

The CC comrades who strongly support the line of RTL saw their position criticised by many at the mid-May weekend school. There were some good struggles there, conducted in a fraternal atmosphere, but we came away from the school more, not less, convinced that the basic position of RTL is correct.

This is not to say that we did not draw self-critical conclusions as a result of the criticisms made of RTL at the school. The two main ones should be stated.

Firstly, we acknowledge unanimously, as indeed, we had already recognized before the school, that the question of the national minorities should have been handled more comprehensively. RTL was not intended to be a programme, and therefore, was consciously restricted in scope; nevertheless, as RTL laid great stress on an orientation to the most oppressed, in particular, to the black and Irish workers, it must be said that an attempt to deal more thoroughly with national minority oppression should have been integral to RTL.

Secondly, the movers of RTL have to be self-critical about not arguing its line more consistently and firmly, and for not, right from the start, really taking on and demolishing a line—that of the amendment to RTL—which we believed to be fundamentally in error.

We consider that there were some very negative aspects to the weekend school.

Most obviously, we think that the support which rank and file comrades gave to the amendment to RTL (hereafter called what it actually is—the alternative text—AT) was incorrect. Some of that support was given to a text which was seen as strong in its own right; some, we believe, was given to a text which appeared as the lesser of two evils, as the result of an aversion to some of the harsh criticisms and firm conclusions contained in RTL. In particular, it was clear in the case of the two London members who have since been expelled that support for the AT was seen as a fall-back position. No doubt once RTL was out of the way, they would have started to draw the teeth out of the AT; nevertheless, the fact that they preferred the AT to RTL is an indication that they saw its teeth as being rather less sharp and well rooted in the first place.

(We will return to criticise the position of the AT later; there is an important distinction to be made between opportunist support for the AT as the lesser of two evils, and the position actually embodied in that document and held by its principled proponents, though we believe that the AT does actually lend itself more readily to abuse by comrades who are being opportunistic than does RTL).

Secondly, we consider that the debates did show our organization to be theoretically weak. Two examples will serve to illustrate this.

One comrade slammed the political economy of RTL and in particular, referred scathingly to the part (P.1, para.3.) where RTL says that the capitalist class aims "to force down the value of (the working class') labour power." What clearly lies behind this criticism is the concept that the value of labour power is constant. In fact, this is an old error in the communist movement.

Marx says (Wages, Price and Profit, p.45*), "What then, is the Value of Labouring Power? Like that of every other commodity, its value is determined by the quantity of labour necessary to produce it."

The normally unwritten and unspoken inference which many, including this comrade, have drawn from the word "necessary" is that necessity means a basic subsistence level, . . . (i.e. enough food to sustain the ability to work, enough clothing and shelter to keep the elements at bay), which remains the same. In fact, the value of labour power is variable:

*FLP, Beijing edition: unless stated otherwise, quotations from Marxist classics will be taken from books published by FLP, Beijing.

"If the owner of labour-power works today, tomorrow he must again repeat the same process in the same conditions as regards health and strength. His means of subsistence must therefore be sufficient to maintain him in his normal state as a labouring individual. His natural wants, such as food, clothing, fuel and housing, vary according to the climatic and other physical conditions of his country. On the other hand, the number and extent of his so-called necessary wants, as also the modes of satisfying them, are themselves the product of historical development, and depend therefore to a great extent on the degree of civilisation of a country, more particularly on the conditions under which, and consequently on the habits and degree of comfort in which, the class of free labourers has been formed. In contradistinction therefore to the case of other commodities, there enters into the determination of the value of labour-power a historical and moral element." (P.168, Chapter VI, Vol. 1., "Capital"-Progress Publishers, 1974 ed.)

RFL took this point. At a time when British imperialism was in a very strong position, the British ruling class conceded some of the demands put forward by the working class of Britain; these were long-term, not temporary gains, and through them, the value of labour power here was indeed established at a higher level than previously. It is our case that crisis-ridden British must, for its own survival, strive to bring about such a serious reduction in real living standards for the working class, for such a period of time, that the masses accept as "necessary wants" far less than they considered "necessary" ten years ago. In short, the bourgeoisie seeks a permanent reduction in the labour power of the working class of Britain, in order to become more competitive internationally. Its reactionary dream is to re-build its world power starting from a re-fashioned domestic base.

Our second example we will deal with more briefly. One comrade put forward the view that there are two main contradictions in Britain—that between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, and that between the nationally oppressed and British imperialism.

