

***Important Struggles
in Building
the Revolutionary
Communist
Party, USA***

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This history is written in the light of the struggle against the Jarvis-Bergman clique, opportunists (led by Mickey Jarvis and Leibel Bergman) who attempted a revisionist coup to seize leadership of the RCP, and failing that tried to wreck, and then led a split from, the Party in the winter of 1977-78. In the course of this struggle, it became clear that a summation of not only the current struggle, but of previous line struggles that went into forging a vanguard of the U.S. proletariat would be extremely valuable. This summation was originally written as an internal document of the RCP and, on the basis of discussion within the Party, it has been rewritten in some parts for publication.

(October 1978)

“Opposition and struggle between ideas of different kinds constantly occur within the Party; this is a reflection within the Party of contradictions between classes and between the new and the old in society. If there were no contradictions in the Party and no ideological struggles to resolve them, the Party’s life would come to an end.” (Mao Tsetung, “On Contradiction,” *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 317.)

The history of the struggle between two lines is a crucial part of the history of our Party and of the communist movement, particularly the Revolutionary Union (RU), that pre-dated the Party—a crucial component in laying the basis for, actually forging and further building the revolutionary vanguard of the working class in this country. A basic knowledge of these struggles is important to deepening our grasp of the stand, viewpoint and method of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought and of our Party’s line as it has been developed in the course of the struggle against opportunism. Such an understanding, widely spread among our comrades and supporters, will push revolutionary practice ahead and arm the whole Party to more consciously participate in future struggles, determine and develop the correct revolutionary line and to tell right from wrong and Marxism from revisionism and opportunism of all kinds.

While history does not repeat itself, but instead moves in spirals, study shows that many common principles and general features run through the major struggles. It is no wonder that, historically, opportunists (including the Jarvis-Bergman clique) inside and outside our ranks have sought to downplay or wipe out the importance of the knowledge of this history, or at most to present only a distorted and partial view of it. This should deepen our determination to arm ourselves with this knowledge as a weapon in the class struggle.

The purpose of summing up this history is not to pat ourselves on the back for our victories and rest on our laurels (though we

should cherish these advances like every gain for our class). We must look to the future, because new struggles will inevitably occur again and again. They will and must go on constantly on all levels of the Party to determine the correct from the incorrect lines and policies. And, with the wave-like development of the overall class struggle, at certain decisive points—especially when the struggle has approached a new stage, two fundamentally opposed lines are sharply posed and a qualitative leap is required to advance—there will be all-out struggle within the Party between opposing forces which actually represent two different roads and two antagonistic classes, the working class on the one side and the capitalist class on the other. With this in mind, we should study this history with a view to deepening our grasp of Marxism, of some general laws that underlie the inner Party struggle, and of its connection with the broader class struggle in society as a whole.

Two-line struggles in the revolutionary ranks, as this history shows, are not “sectarian squabbles on the left” or “contention between a few heavies,” but are a crucial part of the class struggle. They are a reflection, a concentrated reflection, within the Party and particularly in its leadership of larger struggles and changes in society and are crucial in determining whether or not the Party will keep pace and be able to provide revolutionary leadership. While the struggle against bourgeois forces within the Party under our conditions is not—as it is under socialism—the main focus of the battle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the influence of the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie certainly affects our ranks. The struggles that result are sometimes antagonistic and sometimes not. But, as indicated, at key points these struggles have been and will continue to be decisive in determining whether the Party is strengthened as the main weapon of the proletariat or is turned into a plaything and tool of the bourgeoisie. Even when non-antagonistic, such struggles are crucial in keeping Party life vigorous and in developing the correct line and policies. Correctly waging struggle to resolve such contradictions is also important because these non-antagonistic contradictions, while they involve ignorance/knowledge, also contain seeds of conflict between Marxism and opportunism.

While our Party faces much greater tasks and tests ahead, this brief history is in fact a real testament to the strength of Marxism-Leninism, to the fact that growth and progress comes through struggle, and to the correctness of our Party’s ideological and political line which is truly the decisive question for the Party in playing its vanguard role.

On the Revisionist Line of the Jarvis-Bergman Clique

The course of the struggle to defeat this Menshevik*clique and the history of its crimes have been gone into in depth in other Party documents and *Revolution* articles, so there is no need to repeat all this here.** But the two points we should summarize and concentrate on here are the basis upon which this clique and its revisionist line developed (which we will go into later in this report) and also on the basic features of its line.

The Third Plenary of our Party’s First Central Committee was exactly right when it characterized this clique’s line as eclecticism, pragmatism and factionalism and, at the bottom line, as revisionism. These counter-revolutionaries made up the first real, thoroughgoing *revisionist* headquarters (as opposed to infantile adventurist, nationalist and dogmatist deviations) to emerge in the history of the Party and the RU before it.

Why do we say this? First because of their failure to make a thorough rupture with, and their rather open yearning to copy and reestablish the revisionism of, the CPUSA. While both Jarvis and Bergman made certain contributions to the RCP and the RU before it on the basis of their break with some of the most blatant aspects of the CP’s revisionism (especially—at least for now—with its disgusting support for Soviet capitalism), their break was never complete and today they are hog-wild to have a party modeled after the CP as it was before the late 1950s—with all its pragmatism intact and all the revisionist tendencies it embodied even before its complete and decisive leap into counter-revolution.

Second, and more fundamentally, they are revisionist because of their basic line. “‘The movement is everything, the final aim is nothing’—this catchphrase of Bernstein’s expresses the substance of revisionism better than many long arguments,” said Lenin. So it is with this clique.

While their tendency to revisionism had long been a corrosive

* These ex-RCP opportunists have been dubbed Mensheviks because of their striking similarity to a band of renegades who attacked Lenin and the Bolsheviks in the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party at the turn of the century (“Menshevik”—Russian for minority). The Jarvis-Bergman headquarters shared a strong brand of right opportunism and a bent toward factionalism with their Russian political ancestors. (See *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union [Bolsheviks]* and *Revolution*, January 1978 for more on the original Mensheviks.)

** See documents on rectification in the Appendices to *Revolution and Counter-Revolution: The Revisionist Coup in China and the Struggle in the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA* (RCP Publications, 1978). See also the articles on these Mensheviks, their line and practice, in *Revolution*, January 1978-September 1978.

influence on the Party and the RU before it, including the establishment of a factional set-up within the Party, it jumped out and reached a new stage—the stage of becoming an anti-Party Menshevik group opposed to the Party, its Central Committee and its Chairman—around the question of the revisionist takeover in China. This was not simply because they were unable to go beyond an emotional tie to China, or to see that the real beacon to the international proletariat was not a country, but the revolutionary line and achievements of the masses and the Party there. It was not even mainly because they saw powerful potential backing for their own careers if they supported the Chinese revisionists. The Jarvis-Bergman clique liked the revisionism coming out of China mainly because of their own revisionism. It fit them like a glove.

They liked what they saw when the historical mission, the final aim, of the working class—to wipe out all class distinctions and all oppression and establish communism—was smashed as the guiding principle and replaced by “something practical”: the so-called modernization of China by the year 2000. They liked the “theory of the productive forces.” Since in their view, the masses can only be motivated by “something palpable,” like pie-in-the-sky promises of the “good life,” it was great to see communism being presented as they put it forward, “absolute abundance” and not, as Mao saw it, classless society, built on a necessary material foundation, yes, but only “reached when all mankind voluntarily and consciously changes itself and the world.” (“On Practice.”)

With their view, it was just dandy to see the disappearance of all the “idealistic talk” about the masses of Chinese people, increasingly armed with Marxism-Leninism, as the real heroes and makers of history, waging class struggle, revolutionizing society and on that basis developing socialist production, shattering convention, achieving the impossible. How much more at home they were to see the masses basically disappear from the pages of the *Peking Review*, except as pawns and slaves to produce, produce, produce until China has caught up to the level of the advanced capitalist countries—all according to the master plans of some revisionist “geniuses”!

As each new pragmatic line would appear in China, the Jarvis-Bergman clique would welcome it as if it were their own—and it was. And when all else failed them, they fell back to the basic tenet of their pragmatic line, “if it works it must be right.” Since the Four lost, they must have been wrong; since Hua and Teng won, they must be right. Any other conclusion would challenge their whole pragmatic outlook.

For all these reasons, something external to our Party—the question of China—linked up with and brought to the boiling point the internal contradiction between Marxism and revisionism.

This is why the struggle against this clique, focused mainly on the question of China, especially at the 1977 Central Committee meeting, by proletarian revolutionaries led by Comrade Bob Avakian, Chairman of the CC, was a great victory. Achieving our Party’s correct assessment and line on the events in China meant that one serious (though temporary) defeat for the international working class was not compounded by another (serious, if lesser) defeat—the triumph of a revisionist line and clique in our own Party, the killing of our revolutionary role. Not only has this defeat been avoided, but as a result of this struggle, our Party has grown stronger than ever.

The objective conditions which provided soil for this clique’s revisionist line included more than the change in the class character of the Chinese leadership. In the U.S. the mid-1970s marked a relative ebb in some of the raging political struggles of the previous decade, and the underlying decline and crisis of U.S. imperialism was not always so evident on the surface.

In fact looking at the situation overall, there had been real advances in the struggle of the workers and in their consciousness. But if looked at metaphysically things just didn’t measure up to the earlier period of struggles which generally had been characterized by more broadly and openly expressed revolutionary sentiments but which mainly had involved other strata of the people and therefore were bound to prove incapable of achieving revolution.

In these conditions, it could appear superficially that there was not much to do but tail along in the economic struggles and abandon the path of all-around revolutionary work and preparation. This clique, awestruck by the apparent great strength of U.S. imperialism, was fascinated by and championed just such a tailist, economist line.

These Mensheviks’ ideological and organizational lines, and their political line on the U.S. class struggle, should be summarized as a teacher by negative example. Their political line is not so fully developed yet and is in some ways difficult to pin down, but that in itself is a characteristic of revisionism (and of Trotskyism—to which there are also many similarities in this clique’s behavior). Lenin’s remark from *What Is to Be Done?* applies here, “Once again Parvus’ apt observation that it was difficult to catch an opportunist with a formula was proved correct. An opportunist

will put his name to *any* formula and as readily abandon it, because opportunism is precisely a lack of definite and firm principles." (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5.)

