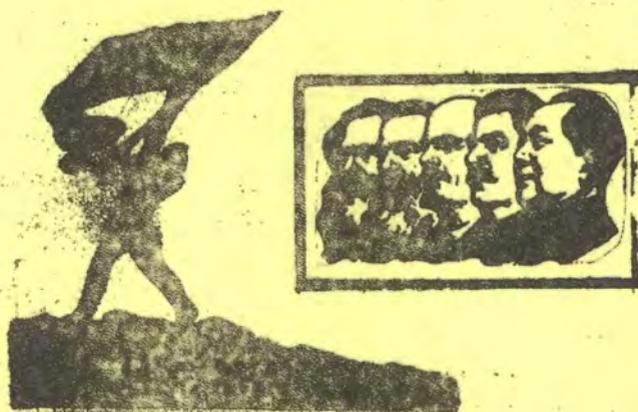


for Marxist-Leninist UNITY



on the

Birmingham

Conference

^{JULY}
~~June~~ (1977)

published by the
Workers' Party of Scotland
(Marxist-Leninist)

270 Paisley Road, Glasgow G5 8NF

FOR MARXIST-LENINIST UNITY
On the Birmingham Conference, ~~June~~ ^{July} 1977.

This pamphlet drawn up by the WPS delegation to the conference is not intended to be an exhaustive report of the proceedings nor a full analysis of the matters raised. It outlines the WPS' point of view on the main points of controversy because, in Lenin's famous words, "In order that we may unite, we must first of all draw firm and definite lines of demarcation". Many useful discussion papers were submitted to the conference but we have only been able to reproduce a small selection of them as appendices here. WPS Secretariat April 1978.

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Initial Guide.

BWA....Bangladesh Workers' Association.
CDRCU..Committee to Defeat Revisionism for Communist Unity (McCreery).
CFB....Communist Federation of Britain)-(united to form RCLB).
CUA....Communist Unity Association)
CPBML..Communist Party of Britain M-L (Birch).
CPGB...Communist Party of Great Britain (revisionist).
CWA....Coventry Workers' Association.
CWLB...Communist Workers' League of Britain.
CWM....Communist Workers' Movement (split from CPBML).
ELMLA..East London Marxist-Leninist Association.
JAC....Joint Action Committee of Marxist-Leninists.
RCLB...Revolutionary Communist League of Britain. (CFB + CUA).
RMLCL..Revolutionary Marxist-Leninist Communist League.
WPPE...Working People's Party of England.
WPS....Workers' Party of Scotland (Marxist-Leninist).

Printed and Published in Scotland
by the
Workers' Party of Scotland
(Marxist-Leninist)
c/o Vanguard Books
270 Paisley Road, Glasgow.

FOR MARXIST-LENINIST UNITY

(On the Birmingham Conference, ~~June~~ 1977)

July

Introduction.

On ~~June~~ ^{July} 2 - 3 1977 two delegates from the Workers' Party of Scotland (Marxist-Leninist) attended a conference of Marxist-Leninists in Birmingham organised by the Communist Workers' Movement, a group which had split from the so-called 'Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist)' of the revisionist Reg Birch. (See appendix A - CWM's 'Open Letter to All Marxist-Leninist Organisations').

We had earlier criticised the proposals for the conference as having no clearly defined political objectives and as being amorphous in organisation. They amounted to seeing what might come out of a unilaterally convened mass meeting of assorted organisations and individuals. So we suggested a preliminary consultative meeting of two delegates from each organisation to consider how to achieve unity of the Marxist-Leninist forces within the British capitalist state, including discussion of differences and whether to hold a further conference and, if so, on what basis (See appendix B - WPS' circular 'Marxist-Leninist Unity').

This suggestion was a direct result of the CWM's proposals and also of an earlier proposal of the Communist Workers' League of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) for a party building 'commission' (See appendix C - WPS' reply to CWLB). But it is not the first time that we have put forward positive proposals for Marxist-Leninist unity. As well as having discussions with practically all of the other organisations individually, we attended the conference called by Reg Birch to start his party in 1967 at which we realised that the basis for unity was to be his own incorrect and subjective line; together with the 'Internationalists' we prepared for a conference in Liverpool which they subsequently called off; we organised a meeting in London in 1972 to explain our line and, at the suggestion of those attending, took initial steps to try and arrange a broader and deeper meeting to which there were only two replies, one in favour the other against. In 1974 we even succeeded in arranging a meeting with two representatives of the virtually inaccessible central committee of Birch's party, but it proved fruitless as they must have thought we had come to surrender to them and refused to discuss anything unless we joined them first!

Only one organisation, the Revolutionary Marxist-Leninist Communist League, agreed to our latest proposal of 20.3.77 but, at the same time, immediately sent out their own invitations to such a meeting organised by themselves - a procedure which we considered out of order and self-defeating, despite their generally correct line.

In view of this poor response to what we consider to be the realistic and scientific approach to uniting the Marxist-Leninist forces, we decided to attend the CWM's conference and argue for our proposals there. By this time they had adopted some 'Theses' provided by the Communist Federation of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) (See appendix D) as the basis for discussion and which contain the essentials of the Manifesto of the Revolutionary Communist League of Britain (an amalgamation of the CFB and the Communist Unity Association (Marxist-Leninist) formed shortly after the Birmingham conference), so we would also have an opportunity to put forward our line on various questions and hear the views of others.

At the conference, as well as the CFB, CUA, CWM and WPS already mentioned, there were representatives from the Bangladesh Workers' Association, Birmingham Communist Association, Coventry Workers' Association, East London Marxist-Leninist Association (since disbanded), the Joint Action Committee of Marxist-Leninists, the Workers' Film Association, Working People's Party of England and a number of individuals. The CWM had withdrawn their invitation to the Revolutionary Marxist-Leninist Communist League to attend the conference, while the CWLB whose own 'commission' has dissolved rejected the CWM's conference as a "conference of the lost".

We have still not been told how many there were from each organisation at the conference but some, like ourselves, had only a few, while others, particularly the organisers, evidently had many. At first the CWM who also chaired the conference proposed to go through the 51 'Theses' one by one discussing and then voting on them. The conference agreed to our suggestion by 20 votes to 15 (!) out of a total of about 80 present that it would be a mistake to vote on the 'Theses' due to the

obviously unequal representation at the conference and the lack of any prior agreement as to what such a vote would represent. So it was agreed to take the 'Theses' as a basis for discussion only. We are not attempting here to write a full report of the proceedings but to indicate our point of view on some of the main political questions raised including, and with a view to, the question of Marxist-Leninist unity.

The Party.

The first question was the central one of the Party and it is of the utmost significance that there was very little discussion of it here - remarkable at a conference on Marxist-Leninist unity! The CFB/RCLB spoke to points 1 and 2 of their 'Theses' reiterating something which they have consistently upheld - that it is "premature" to found a party. The JAC, on the other hand, seemed to be for founding a party straight away. It was a case of two incorrect lines supporting each other. The CFB/RCLB used the impetuosity of JAC and the inadequacies of that particular conference as an excuse for their conservatism which, in turn, served as a constant provocation to JAC's impatience.

The CWM's conference was evidently not prepared as a party founding conference but that is not to say that such a party founding conference if properly prepared would be premature. Accordingly in our contribution on this question we concentrated our fire on the CFB/RCLB's line, and pointed out that at practically every step in the development of the Marxist-Leninist forces there were those who said it was "premature". When Michael McCreery led the historic break with the revisionist 'Communist Party of Great Britain' in 1963, there were those self-styled 'Marxist-Leninists' (including presumably those who later founded the Joint Committee of Communists which became the CFB, and Birch's CPBML) who wanted to stay in the revisionist nest and accused McCreery of being premature, together with some vicious personal abuse. After McCreery founded the Committee to Defeat Revisionism for Communist Unity, it was prevented from developing into the Party by those who said such a step would be "premature" and wanted the CDRCU to function as a sort of theoretical ginger-group, i.e. they still regarded the revisionist CPGB as their spiritual home.

