

Chapter III

THE CHALLENGE WE ACCEPT

The Tasks the Situation is Calling on the Marxist-Leninists to Take Up

Comrades and friends,

For the forces of progress and democracy, for the working class and all those forces working and aspiring for the emancipation of humankind, the eve of the 21st century presents great challenges. When so many problems demand to be solved in the political, economic, social and other spheres, the bourgeoisie, far from addressing them, is doing its utmost to turn back the clock and deny and undo the gains made by progressive humanity in the 20th century. This is presently at the nub of the struggle in society: on the one hand there is the denial of the gains made by progressive humanity; and on the other there is the necessity to solve the objective problems that are mounting up nationally and globally by building a new society which has the concerns of the vast majority of the people as its basis.

It is the struggle to resolve this contradiction, at the base of which is the necessity to socialise the ownership of the means of production and thereby control the direction of the economy on a planned basis to serve the needs of the people, which will open the path to taking society into the 21st century on a new basis. This new basis is a socialist basis. The challenge is to work to bring about this new basis. It is a challenge to tackle the great problems of how the rights of each are to be recognised and guaranteed, how to renovate society from top to bottom, how to resolve the problem of democracy so that the people are truly sovereign. It is a challenge as to how to sweep away all the backwardness and chauvinism which comes from what is outdated and superfluous. It is a challenge as to how to democratise international relations and end the barbarity stemming from globalisation. It is a challenge as to how to develop a new culture which is built in opposition to all that is self-serving. These and a myriad of connected issues to do with humanising the natural and social environment are the great challenges as the new millennium approaches. These tasks can be summed up by saying that the need of the times, as society prepares to move onward into the 21st century, is not to debate in the abstract what is a perfect utopian system and complain in the here and now of the rottenness and injustice of capitalism, as though the remedies of the crisis were far in the future and socialism is a system which only future generations may enjoy. It is to rise to the challenges by actually carrying out the work to create such a modern socialist system, to bring about the new basis of society by elaborating and implementing the programme of fighting to resolve the problems of the present with the guidance of the experience of the past, especially of the 20th century taken as a whole, and the increasingly detailed and sharply focused vision of the future. This is the logic of history in the making.

As a historic stage in its forward march, our Party is meeting these challenges in this Congress and the future tasks which will arise out of its decisions, which is precisely the whole work of preparation for the revolutionary storms which are in the making. It has put

forward its rallying cry to the working class to take centre stage and lead the people in uniting around the programme to *Stop Paying the Rich – Increase Investments in Social Programmes!* It thereby emphasises the necessity to develop an independent pro-social programme in opposition to the anti-social offensive of the bourgeoisie and its governments as the necessary fighting programme to move towards the transformation of society from capitalism to socialism, a transformation which is long overdue. It seeks to establish modern arrangements, consistent with the needs of the times, in order to enter the 21st century on a new basis. It is necessary for the Party to solve very definite problems of how to move society forward, how to make sure that the working class plays its leading role, constitutes itself the nation and provides that new coherence which history demands and which will take society forward on a new basis. In this regard, the Party itself has to become a Party of modern arrangements, and must work to establish those arrangements which will ensure that the working class will play its historic role. It must find ways of breaking with the marginalisation that has been imposed on the working class and all collectives in society. This is the task to prepare to enter the 21st century on a new basis, which is consistent with the needs of the times. The task is to establish these modern arrangements that will lead to the empowerment of the people. This must be done in the course of taking up the question of intervening in the political life of the country. The task is to enable the workers and other sections of the people to take centre stage, to raise their consciousness about what kind of society they want and what kind of society is needed. The task is to enable the workers and other sections of the people to take the necessary action to end their marginalisation, vest sovereignty in the people and open society's path to progress.