Their political line on various aspects of the class struggle can be generalized in the following words of Lenin: "To determine its conduct from case to case, to adopt itself to the events of the day and to the chopping and changing of petty politics, to forget the primary interests of the proletariat and the basic features of the whole capitalist system, of all capitalist evolution, to sacrifice these primary interests for the real or assumed advantages of the moment—such is the policy of revisionism." ("Marxism and Revisionism," *Collected Works*, Vol. 15, pp. 37-38.)

From this narrow rightist point of view this clique advanced the charge that the danger in the Party was "left idealism" at the top, and that there was a retreat from building the struggles of our class and the task of "fusion of socialism with the working class movement." But there was no such retreat, and what they were pushing was not fusion at all but *confusion* of socialism with the spontaneous level of the workers' struggle. In fact, the stress we had given our progress in building the daily struggles, while correct, had also given rise to some spontaneous tendencies to trade unionism and rightism with which their own revisionism could, to an extent, "fuse." The fact that our Party was beginning to more firmly grasp what it means "in the movement of the present [to] also take care of the future of that movement" (*Communist Manifesto*) was enough to drive these people up a wall.

Their line made a special stage out of economic work, and in fact was a general recipe for stagism. They separated tactics from and elevated them above revolutionary objectives and political line. They pushed the line of "everything through the IWOs" (Intermediate Workers' Organizations) to liquidate the role of the Party, and at the same time gutted the IWOs of their political content, in effect aiming to reduce them to shells under whose name these would-be hacks could call a demonstration or mobilize workers to be a pressure group within the unions, or a "political" pressure group relying on bourgeois politicians. As for broader political questions, if they weren't avoiding them altogether (the woman question), they were quite capable of turning anything (youth work is a glaring example) into reformist "constituency" work. On the international level, while their line has not yet fully developed, we can already see them adopting more and more of the revisionist line coming out of China, which means capitulation to imperialism, in particular U.S. imperialism, right now. And we can

safely predict that when push comes to shove around the question of war, they will fully cave in to imperialism, especially "their own" imperialists. Why can we predict this? Because the whole idea of sticking to the high, hard road of revolutionary struggle is contemptible to these "quick and easy resulters," and their line is a line for non-revolutionary work in any situation.

Ideologically, they practiced eclectics and pragmatism and broke the link between theory and practice. They constantly raised a secondary point to try to defeat the principal one. You wanted to give some life and meaning to becoming tribunes of the people? They said we would abandon the economic struggle. You wanted to give some emphasis to building the Party and raising the consciousness of active and advanced workers? They said this was Trotskyite interventionism. You wanted to attack and expose the capitalist system as the cause of unemployment? They said this was too abstract, that we should make "the general reside in the particular" and blame the President's policies.

They practiced metaphysics on the relation of struggle and consciousness. Some even said at the time of the Founding Congress "what the masses want to know is not where their oppression comes from but how they can fight and win." To them the Party press, propaganda and political exposure were meaningless, and "raising consciousness" was limited to *only* what could be unfolded out of a particular struggle. Theory might be OK for use as an occasional ready-made recipe for how to carry out some specific work but could never be studied in a comprehensive way to grasp basic principles and really guide all-around revolutionary work. This was a clique of philistines—smug in their narrowness and contemptuous of real revolutionary theory-guiding consistent revolutionary work.

Organizationally, they had no use for the Party's structure, its chain of knowledge and chain of command. Their line would lead to cutting off the Party branches from this chain, because it choked off the lifeline of the branches, education in the Party's ideological and political line ("too general"—they would say). Because of their methods and their revisionist line on the nature of the enemy, they threw the Party's security to the four winds (though secondarily they sometimes used "security" as a slogan to keep comrades from doing necessary revolutionary political work). They wanted to do things by "having everything under their command and everything at their disposal" and they seriously damaged the Party's methods of leadership and the practicing of the mass line.

But while this faction's revisionist line was consolidating and

its ambitions were growing throughout 1977, it was meeting increased criticism and resistance from many comrades and sharpening struggle from leading comrades holding to our Party's line. All this increased its underhanded double-dealing, and finally led it to openly jump out for a trial of strength seeking to pull a coup or blackmail the Central Committee. Overestimating their own strength and underestimating the strength and tenacity of the majority of the Central Committee and the proletarian line, they were thrown into disarray and had to resort to still more double-dealing, hypocritically voting to carry out the decisions of the Central Committee, including Party rectification. But stuck on their revisionism and careerism, they could not and would not face the criticism of those below them they had misled, and they feared like the plague having their revisionist line openly exposed and studied by the Party as a whole. So they had no choice but to attempt to split the Party immediately, making full use of appeals to emotionalism and ultra-democracy to steamroll as many as they could along with them. Thus they began the inevitable process of openly repudiating one aspect after another of our Party's revolutionary line and making themselves teachers by negative example and objects of the just hatred of the whole Party.

The Founding of the Revolutionary Union

This struggle against the revisionist line of the Jarvis-Bergman clique was not the first such struggle faced by our Party and the Revolutionary Union before it. There have been two earlier major two-line struggles within our ranks, several smaller struggles, and a whole decade of struggle in the revolutionary movement generally in which we have worked. It is through these struggles that the correct line and *Programme* of our Party were forged.

In these years, from the late '60s to the founding of our Party in 1975, the particular course of the revolutionary forces, and the particular variants of opportunism which had to be combatted had much to do with the specific features of the period—mainly the absence of a party and the character of the main social forces in motion.

Some of these features were negative. There had been an ebb in the workers' struggle due in large part to the post-WW 2 strength of U.S. imperialism. The Communist Party (CP) had sunk into counter-revolutionary revisionism. Our *Programme* clearly sums up its character. The early attempts to form Marxist-Leninist organizations also became opportunist roadblocks. The Provi-

sional Organizing Committee, which split from the CP in 1958, was a swamp of sectarianism, as shown for example by the way it prematurely split without fully carrying out the struggle against revisionism. The POC produced a collection of spin-offs including the Communist League (or Communist Labor Party) which shared such common features as dogmatism, revisionism and the line that white workers were basically reactionary. The Progressive Labor Party (more on it later) had first showed some promise, but by the latter '60s had clearly sunk into counter-revolutionary Trotskyism. As a result of this, revolutionaries in this country, mainly arising from the non-proletarian social forces whose struggles were growing, were largely cut off from the experience of the communist movement here and internationally and many were, in fact, turned off to Marxism-Leninism both because of the influence of the bourgeoisie's propaganda and because of what they saw masquerading as Marxist-Leninist.

But the main features of this period were far from negative. At the same time as revolutionary struggles pounded U.S. imperialism internationally, great mass movements in this country shook the system and changed the political face of the country. The Black people's struggle, the movements of other oppressed nationalities, the struggles against the war in Indochina, the general revolt of students and other youth, the women's movement—all these were living proof to the truth that wherever there is oppression there is resistance. So, too, by this time the spontaneous workers' struggles were beginning to grow in intensity. In China, the Cultural Revolution was surging ahead, demonstrating to many the life and power of Marxism-Leninism and in many ways reestablishing it in this country.

Under these circumstances revolutionaries organized themselves in various ways. Many, from the Black Panther Party to the League of Revolutionary Black Workers in Detroit to many in the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) were influenced by and in varying degrees based themselves on Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought. Some were forming local revolutionary groupings and trying to establish ties with the workers' struggles. It was in this situation that the Revolutionary Union was formed in the San Francisco Bay Area in 1968. Made up principally of young activists from the period's mass struggles, plus a few older comrades who had left the revisionist CP, the RU was to develop into the main political and even organizational center for the formation of the RCP.

But at the time, due to the conditions just described, there was

no such center, nor was there any way to simply declare and form a genuine Party. Different forces were coming, or possibly coming, to Marxism-Leninism from different directions. There were hopes that the Black Panther Party and others would develop along a correct path and play a big role in developing the Marxist-Leninist Party. There was little experience in integrating basic Marxist-Leninist principles with the concrete conditions of the U.S., especially in the working class.

Still, from the beginning, the RU grasped the importance of forming the Party and set out to play a role in this process, recognizing there is *always* an objective need for a vanguard Party. In its first publication, *Red Papers 1*, there was a section, "Thesis on Building a Revolutionary Party in the United States," which said: "Many are becoming conscious of the need to transform the protest movement into a revolutionary movement—a movement that would be more than a thorn in the side of the ruling class; a movement capable of destroying that class and creating a new society; a movement that is not primitive, fragmented and directionless, but one guided by a revolutionary party based on Marxist-Leninist principles." The RU even said, "the most immediate and urgent practical task facing the U.S. revolutionaries is to establish an organization of revolutionaries capable of maintaining the energy, continuity and direction of the political struggle, thereby creating the conditions for the emergence of a revolutionary party," and called for the formation of local Marxist-Leninist collectives and the exchange of experience between them.

But creating these conditions was no straight line process, and the principal condition was to establish a center (mainly political, secondarily organizational) for the building of the Party. While ideological struggle could and did play an important role in this, this was principally a question of establishing this through practice and the summation of practice based on Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought. For these reasons, while errors were sometimes made in underplaying the task of Party-building, the RU was correct in concentrating on work in the mass struggles, particularly in the working class, on integrating the basic truths of Marxism with U.S. conditions as the only possible road to the Party—as opposed to concentrating on Party-building through debate and struggle among those who were part of this new communist movement.

As part of building toward the Party, the RU did undertake at its beginning to fight for Marxism in opposition to opportunism—

particularly that of the CPUSA and Progressive Labor Party. In an article "Against the Brainwash" in *Red Papers 1*, the RU exposed the CP and Soviet social-imperialism, and while explicitly pointing out that "revisionism, or right opportunism, constitutes the main long term danger to the revolutionary movement" it also took up a polemic to expose the "left" opportunism of Progressive Labor Party (PL), which was spreading confusion by posing as upholders of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought while attacking the revolutionary thrust of the major movements of the times—and, of course, the thrust of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought. PL was denouncing the Vietnamese for not fighting immediately for socialism and instead (correctly) fighting for a new-democratic stage of national liberation; it was attacking the Black liberation struggle in the U.S. because it was nationalist, not socialist, and PL claimed "all nationalism is reactionary"; it was denouncing the student movement as useless since it did not make its main focus linking up with workers in economic struggle. The RU showed how this was a perversion of and objectively an attack on Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought, and this exposure of PL's line inspired many revolutionaries—especially among the youth and students—to take up this revolutionary science.

But even these steps were not taken without struggle internally. With the origins of the revolutionary forces, including the RU, in the non-proletarian social movements of the time there was bound to be some mixing of Marxism with various petty-bourgeois trends. One was the tendency to adapt socialism to nationalism (more on this later). Another was various "new left" tendencies—toward seeing communism (or "socialism") not as the revolutionary science and the historic goal of the proletariat, but in utopian terms of ideals like "democracy," "equality" and so on.

