

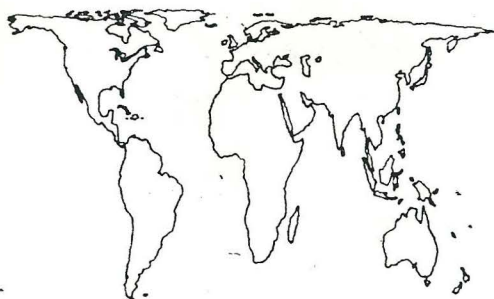
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INTERNATIONAL REVIEW



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of

Revolutionary Communist League of Britain



INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

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This is the eight edition of an internal bulletin designed to circulate information on the international communist movement, and the analysis and developments within fraternal organizations.

There may be unacknowledged disagreements with positions expressed and these articles should not be taken as representing official RCL position.

Aotearoa : LIQUIDATIONISM DESTROYS THE WORKERS' COMMUNIST LEAGUE !

At its 7th National Congress held in January 1990, members of the Workers' Communist League took the decision to dissolve the organisation and to stop publication of *UNITY* after 12 years of existence.

A new left organisation *LEFT CURRENTS* was formed in the aftermath of the decision. It is to work towards building alliances for a new Aotearoa (New Zealand) - socialist, democratic, feminist and decolonised.

"This move was a logical follow-on to changes in the WCL over recent years which have seen the organisation break with key elements of what it criticised as the 'orthodox' communist model.

In particular, the organisation rejected the views that communist parties should have a monopoly on political power and that the class struggle had primacy over those for Maori self-determination and women's liberation.

Underlying the policies and work of *Left Currents* is the long term goal of building a broad based mass movement for social liberation based on a strategic alliance of the struggless of Maori, women and workers.

The organisation will be actively seeking dialogue and co-operation with other forces in the progressive movement, and is open to new members from different philosophical backgrounds."

[*UNITY* Volume 13:1 March 16, 1990]

The WORKERS' COMMUNIST LEAGUE was launched in 1980 with the perspective common to the new communist movement of re-building a genuine working class revolutionary party. It established itself as a major force on the New Zealand Left, it recieved much acclaim for its leadership activities around the 1981 Springbok rugby tour and tireless activity in progressive campaigns, particularly around Wellington, and in the trade union movement.

Like other ML forces it misjudged the seemingly sisyphian task and speed of progress possible to rectify the political errors of the past and re-root communist activity among the working class. In the wake of international developments, such as in China and Poland, and in response to the growing influence of the Maori nationalist struggle and the feminist movement inside the country, the WCL began to re-assess its basic assumptions and certainties.

That reassessment came to adopted anti-Leninists position as what was described as the traditional orthodoxies on the centrality of class were challenged and rejected, as was the concept that communist parties should hold a monopoly on power in socialist societies and in revolutionary struggles. The WCL membership argued that there were many important struggles and activists outside the issues promoted by the 'traditional communist movement'. Whilst many criticisms had some valid points about past practice in the international movent, there was the tendency to want to throw out the baby, the bathwater and the bath itself and begin with a totally clean slate. They concluded that "much of the communist movement today was itself irrelevant to struggles for liberation".

The Conference Resolution that dissolved the WCL and marked the abandonment of marxist-leninist political practices and objectives stated:

" We believe the word 'communist' is not suitable as a definition of our political programme and practical work because:

(a) the word 'communist' has negative associations with monolithic, patriarchal, excessively hierarchical, racist and/or national chauvinist, and environmentally exploitative actions of communist parties in power and many communist groups.

(b) the word 'communist' does not incorporate other key aspects of our policy, that is, the equal importance of liberation from the patriarchy, and the need for Maori self-determination."

As *UNITY* makes clear in its report of the proceedings "The Conference decided that a clean break was needed with the communist movement and our previous methods of organisations." The association of the WCL with the international communist movement [meaning that despite its criticism it could not shake the "pro-China" tag] meant that "much of the organisation's good work was dismissed as irrelevant to developments in this country".

The triumph of liberalism within the WCL was marked by policy changes throughout the 1980s : the decision to reverse the judgement on the nature of the Soviet Union and to regard it as a socialist society demolished the demarcation lines that had been drawn between modern revisionism and marxist politics.

What was argued was that "the main trend in the communist movement internationally these days is a reactionary one. The violent repression of democratic opposition forces in the 'socialist' countries is the clearest example of this. The undemocratic monolithic practice of most communist parties in the West and in the third world has also caused major set-backs for movements for revolutionary change" .

Thus criticism of the Soviet and Chinese experience involved a political rejection of marxism from which a liquidationist belief drew strength. The very ability to "know" anything was questioned, and correct criticisms of bad practices [arrogance, sectarianism, errors of democratic centralism and monolithism] both within the WCL and the international movement was taken as evidence that "the communist movement as it was today was not up to the challenges before it."

In seeking to understand the complexities of class societies, and overcome the ideological baggage of *Stalinism* , what became obscured and eventually rejected was the continuing relevance of the marxist method, of the contemporary validity of an analysis based on the philosophical foundations of dialectical materialism.

The adoption of more diverse and pluralistic politics marked a retreat from a simplistic concept of class dynamics that had not taken on board the issues and priorities that had developed. The WCL opened itself to the corrosive impact of activists of "different philosophical backgrounds" weakened the ability to apply the science of revolution - Marxism-Leninism Mao Zedong Thought.

The focus became criticism of "classical marxism", "orthodoxy" and generally past standards considered no longer appropriate and the development of a radical critique that incorporated those criticisms and conclusion.

What emerged dominant within the thinking of the WCL was the attractions of the prospects of building Left Unity based upon the strategic analysis of Aotearoa that sees three fundamental contradictions : between settler colonialism and indigenous Maori nationalism; between patriarchy and the women's movement for liberation, and the gay and lesbian movements; between capital (especially financial and transnational) and labour (especially low paid and unemployed).

In itself not an inaccurate description of New Zealand society, however members of the WCL no longer saw the organisation as one with which it was possible to implement the strategic programme devised by the end of the 1980s . The launching of *LEFT CURRENTS* , in the endeavour to "include rather than exclude" , the ex-militants of the WCL have abandoned the vehicle for revolutionary change and embrace the failed social democratic morass, seduced by the perspective of "left renewal", of a regenerated radicalism of the Left in the 1990s. What prospects are there for this project when the January Conference resolved that :

"Left Currents is ready to dissolve later this year if it is found that the conditions exist to form an even broader organisation and if this advances the strategic programme."

The disintegration of seemingly strong marxist-leninist organisations in Canada and West Germany in the early 1980s contained political lessons for young ML forces elsewhere , they were not acted upon in Aotearoa.