While posing as the experts in Marxist-Leninist theory such people have neither the practical ability nor the proletarian vision to found the revolutionary party of a new type to lead the working class, and ban others from doing so. All Marxist-Leninists should recognise the significance of the work of McCreery who led the historic break with modern revisionism fifteen years ago. We must continue to develop that work which McCreery's untimely death left incomplete and not use the fact that it was incomplete to play up alleged short-comings and criticise it in a 'superior' fashion, lumping it together with a number of later opportunist organisations as was done by the CFB and also by the CUA in its pamphlet "Imperialism and the Struggle for a Revolutionary Party" (1974), from reading which it is apparent that the line of the new RCLB is essentially that of the old CUA which the CFB switched over to and then provided most of the membership as well as the publications of the new RCLB. In this pamphlet the CUA made about twenty criticisms of McCreery of which only one appeared to be fair comment - that "McCreery failed to understand the crucial role played by the labour aristocracy (in fact he failed to recognise its existence)". Yet in the CDRCU 'Vanguard' of September 1964 (a file of which we had provided the CUA with!) in an article on 'State Monopoly Capitalism' McCreery wrote, "It must never be forgotten that such 'welfare' concessions as have been won from the state by the working class in Britain have only been made possible because Britain is an imperial power. The loot which flows into Britain from half the world goes not to the British people but to the financial oligarchy. However, it has enabled this oligarchy to concede more to the working class in Britain than would have been possible did the British monopolists not loot half the world, and thus to foster the spread of illusions about the true nature of capitalism (we will return to this question in a later article)" (our emphasis). So even here they have taken advantage of his premature death to level false accusations.

After McCreery's death the WPS was formed by the Scottish Committee of the CDRCU on the basis of the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao Tsetung and John MacLean. We may not have an elaborate programme but we have the essentials in our

Manifesto together with our Constitution and Notes on Basic Organisation, Leadership and Members' Duties (Party rules). Thesis 1 which, by putting the Party programme and rules before the Party, puts the cart before the horse, seems to be based on a misunderstanding of the opening paragraph of section 2 of chapter 2 of the 1939 Short Course History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) where, to demonstrate that "no real party was as yet created", it points out that "There was no party program or party rules" (page 30) i.e. to prove that no real party existed as yet. No-one (apart from the renegade Birch) is claiming that a Marxist-Leninist Party covering the whole of England, Scotland and Wales exists at the moment.

Does the WPS constitute a "single leading centre"? We are actually leading very few people at the moment due largely to objective circumstances and, to a certain extent, to our own short-comings, but we believe that our line is that which reflects the interests of the working class and must and will be taken up and pursued by them. Nor do we believe that we have a monopoly of the correct line. We can, have and will learn from others, particularly from the mass of the workers and the international Communist movement but also from other Marxist-Leninist organisations. If our line is shown to be incorrect (and not just declared so) or inadequate we will change or supplement it, but we will not hold back for the sake of the CFB/RCLB, because we believe that they are trying to hold things back to their own subjective level which is the opposite of leadership. In both 'Origins and Perspectives' (their founding 'federalist' documents which they have now rejected) and in their 'Theses', while posing as the arch-enemies of 'small group mentality', they use the existence of the 'small groups' to obstruct the building of the Party and protect their own bigger small group, firstly by preaching 'primarily organisational' unity (of which they at the same time accused McCreery) in the form of 'federalism', and now by rejecting the minimum necessary steps to try and achieve political and ideological unity on a higher level than that of more or less spontaneous 'bi-lateral relations' ('federalism' under another guise) as containing "dangers of federalism".

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that when the CFB/RCLB say that a party is "premature", that the situation is not ready etc., they mean that they are not ready and that, although they say there is no single leading centre, they in fact consciously or unconsciously regard themselves and seek to be regarded by others both in Britain (and northern Ireland) and abroad as that centre. We will return to the question of unity again at the end and conclude here by repeating the question we asked at the conference - how, when the working class movement has been in existence for about 150 years, nearly 100 years after Marx's death, 60 years after the October Revolution and 15 years after the split with modern revisionism, can it be "premature" to have a Marxist-Leninist party?

International.

By contrast there was a considerable amount of discussion on the international situation over which, it must be realised, we will have little influence unless we are well organised at home. The discussion was mainly around the criticisms of the Theses by the CWA who, broadly speaking, reiterated the Albanian party's criticisms of Chairman Mao's 'Three Worlds' concept on which theses number 4 to 10 are based. Since then the People's Daily editorial of 1.11.77 - 'Chairman Mao's Thesis Differentiating the Three Worlds Is a Major Contribution to Marxism-Leninism' - has been published to which brilliant exposition of the subject we have little to add and with which we fully agree. Our problem is how to apply it here. In this respect the theses were a bit inadequate concentrating in point 10 on future tasks in a situation which has not yet arisen and failing to mention the need to mobilise against 'appeasement' of Soviet social-imperialism. This is dealt with more adequately in the RCLB Manifesto.

We did not, in fact, get a chance to state our views on the international situation but agreed on the whole with the majority who were in general agreement with theses 4 to 10. In this respect we were pleased to see that the CFB had rejected their own earlier attacks on China's revolutionary foreign policy, which the WPS has consistently supported as, for example, in our statement on the EEC referendum of June 1975, in which, while exposing the referendum itself and the economic nostrums of the 'Yes' and 'No' campaigns, we supported the strategy and tactics of utilising the contradictions between the western European bourgeoisie and the two super-powers,

particularly Soviet social-imperialism.

The 'objections' of the Albanians, CWA and others to the 'Three Worlds' strategy and tactics are, despite 'left' appearances, essentially a manifestation of conservative thinking. They treat the international situation as though frozen in the 1960's and seem frightened to go into all the consequences of the development of Soviet social-imperialism, particularly:-

- a) that from opportunism and revisionism the Soviet Union has developed into a fascist social-imperialist state striving for a redivision of the world in its favour similar to the fascist powers in the 1930's. The 'critics' of the 'Three Worlds' and Chinese foreign policy have completely failed to mention, never mind learn the lessons of, the line of the international communist movement led by comrade Stalin in the 1930's and 1940's against fascism, appeasement and war. The principles of the current line are essentially the same as the People's Daily article shows;
- b) the destruction of the post-war socialist camp and consequent relative weakening of the international influence of the remaining socialist countries (notwithstanding the tremendous and growing influence of China);
- c) the consequent relative strengthening of the international role and significance of the Third World countries which Marxist-Leninists had already in the struggle with modern revisionism in the early 1960's held to be the area in which the contradictions of the contemporary world were focussed. This includes the drawing into the struggle of classes, groups and individuals previously subservient to imperialism;
- d) the development of the contradictions between the bourgeoisie of western Europe and U.S. Imperialism which Stalin had predicted in 'Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR' in 1952; and the need to make use of inter-imperialist contradictions, which does not mean 'relying' on the bourgeoisie any more than Stalin 'relied' on Churchill.

Particularly effective defences of the 'Three Worlds' concept were made by two comrades from JAC and BWA, although the JAC speaker incorrectly implied at one point that it somehow involved furling our class banners. Since the CWA had criticised the struggle by the Third World countries for a New International Economic Order on the grounds that the only possible economic order were either capitalism or socialism, the BWA speaker pointed out that this struggle was the international equivalent of the struggle for New Democracy within the former colonial and dependent countries, i.e. it was a stage on the road to worldwide national liberation and socialist revolution as opposed to Trotskyite ideas of single stage revolution.

British Monopoly Capitalism.

The conservative thinking of the CWA was more immediately manifest, as a comrade from the CFB pointed out, in its objections to points 18, 21 and 22 of the Theses (See appendix E - CWA's 'Amendments to the Theses'). Although as they stand they do not appear to be in contradiction with the Theses, from what was said by the CWA comrade we understood them to mean that due to "working class support" for nationalisation and the Labour Party we should give them what is sometimes called "tactical support". This is a similar line to the revisionist CPGB and the Trotskyites, and is usually justified theoretically by reference to Lenin's advice to the British communists in 1920 to support Labour "in the same way as the rope supports the hanged man" ("Left-Wing' Communism - an Infantile Disorder", Peking, p. 91) or, as MacLean said at the same time, "it is better to send them to power and so test them in the light of experience". Lenin and MacLean were writing at a time when the mass of the workers had hopes and illusions about the Labour Party introducing socialism and no actual experience of it in government. In the nearly 60 years since then we have had several Labour governments as well as coalitions, and many industries have been nationalised since World War Two. So now we can say of Labour what MacLean said of the Liberals in 1910 - "our every experience proves that they do not step aside, that they fight us more immorally - with more contemptible lies - than even the Tories" - i.e. they are the best props of British capitalism against the working class.