This is, quite simply, an untenable position. We believe that the comrade did not want to commit himself to one or other being the main contradiction, and so produced this fudge, because that's what it is. There is always (except for the brief moments when one contradiction takes over from another as the main one, which only a pedant would bother about) one main contradiction, which determines what has to be done at a given point in the process of revolution. There may well be a number of major contradictions, but there can only be one main one; anything else doesn't correspond with reality and makes no sense philosophically. Mao Zedong, we hope, would forgive us: "Grasp the main contradiction, and everything falls into place; grasp the two main contradictions, and everything falls all over the place."

No-one spoke up at the time to criticise these erroneous statements, even after the second one had been endorsed by another comrade.

These examples were not picked out in order to put down the comrades who made them, but to illustrate a point. As an organization, we have collectively got a big job on our hands to revolutionize our theoretical development. RFL grasps that. It points (para.5, p.6) to the key theoretical tasks with which we must deal; fulfilling these tasks will give us a sound basis for dealing with wider questions. Compare it with the tasks on the theoretical front set forth in the AT (para 2, p.9), which are wider, and lack a definite focus. The targets are not wrong in themselves, but experience should have taught us by now that if we try to take on too much at once, we make a poor job of everything, and that the way we have to proceed is to set limited objectives and clear priorities, so that we can go ahead step by step.

FRFI

Thirdly. (and since this is not central to the points we need to deal with now, we mention it only in passing), we oppose the call to stop stocking FRFI in NEB. Agreed, comrades have different experiences with the RCG; agreed, they need to be examined and summed up so that we have a clear, all-round position as an organization. But what was notably absent from the contributions on this question was a developmental view, which recognized

the RCG as an organization in movement. It's no secret that among the comrades who today see the RCG in a very positive light, there are various criticisms of them, and sharply opposing views on certain questions—for example, their conduct during the Hunger Strikes. But what these comrades have in common is a perception of an organization which began as trotskyist and is gradually moving away from that position, learning new lessons and elaborating positions which belong firmly in the field of Marxism. They may yet take a wrong course, but the fact is that they have embraced many positions which were once peculiar to our movement, and we should welcome this development, and not treat them with sectarian condescension. The RCG have moved, and will move; they've achieved quite a bit in the process, and our hand should go out to them.

As for comrades who have made critiques of their positions on women and on racism and found them to be seriously flawed (and here again, different views exist among us on the strength of the criticisms made), what should be pointed out is that we have taken the correct course of making a critique of the strongest positions on the left on these questions, and if we can go better, then we must acknowledge that the strong work done by the RCG gave us a start which we'd have lacked to some extent if they had not existed. At present, there's nothing to suggest that the RCG would not listen to our criticisms and at least give them serious consideration, which is more than we could expect from most of the left. But of course, if we were to embark on a dialogue with the RCG about our criticisms of them, it would be essential to put our own house in order first.

The CC Minority Line

The great majority of comrades at the weekend school supported a line put forward by a minority of the CC. That minority formulated their position after they'd made a critique of RTL. We hope that the criticisms that we make of their position will not only help to defeat the erroneous line it represents, but will affirm the strengths of our position; furthermore, that they will help us to elaborate that position further in the future.

The CC minority line is chiefly represented by the documents, "Re-orientate the League for the Tasks of the Moment—A Criticism" (RTL-AC) and the Alternative Text (AT). As this line draws on earlier articles, we will have cause to refer to them extensively: "The Roots of Resistance" (Interim TJ No.1.), "The Struggle of National Minority People and the Line of the RCL" ("October" No.1) and "Racist, National Oppression and Free National Development" ("October" No.2)—abbreviated respectively to RoR, SNMP, and RNO for ease of reference. The articles followed one another in succession, but from our point of view, they do not represent the more and more perfect elaboration of a single sound basic line. Our view is that the first three articles contain an analysis of the national minorities and their struggles which is overwhelmingly correct, but they have secondary weaknesses, which became more pronounced as they went on. These found their full expression in the documents put forward by the CC minority.

To elaborate: The articles in the Interim TJ and "October" put forward and established the following correct positions:-

They debunked the concept of "race" and showed that the roots of racism lie in the imperialist oppression of the lands of origin of the national minorities. They showed that black people in Britain (as well as others, from imperialist-oppressed lands) not only suffered national oppression in their lands of origin, but continue to face it here (We acknowledge that reference should have been made to this in RTL, and this omission should be rectified). They advocated free national development for the national minorities, and indicated that this could only be implemented with the victory of the socialist revolution.

These are positions which we fully support. We believe RTL to be fully compatible with them, and that it correctly indicates the orientation we need to adopt now if we're to get on with forging the vanguard party which will lead the struggles of all the oppressed to victory.

The secondary aspect, which we oppose, may be summed up as the severance

of the class and national struggles from each other, and a downplaying of the former. These positions are not essential components of what we believe to be a correct position on the national minorities, and should be discarded, as superfluous to that position and harmful to the realization of our objectives.