The Third Congress is being held with the orientation of preparing to transform society and to enter the new millennium, of preparing to the utmost to take advantage of the coming revolutionary storms and bring about a socialist society. Implicit in our Party's general line and its draft programme for the working class is the importance of giving a profile to socialism, the necessity of our times of working to bring the vision of a new society arising out of, and as a negation of, the objective conditions of the old into sharper and sharper focus, to give confidence to all progressive forces in its realisability. This socialist society is one where the rights of all are guaranteed, where the people's claims on society are met irrespective of wealth, irrespective of "scarce resources", or any other consideration. Generation after generation of the labour aristocracy and social democracy in Britain has tried to reduce this socialism to a phrase. When Tony Blair organised New Labour to remove all vestiges of anything "socialist" from the Labour Party, others who have reduced socialism to a phrase have otherwise occupied this space.

But the historical traditions of the British working class, one of the oldest, most organised, and practical, points to the need to advance by occupying this space and giving socialism a content, imbuing the movement with revolutionary theory. This new content begins from a society which guarantees the rights of all and of each by virtue simply of being human, and it is this which the working class must now inscribe on its banner.

The National Consultative Conferences which RCPB(ML) held in July and November 1998 were very significant in this respect. They declared that the working class can and must challenge the bourgeoisie on all the fronts on which it is determined to resist sorting out the problems and maintain the status quo. They declared that it is up to the communists

to articulate the alternatives on behalf of the working class and people, at their head and along with them, and organise them to take up this challenge, so that it is their deed.

This is the content of the struggle as Britain prepares to enter the new millennium. The significance of the Party's Third Congress is that it will be instrumental in opening up these historic vistas, pointing the way forward with confidence into the 21st century, into the new millennium. The Party will take up the challenge to take society into the 21st century on a socialist basis.

This Congress is actually addressing the issue of beginning to lay the foundations of a mass communist party and will move into the 21st century as a communist party based on modern definitions. This is one of the challenges the Party takes up as it moves into the 21st century – that of laying the foundations of RCPB(ML) as a mass communist party and taking up the task as a practical problem for solution of uniting all communist, progressive and democratic forces into such a mass communist party.

It is pertinent in considering the norms and organisational line of the modern communist party to look at the question of the how the credentials of this Congress were arrived at. If a basic organisation was in good standing, the credentials of the members of that basic organisation were assessed in relation to that basic organisation. In other words, it was not a question of individual qualities or personalities, it was not a question of assessing comrades' strengths and weaknesses in the abstract. If the basic organisation was not in good standing, even if members were admitted into the Party many years ago, there was no basis on which they could attend the Congress because the credentials have been assessed in relation to the standing of the basic organisation. So the participation in the Congress has been reflected in relation to the work of the Party. It does not in any way go against the constitution that was adopted in 1983. The norms reflect the cultural and social forms that were appropriate for that time. These norms have not been contradicted, but they have been built on with this crucial factor of conscious participation of the whole membership in the work of the Party.

In considering the question of the theory and practice of a modern communist party, one of the key issues is the consciousness with which the work is carried out. The issue is not simply just to agree or disagree with the line that is put. The issue is that a modern communist party comprises people, comrades and activists, who are thinking through and working through the problems themselves. The people who actually carry out the work are the ones who also have to do the work of analysing what is that experience.

It must be addressed that in building a modern communist party, it is the most crucial factor in bringing about revolution. Why is it then that modern communist parties have not been built and revolution taken place? In this connection, the agenda of the Congress raises that scores must be settled with the old philosophic conscience. Building socialism here in Britain is not building socialism with old so-called British colours, with a "British Road to Socialism" which says that there is at root something to be cherished about this British democratic system, something which makes Britain an exception to the laws governing all social revolutions.

It is therefore the order of the day that a modern communist party has to settle scores with the old philosophic conscience. RCPB(ML) must step up the work to build the Party on such a new historical basis and to further strengthen it on the basis of the principles of democratic centralism. In carrying out this work, the basis of unity of Marxist-Leninists as

adherents of some general principles of communism, or some general line, is not enough. It has to develop its work on the basis of modern definitions.