It is a decreasing minority of workers under the influence of the revisionists, Labour 'Left', and Trotskyites who harbour illusions about Labour - especially in

Scotland where, in purely electoral terms, many workers are turning towards the Scottish National Party. We should publicise the past and present activities of Labour, at home and abroad, to show that there are no advantages to be gained by voting Labour or supporting bourgeois nationalisation which, on the contrary, is used to bolster the political and economic positions of the monopoly capitalists over the economy and the state and further attack the livelihood of the workers through 'rationalisation' and 'redundancies'.

The CWA's concessions to revisionism are also reflected in its critique of the 'British Road to Socialism' submitted to the conference which was written as though our argument with the CPGB was still that they have departed from Marxism-Leninism and are 'reformist'. In this regard McCreery's pamphlet 'Destroy the Old to Build the New' was quite adequate, but now, 15 years later, we must say that the CPGB has become a counter-revolutionary, social-fascist party, a social-imperialist 'Fifth Column'.

As in some of the other Theses we felt that some of the formulations here were bad. In number 14 why talk of "control of the means of production by the members of the monopoly capitalist class" and not "ownership by the monopoly capitalist class" (whether private or state owned)? In number 16 the use of the terms "wiped out" and "destroyed" is going too far altogether and is reminiscent of theories about the spontaneous "collapse" of capitalism. Imperialist competition, amongst other factors, is severely weakening British imperialism which is destroying "a mass of productive forces" as a result of the capitalist crisis.

Class Analysis.

There was virtually no discussion on this crucial question although a number of papers on it were submitted to the conference and we made Michael McCreery's "Notes on the Lower Middle Class and the Semi-Proletariat in Britain" available. Two significant respects in which the Theses differ from McCreery's analysis are in their fudging of the questions of the non-monopoly bourgeoisie and the middle class. As against numbers 11 and 28 McCreery argued that the principal contradiction in a capitalist country like Britain was that between the working class and the capitalist class as a whole (of which the monopoly capitalists are the decisive section). Obviously the proletariat seeks to win over or neutralise as many people as possible but can it seriously be argued that that section of the capitalist class who are not monopolists, or finance capitalists, can be "neutral" in the struggle for socialism?

Thesis 27 seems to be more concerned with evading the question of the middle class than with clarifying it. It is well known that the revisionists (including Birch and company) deny the existence of the middle class and in his pamphlet McCreery, quoting Lenin's statement of 1917 that "The Social-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks....are afraid to admit the truth that every capitalist country is fundamentally divided into three main forces, the bourgeoisie, the petty-bourgeoisie, and the proletariat" (from 'Constitutional Illusions'), says "It is, incidentally, quite unsatisfactory to replace the word 'class' by 'strata'. Marxists have always analysed society in terms of certain broad class divisions, and then further sub-divided these classes into various strata. To say that there are various "intermediate strata" which do not belong to any class is really only to play with words in order to avoid recognition of classes other than the two decisive classes". This denial or evasion of the role of the middle class is not accidental since this class is one of the main channels through which revisionist ideology penetrates the working class. Nor do we distinguish the middle class in order to exclude it from the revolution but so that we can win over or neutralise sections of it in the struggle for socialism, just as, in the struggle against Soviet social-imperialism and super-power hegemonism, we must win over or neutralise sections of the bourgeoisie.

National Question.

The discussions on Ideology and Practice having been postponed we were now afforded some time to explain our views of the Theses on the national question. Firstly, is Scotland a nation? Here, unlike the CWM's paper (See appendix F - CWM's 'Submission on the National Question in the British Isles') the Theses are evasive

and self-contradictory. They grant the right to self-determination including secession (which only nations can properly enjoy) but use the vague term 'peoples' rather than 'nation'. Infact the CFB/RCLB representative explicitly stated that they regarded Britain as a 'nation state' with "residual nationality contradictions" whatever that means! He also admitted that they were not very sure of the national question and had only done limited investigation. Now it is bad enough to have neglected this important question but it is quite scandalous for Marxists to pronounce on matters on the basis of admitted and apparent ignorance. It must raise serious doubts about the quality in general of their stand, viewpoint and method.

We gave a brief summary of Scotland's national development through feudalism and the Wars of Independence against English feudalism, the bourgeois reformation and revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries (interconnected with England's but nationally distinct), and the 1707 Union with England when the modern nation state of Scotland was incorporated into the supra-national 'British' state. As McCreery says in his pamphlet on the matter, Scotland fulfills Stalin's famous definition of a nation - "A nation is a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture". Those lazy dogmatists who refuse to make historical and other factual investigations and will only believe 100% Marxist texts will find that Engels himself said in his Critique of the Erfurt Programme of 1891 that "In Britain.....four nations inhabit the two islands".

Nevertheless a comrade from the ELMILA felt that Scotland does not have a common economic life. Yet the bourgeoisie through the economic and other functions performed by the Scottish Office administer it to a large extent as an integral unit together with organisations like the Scottish Development Agency, Scottish Area Boards of nationalised and private companies etc.. Of course Scotland is also part of the U.K. and western European economy, but that no more deprives it of its own economic life than the fact that it is 'joined' to England geographically deprives it of its own territory - except in so far as its economy and territory are taken over by imperialists. From the point of view of analysis and statistics Scotland is also taken and studied as an integral national unit. For example, Scotland has the second highest per capita amount of U.S. investment in the world. Her industry is 75% outside owned mainly from England and the USA. This, incidentally, taken together with the existence of the Unionist bourgeoisie in northern Ireland upsets the CWM's one-sided comparison of Scotland's "partnership of joint exploitation" with "nakedly colonial" Ireland. Scotland has the features of both a colonial, dependent country, economically, politically and culturally (predominant foreign ownership, lack of self-government, cultural anglicisation), and of an imperialist country (capital export, labour aristocracy) - although it was and is a tiny, increasingly anglicised ruling class who sold their country against overwhelming popular opposition for a share in the loot of England's developing empire. The bourgeois democratic movement of the 18th and 19th centuries, however, continued to demand an independent Scottish Republic, a demand correctly taken over by the proletariat in the 20th century.

Thus, within the British imperialist 'United Kingdom' set-up, Scotland is not only a nation but an oppressed nation, and this has led to a rising tide of national consciousness as we predicted amongst the working class and petty-bourgeoisie which sections of the bourgeoisie are trying to divert into narrow nationalist channels through the Scottish National Party which is against an independent Scottish Republic but wants a Scottish Parliament within the U.K.. This national consciousness has been accentuated by the capitalist crisis with all its baleful consequences for the working people.

What should our attitude be to these developments? The tendency of most self-styled 'Marxists' is to counterpose 'socialism' to 'nationalism' and accuse anyone who supports Scottish independence of "splitting the workers". Such a crass 'argument' could be used against any oppressed nation seeking state secession and independence and is the stock in trade of the revisionists and Trotskyites who cannot distinguish between bourgeois imperialist 'unity' and proletarian internationalist unity. In this era of imperialism the national liberation movement is part of the world proletarian socialist revolution and it is the imperialists, the big nation chauvinists who are the prime splitters. The WPS Manifesto makes clear that the workers of Scotland

should unite with the workers of England, Wales, Ireland and elsewhere but split from the British imperialist U.K. state.

The CFB/RCLB, on the other hand, advocates a kind of 'devolution' - "regional autonomy within a federal republic". This position is not based upon a "concrete analysis of concrete conditions" but on an incorrect reading of Engels together with a confusion of the Soviet and Chinese constitutions. In his Critique of the Erfurt Programme Engels advocated a federal republic as a step forward for the four nations of 'Britain' - England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. Leaving aside for the moment the question of how we get to that federal republic, let us note here that a federal republic is an agreement between nations which retain the right to secession (as in the Soviet constitutions drawn up by Stalin) while an autonomous region where national minorities live in compact communities exercises local self-government as an inalienable part the state (as in the Chinese constitution).

Since the fact that the Soviet Union and China both have one Party for all nations and nationalities is often used against us, we will supplement our remarks here with a fairly lengthy but revealing quote from Lenin's theses on 'Socialism and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination' in which he clearly distinguishes between all three (i.e. Britain, Russia, China) in relation to the national question:-

"THREE TYPES OF COUNTRIES IN RELATION TO SELF-DETERMINATION OF NATIONS.

In this respect, countries must be divided into three main types:

First, the advanced capitalist countries of Western Europe and the United States of America. In these countries the bourgeois, progressive national movements came to an end long ago. Every one of these "great" nations oppresses other nations in the colonies and within its own country. The tasks of the proletariat of these ruling nations are the same as those of the proletariat in England in the 19th century in relation to Ireland. (WPS emphasis)

"Secondly, Eastern Europe: Austria, the Balkans and particularly Russia. Here it was the 20th century that particularly developed the bourgeois-democratic national movements and intensified the national struggle. The tasks of the proletariat in these countries - in regard to the consummation of their bourgeois-democratic reformation, as well as in regard to assisting the socialist revolution in other countries - cannot be achieved unless it champions the right of nations to self-determination. In this connection the most difficult but most important task is to merge the class struggle of the workers in the oppressing nations with the class struggle of the workers in the oppressed nations.