This petty-bourgeois thinking had its influence in various ways in the revolutionary ranks—often producing reformism and a "condescending savior-social worker" approach when connected with the workers' struggles, and on the other hand "left" trends like dogmatism or adventurism when separated from those struggles.

The RU was not immune from these trends. Its experience and understanding of Marxism-Leninism was very primitive at that time. In formulating its basic positions, which became the "Statement of Principles" in *Red Papers 1*, a struggle developed over the question of whether to base itself on Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought, or on some kind of "American exceptionalism," as was quite popular at that time in radical circles.

A handful of petty-bourgeois radicals who had joined up with the RU because it seemed like "the thing to do," argued that the dictatorship of the proletariat was fine in backward countries, filled with "ignorant peasant masses" like Russia and China—where you had to have a "forced march" to achieve rapid economic development. But it was unnecessary in an already developed country like the United States and would be rejected by the "more cultured" people of this country. In other words, they put forward the theory of the productive forces and really saw the dictatorship of the proletariat as a dictatorship *over* the people. And they "couldn't support" Joseph Stalin—"that butcher."

They opposed Marxism-Leninism as a "dogma" and wanted instead a "mixed bag" with a little of every idea popular in the student movement at that time. Their line came down to American chauvinism and social democracy. They opposed the idea of a disciplined, democratic centralist communist party leading the revolutionary movement. They were really opposed to accepting the discipline of the RU; they opposed building it along Marxist-Leninist lines, and split from it.

The struggle against this group, while in one sense not very intense or deep-going, did play an important part in helping the RU to consolidate around the stand of basing itself on the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism, and to publish *Red Papers 1* on that basis.

Shortly after the publication of *Red Papers 1* in 1969, a small clique of armchair revolutionaries within the RU, headed by one Marv Treiger and tied in with certain people now in leadership of the "Communist Party Marxist-Leninist" (CPML) (including M. Klonsky), raised a frontal attack on the RU's united front strategy. They blasted it as a slick version of the revisionist CP's "anti-monopoly coalition." They claimed that the RU, like the CP, made a distinction between monopoly capitalism and imperialism and that on this basis the RU actually put forward a strategy for two-stage revolution in the U.S. They labelled the RU "economist" because it took part in the day to day struggles of the workers, and attacked it as "national chauvinist," because it did not base the strategy for Black liberation on the struggle of the Afro-American nation for self-determination (the right to secession) in the Black Belt area of the South.

To cover up their own social-pacifism and fear of revolutionary struggle, they blasted the RU for refusing to join with them in publicly condemning the *Weatherman* group from SDS as "enemies of the people" at that time. And they charged the RU with

"male chauvinism" because it didn't join with them in tailing behind petty-bourgeois tendencies of the women's movement.

The struggle against this clique strengthened the RU's understanding of the fact that communists must base themselves on a *concrete application* of Marxism-Leninism to the concrete conditions of the U.S. and the mass struggles of the people. And it strengthened the understanding that communists must oppose the dogmatism that develops among sections of the radicalized petty-bourgeois intellectuals, who are attracted to the body of Marxist-Leninist theory (which is actually the outlook of the working class and its real scientific approach to theory), but fear and look down on the working class itself, and its practical struggles.

Finally, this struggle helped to consolidate the RU's understanding of the strategy of the united front against imperialism under proletarian leadership, and to develop and put forward this line in *Red Papers 2* (late 1969). And to develop and put forward a more proletarian line on the woman question in *Red Papers 2*—and in *Red Papers 3* (spring 1970), which although it contains many weaknesses, represented a real step forward at that time, as compared with the bourgeois feminist tendencies that had considerable sway among the circles of revolutionary intellectuals represented in groups like the short-lived RYM II*. The leaders of these circles—or at least those now in leadership of the CPML—have carried these tendencies with them to this day.

The Franklin Opportunist Group

In the summer of 1970 a successful attempt was made to bring together various collectives around the country who united around the line of *Red Papers*. This was the beginning, though primitive, of a nationwide pre-party organization based on the principles of

* RYM II (Revolutionary Youth Movement II) was a group that began in 1969 within SDS as it split from Progressive Labor Party. Among those battling PL, RYM II developed in opposition to the *Weatherman* group. Both had come out of RYM I, which had been formed as a tendency in SDS in opposition to PL's narrow economism and "workerism" with which it tried to beat down the revolutionary upsurge in society, including among students and youth.

On the surface the split between RYM II and *Weatherman* involved RYM II's insistence on upholding the revolutionary role of the working class. At the beginning, therefore, the RU was inclined toward RYM II, though it refused then to go along with casting *Weatherman* into the camp of the enemy. But the RYM II leaders, with today's CPML leader Mike Klonsky at the center, pointed at *Weatherman's* anti-working class tendencies and insisted on raising this contradiction to the level of antagonism in order to promote their own opportunism.

Increasingly, under a thin veneer of dogma, RYM II became characterized by sterile reformism, thinly disguised pacifism, and petty-bourgeois self-cultivation,

Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought. The organization had begun to sink roots in the working class, was no longer confined to the Bay Area, and had some significant influence within the revolutionary movement as a whole. As a result and in the context of these developments, the struggle against the Franklin opportunist group became full blown in the RU in late 1970. This ideological struggle was far more intense, deep-going and decisive in the development of the RU than any of the previous struggles. This struggle against the Franklin opportunists broke out when it did because the RU could not continue to develop in a proletarian direction without discarding the baggage of the petty-bourgeois radical movement that Franklin's line represented.

This struggle started around the question of military strategy—against a slightly more sophisticated version of the anarchism and adventurism represented in the student movement by the *Weatherman* group, and in the theories of “urban guerrilla warfare” put forward by the Panthers and some other forces at that time. As this line of the Franklin opportunists was exposed, the focus shifted and the struggle expanded to take in the national question, the question of fascism, and finally came down to the basic question underlying all of this: what class and class ideology do we base ourselves on and uphold?

In a nutshell, Franklin's argument came down to saying that the most oppressed were the most revolutionary. That the Black communities (and those of other oppressed nationalities) were therefore potential revolutionary base areas which were under police occupation and fascism and were engaged in the initial stage of a protracted armed revolutionary war. The task of communists was to raise the level of this war of attrition against the imperialist enemy and to spread it. For opposing this, the RU was labelled “revisionist, national chauvinist and social pacifist.”

While this may seem transparently wrong—even silly—with the merest glance at today's situation, it was not at all so obvious at that time. It was not even yet apparent that the Black liberation upsurge of that time was approaching an ebb, the Panthers were still militantly fighting the system, and many in the revolutionary movement held views similar to Franklin's. Objectively, the need for a leap in understanding was there, but it required the science of

including the bankrupt line of centering the struggle around getting people to repudiate their “white skin privilege” and “male privilege.” The RU attempted to wage some further struggle with RYM II, but this group—stagnating in this pit—soon fell apart. *Weatherman*, too, continued to degenerate and became a terrorist sect, whose foundation remained ultimately reformism.

Marxism to make that leap.

Communist revolutionaries in the RU, led by Comrade Avakian, struggled to defeat this line of revolutionary adventurism. It was pointed out that not only would such a line lead away from the real pressing tasks of communists, but that it would lead to the destruction of the RU. And it did lead in about two years to the destruction of the *Venceremos* organization which Franklin formed when he split the RU.

The line that the oppressed Black nation would lead the revolution was fought, pointing out that the main and leading force would be the industrial proletariat. Black workers are part of the single U.S. proletariat while the national struggles were a key part of the united front. Franklin's empiricism was criticized:

“It is true that today the workers are not yet playing the leading role in the struggle against U.S. imperialism. But we would be very narrow-minded, extremely empiricist, if we based our strategy only on what is happening today. By using the dialectical method—by basing ourselves on what is new and arising—we can recognize that, throughout the capitalist and imperialist countries the workers are beginning to rise to their role as revolutionary leaders.” (*Red Papers 4*, p. 87.)

The “terrorism of the outraged intellectuals” which characterized the Franklin group was criticized and the real task of raising the level of the struggle was clearly brought out in opposition to this. But social-pacifism and economism were not subscribed to. “Raising struggle to a higher level means raising the *political consciousness* of the masses involved in struggle: that is our task in every situation, and military tactics must be assessed on the basis of how they contribute to this central task.” (*RP 4*, p. 26.) Against the charge that to argue for this task was revisionism and economism, *What Is To Be Done?* was studied: “In *What Is To Be Done?* Lenin attacks the economists. What does he have to say against them? That they are scared to engage in armed combat with the police? *No*. In fact, as we pointed out in *Red Papers 2*, the Economists did at least as much of that as the Bolsheviks. Lenin demanded that Communists involve the workers in *all-around political struggle against the State*. Raising the level of struggle, for a Leninist, means broadening it beyond mere economic issues, linking up struggles, building the united front.” (*RP 4*, p. 68.)

Our understanding of the united front was deepened in this struggle, even as we argued that we must be based first and foremost on the industrial proletariat:

“Once again, in contrasting the outlook of the employed

workers with less stable sections of the working class, we are not saying that these other sections cannot play a very important role in the struggle. We are not saying that oppression has nothing to do with resistance. We are only saying that, in order to develop revolutionary consciousness and organization, these sections, and the rest of the oppressed people need the leadership of a communist organization, based primarily on the workers in large-scale industry." (RP 4, p. 63.)

"Our task as communists is to support and give leadership to all the struggles of the people. When objectively anti-imperialist struggle breaks out among non-proletarian strata and classes, we must join with these struggles, fight for proletarian ideology, unite all who can be united against the main enemy, and work tirelessly to spread the struggles to the working class." (RP 4, p. 89.)

Against Franklin's mechanical copying of the form of struggle in colonial and semi-colonial countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, the RU stressed that a scientific Marxist understanding had to be applied. The U.S. is an imperialist country, and the level of the productive forces and the relations of production basically determine that protracted war beginning with self-sufficient base areas cannot be the strategy. Instead the October Revolution of Russia, with insurrection followed by civil war, provides the basic model for us. The RU leadership pointed out:

"Comrades need have no fear: in the course of these struggles there will be plenty of violence, and there will be plenty of opportunity, indeed necessity, for armed struggle. And we will have to develop and strengthen all the appropriate forms of organization to carry on struggle on all fronts, and on all levels. But, until we are ready to launch an all-out insurrection and carry it through, *all military work must be a subordinate part of the political struggle of the masses.*" (RP4, pp. 65-66.)