It is the order of the day that the communists elevate themselves to the position of politicians, respected by the working class and the broad masses of the people. This raises the question of what is a politician, what does it mean to be political, what will transform the situation. There are parallels with the Party's plan for *Workers' Weekly* which it has stuck to and with which, rather than focusing on developing some pure so-called "politically correct line", the Party has focused on paying attention to its decisions on this front and implementing them. It is having basic organisations which are organs of class struggle, the collective leadership, which will transform the situation in terms of the communists elevating themselves to the position of politicians. This, furthermore, is at the core of the issue of basic organisations being in good standing.

In this period, there is very big pressure for people to say that the movement is everything, that getting involved with and intervening in the movement is the main thing, whereas the Party's work comes nowhere. Our Party, however, is constituted on the basis of the analysis that the objective conditions are over-ripe for revolution but the subjective conditions lag behind. Our entire *raison d'être*, therefore, is to prepare these subjective conditions for revolution. For this reason, it is essential for our very life to go profoundly into the question of the modern definition of a communist party.

In the twentieth century there has been a great deal of experience. There has been not only the victory of revolution first in socialist Russia, and the creation of the Soviet Union, but people's democracies were established. The communist and workers' movement has been in existence from the time of Marx. However, in the 1960s, when The Internationalists were founded, the situation was that, more than one decade after the second world war had ended, with communist parties in many countries, including Britain, revolution was not taking place. Not to address the question of why this was so was not to take a serious attitude.

Let us go back to Marx's time, and trace through the question of the party of the working class, the communist party. Marx said that philosophers have interpreted the world in various ways, but the issue is to change it. Marx and Engels issued the Communist Manifesto in answer to the spectre of communism which the bourgeoisie had evoked. It is important to realise that the "spectre of communism" means precisely the bourgeoisie's rendition of communism, a phantasm of the brain. One of the big problems that the communist and workers' movement faces is that what is generally understood by communism is what the bourgeoisie promotes as communism. Marx and Engels, who settled scores with the conscience of their time, with French socialism and other trends, said that it is high time that the spectre of communism is answered with a manifesto of our own, the Manifesto of the Communist Party.

Marx analysed that the bourgeoisie has given rise to its own gravedigger, the proletariat. It is the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and proletariat that is the basis of motion, development and change in society. The Chartist movement was the expression of the working class movement at that time. At that time, only the citizens, the men of property, were eligible to vote, and the struggle for universal suffrage took place. If the bourgeoisie had not perfected the party system, then under a democracy the working class could have been elected to power. However, the bourgeoisie established their conception of a political party as an electoral machine, and established the system of representative

democracy as one which brings political parties to power or keeps them in power. Political parties in this system are instruments to de-politicise the masses. And the essence of this political system is to keep the working class out of power. When the role of a political force in this society is assessed, then it must be assessed in relation to the class struggle. That is to say, whether it is struggling to bring the working class into power so that it can vest sovereignty in the people, or whether its contribution is to de-politicise the people, keep them marginalised, keep them out of power. In other words, the key thing about the role of a political party under modern definitions is whether it is facilitating the working class to occupy that space for change, the space to empower itself, or not.

After the time of Marx, the role of a political party was still conceived of as that of coming to power through elections. When the working class created its own party, the Labour Party, it represented the interests of labour, just as at that time the working class was organising itself in defence organisations, defence organisations of the interests of the working class. At that time, the issue presented itself as a contest between parties of different kinds with the Conservatives representing very definite property interests and the Liberals representing very definite commercial interests. But by the time capitalism changed into monopoly capitalism, the whole system had been perfected of keeping the working class out of power. Then it was once again necessary to address the question of the nature of a political party.

This is the time that Lenin came forward to analyse that it was necessary to create a party of a new type, the Leninist party. Our Party is a Leninist party in that its conditions for membership are based on agreeing with the general line of the Party, paying dues and working in a Party organisation. The fight that took place at the time of Lenin on the rules of party membership was between those who wanted just to agree with the general line and those who upheld that membership must entail working in a party organisation. This is when it was hammered out that the communist party must be organised on the basis of cells. If the issue is left there, the question arises, if there exist communist parties where everyone who belongs to the party is working in a party cell, why is revolution not occurring? Why are the subjective conditions not being prepared?