"Thirdly, the semi-colonial countries, like China, Persia, Turkey, and all the colonies, which have a combined population amounting to a billion. In these countries the bourgeois-democratic movements have either hardly begun, or are far from having been completed. Socialists must only demand the unconditional and immediate liberation of the colonies without compensation - and this demand in its political expression signifies nothing more nor less than the recognition of the right to self-determination - but must render determined support to the more revolutionary elements in the bourgeois-democratic movements for national liberation in these countries and assist their rebellion - and if need be their revolutionary war - against the imperialist powers that oppress them." (Lenin on the National and Colonial Questions, Peking, pp. 11-13).

Thus Lenin clearly distinguished in his time between three types of countries and three types of tasks:-

1. In Western Europe and the USA where the bourgeois-democratic movements were generally over, the proletariat of the oppressor nations' tasks were the same as those of the proletariat in England in the 19th century in relation to Ireland (both towards the colonies and towards the oppressed nations within their own country). It is well known how Marx and Engels concluded that the task of the proletariat in England in the 19th century in relation to Ireland was to support Irish independence. Thus, although Engels suggested a federal republic for England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, in the case of Ireland at least he and Marx taught that separation would have to come first, that this was in the best interests of the English proletariat, but that the lever would have to be applied in Ireland itself - "...although after separation there may come federation" (Marx to Engels, 2 November 1867). That Lenin

by no means regarded Ireland as an exception in this respect is demonstrated by the above quote where he generalises on the basis of the position of Ireland. So, leaving aside the question of the party for the moment, John MacLean's line on Scotland (separation possibly followed by federation) was fully in accordance with Lenin's teachings on the matter - although Lenin may not have realised it!

2. In Eastern Europe where the bourgeois democratic revolution was in progress Lenin advocated merging of the class struggle and organisational unity between the proletariat of the oppressor and oppressed nations and support for national self-determination (as in the Russian Empire).

3. In semi-colonial and colonial countries where the bourgeois-democratic movement had hardly begun Lenin advocated complete liberation of the colonies and support for the anti-imperialist bourgeois-democratic revolutionary elements (like Sun Yat-sen's Kuomintang).

It is a singular fact that whereas the situation in groups 2 and 3 has since undergone remarkable and dramatic developments from the point of view of bourgeois-democratic, national democratic and socialist revolutions, the internal regimes of the countries in group 1 remain essentially unaltered. And what does all this signify for Party organisation? The CFB/CUA/RCLB have proclaimed what they call the "Leninist principle of a single party for a single state" in order to dismiss the conception of a separate Party for Scotland without further consideration. Yet in so far as Lenin did advocate such an idea in the circumstances of his time he appears to have confined it to Eastern Europe and Asia:-

"At a time when bourgeois-democratic revolutions in Eastern Europe and Asia have begun, in this period of the awakening and intensification of national movements and of the formation of independent proletarian parties, the task of these parties with regard to national policy must be twofold: recognition of the right of all nations to self-determination, since bourgeois-democratic reform is not yet completed and since working class democracy consistently, seriously and sincerely (and not in a liberal, Kokoshkin fashion) fights for equal rights for nations; then a close unbreakable alliance in the class struggle of the proletarians of all nations in a given state, throughout all the changes in its history, irrespective of any reshaping of the frontiers of the individual states by the bourgeoisie" (from 'The Right of Nations to Self-Determination' section 7).

Furthermore when Lenin and Stalin criticised the Bund and the Austrian social-democratic party for splitting the workers along national lines it was usually the theory and practice of dividing the workers along cultural nationality lines they were attacking and not along lines of territorial nationality. This was precisely why the WPS rejected the name 'Scottish Workers' Party' in case it was taken to imply that it was the party of workers of Scottish descent only and wherever they lived. Whereas 'Workers' Party of Scotland' makes it clear that the WPS is the party of all workers living in Scotland whatever their national origins. Nor was there ever any suggestion by Lenin that Ireland should be included in the same Party as Britain - although the CFB/RCLB is holding on to northern Ireland as its organisational preserve "unless and until the struggle to separate northern Ireland from the British state is successful", i.e. until they are thrown out with the British army by the Irish people!

The CWM, on the other hand, while recognising Scotland as an oppressed nation and the need to "link the national question with that of class power and to fight for a workers' state there" tries to make a qualitative distinction between Scotland and Ireland from the point of view of Party organisation in particular, advocating a unitary party with separate national sections for England, Scotland and Wales and a completely separate party for Ireland. This is certainly a much more plausible and understandable position than the CFB/RCLB's but, as we have indicated, there is no difference in principle but only in degree between Scotland and Ireland. Both are economically, politically and culturally oppressed and we should support independence for both, not only support but lead that struggle. If we are to lead that struggle the workers of Scotland must have their own independent leadership just as the workers and peasants of the former colonial countries need their own independent parties to lead them in their struggle. This only splits the workers if the separate parties are unable to unite due to big or small nation chauvinism. At one time the

whole of Indochina was under French colonialism. Does this mean there should have been one party for Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos? In the federal state of Malaysia there are two Marxist-Leninist parties, the Communist Party of Malaya and the Communist Party of North Kalimantan, while south Kalimantan comes under the Communist Party of Indonesia. Yet some people "boldly" proceed as though multi-form and complex reality operates in obedience to a few dogmatic rules, and that it is enough for them to assert these rules for the world to fall into place like Jesus Christ bringing calm to the Sea of Galilee!

At the same time neither the class struggle in Britain nor the national struggle in Scotland are likely to assume revolutionary proportions in the immediate future while the prospect of Soviet social-imperialist aggression and super-power war looms increasingly large. This gives added urgency to the common tasks of Marxist-Leninists (and democrats generally) not just in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland but also throughout Europe and the rest of the world. We are seriously lagging in this as in many other respects.

One final point on the national question - the CWM say that "no genuine national independence is possible for Ireland without socialism, workers' state power, and so the struggle for national independence must also be a struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat". This is quite wrong in that it makes no distinction at all between firstly the struggle for national independence and unity and secondly the struggle for socialism which are closely interconnected but consecutive stages. Nor do the people of Ireland need us to tell them to follow the socialist road any more than they need our particular help to build their own Communist Party. We should get rid of any and all chauvinist tendencies to think that we are in a position to offer much advice to the peoples of the subject nations on how to conduct their struggles. On the contrary, in the present circumstances, we have a lot to learn from them about the theory and practice of revolution, even when they do not necessarily regard themselves as Marxist-Leninists.

Theory and Practice.

There was very little discussion on these questions, nor was there any opportunity to exchange experience of practical activities and mass work, never mind "synthesise" it as suggested in the invitation, although one of our delegates had a statement prepared about our activities. We must confine ourselves here to two criticisms of the theses concerning, firstly, the relationship between theory and practice and, secondly, the question of mass work particularly within the reactionary trades unions.

Thesis number 36 does not make much sense to us and can only be understood to be some sort of 'theoretical' justification for the RCLB's position that a Party is "premature". Instead of emphasising the need to unite theory and practice by applying Marxism-Leninism to the situation here, the thesis separates theory and practice in the most absurd manner under the pretext that "theory is primary at the present stage". This formulation seems to derive from the line of the CUA that "at this stage of the struggle the theoretical task of analysing British imperialist society and developing a strategy expressed in a party programme is the primary task" ("Imperialism and the Struggle for a Revolutionary Party" p. 51). There is no evidence, however, that they have got on with this task. Rather they have constantly used this thesis as an argument against forming a party. As they openly admitted at the same time - "no concrete organisational steps to the party can be planned at this time" (ibid.) which does not follow at all from the undoubtedly correct thesis that the question of organisational unity is subordinate to political-ideological unity. The RCLB should recall that the Gang of Four in China spread confusion by erroneously preaching that the relations of production are primary over the forces of production, not in order to improve the relations of production and develop the productive forces but in order to sabotage both. In the same way this "theory is primary over practice at the present stage" in Britain" thesis has not resulted in any advance in theory and practice but has obstructed the development of both.