Evolution of An Erroneous Position

The emergence of the erroneous position is traced below. It is necessary to trace it back to its origins as it has had a long time to engrain itself in comrades' thinking without being challenged. That is why it has found ready acceptance or little opposition in its most blatant form in the CC minority's position, though we consider it to be un-Leninist.

In RoR, the relationship between class and national struggle was generally handled very well (e.g., look at its conclusions). However, there are signs of what was to come—for example, the reference (para.6.,p.12), to "the struggle of the working class against its exploitation and the struggle of the national minorities against national oppression.

This was repeated in SNMP, but the separation between these two struggles became more definite—"twin streams of resistance." The significance of this is that the definitions originally put forward were wrong, and then these incorrectly defined "twin streams" were artificially separated, in a really metaphysical way.

"The struggle of the working class" clearly means, in context, the struggle of the majority, white working class; "the struggle of the national minorities" is clearly an all-class one—the fact that the national minority working class participates in struggles as part of the working class of Britain is seen as pretty irrelevant to this analysis.

So what is the "struggle of the majority working class? Clearly, it is viewed as an economic one—"against its exploitation." By contrast, the national minorities' struggle is political—"against national oppression." So not only are the class and national struggles separate, but the first is economic, and the second is political—a second separation has taken place!

In fact, the working class as a whole is both exploited and oppressed—it is oppressed by being denied any effective decision making power over its own life, by being subjected to a battery of laws to keep it in place, and by major sections of it being harassed by the state, whether by the police, the DHSS or some other body. These sections of the majority working class who've had the worst of this oppression will generally identify fairly readily with black people subjected to similar treatment and worse; for them, there's not some barrier marked "national struggle only this side." Similarly, the great majority of national minority people are working class. When they take part in struggles side by side with members of the national majority, it is not as an act of solidarity by the nationally oppressed to the ones facing class oppression; it's out of common class interest.

This is not to deny that the national minorities have received scant support from the majority working class for their struggles, and it is essential that communists work to build the political consciousness and organization that can change that. The point is that there is no Great Wall between the class and national struggles, no either/or choice between class and national oppression and class and national identity, except for the dogmatists of our own organization!

But more of this anon. . . .

For the CC majority, the struggle of the national minorities is at a more advanced, more overtly political level than that of the majority working class. But these struggles have a vital point of junction in the national minority working class, and the points of junction between the majority working class and this section of the national minorities are not only in the common experiences of oppression and exploitation in many workplaces, but similar experiences with the state outside the workplace. Without overstating their importance, we should welcome and encourage every manifestation of working class resistance, every little advance in consciousness. In particular, looking back at the uprisings of 1981, we see white working class

people, mainly young, taking to the streets and confronting the police, following a lead given by black youth. The youth shared experiences of police harassment (albeit to different degrees), and decided they wouldn't go on taking it. Two strands of struggle came together and were interwoven in the face of the common enemy. This is the sort of solid reality in which the stand of RIL is founded. It is, however, rather inconvenient if you see the national and class struggles as rigidly separated, and downgrade the struggle of the majority working class by relegating it to the economic sphere.

It is therefore not surprising that we read in SNMP(para5., p.16), "The Uprisings were a new stage in black resistance, focussing on a section entering the struggle in force, the dispossessed, the workless and criminalized youth. Black youth in Bristol and Southall confronted the police. During the summer, black youth in all main cities rose up against the police, the most immediate target and symbol of racist oppression. In some places, such as Toxteth, other sections of society were united behind their leadership."

In fact, the uprisings were also a new stage in the class struggle in Britain, introducing an insurrectionary element which had been largely absent at least since ^{the} Chartists, perhaps earlier (There were some exceptions, even early in this century, but relatively small scale ones). They pointed the way forward for the working class; meet force with force, and take the road of insurrection. But whites participating in the uprisings are presumably what are coyly referred to as "other sections of society" in this article. In fact, white people took part in the uprisings in large numbers, as shown by the facts that some occurred in towns with a very small black population (e.g. Maidstone, in Kent) and that the majority of those arrested in Brixton were white.

The same analysis occurs in RNO (para.2., p.11., where "the summer 1981 uprisings" are called a manifestation of "the struggle of the oppressed national minorities."), but the tendencies indicated in the earlier articles have developed further. Now we read that racism created "an alliance, however temporary, shifting and contradictory, between the classes of (the) oppressor nation, directed against the oppressed nationalities."