The problem taken up for solution is precisely that of the relationship between form and content. There is the issue that you cannot be in good standing unless you agree with the general line, you pay dues and you work in a party organisation. However, this is not enough. The key element, according to our modern definitions, is that the basic organisation has to be an instrument of class struggle. In other words, its members have to be political. Being political means waging the class struggle in favour of your class. This is a matter of very tough decisions of how to occupy this space and how to bring the class with you, how to create the social forms, how to imbue the movement with theory. The key question about democratic centralism is that it is based on the line. There cannot be organisations devoid of dealing with the line, not waging the ideological struggle. Therefore, when our Party gives the formulation that the issue is to raise the level of consciousness and organisation, based on our theory that an individual cannot have understanding without conscious participation, this means that there cannot be organisations except those of people who participate in elaborating the programme. It is impossible to build basic organisations in any other way.

Social form comes as a vision is provided, as the ideological struggle is waged, as the movement is imbued with its line. Therefore, it is necessary to consider which social forms

facilitate the workers occupying this space for change, facilitate ending the political passivity of the working class. It is our responsibility to end the passivity of the working class.

How is an organisation going to occupy the space for change, set its line of march? What is important are the collective decisions that are made in practice. If organisations are instruments of class struggles and are waging the class struggle, then sometimes very hard decisions have to be made. But this is what is going to end the passivity, this is what is going to break the de-politicisation of the working class.

If the movement is everything and the plan is nothing, then you can fight in the movement and it is not going to make any difference, because what is needed is sticking to the plan and then taking those initiatives. Courageous basic organisations are needed that are going to analyse, that do not exist in order to master the “correct line”. The line is there as a guide. As a Party, we base ourselves on the most advanced theory, the most advanced experience. But when all is said and done, theory is the summation of the actual experience of the workers’ and communist movement. The comrades who are actually waging the class struggle in practice are the ones who not only know what is going on but can determine what can be done to advance the struggle.

To sort out of the relationship between form and content, and the dialectical relation between the two, is to defend form once the content has been decided. It is by defending that form, that democratic centralism, the implementation of the decisions, the representing and not misrepresenting, that defends the content. This is what becomes decisive. If any concession is made on the question of iron discipline then nothing will be accomplished. This is why fights take place on this question, and this is why these fights are life and death issues. This is why our Party is so enthusiastic about these fights and sorting out these problems.

When that quality is given birth to, the quality of the new historical basis, the quality of the modern communist party, of settling scores with the old philosophic conscience, then this is the quality of having an organisation and defending it like the apple of one’s eye. It is then the Party will be able to turn that quality into quantity. This is why the Third Congress of RCPB(ML) is historic, because it is based on, it is giving rise to, this quality of the new historical basis that is decisive for preparing the subjective conditions for revolution, for preparing for the coming revolutionary storms.

Comrades and friends,

There can be no two ways about it – the Party, RCPB(ML), is the indispensable and number one factor for preparing the subjective conditions for bringing about a socialist society through social revolution. That is why the work to build the Party can never be downgraded.

The strengthening and consolidation of *Workers’ Weekly* has prepared the conditions for the task of increasing the tempo of the all-round organising work and of defining new organisational tasks. The new cutting edge work will be built on *Improving the Content, Extending the Readership* of *Workers’ Weekly*, incorporating it and not moving off in some different direction. All the demands of the programme of the working class, *Stop Paying the Rich – Increase Investments in Social Programmes*, must find their place within the newspaper. When we talk about a fully rounded newspaper, this is the crucial thing that it means, that it not only covers the struggles of the people but elaborates these demands and,

most importantly, should be developing along the lines of giving practical content to these struggles of the working class and people on all these fronts.