In opposition to the Franklin line that the U.S. was a fascist or a "developing fascist" state, it was pointed out, "Yes, the ruling class is developing its fascist apparatus; but it is developing it *within bourgeois democracy*, which is still the dominant form of bourgeois rule in this society. Now nobody should get too excited: bourgeois democracy does not mean that there is real freedom for the masses of people. Bourgeois democracy is simply a veiled form of class oppression, of bourgeois dictatorship, in which there is real democracy only for the ruling class, and sham, limited rights for the people." (RP 4, p. 92.) Repression and preparations for fascism must be fought under bourgeois democracy, but in a revolutionary crisis as the bourgeoisie tries to impose fascism "the only way to

prevent the consolidation of fascism is to overthrow the ruling class. In the final analysis the question of preventing fascism comes down to the question of proletarian revolution. Our strategy for the one must be the same as the other." (RP 4, p. 93.)

This whole struggle greatly deepened the RU's understanding of the crucial importance of ideological and political line and of revolutionary theory. Even while they picked a few quotes out of context to attempt to justify their line, the Franklins constantly chirped "practice is primary" and accused the communists who combatted them of "correct-line-ism" in order to deny the importance of line, attack the role of revolutionary theory and split it from practice.

The RU leadership said at the time, "The opportunists who recently split the organization did a lot of damage by making a fetish of our own 'practice,' by refusing to learn from the history of the world communist movement, which has resolved many of the contradictions we encounter in our own work, and has laid the basis for resolving many of the genuinely new contradictions that arise in the development of class struggle. Because of the low level of development of the entire organization, these opportunists were able to play on people's emotions—which are the only thing people have to fall back on when they don't have the scientific tools to deal with the contradictions scientifically." (RP 4, p. 81.)

And because the Franklins tried to use a few workers they had confused and corrupted as a form of capital to bolster their arguments it was also pointed out, "to argue, at any time, that the number of workers who support a particular organization or political line determines how proletarian that organization or line is—that is completely unscientific. By this standard the revisionist CP in the U.S. is much more 'proletarian' than our organization—it still has more working people than we have. Or, to make it more obvious, the revisionist parties of Italy and France—who can claim hundreds of thousands of workers in their ranks, would have to be judged more proletarian than the communist organizations in those countries which uphold the Thought of Mao Tsetung and are trying to apply it to their situations.

"If workers could not be attracted to non-proletarian ideology there would be no need for the science of Marxism-Leninism; the writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao would be completely redundant and a waste of time. In fact, in the early stages of the working class movement especially, it is easier in some ways to attract a small number of working people to one form or other of non-proletarian ideology. This is not to slander the working class,

but [dialectical] materialism is always harder to master than metaphysics; it is easier at first to be guided by emotion rather than science; casting off selfishness and narrowmindedness is a long process of struggle. We have full confidence that the American proletariat can and will do this—but only when its practical struggles are merged together with communist agitation and propaganda, and only as its most advanced members and representatives, the members of its communist organization, carry out the most thorough ideological struggle within their ranks, ideological struggle which constantly sums up practice in an all-sided way and constantly relates theory to that practice.” (RP 4, p. 16.)

The process of development of this whole struggle holds some valuable lessons. For a long time, the disagreements with Franklin were of a lesser, quantitative type. His opportunism was not so fully developed, and many of his wrong ideas were current throughout the revolutionary movement and within the RU. But when he put forward his paper on “military strategy,” things took a leap. For a while it might have seemed that he would get off this line and move ahead, but it soon became clear that he would not, and he became more and more stubborn. History was moving forward. The line and work of the RU were developing. Roots were being sunk in the working class. Organizationally, primitiveness and localism were being moved beyond. It was clear Franklin was stuck politically. And he would not give up on the “independent kingdom” he had developed within the RU in the Mid-Peninsula area of the Bay Area.

In typical opportunist fashion, Franklin began an all-out assault on the RU, continually shifting the focus of debate, breaking democratic centralism, attacking “top down leadership” and peddling emotionalism. Things had gone from quantity to quality. And while Franklin had begun by raising “only one issue,” military strategy, and posing as the true defender of the RU’s line on all fronts, this quickly changed. Summing up this development, and referring to the previous struggle within the RU against the dogmatist Marv Treiger, a former RU leader, the RU leadership pointed out:

“Now, a year later, a handful of leaders within our organization have taken the same path. They have opened an all-out attack on the line of the organization (the very same line they defended so strenuously one year ago) as ‘revisionist... racist... national chauvinist.’ They have consistently defied and attacked democratic centralism and have launched an open campaign of lies and rumors about those of us who continue to uphold the organiza-

tion’s line and are trying to hold the organization together in the face of this completely unprincipled attack.” (RP 4, p. 72.) Opportunism has its logic, and Franklin went on the road to hell.

As a result of this struggle, while a third of the organization was lost, the RU made rapid progress theoretically, politically and organizationally. It solidified a loose amalgum of contacts into a more unified structure and developed as a nationwide organization. Comrades plunged into the practical work in all fronts, especially into the struggles of the working class, with greatly increased understanding and enthusiasm. Advances were made which contributed greatly both to the practical struggle and to the task of forming the Party.

On the basis of these developments, new struggles arose. Within the RU, the Central Committee after a time began to sum up rightist tendencies—tendencies to narrow down our working class work to trade unionism and a tendency on the part of some comrades, notably L. Bergman as well as a trio on the West Coast, to be fooled by and supportive of the 1972 “anti-war” election campaign of George McGovern for President against Nixon. In addition, the RU began to struggle against the dry dogmatism and then, increasingly, the open reformism of the October League (now the CPML), which was formed in groupings in Los Angeles and Atlanta and began to spread nationally.

Struggle Against Bundism

In the fall of ’73, the RU leadership began to sum up and struggle over the question of moving to actually *form* the Party of the proletariat. Objectively, the time had come when actually moving to form the Party, Party-building, was the most urgent and central task. The proletariat was at a crossroads—it “was an end of one period and the threshold of a new period” both in the communist movement and in the mass movement.

In the first public call to move to build the Party (May ’74 *Revolution*) the RU summed up: “different forces have come to Marxism-Leninism from different directions, and have gone to the working class and masses on that basis. In the course of this, practice has been accumulated, ideological struggle has been carried on, and different tendencies have developed. So now it has become possible—in fact, it has become crucial—for the revolutionary forces to sum up these developments more systematically, conduct ideological struggle on that basis on a higher level and in a more concentrated way, and *unite all who can be united around a*

Marxist-Leninist line and Programme, and in this way form the Party."

The absolute necessity to move to actually form the Party of the proletariat in the immediate period also related to the fact that it was an end of a period in the mass movement as well. The high tide of mainly spontaneous (and mainly non-proletarian) revolutionary struggle of the '60s and early '70s had reached the limits of its character. Of course, wherever there is oppression there is resistance and the masses continued to wage struggles, even very sharp ones (including in the working class) but the struggle of the masses was at a relative ebb. Both in this relative ebb and in the upsurge that would surely develop there would be greater demands for disciplined, more class conscious leadership for the proletariat to maximize its struggle toward revolution. And if the proletarian vanguard wasn't forged at that time, another generation of revolutionaries—those who had emerged from the '60s struggles—would be lost and a tremendous setback for the proletariat would occur.

At this critical juncture—at the point when the RU leadership was struggling out the questions necessary to make these decisive steps—a very sharp and intense two line struggle broke out—both within the RU and between the RU, led by Comrade Avakian, on the one hand and two organizations called the Black Workers Congress (BWC) and the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization (PRRWO), on the other. These organizations had been working together with the RU in a National Liason Committee.¹

An opportunist, D. H. Wright, at that time a leading member of the RU, together with the leadership of the BWC and PRRWO, jumped out and opposed this change in the central task, initially on the basis that it was premature. According to them, communists had not sunk deep enough roots among the masses and above all, had not sunk enough roots among oppressed nationalities. More specifically, they argued that the BWC and PRRWO, i.e., communist forms based on nationality, needed to develop more so that "Third World" communists could have their "special place" (the vanguard of the vanguard) in the new Party.

The overall terms of the struggle can be characterized as "Marxism vs. Bundism" (adapting socialism to nationalism). National Bulletin No. 13 (reprinted in *Red Papers* 6) was written as an RU internal document aimed primarily at D. H. Wright and his small camp in the RU. But while his opportunism verged on out and out national chauvinism (with his "rating" system of different nationalities in the working class—of course topped by his own!) tendencies toward Bundism were existent throughout the RU.

These tendencies to not be thoroughly scientific on the national question were part of petty-bourgeois baggage carried over from a period of high tide of struggle in the national struggles not led by a proletarian line. These tendencies in the RU were linked with economism and other rightist tendencies that tended to confuse bourgeois ideology and politics with proletarian ideology and politics.

The line struggle initially took shape over the question of revolutionary nationalism and the slogan "Black Workers Take the Lead" in the mass movement and over whether Black and other "Third World" communists had a special leading place within the RU and in the Party that was yet to be formed. At the heart of the struggle were very important questions: The character of the national struggle in the U.S.; whether there was a single multinational proletariat in the U.S. with a single common world outlook expressing its interest. Whether the multinational proletariat could (and would through the leadership of its vanguard) lead the fight against all oppression, including the struggle against national oppression, and how the ideology of nationalism is not the same as proletarian ideology, but a form of bourgeois ideology.

An entire *Red Papers* was dedicated to this line struggle. Some passages from it would best clarify in a concise way the nature of the line questions:

On the character of the national struggle in the U.S.:

"In the semi-colonial and colonial countries generally, the struggle for liberation of the nation basically *defines* the overall character of the revolutionary movement in the country as a whole. Liberation, independence from imperialism, is a first and necessary step in order to clear the ground for the next stage of struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the struggle for socialism, throughout the entire nation (country). So, as Mao Tsetung wrote, in these conditions, the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in that country (the oppressed nation) must be subordinated to the struggle for national liberation—*independence of the country from imperialism—until the revolution has developed into its second, socialist stage.* [See 'Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War,' Mao Tsetung, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 196.]