There is no differentiation here between sections of the working class, no indication that racism has a stronger hold in some strata than others. All we are left with is a uniform racist mass. Here is the root of the statement in the AT(para.12., p.3.) that, "The English working class is the working class of an oppressor nation and is thoroughly imbued with racist ideology." Surely our organization should have enough experience of work in the majority proletariat to know that this is not true, and that, while racist ideology has had a deep influence on it, there are indeed advanced, middle and backward elements in the majority working class and if we could not count on rallying the advanced in future, then there can be no real hope of winning the working class support for free national development about which RNO speaks.

Incidentally, the prescription for breaking the "racist alliance" should be noted: "Mutual recognition of these two struggles (of the working class and of the national minorities-our note), facilitated by the presence of most of the oppressed nationalities in the working class camp (A bit of RILism-No, as we shall see!-our comment), can strengthen each by destroying the racist alliance." The favourable conditions for this are indicated, and then follows, "The catalytic element in this situation would be a revolutionary alliance between the working class and the national minorities." So we have the bizarre logic of; first, establish a revolutionary alliance, follow that by mutual recognition, and then break the racist alliance! Surely, the proponents of this unvariegated "racist alliance" line have got this back to front? However, if they start from the standpoint of there being such a racist alliance, which must be broken if a revolutionary alliance is to be formed, then they run up against the problem of their own analysis, for they then have to point to the key elements who will initiate the breaking of the "racist alliance"-i.e. a largeish number of national minority workers, and the relatively small number of members of the majority working class who are least influenced by racism,

who are most prepared to solidarise with black people and to take on the state-i.e., the elements indicated by RFL!

Side by side with the downplaying of the working class as a whole goes a re-writing of history to elevate the importance of the national struggle within countries in past revolutions (RNO, para 2, p.12.):

"The October Revolution was the product of the alliance between the proletariat and the oppressed nations within the Russian empire. The Chinese revolution was based on a co-ordination between the struggle of the whole Chinese people and the struggle of China's minority nationalities against Han chauvinism."

Now this backs up the position of RNO and of the CC minority admirably. Unfortunately, it's not true. The worker-peasant alliance was the key to the success of the October Revolution, crystallized as it was at first in the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies (the vast majority of the soldiers being from the peasantry). Nearly all the main centres of the October Revolution were in Great Russian areas, apart from Tashkent in Central Asia, and some parts of the Caucasus (Lettish sailors did play a significant role in Petrograd, it's true). Many of the forces which set out early on to smash the Bolsheviks were actually based on one oppressed nationality or another; reactionaries used the existing national contradictions to mobilize support - Cossacks under Krasnov, Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Polish republics, the Ukrainian Rada, the Transcaucasian Mensheviks and the forces under the Emir of Bokhara. The October Revolution was threatened with destruction because of the legacy of Tsarist national oppression; to a certain extent, the counter-revolutionary forces were able to mobilize on the basis of contradictions among nationalities, or to convince a section of the oppressed nations that their struggle against oppression had indeed to "take the form of a struggle between nationalities" to be "a struggle even against the subordinate classes" of the Great Russian nation. To combat this, the Bolsheviks on the one hand advocated a programme of self-determination and full national rights, and on the other, appealed to the ~~oppressed~~ toiling and oppressed classes within the oppressed nations and nationalities for class solidarity against the oppressing classes of all nationalities. It took years to resolve the national question in the Soviet Union, and, indeed, there's a strong case for saying that the socialist Soviet Union never fully managed to do so, and this was a major factor in its downfall (But that's another argument....) (See practically any serious book on the October Revolution - try E.H. Carr's history of it, for a start off).

As regards China, RNO is on even shakier ground. The CPC was founded by Hans and built almost exclusively in Han areas; nearly all the early Red Base Areas were in Han country. The Long March took the Red Army through some national minority areas where the seeds of future communist work were sown, although in at least one instance, the Red Army was attacked by members of one of the minorities (one branch of the Yis). The base area around Yenan incorporated part of the Hui area of Ningxia; in the 1940's, anti-Japanese base areas included Korean inhabited zones in the North-west. Nevertheless, the Communist base among the national minorities was tiny, and the struggles of the national minorities played a relatively minor role in securing the victory of the Chinese revolution. In quite a number of cases, national minorities only came in touch with the Communists at the time of liberation (e.g., Tibet in 1950; there was not a single Tibetan CPC member in the region before liberation). The RNO position on this simply doesn't stand up to examination.

This re-writing of history is not simply an academic question; it helps to underpin a "nationalist" position, which seeks to stress the national struggle as against the class struggle. (Incidentally, it is worth remembering that both the CPC and the Bolsheviks laid great stress on "the leading role of the working class.")