In thesis 38, while agreeing that we must give priority to work amongst the proletariat, the only really revolutionary class, we think it is wrong to confine ourselves to that class in our mass work even when organised resources are very limited. It is always necessary to use all opportunities for mass work amongst all sections of

society. Thesis 39 taken together with Section D point 14 paragraph 2 of the RCLB Manifesto (p.22) that "Unless there is revolutionary Communist leadership, the trade union movement spontaneously gives rise to the ideology of narrow trade unionism, a bourgeois ideology that restricts the workers' struggle to reforms within the limits of the capitalist system", is not sufficiently distinguished from the revisionist-trotskyite line of replacing the leadership and making the unions more "militant". It is the struggle against such 'economism' which should be the focus of our work within the reactionary trades unions. In this respect thesis 29 is idealist in suggesting that it is primarily bourgeois ideology and opportunism within the working class which has prevented the overthrow of British monopoly capitalism without reference to the economic basis of this opportunism in imperialism and the buying off of the working class movement with the aid of imperialist super-profits. Although this is included in the RCLB Manifesto the point is worth making as at the conference a comrade from the EIMLA, pointing out that the Communist Party of China and the CPGB were both founded in 1921, seemed to suggest that the reason for the success of the former and the failure of the latter was due to the quality of their respective lines without reference to the different circumstances prevailing in the two countries.

The Way Forward.

The second day of the conference was devoted to discussing the question of unity and after a series of suggestions and statements on the crucial question of democratic-centralism, some more or less firm positions emerged and the fundamental weaknesses of the conference became apparent.

The conference had originally been declared to be "to bring together the collective experience of Marxist-Leninists and to develop a programme of practical and theoretical work towards the founding congress of the revolutionary party". This was one of the reasons we had suggested a preliminary consultative meeting since, in the circumstances, only a representative body would be in a position to convene such a conference and decide the agenda and rules of procedure etc.. One particular organisation should not take it on itself to decide these matters as was done by Birch in 1967.

But the conference was, for the most part, not as described in the convening circular - it was simply a political forum (there was virtually no discussion of practical experience) organised by the CWM. Such a unilaterally convened forum, together with other bi-lateral and multi-lateral meetings and other activities, is quite legitimate and potentially useful - as long as it does not pretend to constitute an adequate plan or procedure for achieving Marxist-Leninist unity. Thus the CWM are quite free to exclude the RMLCL from their forum if they wish but they cannot be the arbiters of who is to take part in the much higher and more difficult task of working out how to achieve Marxist-Leninist unity on the basis of democratic-centralism, any more than the RMLCL can.

Unfortunately at the end of the conference it was as though the CWM had recalled their original plan and forgotten the previous day's decision that voting was not in order at such an unequally representative gathering (for which reason JAC's proposal to set up a co-ordinating centre from the conference was also incorrect). As chairman of the conference the CWM insisted on putting the various proposals to the vote and their own resolution was carried! (See appendix G - CWM's "Conference of Marxist-Leninists, Birmingham, 2/3 July 1977"). It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the CWM were, consciously or unconsciously, using the conference to establish their "credentials" - especially as they wanted us to modify our proposal for a consultative meeting so that they would be charged with convening it and, when we turned this down, petulantly declared that our proposal would lead to an endless series of meetings - a startling criticism in view of point 1 of their own resolution!

Like the CFB/RCLB's suggestions the CWM's proposals contain nothing we shouldn't be doing already. It is a bit like saying that to make revolution we must 1. engage in class struggle, 2. criticise opportunism, 3. build up the Party, 4. hold meetings etc.. which are all quite correct but hardly constitute a concrete plan for making revolution. And this is why the RCLB's position on unity is so incorrect - they make out that their recommendations constitute a plan, a line for "establishing a single democratic-centralist Party-building organisation", whereas they are the opposite, rejecting the need for a plan, bowing to the more or less spontaneous development of

the "Marxist-Leninist movement", failing as the BWA pointed out to "raise organisation to the level of politics" just as the original 'Federation' failed. The BWA comrade in his objections to thesis 51 point 3 in particular, described some positive and negative examples of the struggle for Marxist-Leninist unity in Bangladesh, USA, Portugal and Canada and how the approach embodied in this final section of the Theses had proved incorrect.

It remains to say that the RCLB having originally declared that our proposal for a preliminary consultative meeting contained "dangers of federalism", decided that it was all right "in principle" but that the time was not ripe for multi-lateral meetings. They nevertheless attended the CWM's multilateral meeting. And what has emerged from it? Now nearly a year later the CWM has not, to our knowledge, convened any further meetings and they have not even provided an adequate assessment of the first one. The hopes and efforts which went into that conference have been dissipated and the next 'event' is to be a THREE HOUR PUBLIC MEETING "on the struggle to unite the British Marxist-Leninist movement" organised jointly with the RCLB who presumably justify this on the grounds that whereas multi-lateral meetings are out of order (although they were prepared to suspend this principle for the CWM at Birmingham) one or two groups together can do what the hell they like.

Conclusion.

What, then, is the point of recounting all this carry-on? Because this struggle over what steps to take towards unity is, of course, itself a political struggle of great significance. The Birmingham conference demonstrated a keen desire for unity amongst the great majority of those present who were looking for a lead, but the prospects for unity are being seriously hampered by opportunist confusion masquerading as revolutionary clarity on the question of Party-building.

The CFB/RCLB are right to call for criticism of the errors of the CPBML which many comrades have been doing for over 10 years now. But they must realise that this means more than simply "excommunicating" Birch from the Marxist-Leninist movement (and who admitted him anyway?) - it means criticising his errors particularly as they recur within our midst, e.g.

1. Failure to render accounts with the history of the Marxist-Leninist movement in particular the historic vanguard role played by McCreery and the CDCU;
2. Scorning 'small groups' in the name of 'unity' while refusing to take serious steps towards principled unity and proceeding on the basis of unilaterally convened and amorphous mass meetings;
3. Denying the existence of a middle class and a labour aristocracy;
4. Great nation chauvinism and the denial of Scottish and Welsh nationhood and right to state secession and independence;
5. 'Economist' overemphasis on the revolutionary possibilities of trade union struggle;
6. Using fraternal relations with Marxist-Leninist parties abroad, particularly the great Communist Party of China, as a surrogate for a correct political line and attracting members on that basis;
7. Attacking the revolutionary foreign policy of the People's Republic of China and the general line of the International Communist Movement on which it is based - Chairman Mao's 'Three Worlds' Theses.

If any comrades consider us guilty of these or any other 'Birchisms' let us have your criticisms. We will defend our line so long as it proves correct and are, likewise, willing to merge with others only on the basis of the correct line, particularly as embodied in the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao applied to the situation here. So we wish finally to repeat our proposal for Marxist-Leninist unity (Appendix B) which is not yet a plan for achieving unity but constitutes the first essential step in formulating such a plan, and represents a challenge to the 'small group mentality' in which those with an incorrect line seek refuge. What reason can there be for refusing to support a consultative meeting other than fear - fear that 'our line' or 'my group' will not stand up to discussion, fear of Marxist-Leninist unity, fear of a revolutionary proletarian party of a new type? But those who fear to proceed themselves become an obstruction when laying claim to leadership. They must either stand aside or be swept aside by the working class and its Party.

Appendix A - CWM's "OPEN LETTER TO ALL MARXIST-LENINIST ORGANISATIONS".

"The Communist Workers' Movement was formed by Marxist-Leninists, formerly members of the CPBM-L, who could see no way forward for the British Revolution in that organisation. We are not a local organisation, but have branches in different parts of the country.

In common with other Marxist-Leninists we believe that the building of a revolutionary proletarian party is the most important single task facing Marxist-Leninists.

The problem is, and always has been, how to build it. The Marxist-Leninist movement in Britain has a positive aspect in that many are working and active despite the absence of such a party. But it has a more negative aspect, namely that the theory and practice of each group is limited by its local scope and perspective so that a synthesis of collective experience is not possible. It is precisely this synthesis that must form the foundations of the revolutionary party.

To establish such a party Marxist-Leninists must unite to develop a clear analysis of Britain, its relations to the rest of the world, and what strategy and tactics must be followed to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat.

This unity can be established by a sincere desire on the part of those participating to submerge their own personal prejudices and interests for the benefit of the class and revolution. It can only be maintained and developed by a continuous dialectic between different views and experiences.

Such an exchange would be sterile however, if it were not based on unity in mass revolutionary work. This work should form the foundation upon which the developing line is tested.