"This does not apply to the Black national question in the U.S. It is not necessary to go through a New Democratic stage and calling for this is in essence revisionist. Further, the Black liberation struggle, while an extremely important revolutionary force in its own right, and as a component part of the overall struggle of the

working class for socialism, does not basically define the overall character of the revolutionary movement in the country as a whole, but is a particular part of it. And the overall class struggle cannot be subordinated to the struggle for the independence of the Black nation, but the reverse. Self-determination, the right of political secession, of the Black nation must be subordinated to the overall struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat throughout the U.S. It is not the case, even when speaking only of Black workers, that 'only by achieving national liberation will it be possible for the proletariat and other working people to achieve their own liberation.' Rather, only through socialist revolution, as the next immediate stage, can the masses of Black people and other oppressed nationalities achieve their own liberation." (*Red Papers 6*, p. 101.)

On the merging of the class and national struggles:

"How, then, do we wage this fight as part of the overall class struggle, how do we bring about the merger of the national and class struggles that Mao talks about? We have to work at it 'from two sides.' On the one side, we have to help unite the greatest numbers of the oppressed nationalities, in the fight against national oppression. We do not say to the oppressed nationalities, 'do not wage a fight against your oppression, wait for the working class to become fully conscious and take leadership of that struggle.' This would only guarantee that the national movements would be under bourgeois leadership, and it would also hold back the development of class consciousness and class unity of the proletariat. As communists we must involve ourselves in every possible struggle against national oppression, work to direct it against the imperialist enemy, to unite it with other anti-imperialist movements and raise the *class consciousness* of the struggling masses. . . .

"From the other side, we must work to develop the workers' movement as a class conscious movement, into a political force that fights against all forms of oppression, recognizing especially the crucial importance of the fight against national oppression." (*Red Papers 6*, p. 16.)

On the proletariat taking up the national struggle:

"We believe, as we stressed in National Bulletin No. 13 that the solid core of the united front in this country will be the alliance of the *single multi-national working class* with the struggles of the oppressed nationalities for liberation, and *not* the alliance of the oppressed nationalities with the *white* workers. In these two dif-

ferent formulations are expressed two opposing lines. And we do believe that it is workers of all nationalities who must be *won to* and play a leading role in the fight against all national oppression. When the BWC accuses us of 'phrasemongering' for raising this, they only show how *they* in fact 'bow to spontaneity,' once again. The fact, as they say, that the workers of all nationalities have not yet taken up a thorough fight against national oppression, and that the working class is not yet leading the anti-imperialist struggle in general—this only *emphasizes* the need for communists to *win* the workers to this fight, and not to raise this primitiveness to a principle or tail behind what exists today." (*RP 6*, p. 54.)

On equating revolutionary nationalism with proletarian ideology:

"And the BWC's attempt to combine two-into-one on Marxism-Leninism and revolutionary nationalism, to equate the two, will mean the 'worst of both worlds,' and will lead to both watering down Marxism-Leninism with nationalism on the ideological level, and to taking a sectarian stance toward nationalists who are objectively (and maybe even subjectively) anti-imperialist, but have not declared themselves in favor of socialism, or for Marxism-Leninism. This attempt at two-into-one won't lead to Marxist-Leninist unity on the one side, because it is adapting socialism to nationalism; and on the other side, it won't lead to unity in the mass struggle with anti-imperialist forces whose ideology is nationalism, because they will see it as 'perverting' nationalism with socialism and opportunizing on the ideology of nationalism. In opposition to this two-into-one, by dividing one-into-two—by not equating Marxism-Leninism with revolutionary nationalism but supporting revolutionary nationalism and uniting with revolutionary nationalists in the mass movement, while bringing forward an independent Marxist-Leninist line—it will be more possible to unite with nationalist forces against the imperialist enemy, and to advance many of these people *to* Marxism-Leninism, while advancing the struggle in a more thoroughly anti-imperialist direction." (*RP 6*, p. 48.)

"We can make a comparison with trade unionism. It is possible for a militant trade unionist worker to play a progressive role for a period of time, and as communists, we must certainly unite with this worker and his desire to mobilize the workers to fight the company, etc. But if we do not, through the course of struggle, move him beyond mere trade unionism, he will move away from a stand of uniting the whole class, and be pulled back by bourgeois influences to a narrow stand of 'my trade first,' which is a category

of bourgeois ideology, 'Me first.' " (RP 6, p. 14)

D. H. Wright's opportunist line also led him to opportunism on the question of organization, setting up a small headquarters within the RU; he tried to build a special network based on Black cadre under his command. His attempts to push comrades into his camp included bullying, slandering and even "honky" (or "Tom") baiting minority nationality comrades who followed the leadership of the RU's Central Committee. But these tactics did not bring him the desired results. His moves were more successful within a very few collectives of the RU and within the Liaison Committee where he got over putting out his own Bundist summation of the RU and its line.

As the struggle against opportunism intensified and the opportunists stood more exposed, they took on a "left" dogmatist line to make their opportunism seem more Marxist. While never dropping their thoroughly rightist essence of raising the national struggle above proletarian revolution and bourgeois ideology over proletarian ideology, they began promoting the ridiculous "Black Belt" theory² (joining the cabal of long-time opportunists of the "left" and pure revisionist variety like the CL and the OL). They also did a complete flip on their initial party-building stand. No longer was it "premature to build the party," but party-building was "always the central task" and uniting and building any struggle not directly linked to and having as its main and immediate purpose party-building was "bowing to spontaneity"—until a vanguard was formed "free from opportunism."

As the BWC put it in their response to NB13: "the majority of the proletariat has not yet developed the necessary class-consciousness to play the leading role in the national struggle or the United Front as a whole. In this situation, the central task of communists is to rally the advanced sector of the proletariat, develop its class consciousness *first*, welding the main core into party cadres and the expansion of the cadres into a workers' party. Then and only then, when this task is *completed*, will our central task become winning the *majority* of the working class for proletarian revolution." (BWC original response pp. 10-11, emphasis ours; quoted in *Red Papers 6*, p. 55.)

This dogmatism was nothing new to the communist movement in the U.S.—particularly the Black Belt Theory—which the RU exposed as early as *Red Papers 2*, an exposure further developed in *Red Papers 5* and then in the paper, "Living Socialism and Dead Dogmatism" (*Red Papers 6*), a response to these dogmatists' more refined version of this tired line (their paper was authored by ex-

RU cadre from Detroit).^{*} Using the theory of Marxism-Leninism and making a concrete analysis of concrete conditions, the RU developed and deepened the proletarian line on this very important question, the Black national question, in opposition to this dogmatist nonsense.

Even the dogmatists' trash on party-building was nothing new—a number of opportunist cliques had for a number of years attacked the RU on this front, most notably the October League (especially in its "left" phase) and the CL.

The RU had always made important contributions in leading the young Marxist-Leninist forces in the struggle to "grow up"—struggling that they be firmly based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism, contributing greatly to the key line struggles, and initiating bold practical steps such as calling for the formation of communist collectives in *Red Papers 1*, forging a national organization at the earliest time possible, initiating the Liaison Committee, etc.

The central task (but not only task!) had been correctly summed up (at the time of the Franklin struggle) until this time to have been "building the struggle, consciousness and revolutionary unity of the working class and its leadership in the united front." As the RU pointed out in *Red Papers 6*, "Our point in raising the central task was to direct our own forces, and to encourage others to direct theirs, toward linking up with the struggles of the masses, especially the industrial workers, and to carry out political work in these struggles in a revolutionary and not a reformist way." And decisive to party-building would be Marxist-Leninist summation of their experience and ideological struggle in this context.

This correct stand in the past stood in sharp contrast to these various stripes of opportunists who knew nothing of what revolutionary theory really is and therefore could never sort out opportunism from Marxism no matter how many left phrases and profound quotes they spouted on top of their revisionist trash. The RU quoted Mao in National Bulletin 13 in replying to this: "We study Marxism-Leninism not for display, nor because there is any mystery about it, but solely because it is the science which leads the revolutionary proletariat to victory."

The RU did move to sum up and correct errors it had made on party-building. As was stated in NB13 (written before the change in the central task):

^{*} "Living Socialism and Dead Dogmatism" is reprinted in *The Communist*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (May 1, 1977).

"In the past, our organization has had the tendency to put the question of forming the Party into the distant future, even though we say in *Red Papers 5*, for example, that we want the Party as soon as possible, and 'yesterday would have been infinitely preferable to tomorrow.' To a certain degree this attitude of making the Party a distant abstraction has arisen as a result of our struggle against the sectarian line on 'party building' put forward by CL, and OL (in its 'left' phase) which made the central, and basically only task, 'propaganda for the advanced workers,' organizing study circles abstracted from practical struggle, etc.—all for the purpose of building up their organizations at the expense of the people's struggles.

"But in combatting this line, and insisting, correctly, that the central task is to build the workers' movement into a class conscious political movement, leading the anti-imperialist struggle, there has been some tendency to lose sight of the importance of building toward the Party. As Mao says, while concentrating on one central task, we must unfold others around it. We must work on the tasks of building the workers' movement, building the united front, building the Party, all at once, while concentrating on the main task now to advance the work of all three. Already, in some places our work with advanced workers has suffered, because we failed to emphasize the building of the Party, while making it clear how it relates to the present main task. This failure amounted to tailing behind them, since they were already deep into practical struggle, were running into the limitations of the spontaneous struggle, and were keenly aware of the need for conscious, scientific leadership. We must correct this error and put more emphasis on building toward the Party, without falling into the sectarianism of CL, et al." (*RP 6*, p. 19.)

The appeal of dogmatism to the BWC and PRRWO and the small clique in the RU was that it offered a simple and easy crutch to lean on in the face of new situations and in coming up against difficulties. This was compounded by the fact that the CL—outrageous counter-revolutionary dogmatist outfit that it was (and is as the CLP today, though in a more openly reformist manner)—was picking up a sizable number of forces from the Black liberation struggle and the student movement, for exactly the same reason. This dogmatism reflected isolation from the mass struggle and in turn led to further isolation. What was probably the main magnetic appeal to the BWC, PRRWO and ex-RU opportunists—and to the forces that CL was picking up—was that this dogmatism was a very convenient and profound "Marxist"

method of adapting socialism to nationalism—CL had long been champions of the "Black Belt" line (with some bizarre variations of their own) and of a more Marxist-sounding version of "Black Workers (and Black communists) Take the Lead."

