aimed at rejecting not only the incorrect lines associated with the faction" and insert "aimed at targetting the ultra-left idealism of the faction". (WyD)

r) Page 4 para 2 Follow para 2 as amended by amendment p) above, by subtitle, "Democratic-Centralism" and then insert Page 4 para 9. Then add to the end of this, "These measures still need to be put into practice. This is illustrated by the fact that the SC intervened in a London District meeting and the fact that the April Conference and the Unity Conference were organized in such a manner to prevent full democratic discussion of problems." Then follow this by Page 4 para 4. (ex-LOC)

s) Page 4 para 3 Delete (IK)

t) Page 4 para 5 Delete (IK)

u) Page 4 para 6 Insert at the beginning a subheading, "IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL LINE". After para 6, continue with para 5 para 3 and following that, Page 4 para 5, but add to the end of this last para, "But discussion of these amendments should have been brought forward and not separated from ideological questions, and the Central Committee should have educated the rank and file of their importance." (LOC)

v) Page 4 para 6 After the amendments in u) above, follow with a new para,
 "A full assessment of the Zimbabwe campaign has been delayed. Initial assessments of the campaign by central bodies have not sought out rank and file opinion. However, we reaffirm the importance of giving special active support to those struggling against British imperialism and its agents in southern Africa, Ireland and elsewhere. At the same time, future work of this type should be appropriately integrated into the areas of mass work of the organization in accordance with our resources and follow the mass line better in the way it is presented and organized." (ex-LOC)

w) Continue with RB's amendment on the question of women's emancipation (see the first part of the amendment approved by the CC to P5 para 5 in the document of 19.5.80.). Then insert a new para, "A summing up of the two-line struggle with the anti-League faction has yet to be made." Then continue with a new para, "The League needs to undertake a thorough appraisal of its political line based upon a deeper understanding of the theory of the three worlds." (ex-LOC)

x) Page 4 para 7 Delete (IK)

y) Page 4 para 8 Delete (IK)

z) Page 4 para 8 Insert at top, subheading, "STYLE OF WORK". At end of para add, "It was certainly correct to target the anti-League faction after the split, but it was incorrect to target them throughout the rectification. This has deflected criticism from the central bodies of the RCLB and self-criticism from the centre have been half-hearted. The Central Committee has approved a major lead stressing the importance of the mass line as a crucial style of work and rejecting ultra-left criticisms of this fundamental principle. Confusion persisted at rank and file level and further education must clarify it." (ex-LOC)

Note further amendments are numbered from 1)

1) Continue with Page 4 para 10 as amended by CC, then Page 5 para 1, then Page 5 para 2, then Page 5 para 5. (ex-LOC)

2) Continue with subhead "THEORY AND PRACTICE" and insert the CC amendment on study (second part of amendment to P5 para 5 in document of 19.5.80) (ex-LOC)

3. Conclude with,
"SUMMARY"

Positively the rectification has appraised aspects of ideological and political line, democratic centralism and style of work and led to a greater degree of democracy in the organization. Negatively, it has tended to divorce ideological from political questions and has left a number of areas untouched.

Despite the shortcomings of the rectification stage it must be said that the organization and its leadership are inexperienced with a relatively weak grasp of Marxism. Our attitude must be to fully resolve the outstanding problems in order to unite the organization at every level, build a more effective and responsible leadership with an open and democratic style of work, a rank and file that is able to exercise comradely supervision over it and able to apply Marxism to the concrete conditions of the class struggle in Britain, and to build an organization which can sink deep roots in the working class." (ex-LOC)

4. Page 5 para 2 Delete (IK)

5. Page 5 para 4 Replace line 1 with, "A full reassessment of the important Zimbabwe campaign has been delayed by a weakness...". Begin second sentence with,

"However,..." and delete, "while not falling".. Delete last line and insert, "should be appropriately integrated into the areas of mass work of the organization in accordance with out resources and follow the mass line better in the way it is presented and organized." (SB)

6. Page 5 para 4 Insert at the end of the first sentence, "The re-assessment of the important Zimbabwe (campaign) has led to a serious error to the right." (PP)