Accordingly the Communist Workers' Movement invite all Marxist-Leninists, whether as groups or individuals, to work together with us towards the convening of a national conference as soon as possible in 1977. The aim of this conference will be to bring together the collective experience of Marxist-Leninists and to develop a programme of practical and theoretical work towards the founding congress of the revolutionary party.

In the meantime the Communist Workers' Movement seeks mergers with all groups or individuals where there is a common identity of interests, on the basis of complete equality, and with this in mind it declares itself to be a purely provisional organisation whose aim is to dissolve in common with the other groups to form the revolutionary party. The Communist Workers' Movement does not claim for itself any fixed line or programme other than the basic precepts of communism. Within these limitations, especially at this stage we welcome diversity of opinion, as Marxism-Leninism, and our experience, especially in the CPBM-L, convinces us that only from that can a correct line emerge."

Appendix B - WPS' Circular "Marxist-Leninist Unity". (20.3.77)

"Dear Comrades,

In relation to the recent proposals from some Marxist-Leninist organisations for the holding of a unity meeting or conference, the WPS favours an early preliminary consultative meeting consisting of two delegates from each organisation to consider how to achieve unity of the Marxist-Leninist forces within the British capitalist state, including discussion of differences and whether to hold a further conference and, if so, on what basis. Unanimity should be the aim in any decisions taken and we suggest, that, in the circumstances, a study of Engels' letter to A. Bebel in Hubertusburg (London, June 20 1873) would be useful. We are enclosing a copy of Michael McCreery on 'the National Question in Britain' and 'Origins of the British State' which we have just republished."

Appendix C - WPS' Reply to Communist Workers' League of Britain (M-L). (23.5.77)

"Dear Comrades,

Thanks for yours of 10.4.77 and apologies for the delayed reply necessitated by circulating it for discussion internally before sending it off.

We have already indicated our willingness to attend a broadly representative anti-fascist conference although we do not think you can have effective organisation against fascism without having a scientific analysis and programme on which to base it as your letter seems to suggest. We think that, if support for the principle of a People's Defence Organisation justifies the holding of a conference, it should be

left to the conference itself to draw up its own Manifesto, Constitution etc..

Quite a few organisations in England have requested meetings with us recently and one of the reasons we have suggested an early preliminary consultative conference of several organisations is to save time and resources spent on several journeys.

You also refer in your letter to your proposals for a commission put forward in your pamphlet "Hey! It's Up to Us!" which, as you know we disagree with. That part of the pamphlet which is not simply a brief presentation of some of the achievements of the Albanian, Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese comrades in applying Marxism-Leninism to the concrete conditions of their respective countries (for which we in this country can hardly claim credit), is a stream of unsubstantiated (and, therefore, unscientific) assertions both as to the failings of others and your own "correctness" and "boldness" etc. It is idealistic in that it deals not with the concrete situation but with an abstract 'definition' and metaphysical in that it does not consider the Marxist-Leninist movement in its development in the struggle against revisionism but as a more or less detached grouping. While purporting to indicate how to build a Party in Britain it is almost completely devoid of concrete facts and analysis about the situation in Britain.

As for the 5 important aspects in which you say we have fallen down - class analysis, international analysis, national question, leading role of the proletariat, and strategy and tactics - are you saying that we, like you, do not have a basic line on all these questions in our Manifesto, Constitution, Scottish Vanguard and other documents - in which case you cannot have studied them - or are you saying that our line is incorrect or that we do not put it into practice - in which case you must show us how we have failed - or are you simply saying that after more than ten years existence we are not leading a mass revolutionary movement which is to be explained primarily in terms of the unfavourable objective conditions in this country, although we undoubtedly make some mistakes both of commission and omission. But you have not scientifically criticised our theory and practice - despite our co-operation in explaining it to you in the past - and yet you subjectively insist that others reply to your own unscientific statement within a specified period.

As for the commission itself - "the correctness or incorrectness of the ideological and political line decides everything" (Mao). We are quite prepared to submit our line to scientific discussion - as we have tried to do with you and others in the past as well as recently indicating our willingness to attend a meeting where differences could be discussed and possibly resolved. If life and the struggle prove our line wrong we will change it. But we are not prepared to sacrifice our line beforehand to the "majority decision" and other purely organisational stipulations of your commission which could come up with an incorrect line especially if based on the ideas in "Hey! It's Up to Us!". Many of the organisations on your list have no concrete line (on your own 5 criteria for example) and there is no telling what a majority decision might come up with. We are not prepared to buy a pig in a poke.

Your pamphlet seems to be a further example of a tendency which has disrupted the Marxist-Leninist movement since its inception - starting with those who attacked McCreery for splitting organisationally with revisionism in 1963, although they claimed to agree with Marxist-Leninist ideology and politics. This tendency is to talk and write a lot about "building the party" by the "correct method" while attacking anyone who actually tries to do it, regardless of their political line. A Party is built around the political-ideological line of a class including an organisational line (democratic centralism for the working class), not just a Party building "method". What is your own line - on your own 5 criteria for instance? Your organisation is among those that have been telling us for some time now that they do not "yet" have a line on the national and other questions in Britain. Every organisation and person has a line whether they know it or not. The question is - is it the bourgeois line or the proletarian line?

P.S. Since this letter deals with criticisms made publicly by you and of some interest to others, we will be duplicating it for wider circulation. Enclosed are copies of the latest edition of our Manifesto and two leaflets distributed recently!

Appendix D - "THESES OF THE CFB(M-L) FOR THE CONFERENCE OF MARXIST-LENINISTS".

1. A conference to found a new revolutionary Communist Party is premature. There is still no Party programme and no Party rules and there is still no single leading centre.

2. However a conference that has the following limited but definite aims will be useful:

- a. To clarify and win unity of thinking on major questions of ideological and political line, internationally and nationally.
- b. To agree on what organisational steps towards Party-building are correct and should be taken at the present time.

3. Therefore the CFB(M-L) submits the following theses on the main questions to be discussed at the conference.

The crisis - international.

4. The principal contradiction in the world today is between the oppressed peoples and nations of the world and the two superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States.

5. The Soviet Union is the more dangerous superpower and the most dangerous source of war.

6. The international working class and oppressed peoples of the world must resolutely unite, and in so doing, must build the broadest possible united front against imperialism, especially the hegemonism of the two superpowers.

7. The main force in the struggle against the hegemonism of the two superpowers are the countries of the third world.

8. An intermediate vacillating force in the struggle against the hegemonism of the two superpowers are the countries of the second world, the minor imperialist powers such as Britain.

9. In the present international struggle against the superpowers, the existence and enlargement of the EEC is primarily positive.

10. War is inevitable and Europe will be the main battleground of the next world war. Only a people's war can defeat the Soviet aggressors; the working class will have to struggle with the bourgeoisie to win the leadership of any people's war of national resistance.

The crisis - national.

11. In Britain the principal contradiction is between the working class and the imperialist bourgeoisie.

12. The working class must overthrow the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie by socialist revolution, smash the bourgeois state and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat.

13. The struggle against the imperialist bourgeoisie must be combined with the struggle against the hegemonism of the two superpowers. Revolutionary Communists must struggle to make the British government line up with the third world.

14. The basic contradiction is between the social character of production and the control of the means of production by the members of the monopoly capitalist class. This basic contradiction gives rise to economic and political crises which the bourgeoisie are unable to solve.

15. The monopoly capitalist bourgeoisie try to solve their crisis by loading it onto the backs of the working people; mainly by trying to stepping up the rate of exploitation of the working class through increased productivity, inflation, wage restraint, unemployment and taxation.

16. British monopoly capitalism is being wiped out by competition from rival imperialist powers; the means of production in Britain is being destroyed by imperialism.

17. The third world's struggle for national liberation and a new international economic order is striking relentless blows against British imperialism.

18. The crisis of British imperialism compels more and more state control of industry. Nationalization and 'government assistance' represent merely the general tendency to extreme concentration and centralisation of capital under monopoly capitalism.

19. The working class must fight all attempts by the monopoly capitalist bourgeoisie to shift the burden of their economic crisis onto our backs. We must make the bourgeoisie pay for their crisis!

20. The fundamental political problem for the monopoly capitalist bourgeoisie is how to maintain an efficient state which protects the class interests of only a small minority of the population while disguising its true nature from the great majority of the people.

21. The so-called two party system is but a device for maintaining the dictatorship

of the bourgeoisie. The two main political parties are two wings of a single bird of prey. Both unite in trying to soften the working class and keep it trapped and exploited under the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

22. As between the two main bourgeois political parties, the Labour Party is not the "lesser evil" as the opportunists shout. The Labour Party is the greater danger! By their cry the opportunists try to tie the working class to the coat-tails of a bourgeois reformist party.