Why did such sharp struggle focus on the national question? It was indeed a reflection of the past period and the roots of the Marxist-Leninist forces that sharp struggle to gain clarity and distinguish the correct from incorrect lines on the national question was a prerequisite to moving toward building the new Party (just as the national question had been a major focus of struggle earlier, especially in the Franklin struggle). These Bundists misassessed where the national struggle was at—not recognizing that in the spiral development of things, while the struggle against national oppression continued by the masses, its character was not the type of revolutionary nationalist upsurge of earlier years—that the struggle had reached a peak and come up against its limitations in the form it had developed in, and in fact that the principal contradiction in the U.S. had begun to shift.³

But more fundamentally, these opportunists had gotten stuck—ideologically and politically—in views which, even if at times very revolutionary, had emerged spontaneously from that movement. While the storm of struggle against national oppression that swept the U.S. in the late '60s and '70s was a tremendous blow against U.S. imperialism and an inspiration and, yes, as a struggle had played a certain vanguard role, still through these struggles spontaneously only nationalist ideology could emerge. Erroneous tendencies (and even serious deviations) were bound to show up in the ranks of the yet fairly young and primitive communist movement. Quantity would inevitably lead to quality around these tendencies—and opportunists would try to capitalize on any tendencies toward raising the national struggle above the class struggle.

The proletariat must lift its sights above and beyond what can be summed up from the internal developments of a single movement—no matter how powerful that struggle is or was. The proletarian vanguard forces must not fall into subjectivity because they were a direct participant in, inspired by or "benefited" from a particular struggle—this subjectivity is a characteristic of the petty bourgeoisie, not the proletariat. No, every struggle must be viewed from the perspective of the historic mission of the working class and that struggle's relationship to the more immediate task of the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeoisie. Errors, tendencies and even deviations were compounded in their development

by the lack of a proletarian party during the high tide of that struggle, and also because of liberal and Bundist tendencies in the old CPUSA even when it was the vanguard of the proletariat.

This nationalist deviation had its historical development through stages beginning in the late '60s. First in the revolutionary movement came the idea that Black and other nationally oppressed peoples could and would make revolution alone, or even with a small number of white supporters, mainly from the petty bourgeoisie.

But this ran up against objective reality. Some forces within the revolutionary movement began to study Marxism seriously and to see that revolution, especially in a capitalist country like the U.S., meant proletarian revolution. But this understanding, combined with baggage from earlier stages, produced in some organizations, and as a political current, the line that the proletariat will make revolution, but Black—and other “Third World”—workers are the only real proletariat.

This, too, ran up against objective reality, and those forces that studied Marxism more deeply to sum up this development, grasped more firmly that the proletariat is an objective social class, defined basically by relationship to the means of production, and that in the U.S. it is multinational. But this understanding, combined with some baggage from former periods, led to the line that, yes, the multinational proletariat and its vanguard party will lead the revolution, but within that “Black workers take the lead,” in the mass movement *and* the communist movement (party).

The RU itself was certainly part of this same process of development. Nationalism was, at that time, a greater deviation on the national question within the communist movement than was white chauvinism. Powerful movements of the oppressed nationalities raged in the U.S. in the 1960s, particularly the Black liberation struggle. This had contributed many to the revolutionary movement and inspired many others, and had struck powerful blows against the system of imperialism. At the same time, due to the relative ebb of the workers' movement and the newness of the rising revolutionary forces to Marxism-Leninism, this also gave rise to nationalist deviations.

A secondary offshoot in the struggle against the Bundist-dogmatists was a struggle that jumped off particularly in one area of the country against quite open economism and Kautskyism. Again with the question of moving to build the Party at hand, a small number of RU cadre—including some who had been leaders in earlier periods—got stuck and raised a hue and cry about how

party-building was premature. “We don't have enough roots in the class struggle” was their surface argument, but more to the point were their developed arguments which rather openly insisted that “there is no imperialist crisis, so what's the hurry anyway?” They united wholeheartedly with the Bundist line on the national question and made serious arguments that our work in the working class should be aimed mainly at improving and reforming the trade unions. Opportunists that they were, they even made a temporary alliance with some of the dogmatists while in the main, in form, their line was right opportunism and was in tune very much with the line of the October League at that time. Struggle, particularly in the area where they were from, was fairly sharp and deep but overall their line was mainly dealt with in polemics against the OL.

Ideological and political line is decisive—and it was decisive at this juncture that the RU took a Marxist-Leninist stand against opportunism—and in a sense went “against the tide” of the various baggage, particularly on the national question, which permeated so much of the “Marxist-Leninist-Maoist” movement. The RU could have taken the low road—gone for the appeal of larger forces in the short run—averting for a short time the small split with D. H. Wright and company in the RU and/or adjusted principles, clinging to the hopes of a merger with BWC and PR-RWO despite their degeneration. But this would have been trying to accommodate Marxism to opportunism and any short-term “advances” would have meant a disaster to the proletariat, as can be seen by the total degeneration of BWC and PRRWO since that time.

Forming the Party and the Founding Congress

Through the course of polemics, a national tour, and in other ways, the RU put out clearly its line that actually forming the Party based on a revolutionary line in the near future was then the most pressing task facing U.S. communists. Through this process it placed this question squarely on the agenda, drew the lines in the communist movement by exposing opportunism and enabled honest forces to grasp these questions of line more clearly and begin to see their importance for mass work.

At the heart of forming the Party of the proletariat was uniting all who could be united around a Marxist-Leninist line and Programme. In June of '74 the RU proposed the general minimum principles of unity—the framework for developing the Party Programme. They were (main points in brief, as paraphrased from

Revolution articles at the time):

1. That the Party be based on Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought . . . that the new Party declare itself the determined enemy of revisionism, the revisionist "Communist" Party, USA and any other organized forms that revisionism might take, and also declare itself a determined enemy of Trotskyism. That the basic strategy for revolution in the USA is the United Front Against Imperialism, and this is part of the worldwide united front being formed against U.S. imperialism, and also Soviet social-imperialism. That this united front is not the same as the united front against fascism, and that this united front does not include bringing in some supposed "anti-fascist" section of the imperialists, while recognizing splits in the bourgeoisie and the need to correctly take advantage of those splits.
2. The central task of the Party once it is formed is to build the revolutionary workers movement and the proletariat's leadership in the united front.
3. The struggle of the Black nation and the struggle of other oppressed nationalities has two aspects: against national oppression and against exploitation and oppression as part of the single U.S. proletariat. While self-determination is not the heart of the Black national question, the Party must uphold the *right* of self-determination. The genuine communist Party recognizes that the oppressor nation must not impose a forcible solution to the question of separation. And finally, that the very core of the united front is the alliance of the multinational proletariat and the minority peoples' struggle against national oppression and for liberation.
4. That the Party operate on the basis of democratic centralism.

The pages of *Revolution* became a key instrument in distinguishing the correct line from the incorrect line. Deep and thorough polemics were printed against various opportunist tendencies—such as the CL, the OL, the *Guardian* newspaper. These did much to clarify what the various erroneous currents were and what the stand of the proletariat was toward its revolutionary tasks in opposition to these lines. Of particular significance was a short series on Kautskyism—aimed at the OL, because their revisionist line represented the more dangerous line, particularly in the long run.

This was not sectarianism, but the opposite of it. Sectarianism is placing the interests of a small group above the needs of the masses, making unprincipled attacks and forcing splits over ques-

tions that are not decisive questions of the day for the mass movement and its vanguard forces. Isolating the lines the RU set out to isolate in fact would make the difference between creating a revolutionary vanguard Party or a reformist sect. Not to have taken up this task, for fear things would "get heavy" would have been the true sectarianism.

Of course under these conditions, the main opportunist groups (OL, BWC, PRRWO) began to back away from talking about forming the Party as an immediate and urgent task. Now it was a "strategic" task, a "protracted process," etc.—all of which was an exposure of their consistently bankrupt line on party-building, their sectarian line of building a united front against the RU and Marxism-Leninism and their position that party-building really consists of slandering the RU (and later, the RCP) to try to undercut its influence.

But the Party needed to be formed, based on the need for revolution, socialism and communism, and the need to take a decisive step then toward these long-term goals. Not to have done so then when it was possible would have meant a great setback. So, to further isolate the opportunists and more importantly, to provide genuine communists with the correct political focus for their Party-building efforts and a bridge to the future, the RU put forward the central importance of the struggle over a programme. Focusing on the programme was key to avoiding both the "left" error of failing to unite all who could be united and the right error of unprincipled unity for the sake of numbers—throwing out the key lesson that ideological and political line decides everything.

The opportunists of the OL, CL, BWC, etc., fled from this task, but the RU set about the task of contacting and struggling with various forces in Marxist-Leninist collectives and groups and advanced forces in mass organizations moving toward Marxism-Leninism. While certain advances for the proletariat came from struggling with these forces and some united wholeheartedly with the struggle to build the Party, it was the case that many of these forces either were consolidated into one of the major opportunist trends or had degenerated into individualistic, self-serving cliques who refused to struggle over line in a principled manner. Instead they viewed the move toward building the Party from the petty-bourgeois view of "what's in it for me or my group."

The RU even made some attempts to meet and struggle with the October League⁴ in hopes that there was a chance that their revisionist lines had not been consolidated yet into a thoroughly revisionist world outlook.

As the RU said in an internal bulletin at the time: "The main question is not *how many* other forces we can unite with—and we must be prepared to go ahead to the Party regardless of the number of forces we unite with—but how to mobilize our own organization, and all others we can unite with to make the *qualitative leap* to the Party. This means summing up experience to overcome primitiveness politically, concretizing political line into programme; and marshaling and reorganizing our forces, together with as many others as possible, to overcome primitiveness organizationally, concretizing these forces into a higher form of proletarian organization than now exists anywhere in this country—into an *organized*, advanced detachment of the class—the Party. Only *such* an organization can fulfill the tasks that lie ahead in leading the class and the masses." Carrying this through was why founding the Party was not, as some have slandered, a matter of "turning the RU into the Party," but building on the political and organizational foundation established mainly by the RU to form a qualitatively higher form of organization, a genuine vanguard of the working class.

A draft of a Party programme was formulated by the RU in early 1975—and the last and most important phase of Party-building was underway. All units throughout the RU made it their principal task to study, struggle and sum up work, relative to the important line questions posed in the draft *Programme*. Programme Discussion Committees (PDCs) were formed in every locality aimed at bringing forces going forward toward the Party into direct involvement in this final stage, building for the Party Congress. A draft Main Political Report for the founding Congress was also written by the RU at this time (although the draft *Programme* was the only document publicly distributed to forces not involved with actually uniting to build the Party). A journal called "Forward to the Party! Struggle for the Party!" came out, open to all who were united in this stage of moving to build the Party, as a forum to struggle out key questions of line as they were posed around the *Party Programme*, Main Political Report and Party Constitution. Resolutions—based on journal articles or written independently—were prepared and advanced to the various level Congresses that took place in preparation for the Founding Congress.