The Relationship between Class and National Struggle

Along with the re-writing of history goes a distortion of the Marxist presentation of the national question. The great Marxists have always stood

The great Marxists have always stood for the ultimate abolition of all forms of oppression, but have seen the proletarian revolution as the key to winning this goal, and the proletariat as the class which must lead that through to success. This was because the working class had no means of production but its own labour power, and was therefore not tied to the old property relations (unlike the petty bourgeoisie), because it had nothing to lose and everything to gain by making revolution, and, being propertyless, but forced into a highly socialized system of production—the most advanced system produced by class societies, it could develop the politics, ideology and organization necessary to accomplish this historic task. It is true that imperialism has had a major effect on class relations in the world, but it has not fundamentally changed the necessity for the working class to lead and carry through the socialist revolution. While imperialism was able to reduce the intensity of class struggle at home and buy off a section of the working class, it did so by enslaving whole nations and impoverishing them, creating within them hundreds of millions of proletarians, whose numbers are growing by thousands every day. These proletarians are playing a growing role in revolutionary struggle in the Third World, and the progressive weakening of the global imperialist order must once more create the conditions for the working class of the imperialist countries—given communist leadership—to awake to its destiny. The working class is an international class, and the only consistently revolutionary class: there is no substitute for it.

Marxists must consider all questions, including the national question, from the standpoint of the international proletariat (and, lest there be any quibbling because of the present prejudices and pro-imperialist bigotry of a lot of the working class of Britain, this means the most scientific, consistent summation of the standpoint of the working class is Marxism-Leninism). The abolition of national oppression is a just goal in itself, but it is also an integral part of the process of socialist revolution. Exactly how it is to be accomplished has to be discussed in the framework of socialist revolution. Thus, the stand of communists towards the secession of one nation from a larger state is ultimately determined by the consideration of whether the effect of that will be to bring forward or strengthen the socialist revolution on a global scale, or weaken it. Communists stand for the right of nations to self-determination, but that does not mean that they shouldn't have, in each concrete situation, a view on the direction in which that right should be exercised (e.g., after the October Revolution, the new government immediately recognized Finnish independence, but for the great majority of peoples in the former Russian empire, they advocated that they should exercise their right to self-determination in favour of being part of the Soviet Union.).

Lenin, Stalin and Mao, all writing in the era of imperialism, have been quite clear on this; none of them would be so categorical as RNO, which maintains that, with the First World War and the October Revolution (para 2, p.12.), "The struggle for socialism and the struggle against national oppression were from that point welded together in a single world revolutionary movement. National movements before that, which were part of the bourgeois revolutionary stage, may have contradicted the struggle for socialism. National movements of the oppressed from that point were not in contradiction to, but were part of the struggle for socialism."

This was not Stalin's view. In "Foundations of Leninism" (p.76), "This does not mean, of course, that the proletariat must support every national movement, everywhere and always, in every individual case. It means that support must be given to such national movements as tend to weaken, to overthrow imperialism, and not to strengthen and preserve it. Cases occur when the national movements in certain oppressed countries come into conflict with the interests of the development of the proletarian movement. In such cases support is, of course, entirely out of the question. The question of the rights of nations is not an isolated, self-sufficient question; it is a part of the general problem of the proletarian revolution, subordinate to the whole, and must be considered from the point of view of the whole." (A concrete example from recent times of a reactionary national movement would be the Israeli-backed secessionist movement in the southern Sudan in the '60s and early '70's, or the separatists in Cabinda (Angola), or even the

"Talklanders" who oppose re-unification with Argentina).

The Marxist-Leninist standpoint should be perfectly clear; we judge national movements from a proletarian revolutionary standpoint, and see the proletarian revolution as being of central importance; it is totally incorrect for a communist organization to abandon this position and embrace the stand of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalism.

"Subordination"

Here, it is appropriate to deal with that question of the "subordination" of the national minorities' struggle to that of the proletariat, which RTL-AC (para 3, p.1, final para, p.8) takes up as a theme from where RNO (para.3., p.11.) leaves off. Our response to the criticisms of RTL on this count really follows on from what we have already said. In that revolutionary communists proceed from the standpoint of the proletariat, and insist on the central importance of the working class making socialist revolution, they have always subordinated every other question to that one (See the Stalin quotation above). To quote "Foundations of Leninism" again (p.75), "Leninism has proved, and the imperialist war and the revolution in Russia have confirmed, that the national question can be solved only in connection with and on the basis of the proletarian revolution....The national question is a part of the general question of the proletarian revolution, a part of the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat."

The order in which the CPC says, "Countries want independence, nations want liberation, people want revolution," is not accidental, but indicates that there is an ascending order of importance to these interrelated objectives.