As well as being a question of being organised in the work to strengthen *Workers' Weekly* and organise around it, the essential work around which the Party gets built, it is also a question of gearing all one's thoughts and actions to serving the movement of the working class for its emancipation. The Party does not agree that a person's life can be compartmentalised into a section dedicated to social revolution and a section dedicated to the pursuit of individual interest. In particular, it upholds that Party members cannot on the one hand claim to be revolutionary in words while at the same time withholding their physical, financial and social commitment. To put it another way, they cannot live their lives with their social culture being detached from their politics, or with political culture which is circumscribed.

In this connection, we would like to quote Hardial Bains who, in his author's preface to the 1998 edition of *Necessity for Change!*, writes: "Can it [a Communist Party] have members who place the accumulation of private property or building their 'careers' in the first place? Or can a Communist Party realise its tasks by having members whose culture in ideological and social form is bourgeois? The answers, again, are no. A Communist Party, if it is to realise its tasks in a mature, professional and on-going manner, must develop revolutionary culture in ideological form, on the one hand, and the revolutionisation of culture in social form, on the other."

There are innumerable problems which the working class and people face both in the short term and in the long term. It could be said that the most important single purpose in life is overcoming these problems in the course of working to ensure that the way becomes opened for society to progress instead of being more and more bogged down in material and spiritual crisis. There can be no lasting solution to these problems without society being on the road to progress, which means that society has to take responsibility for its members and that people must control their own lives. In short, society itself must become socialised.

A force must be brought forth which is capable of embodying the political unity of the working class and people in their fight for the victory of a pro-social programme and for political empowerment. People must arise who will carry that line organisationally. This is the heart of the matter.

Comrades and friends,

The work of the Party has brought us this far. It has provided itself with a general line, it has formulated its draft programme for the working class, it has forged ahead with its cutting edge task of strengthening and consolidating its newspaper, of building and strengthening the Party inextricably linked with this programme, of organising the working class and other sections of the people on this basis. The National Consultative Conferences of 1998 ensured that the whole Party was consciously in step with the leadership, and that all the activists were consciously organised to participate in defining the stage of the Party's work. They ensured that the Party comes to its Third Congress with unity of will and unity of thinking. This is what will enable the Congress to deliberate so successfully on setting the seal on this work, what are the key tasks to take up, what are the problems in society which are crying out so vehemently for solution.

The movement must be summed up to give scientific orientation to the victory of the movement. It is important when struggles are beginning to break out that this work is done, of organising around the paper, of building and strengthening the Party and its inner-party democracy, the norms of democratic centralism. The question of organising this generation of youth to build a revolutionary youth and student movement must be addressed. The question of working to establish the organisational form for the line of the unity of the people in the defence of the rights of all, the question of building the Party in the working class and imbuing the workers with the spirit of taking hold of what belongs to them and presenting them with the clear theory that they can take up as their own and use their own experience to organise their peers and set their agenda – this work must also be carried.

History beckons us; the 21st century is but around the corner. Should not the British working class make a break with all the old prejudices with which the reactionary bourgeoisie and the financial oligarchy have sought to shackle it? Should not the British working class make its stand right now to make its contribution to social revolution of the working and oppressed people of all lands? Should it not make its preparations for the coming revolutionary storms by taking up its independent pro-social programme and seeing it through to victory? Should not the Party build itself in the heart of the working class so that the class is organised and made conscious that it must take control of what belongs to it and empower the broad masses of the people? The Party and the working class must stand on their own feet, as one, declaring and acting independently of the bourgeoisie, that they will inscribe on their banner that everyone born to society has rights as human beings and that their claims on society shall be met. They should elaborate and fight for right now their vision of a socialist society, of a socialist Britain, a modern society in modern colours, proletarian colours.

***Forward into the 21st Century! For a Socialist Britain!
Party and Class: Take Hold of What Belongs to You!***

LONG LIVE RCPB(ML)!
WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!