The period of discussion around the draft *Programme* and draft Main Political Report in preparation for the founding Congress was mainly a period of consolidating and developing the unity of the advanced forces, not of intense struggle and division between two lines. But within that context there was very vigorous

struggle for clarity on a number of questions. There was struggle over the role of the intermediate workers organizations (IWOs), against a tendency to see them as simply centers for politics for a handful of advanced workers (and somewhat liberal politics at that), while leaving other struggles, particularly economic struggle, mired in pettiness and economism, and also against a tendency to see them as essentially trade union syndicates, guided by the economist view that economic struggles were themselves potentially revolutionary. In both cases it was pointed out that the question is not "getting some people around us," but of establishing political centers in the class struggle where advanced workers and communists can get down politically over the key questions involved in mobilizing the masses in key battles in society.

Also sharp and of considerable significance was the struggle up to and at the Founding Congress against a social chauvinist line on the international situation (pushed by members of the Jarvis-Bergman Menshevik clique). This line—basically modeled after the revisionist "Three Worlds" strategy of Teng Hsiao-ping and Co. in China—in essence called for support for our "own" imperialists in the international struggle. This also, of course, means capitulating to them in an all-around way.

There was also struggle to grasp the need for closer connection to the economic struggles of the masses of workers and against tendencies to fail to seize the opportunity to bring light into those struggles. In general this deepened our understanding of the fact that our task is not to "concoct fashionable means of helping the workers" (which although it is a weapon against "leftist" aloofness from the struggle, is fundamentally a weapon against rightism—reformist schemes).

The Founding Congress itself continued these struggles and waged some more against lines pushed mainly by members of the Menshevik clique. These included the line of "everything through the IWOs," a narrow empiricist line on the tasks of the Party branches; a view of socialism that promoted the theory of productive forces, and a line on the young communist organization that denied a "leap" to communism was necessary to join. In addition, a sharp struggle was waged against "federationism" and "departmentalism" (tendencies to pit the Party structure in a particular area against and above the Party as a whole). These narrow organizational tendencies resulted not only because of the spontaneous localized development of the RU, but because of the empiricist line and factional methods of the Menshevik clique.

The fact that there was some sharp struggle at the Congress

does not at all mean that it was not a Congress of unity and of victory. What it shows is that unity and victory cannot be viewed metaphysically and statically, but dialectically—as products of struggle and as things that cannot be frozen and “maintained” but can only be further developed and established on a higher level in the course of sharp struggle—at times antagonistic struggle—between two lines.

In fact the founding of the RCP in the latter part of 1975 was a great victory in the class struggle in spite of interference from the Menshevik clique. The founding of our Party, which we said we were determined would be the second and last founding of the revolutionary Party of the working class in the U.S., was a declaration of war on the bourgeoisie. It was a great blow against revisionism and opportunism of all stripes. It concentrated and consolidated the advances made by communists in the class struggle and the struggle between two lines in this country on all fronts—ideologically, politically and organizationally. It forged one Party with one line. This was concentrated in its Main Political Report and especially the Party *Programme and Constitution*.

At the same time, it is necessary to sum up a secondary, rightist and especially economist countercurrent that arose off the Congress. One of the genuine victories of the founding of the Party was the reorganization that was established—concentrating our forces along the lines of basic industry (and in key industrial areas where the RU had not spontaneously grown so large). Without this basic step it would be impossible to build factories as fortresses in the revolutionary struggle. To accomplish this it was correct and necessary to “bend the stick”—to give emphasis—to this question and to the task of establishing ties with and leading the day to day struggles of the workers. Without thoroughly carrying this out our Party could not have accomplished what we have.

But these necessary steps were bound to encourage spontaneous tendencies throughout the Party toward rightism and economism. And at the Congress itself, particularly in its Main Political Report, there were, as we have summed up, some mistaken formulations. The most serious of these was calling for the concentration of the Party’s work to be in the workers’ economic struggle, terming the economic struggle “the center of gravity” of the Party’s work. These errors encouraged this rightism still more and tended to make a separate stage out of work in the economic struggle.*

* See “Rectification is Fine; The Mensheviks’ Answer is Terrible,” *Revolution and Counter-Revolution*, pp. 456-61. Also see “Economic Struggle and Revolutionary Tasks,” *Revolution*, July, 1978.

But even more than these errors and spontaneous tendencies, the main responsibility for this economist counter-current—or at least its dogged persistence—was the pragmatic, revisionist line of the Menshevik headquarters which was developing.

As the Party’s work got underway, struggle and education against economism was unfolded in the Party—particularly in a series of articles and a campaign around the mass line—stressing that the mass line is not a mirror to reflect the masses’ spontaneous understanding, but a weapon based on revolutionary science and the underlying laws of class society.

But the major blows against economism and rightism generally—and the first major round of battle with the developing Menshevik headquarters of Jarvis and Bergman—came at the Second Plenary of the First Central Committee, held in the latter part of 1976. The meeting set a number of tasks in the practical work for the period ahead—including forming the National United Workers Organization, building an independent union to organize an industry in one area, founding a young communist league—most of which were opposed in various ways by the Mensheviks. It summed up the significance of various advances in the class struggle, in various industries and around the 1976 Bicentennial campaign. But most fundamentally, this meeting made big advances in developing a correct analysis and orientation for our Party to carry out revolutionary work in the current non-revolutionary situation.

The meeting zeroed in against right idealism, particularly economism, the idea that by pursuing one form of struggle, the economic in particular, we can march straight ahead, step by step to revolution. It clearly pointed out the necessity of pursuing all three forms of the class struggle—economic, political and theoretical. It reemphasized that our strategy for revolution is the united front against imperialism, in opposition to single-minded—and narrow-minded—concentration on the workers’ struggle.

With its analysis that we are at the beginning of a new spiral, it helped clear up and correct some erroneous tendencies we had held in (correctly) stating in the course of forming the Party that the mass movement was entering a new period. We had failed to fully recognize an ebb, and there was a tendency to mechanically expect the previous high tide of struggle of mainly non-proletarian movements in the ’60s would immediately be replaced by a high tide of working class struggle. While pointing to advances in the working class struggle, the CC pointed to the need to grasp the underlying laws of development and stated, “where things are now

is an advance because it is the spiral that will lead to a major change in the relation of forces and will lead to the real prospect of proletarian revolution in this country as well as in others.”

The CC pointed out that in this situation, by applying the mass line, it was possible and urgently necessary for the relatively small forces of conscious proletarian fighters to lead major battles involving many masses.

At the same time the CC criticized the line of stagism—of walling off immediate struggles from the revolutionary goal: “[we can] never forget the revolutionary goal. If we do, it will also affect the smaller battles because they are also dialectically related—whether we understand it or not, whether anyone wants it to be true or not—it is true that what you can achieve in changing the conditions of the masses, for example, is related to the big question of how society is organized. There is no way to get around that.

“If we think we can plug along and just change conditions step by step without running up against the question of changing the whole way society is organized, then we have forgotten some very basic things and we need to re-root ourselves in those basics. So while we have to take up these particulars, look at the question of quality within the quantitative build-up, we have to keep in mind always the general, sweeping goal and the big qualitative change that we are talking about.”*

All this, of course, caused a number of these revisionist Mensheviks to jump out in sharp opposition, while others gave them encouragement behind the scenes. But the CC defeated this attempt to block a crucial advance.

This Central Committee meeting marked a major step in grappling with the crucial question of how to make revolution in an imperialist country—how not to fall into the easy road of reformism and narrow rightism and end up capitulating to the enemy, and instead to do the most for the revolution at every point along the way. This was the essence of the task this meeting put forward of sticking to the “high road.” No wonder the Menshevik clique never ceased hating this task and doing everything in their power to oppose or undermine it.

In fact, this meeting was crucial preparation for the whole Party in arming itself to combat and defeat the Menshevik clique,

* See “Revolutionary Work in a Non-Revolutionary Situation,” Report of the Second Plenary Session of the First Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA (1976), p. 39.

which was soon to jump out in more all-out and finally open and complete opposition to the Party’s line after the death of Mao Tsetung and the revisionist coup in China. This process was further deepened and the battle further joined throughout 1977, particularly when the proletarian headquarters in the Party counterattacked around the questions of the tasks of the Party branches, the role of the Party press, and the name and nature of the Party youth organization.*

Smashing the Menshevik Clique Is a Great Victory

In order to truly learn from the negative example provided by the Menshevik clique, and to more clearly see how smashing it is indeed a real victory in the class struggle, it is important to focus on its social causes and social base.

As we pointed out in our reply to their attack on Rectification (published in the book *Revolution and Counter-Revolution*):

“Their line, or more to the point its pragmatist, rightist essence, represents a tendency that will occur again many times in the future. As both our *Programme* and first Main Political Report make clear, such rightism and pragmatism have historically been and will continue to be overall the main danger facing the revolutionary movement in an imperialist superpower like this.

“The fact that such a struggle has broken out in our Party reflects some very real things about the class struggle, and in fact is in some ways a by-product and a measure of the progress we have made in integrating with the struggles of the working class. Before the Party was formed most—though not all—of the struggles were against ‘leftist’ deviations, pulling away from the working class into adventurist or dogmatic isolation and sectarianism. But now, exactly as a reflection of having defeated such tendencies and deepened our ties with the actual struggles of the workers, the kind of lines which can find some following among sections of our Party, which can ‘fuse’ to a certain degree with spontaneous errors, are more likely to be from the right.

“While struggles against such a pragmatist, rightist line will inevitably occur in the future, this particular variant has features

* For more on these specific struggles, the reader can refer to the following sources: the pamphlet, *The Tasks of Party Branches, the Task of Revolution* (RCP Publications, 1977); “Sharpen the Weapon of the Party’s Press,” *Revolution*, June 1978; and the pamphlet, *Communism and Revolution vs. Revisionism and Reformism in the Struggle to Build the Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade* (RCP Publications, 1978).

of its own which are largely determined by the period we are in. Because it is the *beginning* of a new spiral, and the working class struggle is at a relatively low level overall, a pragmatic reformist line in this period will tend to be less political (in a reformist sense) and more puny and petty than at a time of bigger upsurge. Overall the rightist essence of this Menshevik line determines its apolitical form. By its very nature it is so glued to whatever is going on at a given moment that its horizons are incredibly limited. There is no sense at all of the laws that underlie the objective situation that will give rise to big things and bring many into motion, and no sense of the danger of revisionism. Our Mensheviks prove utterly incapable of giving any real revolutionary meaning to the high road and have no sense at all of the sweeping anti-revisionist world view poetically summed up by Mao Tsetung, 'Look, you, the world is being turned upside down.' " (pp. 443-4.)