The Marxist-Leninist position on the national question is one that must be defended against all deviations. While RNO itself makes serious errors, it makes correct criticisms of certain right and left opportunist lines on the struggle against racism. It identifies these right and left forms of opportunism as regarding "the struggle against racism as a class question alone subsumed within the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie." This is a correct formulation, although, as we have tried to show, the position which it seeks to defend does itself have some serious flaws. We have to go further.

Marxism-Leninism recognizes national oppression and national struggles as having their own specific characteristics. At the same time, as Mao Zedong pointed out ("Statement Supporting the American Negroes in Their Just Struggle Against Racial Discrimination by US Imperialism-August 8th, 1963), it holds that, "In the final analysis, national struggle is a matter of class struggle." Trotskyists in particular, but also other right and left opportunists, twist the correct Marxist line by making out that if the national struggle is "in the final analysis" "in essence" class struggle, then treating it as a phenomenon in its own right is either reactionary or unnecessary. They are thus able to get up to any social-chauvinist tricks they want without blushing. But while their stand has to be refuted, so does its flip side, which cuts the connections between the class and national struggles, and, while rejecting a position which "subsumes" the national struggle within the class struggle, itself belittles the importance of the class struggle.

For our part, we accept the Leninist subordination of the national to the class struggle, but this is not in contradiction to upholding the right of the oppressed national minorities and nations to determine the direction of their struggles and decide on their objectives. This right we do uphold. We also assert the right of the national minorities to carry forward their struggles at whatever pace they are able and ready to choose, and we would oppose any position which held this to be wrong because it "divided the working class" by challenging white racism, "held back assimilation" or "outpaced the working class struggle." Such arguments could only justify the subordination of the national struggles in the worst sense. We consider that if the position we put forward is propagated, it will rally the best elements in the majority working class to support for the struggles of the national minorities, and that in turn will promote working class unity and assist the national minority working class to become the unquestioned leadership of the national minority struggles, which in turn will constitute a guarantee of solid unity in struggle between the working class and the national minorities.

Changing Nationalities

Since we're getting to the point of leaving behind the TJ articles and dealing directly with the position advanced by the CC minority, one loose end needs tying up, as it has a bearing on the question of the newly-emerging forces, to which RTL refers.

Briefly: While the TJ articles correctly analyse the various nationally oppressed peoples here (besides the Welsh and Scottish nations) as national minorities, their specific references to their national cultures and everything which gives them a positive identity tend to be backward looking (see paras 5, 6 and 7, p.11. of RoR) or at least, pretty static. It's as though the national minorities have their languages and historic cultures to defend, but are not moving on. In some places, the articles do indeed implicitly take a more forward ~~position~~ looking position-e.g., in the "October" articles, the talk is much more of "black people" rather than "national minorities," which not only reflects a view that it is the black national minorities who face ~~the~~ the worst oppression, and who take the most advanced stand, and on whom we must primarily concentrate our analysis, but also reflects the fact that the black national minorities are drawing together in the face of British imperialist oppression, and are being transformed. There are two different positions here, and it may be the case that the difference can't be resolved satisfactorily on the basis of the line of the CC minority, with its dogmatic and undialectical approach.

The position of the CC majority is one that understands the national minorities as a force in development, and the conditions under which they live necessarily have an important influence on the course which their development is taking.

Nothing develops according to a pre-set formula in human societies and that goes for nations and nationalities as well as classes. Every nation has developed and is developing under conditions which have long-term effects on its character-e.g., the English nation developed with the rise of English capitalism; its ideology, its identity, its nationalism, were very much shaped by the class which held hegemony over it, the bourgeoisie. Stalin's definition of a nation ('Marxism and the National Question,' Works, Vol.2, p.307), while adequate at the time, is Eurocentric and inadequate to today's conditions, especially in the Third World; nevertheless, it does give some useful pointers to the characteristic features of a nation:

"A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture."

As we've indicated, some nations emerged in the process of the rise of their bourgeoisie, in some instances to world power, and this has left its marks on the national character in chauvinism and a certain national self-confidence.

Others have arisen under conditions of imperialist oppression, and have developed cultures rich in the spirit and language of resistance to oppression; they have developed nationalisms with contents which are overwhelmingly progressive.

Groups of people detached from the nations in which they originated do not cease to develop; on the contrary, they frequently develop in new directions, and may even constitute new nations themselves. In the old imperialist world order, that was exactly what happened with the English, Irish, Welsh and Scots who went to America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. It was also what happened with the Africans who were taken as slaves to the USA, who lost their original languages, cultures and even their names, but who were reformed into a black nation, distinct not only from other nations and nationalities in the US, but also from the nations of Africa, despite their strong identification with the cause of the African peoples. The national character of the black nation in the US has been profoundly influenced by the fact that it developed under conditions of barbaric national oppression and was also almost totally made up of oppressed and exploited classes.