23. The bourgeoisie prefer to conceal their dictatorship under the mask of bourgeois democracy. But increasingly, as their rule is threatened and whenever it is in their interests to do so, they will attempt to prolong their rule by introducing fascism and fascist methods.

Towards a class analysis.

24. Who are our enemies? Who are our friends? This is a question of the first importance for the revolution.

25. Our enemies are the monopoly capitalist class and all those in league with them.

26. The leading force and the main force in the socialist revolution in Britain is the working class, and in particular the industrial working class.

27. The petty bourgeoisie and intelligentsia form a large body of middle strata of working people most of whom can become the close friends of the working class in the struggle for the socialist revolution.

28. The small and medium bourgeoisie is partly oppressed and exploited by the monopoly capitalist bourgeoisie, but in general it lines up with the monopoly capitalist bourgeoisie. Our aim with these sections of the bourgeoisie is to neutralise them in the struggle for the socialist revolution.

On ideology.

29. The British monopoly capitalist bourgeoisie would long ago have been overthrown but for the existence of bourgeois ideology and of opportunism within the working class.

30. A serious form of bourgeois ideology within the working class is opportunism. The fight against imperialism is a sham and a humbug unless it is inseparably bound up with the fight against opportunism.

31. Opportunists are agents of the bourgeoisie within the working class movement. The active people in the working class movement who adhere to the opportunist trend are better defenders of the bourgeoisie than the bourgeoisie itself.

32. The task of winning over the class-conscious vanguard to a conviction in the necessity for revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be accomplished without a complete ideological and political victory over opportunism within the vanguard of the working class.

33. Revisionism is the most dangerous enemy in the working class movement because it uses the name and terms of Communism to deceive the working class.

34. Within Britain, social democracy is the most widespread ideological enemy within the working class movement.

35. Racism is a serious divisive ideological tendency which imperialism uses to split the ranks of the working class. It is the main ideological weapon which the monopoly capitalist bourgeoisie use in order to try and bring in fascism, and to justify their increasing use of fascist methods.

On practice.

36. Although in general practice is primary over theory, at the present stage in Britain theory must be primary over practice. However practice is essential and in some specific aspects of work it is already primary.

37. It is essential to grasp priorities correctly on the basis of the two historical tasks of revolution. The first historical task is to win the class-conscious vanguard to a conviction in the necessity for revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. The second historical task of revolution is to lead the masses in practical activity towards the revolution.

38. At this stage when organised resources are limited we must choose priorities strictly between different classes: we must direct all mass work to the working class, and concentrate particularly on the industrial working class.

39. At the place of work, in the course of struggle against the employer and the capitalist class, we 1) rally the advanced workers around the revolutionary Communist Party, and 2) strive to turn the trade unions into fighting class organisations.

40. Our basic method is the mass line, "from the masses, to the masses". The revolutionary Communist Party will increasingly lead and guide the mass of the people to struggle for their just demands, sum up their experience and raise their ideological and political consciousness and their organisational strength step by step, until they form a giant army capable of overthrowing the monopoly capitalist bourgeoisie.

The national question in the British isles.

41. We oppose all national oppression within the United Kingdom in order to strengthen the fighting unity between the working class of the British isles against the British monopoly capitalist bourgeoisie.

42. We uphold the right to self-determination, including the right to separation, for peoples of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

43. We support the demand for regional autonomy within a federal republic for Scotland and Wales, but do not advocate separation for them.

44. We advocate separation of Northern Ireland from the British state, and demand that British troops get out of Ireland. We hope to see the unity of the fraternal people of Ireland gradually grow in the common struggle against imperialism and reactionaries.

45. In order to build the strongest possible proletarian organisation to resist and overthrow the united forces of British imperialism throughout the British imperialist state, the revolutionary Communist Party must be built and must rally the working class and working people in the struggle against British imperialism and opportunism in all parts of that British state. This includes Northern Ireland unless and until the struggle to separate Northern Ireland from the British state is successful.

The way forward.

46. Building the revolutionary Communist Party of the working class is the central task in Britain today. We must arrange all our work around this central task, and to serve this central task.

47. We must overcome the division of the small British Marxist-Leninist movement into a number of parties, organisations and circles. However it is premature to found the new revolutionary Communist Party until we have a Party programme and a single leading centre. The target in the middle term must be to form one single democratic-centralist organisation.

48. Federal forms of unification are opportunist because they do not challenge small group mentality openly and they violate democratic-centralism.

49. We must struggle hard to unite all genuine Marxist-Leninists. In uniting Marxist-Leninists, the struggle for ideological and political unity must play the leading role. When ideological and political unity has been won on major questions between different groups it must be consolidated organisationally by uniting in a single democratic-centralist organization.

50. Active ideological struggle is the key link in uniting the Marxist-Leninist movement for Party-building.

51. We must grasp 3 specific tasks to fulfill the aim of establishing a single democratic-centralist Party-building organization.

1. Ideological struggle and education against small group mentality.
2. Unfolding of a militant and scientific criticism of the errors of the CPB(M-L) as the first step of a protracted struggle against incorrect ideological and political lines on the British revolution.
3. Forming larger democratic-centralist organizations by uniting smaller organizations. This is the key immediate step on the road to a single democratic-centralist organisation.

WORKERS AND OPPRESSED PEOPLES AND NATIONS OF THE WORLD UNITE!
LONG LIVE MARXISM-LENINISM-MAO TSETUNG THOUGHT!
BUILD THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE WORKING CLASS!

The Executive Committee of the CPB(M-L) May 1977.

Appendix E - CWA's "Amendments to the Theses".

Point 5 Delete substitute "The influence of the two superpowers is not exercised in the same manner everywhere. Consequently the revolutionary forces whilst denouncing both will in their own spheres of influence have to pinpoint the principal enemy!"

Point 6 Accept.

Point 7 Delete refer to point 6.

Point 8 Oppose substitute "In the struggle against the two superpowers the lesser imperialist states such as Britain, France, W. Germany, Japan etc. have to be opposed and exposed as contending and colluding powers".

Point 9 Oppose substitute "The Party of Labour of Albania, the Albanian state and people are against NATO and the Warsaw Treaty, against Comecon and the Common Market, because these organisations are the basic instruments of the expansionist policy of the two superpowers, because they oppress exploit and impoverish both the peoples of Europe and the peoples of the developing countries, undermine both the revolution and the liberation of the peoples, and are instruments of enslavement."

Point 10 Oppose substitute "As the crisis of imperialism deepens so the threat of World War increases. War may break out in any part of the world. The reactionary bourgeoisie of Britain cannot be separated from the forces of world imperialism. Therefore the prime task of revolutionaries in Britain is the overthrow of the British ruling class. This is our major and prime task in the struggle to avoid a world war."

Point 11 Accept add at end "i.e. that of Britain, U.S. and W. Europe and Japan".

Point 13 Reword "The struggle against the imperialist bourgeoisie operating in Britain is the focal point of our struggle against the hegemonism of the superpowers. In its attempt to maintain its position the British ruling class will collude and contend with either of the superpowers, however its basic imperialist character cannot be modified - it has to be smashed".

Point 17 Reword "The national liberation movements of Asia, Africa and Latin America are striking relentless blows against British imperialism."

Point 18 Reword "The crisis of British imperialism compels more and more state control of industry. Nationalisation and 'government assistance' demonstrate this crisis and is a manifestation of the dilemma of capital. Revolutionaries have to intensify the contradictions between the bourgeois forces who strive for state monopoly capital and those who seek to preserve parts of industry for existing monopoly and multi-nationals. Within this contradiction we seek to demonstrate the central question of property and class state power. The subjective support that exists in the working class for nationalisation as a challenge to 'the private ownership of the means of production' has to be won for the developing opposition to the bourgeois state".

Point 19 Delete 2nd sentence.

Point 20 Delete "the fundamental" and substitute "an increasingly difficult" then add at end point 23.

Points 21 and 22 combined and reword "The so-called two party system is but a device for the maintaining of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. However it is essential to understand that the two parties - the Tories and Labour - have different origins and bases for their mass appeals. The grip that social-democratic ideology has in the working class makes the Labour party the more dangerous in diverting the class from the revolutionary path. Whilst both parties serve the interests of the bourgeois system the subjective characteristics of them are different and revolutionaries will have to develop different tactics in opposing them. These tactics will have to take into account the history the origin and the subjective characteristics of the Labour party in particular if we are to win large elements amongst its membership and supporters for the revolutionary path."