In Britain, the black national minorities are in transition. There is a distinct tendency for identification with people of the same national origins

to decline in relation to attitudes of identification with black people more generally. On a political level, black unity is a cause espoused by many black activists, and it has sometimes found organizational form (e.g. the Race Today Collective, the United Black Youth League).

However, while common oppression tends to draw all black people into a common front against British imperialism, major differences in culture and history between black people of African and Asian origins tends to militate against their transformation into a single black nationality/nation for some time to come; instead, there is a tendency for the peoples of African origin to coalesce into one nationality, for those of ~~Asian~~ South Asian origin to develop into another, while the Chinese remain as distinct as before.

The change is coming particularly as new generations grow up who never or only briefly lived in India, Pakistan, Trinidad, Jamaica, or other Third World countries. Their collective consciousness was moulded in Britain, not only by family, but by the whole society around them. The thousands of experiences which made their parents ~~the nationalities~~ part of the nationalities which they are only moulded then at second hand; they too, have experienced national oppression by imperialism, but ~~much~~ beyond that basic fact, most of their experiences have differed a lot. In saying this, we are not playing the game beloved by the SWP of trying to promote divisions between generations; we are merely recognizing an objective reality, and trying to see what the outcome of certain existing trends will be. We also demarcate our position from that taken by two comrades who formerly played the leading role in anti-racist work in London. They acknowledged that the term "national minorities" applied to black people born in the Third World, but didn't consider it could be used for later generations, who were oppressed as black people. In fact, their erroneous position fed off this weakness which we have pointed out in the TJ articles, i.e., its failure to adequately acknowledge development of the old national minorities towards something new-into new nationalities in fact. We believe that a real developmental perspective needs to be injected into the TJ analysis of the national minorities in order to bring it more into accord with reality, to make it more complete and more able to refute other positions.

Today, among Afro-Caribbean people in Britain, there are clear indications on various levels of the trend we have pointed to. Rastafarians and others identify specifically with Africa, not the Caribbean islands or Guyana. The culture of the peoples of African origin is very much a common one, as ~~are~~ their political life and mode of community organization (e.g. "Grassroots" and Black Unity and Freedom Party organize among African people generally in the areas where they work; there are a number of community bookshops, none of which are committed to serve one particular old national minority group; political organizations and bookshops have a strong Pan-Africanist orientation, and this has been emphasised strongly in events they've sponsored such as Africa Liberation Day activities or the Black and Radical Third World Book Fair.

The tendency to form one nationality is less evident among South Asian peoples, perhaps because they are not as homogeneous linguistically or in religion as the Afro-Caribbean communities. Nevertheless, the persistence of various Asian Youth Movements is indicative of what is on its way.

Practically, the trend towards the formation of these two new nationalities will mean that the black national minorities will achieve a growing cohesion and strength as a force against British imperialism, and their revolutionary potential inside Britain will expand; secondly, the replacement of the older, narrower national identities with the new ones will mean (and we think ~~that~~ already does mean) that the latter can identify even more readily with the struggles of peoples throughout the Third World.

Minorities National Formation and Class Oppression

After the imperialists conquered the peoples of what we now call the Third World, their rule had two major effects on the internal class structure of those countries. On one hand, by bringing those lands fully

into the capitalist world economy, it accelerated polarisation in those countries, eroded the old class relations, and brought into being a working class, which has grown rapidly this century; it also brought into being a (largely dependent) bourgeoisie. On the other hand, it distorted and restricted the development of the colonial countries and reinforced politically and militarily the old social relations which were being undercut by the capitalist economic system.

This had a great effect on their emergence as nations; anti-colonialism is part of their national consciousness, something to which even comprador and feudal elements have to give lip service. Because a large number of bourgeois elements could play, and can still play, a positive role in fighting for national freedom, they can still retain a fair amount of credibility as nationalist leaders where more revolutionary elements from the most oppressed sections of the people have not been able to seize the initiative. They may promote an anti-imperialist consciousness which goes only so far; only the rising working class and the vanguard organizations which represent it can ~~develop~~ develop this consciousness to its logical final form.

In most Third World countries under imperialist domination, the vanguard proletarian forces will have to form various united fronts and wage quite complex struggles to win the leadership of all the popular masses.

More could be said, and expressed in a better way too, no doubt. The point that we're driving at is that nations take shape under different conditions, and this inevitably has an important bearing on their outlook and on how a proletarian revolutionary vanguard may work among them.

We've already said that there's a tendency for the Afro-Caribbean peoples ~~in~~ and the South Asians to converge into two new nationalities, but this process is taking place under specific historical conditions. We are not dealing with whole peoples, with a multi-class society existing within a specific territory, which have been subjected to imperialist conquest, oppression and exploitation, and are emerging as nations in large part through this experience. The nations from which the black national minorities came have been through that, but they are themselves undergoing transformation under conditions which are different in some quite significant ways; the nearest comparison actually would be to the black people in the USA.

In the first place, the black national minorities in Britain as they existed in the first place were fragments of Third World nations. It was not members of the oppressor classes who came to Britain, but of the oppressed classes (though not people right at the bottom of the colonial and neo-colonial societies, who simply didn't have the means to come), so it was not as if a vertical section of various Third World societies was transposed to Britain.

Once here, the great majority of the black national minorities were employed in the most menial and/or most poorly paid jobs (e.g. on public transport, or in the NHS), and things have got worse, not better, with black youth being particularly badly hit by unemployment.

Thus, not only did the great majority of black national minority people in Britain come from the subordinate classes of oppressed nations, but they overwhelmingly became part of the working class of Britain. All suffered national oppression; the vast majority also suffered class oppression and exploitation too. What is developing, therefore, are not only new national minorities, but new national minorities whose "common psychological make-up" (in Stalin's words), is deeply influenced by their overwhelmingly proletarian character. Thus, just as, in the third quarter of the last century, Engels could speak of the English collectively as a "bourgeois nation" so we can speak of the black national minorities as proletarian national minorities (For evidence of this, check out any of the black papers mentioned above, or Sivanandan's "From Resistance To Rebellion" or just listen to popular Afro-Caribbean music).

At present, there is talk of British imperialism fostering a black bourgeoisie as a co-operative national minority leadership-this idea basically being put forward as one of the British bourgeoisie's responses to the Uprisings. Will this happen, and, if it does, can this bourgeoisie

remould the national minorities with its own values? Both seem doubtful, to say the least. British imperialism is crisis-ridden, and not in any position to dish out the necessary funds; nor is it in the nature of imperialists to willingly give up anything to people who might be rivals in some spheres later on. Instead, state cash is provided to buy off and co-opt militants or potential militants. Such people may have a divisive and disruptive influence in black communities, but British imperialism in crisis will only intensify racist oppression of the national minorities as a whole, and the people's experience of this is sure to counter-act the influence of any who seek to reconcile them to British imperialism.

Newly-Emerging Forces

We believe that what we have said above provides ample reason for talking about black people in Britain as "newly-emerging forces." It was suggested by a comrade at the weekend school that this meant that we were denying the history of the black national minorities in Britain as one of struggle, but that is simply not the case (We did, of course, cite as background material the Sivanandan article, "From Resistance to Rebellion," which says quite a bit about that history.). Our point is that the struggle of the black national minorities has not only developed quantitatively, but qualitatively; We are talking about peoples who have not only been remoulded by the conditions under which they live, but who are re-moulding themselves, and developing a cohesiveness, solidarity, internationalist outlook, and a proletarian outlook which is relatively new, in its degree of development and looking at these things in their totality.

The CC majority also includes the Irish workers and people among the ~~newly-emerging~~ forces in Britain. Again, this does not constitute a denial of their major historical involvement in the class struggle in Britain or their support for the liberation of Ireland, but it is a fact that since the rise of Provisional Sinn Fein and the IRSP, and especially since the Hunger Strikes, a new rebellious spirit has begun to spread among them. Unlike the AF (p.47, para 14), the CC majority believe it is correct to refer to "anti-Irish racism" not just chauvinism. The TJ articles showed the spurious character of the concept of race, and how racism originated; just because the Irish are not black and do not usually stand out physically from the Scots, Welsh and English, it does not follow that they cannot therefore be subjected to racist treatment; the "Irish joke" is the chief ideological expression of this, and the PTA its major political expression (Not for nothing have some commentators referred to the PTA as introducing an "apartheid system" to Britain.)

A Brief Summary

In the second part of this critique, we will go on to deal directly with the positions set forth in the documents of the CC minority. We hope to do this reasonably briefly, as we believe that we have already dealt with the major theoretical underpinnings of their line. What follows will therefore tend to be rather bitty, but unavoidably so.

We hope that we have clarified what we believe to be some of the main lines of demarcation. We have set forth some views on the Weekend School; we have shown how a position developed which separated the class and national struggles and downgraded the significance of the former while over-emphasizing the latter; we have dealt with the red herring of "the subordination of the national struggle to the class struggle;" we have affirmed the revolutionary character of the proletariat and the necessity of a communist organization viewing everything from a proletarian class standpoint; we have defended the concept of the "newly emerging forces." All of this directly concerns the questions we are struggling over in the League today, and we hope comrades will re-examine the positions of the CC minority with these arguments in mind now; the second part of this critique will follow soon.