Appendix F - CWM's "Submission on the National Question in the British Isles".

Historically in the British Isles there have been four nations, England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. Equally historically, England incorporated Wales, and coerced Scotland into a partnership - a partnership of joint exploitation. In Ireland, on the contrary, the relationship was from the beginning nakedly colonial, and in fact has remained so.

The unity of the mainland nations was a considerable asset for developing capitalism - it ensured one single toll free area, little or no need of land defence forces,

and little devastation from warfare.

While the English and Welsh Bourgeoisie developed together as a consequence of Wales' feudal, indeed in parts tribal, society at the time of union, the Scots Bourgeoisie developed independently, and hence there was already developed in Scotland a nation state of Modern king, as opposed to a feudal, dynastic one. This relative development of Scotland is reflected in her retention of a separate legal and administrative structure, as compared with the total incorporation of the Welsh tribal/dynastic state into the English polity. It is also reflected in the greater support for Scots Independence among Scots workers as opposed to Wales, in spite of Wales for instance having a larger more viable ethnic language in Welsh, and lacking the Gaelic/Lallans divide of Scotland.

Geographically also Wales is at a disadvantage in that North and South are divided by mountains and have their separate axes of transport, and economy towards respectively, the Midlands, Merseyside area, and the South West of England. Despite this however, a sense of Welsh nationhood has survived, and would appear to be flourishing.

What then should the communist attitude be? We find throughout Marx, Lenin and Stalin etc. what sometimes appears to be a contradictory attitude to nationalities. Marx at one time dismissed Bohemian (later Czech) national prospects as necessarily being absorption into Germany. This did not mean that Marx was a Teutonic chauvinist, or did not respect the right to self-determination - it meant that at the time he wrote the Czech people were not conscious of their nationhood, nor were they demanding it. When later they did so, Marx and later the Bolsheviks supported them.

Similarly British communists, while giving general support to self-determination, have for many years not applied it to the British nations because of the relative quiescence of Scotland and Wales. We must emulate the humility of Marx and reconsider the question in the light of the growing national consciousness of the workers of Wales and Scotland, especially since the increasingly obvious deficiencies of rule from Whitehall and Westminster partake more and more of a national character, in addition to class and party political aspect apparent in England itself. Therefore, while giving general support to the principles of self-determination, and bearing in mind Stalin's criteria for nationhood, we must remember the cultural, subjective point of nationhood. When we consider support for secession as opposed to recognition of the right to, we must take into account the strength of national consciousness among the people, and especially among the working class. If as seems likely, this consciousness has imbued the Scots workers, then it is the duty of communists in Scotland to link the national question with that of class power, and to fight for a workers state there.

In Wales, where the movement, both nationalist and communist appears weaker, perhaps actual advocacy should be reserved, but as well as advocating the right to self-determination we should also actively call for the protection and encouragement of the Welsh culture - especially the language.

However, while recognising the right to self-determination, we must also consider several other factors objectively, 1) England, Wales and Scotland make a coherent economic unit 2) British workers have developed common traditions of solidarity and Britain is governed by an essentially unitary state (except IRELAND, n & s).

Bearing in mind these considerations we should call for 1) a unitary communist party for England, Scotland and Wales, with separate national sections with a maximum of local initiative, but under a unified political programme and leadership. (2) Such a party should have as one of the main points of its policy, the call for a federation of Workers' states in the British Isles (including Ireland if possible). (3) Such a party must fight vigorously against any attempt to use national chauvinism to split the working class.

In passing, let us note that Marx, Cornish nationhood is not justified on any of Stalin's criteria except that of common territory, and that while calling for the encouragement of local cultural differences, we should dismiss these proposals as romanticism, and eccentricity.

Why do we not advocate the party covering Ireland? Because Ireland has been the subject of a colonial relationship in all its aspects, economic, political, and cultural, unlike Wales and Scotland where mainly cultural imperialism was allied to the economic and political partnership of the capitalists of those nations. This relationship of colonialism is apparent even now in Northern Ireland despite the dissolution of Stormont. The 12 MP's from N.Ireland at Westminster no more prove integrat-

ion into the state system than does the representation of French Overseas Territories in Paris prove that Djibouti for instance has been part of France all this time.

Ireland is culturally and historically one nation. The purpose of direct colonial rule in one portion, is to maintain the even more economically important 26 counties in a neo-colonial position.

Hence a prerequisite of genuine national independence in Ireland is British withdrawal from the North. But national independence for whom? The Irish National Bourgeoisie is on the verge of extinction, having signed its own recognition of moribundity in the form of the Free Trade agreement with Britain after 40 years attempts to build a separate Irish capitalism.

The Irish ruling class is overwhelming dependant on foreign capitalism so much so that the Irish even have their own word for the comprador bourgeoisie - the gombeen men! Eire government policy is the encouragement of imperialist penetration into Ireland, with grants, tax holidays etc. The conclusion is that no genuine independence is possible for Ireland without Socialism, workers state power, and so the struggle for national independence must also be a struggle for dictatorship of the proletariat. Only such united working class struggle in N.Ireland can hope to break the sectarian divide so sedulously fostered by the British and their objective allies on the so-called nationalist side.

We must use what little influence we have to help build an Irish communist party and lend it full support in its struggle against the British state, but not on the basis of a unitary British party, but on the basis of a separate party, fighting a different form of struggle against our common enemy - the British ruling class, its allies and puppets.. (May 1977)

Appendix G - CWM's Circular "Conference of Marxist-Leninists, Birmingham, 2/3 July 1977"

At the instigation of the Communist Workers' Movement, over 80 Marxist-Leninists assembled for two days to discuss the problems of unity and party-building in Britain. Organisations represented included, The Communist Workers Movement, Communist Federation of Britain, Communist Unity Association, Workers Party of Scotland, Working Peoples Party Of England, Bangladesh Workers Association, Birmingham Communist Association, Coventry Workers Association, East London Marxist-Leninist Association, Joint Action Committee, and the Workers Film Association. Geographically, there were comrades from Liverpool, London, Birmingham, Nottingham, Newcastle, Brighton, Reading, Medway, Coventry, Newport and Glasgow.

In the opinion of the CWM, this breadth of representation, politically and geographically, represented a major achievement in itself, considering the fragmented nature of the British Marxist-Leninist Movement, and as could be expected from such a body, there was a lively exchange of ideas and experience, in the main in a refreshingly non-sectarian manner. There was no doubt that there was assembled the bulk of genuine Marxist-Leninist organisations and individuals in Britain, and that despite the lively arguments, there was much common ground, and a common desire for unity. "Gurus" and would-be "little Lenins" were prominent by their absence.

It was noticeable that while there was a general agreement on the danger to the World's peoples of the two superpowers, there was disagreement on the interpretation of this thesis in relation to work in Britain, and indeed, on political questions affecting work in Britain there was a general lack of deep analysis. This demonstrated the great need for application of general Marxist principles to the particular questions and problems of Britain if a genuine Communist Party were to be built.

On the question of party-building, of unification, despite the agreement of all concerned that the party must be built, and that the conference had to some extent helped create favourable conditions for unity, it was evident that much more work was necessary to actually bring this about. Nonetheless, it was agreed that it was a matter of urgency that such work be done, and that there were strong possibilities of unity among many of the organisations present, which should be fostered.

Finally, the resolution that was adopted by the conference was:-

- 1) That the CWM should convene further meetings of organisations on particular political and ideological issues, with a view to advancing unity.
- 2) That where organisations have comrades working in particular areas of industry, these comrades should get together to work out a programme of work for those areas.
- 3) That we should encourage bi-lateral discussions and where possible mergers of organisations.

In the course of the proceedings, a resolution of support for the strikers at Grunwick's was passed unanimously and a collection of £55 was made for them.

In summary, although more was hoped for from the conference, it was without doubt a positive development, and it is to be hoped that further gatherings will produce the degree of unity needed to start the necessary process of party formation.

The Communist Workers Movement for its part, while still holding to its already stated positions of willingness to merge with other organisations on a basis of equality, and of readiness to dissolve itself into the party, will be considering the questions of its own organisation and basic programme, in which it welcomes the participation of other Marxist-Leninists."

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* CORRECTION *
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* The Birmingham Conference took place on *
* 2nd and 3rd JULY 1977 and not June as *
* stated on the cover and opening titles. *
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