What about the Mensheviks' social base? In the Main Political Report of the First Congress we pointed out that there is a contradiction between the proletarian line of our Party and its composition—the fact that the majority of its members are from the petty-bourgeoisie. This is not, of course, unique to our Party and it does not mean that petty-bourgeois people cannot be remolded to take up the proletarian world outlook or that individual workers are somehow "better" or automatically proletarian in their outlook. It also should be pointed out that there are many positive things about having Party members who were experienced in the political struggles of the '60s, though of course they must keep on advancing. But it remains true that in the long run the proletarian line must transform the Party's composition (by bringing in more workers), or the petty-bourgeois composition will transform its line. And, at the same time, the Party must continue to deepen its grasp and application of the correct line and strengthen itself and its membership as a whole ideologically, politically and organizationally.

For all their proletarian posturing, for all their puffing about "petty-bourgeois left idealists," the Menshevik reaction exactly represented a section of unremolded petty bourgeois in the Party jumping out to attempt to transform its proletarian line. Of course many people were swept along in confusion. And there was also a handful of workers, aspiring labor aristocrats, who had degenerated into philistinism, or had been encouraged by these Mensheviks into trade union hack style careerism. This social base represents the petty bourgeoisie in its rightist, reformist characteristics—conservative and trade unionist—when seeking to be

part of (or more accurately to capitalize on) the current relatively low level of working class struggle. The revisionist, pragmatist, economist line of the Menshevik clique first helped mold and then rallied these forces. The Menshevik line on methods of leadership—hot-shot heavies and condescending social workers, not arming the masses politically and mobilizing them, but having everything under your command and at your disposal—this also rallied these forces. Having defeated this reaction, our Party's proletarian line is stronger than ever, and a still more powerful weapon for transforming the world—including our Party membership—through class struggle.

It should also be pointed out in analyzing the characteristics of this clique that there are some opportunist leaders—M. Jarvis and Leon Trotsky are two that come to mind—whose ideological line is fairly directly expressed as careerism. As a result there was a heavy element of trimming their sails to the wind, and of conscious plotting, that characterized this particular Menshevik clique. But this kind of outlook is also closely linked with pragmatism, and at a critical juncture such people will stop trimming sails to the proletarian line and will jump out with a political line in opposition to the proletarian line—most often a right opportunist line.

The Mensheviks are ripe material for a merger with the CPML, especially now that the CPML is dropping its shallow "left" trimmings under the leadership of Hua & Co. Never were there two groups of opportunists in the United States more deserving of each other and it's probably only the swamp of careerism on both parts that has made a marriage contract between the CPML and at least a part of the Mensheviks difficult to negotiate.

The degeneration and defeat of the Menshevik clique, and the social roots of this clique, are a living example of the struggle to stay on the high road. As we said in our reply to them:

"The road these Mensheviks would have our Party follow is more like a rut. It is a well defined groove, worn and channeled by the force of spontaneity, and pioneered for us by the old CPUSA. You can close your eyes and do what they're doing. It's very easy. At most what you do is do some good things, accumulate some forces, get mired down further and further in spontaneity and end up capitulating." (*Revolution and Counter-Revolution*, p. 488.)

The history of the Party and the RU before it has always been a history of "going against the tide" of acceptable and opportunist lines in the revolutionary movement. This was true in earlier major struggles against the Franklin opportunist group and against the Bundists and is true now. This was painfully clear and intolerable

to these pragmatist Mensheviks, who were stuck in the past, at best following the ways of the old CPUSA. So they were bound to jump out, not only over the China question, but as the revolutionary line and practice of the Party went deeper. This is why they simply could not stand for the high road approach, which expressed our determination to chart (as we said in our reply to them) "... a basically uncharted course—realizing there has never been a successful revolution in an advanced, imperialist country—taking into account the real and significant influence of a labor aristocracy and of the bourgeoisification of a sizable section of the workers, the danger of war and more—facing all this squarely and looking beneath the surface to chart a course to revolution, basing ourselves firmly on Marxism and the masses. The very thought of this drives these Mensheviks up the wall. With their slide into the rut and their frenzied attacks they have tried to kill our revolutionary Party outright in its infancy—to turn it into a lifeless reformist sect which would degenerate, wither and die. But defeating them is exactly part of the class struggle to stick to the high road, and our Party is determined to do it so we can make our contribution to revolution and communism." (*Revolution and Counter-Revolution*, p. 488.)

While we have shown that the struggle between Marxism and opportunism was fundamentally at stake in the two-line struggle with the Jarvis-Bergman clique, as in any other struggle, the contradiction between ignorance and knowledge also played a role. This contradiction took a greater toll because of some erroneous tendencies in the Party as a whole, related to other errors already spoken to, such as economist tendencies. In the period directly following the founding of the RCP there were strong tendencies to underplay the importance of militantly taking on the struggle to master the science of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought. While not the main reason the Mensheviks were able to gain significant influence in our ranks and win over the numbers they did, such erroneous tendencies did strengthen them. A generally low level of scientific outlook and understanding in our Party made it easier for them to promote and to a certain degree get over with their opportunism.

Intentions, no matter how good, are not enough to guarantee a revolutionary line. Spontaneity is on the side of the bourgeoisie ideologically and politically—its outlook permeates our society. It is no simple thing to separate truth from falsehood, Marxism from revisionism and dialectical materialism from metaphysics and idealism, particularly in the face of new conditions, such as the

relative ebb of struggle which our Mensheviks used to promote their philistinism and economism. The importance of constant education in the Party's ideological and political line—in the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought and in its particular application to the current struggle is an important lesson of this particular struggle. Learning from these errors can only strengthen the Party's overall ability to tackle the difficult and complex problems and struggles it is bound to face in the future.

Some General Lessons

There are some general lessons and some common features that emerge from studying this history of the two-line struggle. These lessons involve its nature, its origins, and our tasks.

First is the fact that these struggles in the RU and RCP have not been "squabbles on the left," but a concentrated reflection of major social developments and developments in the revolutionary movement as a whole. They are part of the class struggle and will inevitably occur again and again. Engels wrote: "Only in the course of internal struggle can a workers' political party develop, and this conforms to the general law of dialectical development." Where there are contradictions there are struggles, and struggles will bring about development. This does not mean we seek splits. We seek unity around a correct line, and certainly seek common ground on minor matters. But communists can never compromise on fundamental matters of principle.

Many comrades and advanced workers and other revolutionary-minded people are at first demoralized at the outbreak of struggle in the Party. "Why are communists always fighting, just like everyone else?" they may ask. In order to get fully prepared mentally for the inevitable struggles ahead we should raise our understanding—in particular our grasp that such "fights" are part of the class struggle. "The fact that the opportunists formally belong to the workers' parties does not by any means remove the fact that, objectively, they are a political detachment of the bourgeoisie, channels of its influence, its agents in the labor movement." (Lenin, "The Collapse of the Second International.") And when Engels faced a struggle against opportunism he wrote: "The development of the proletariat proceeds everywhere amidst internal struggles." "And when, like Marx and myself, one has fought harder all one's life long against the alleged socialists than against anyone else (for we only regarded the bourgeoisie as a class and

hardly ever involved ourselves in conflicts with individual bourgeois), one cannot greatly grieve that the inevitable struggle has broken out."

These struggles reflect the forward motion of society. When we look back today at the political line of the Franklins or the Bundists on the surface it appears ridiculous—how could people be taken in? But, of course, such lines had much currency at one time and didn't at all appear ridiculous until they were hit at by Marxism-Leninism (though, later, when history passed them by their absurdity became apparent, if they weren't opposed with Marxism at the time, history would also pass by many more forces than necessary).

History moves in spirals; there are stages in its development. Engels wrote: "The movement of the proletariat necessarily passes through different stages of development; at every stage part of the people get stuck and do not join in the advance. And this alone explains why it is that actually the 'solidarity of the proletariat' is everywhere being realized in different party groupings which carry out life-and-death feuds with one another."

In all such struggles there is a process of development. Things go from quantitative differences to a qualitative leap to opportunism on the one side and advance on the other (unless both sides degenerate into opportunism). As the Chinese Party said in 1973 about Lin Piao, "On his part there was a process of development and self-exposure, and on our part there was also a process of getting to know him." And once all the opportunists went to the stage of fundamental disagreement with a basic principle of our Party (or the RU before it)—even if it started over one particular issue—they have all quickly gone to all around opportunism, opposing the correct line on every front.

The second and related lesson that emerges from these struggles is that although they have all been marked by the central role (positive or negative) of leading individuals, this has not meant that these are simply battles arising and settled among "heavies" in which the masses of Party members and others play no real role. Why do leading people play such a central role? This is because all these struggles center on the question of *line*. Owing to the necessary division of labor in the Party, leading people are the ones who are dealing in the most concentrated way with major questions of line. If they were not dealing with these questions in this way, then we should ask what the hell they were doing there anyway. Individuals become associated with lines, and leading people are the only ones who are in a real position to muster the

social forces in the Party to carry off a major struggle or split.

But in every major struggle in the RU and the RCP, these struggles could only be and were ultimately resolved by the masses of the membership. The lines have always been brought out to the membership as a whole, and the RU and Party leadership has always, at the appropriate time and in the appropriate way, made the full positions public for study and discussion. In fact, the question could be resolved in no other way except by the actions of the Party members, based on their study. Either a line got their support or it didn't. And the level of Marxism of the whole membership has been raised as a result of every such struggle.

Third, all these struggles have taken in the question of democratic centralism. And this is not a minor point. As the Chinese Communist Party repeatedly emphasized: opportunism in matters of political line always leads to opportunism in organization affairs; or as Wang Hung-wen put it in his report to the 10th Congress of the CPC, "If one practices revisionism . . . one will inevitably go in for splits, intrigues, and conspiracies." The question of whether or not to uphold democratic centralism, "to adhere to party principle," as the Chinese said, is a basic question of world outlook and class stand. It depends on whether you believe that correct ideas come from the experience of the masses in the struggle to change reality, and that it is the masses that make history; or whether you believe that correct ideas come from a few "geniuses" and that "heroes" make revolution. And this applies to reliance on the masses in the communist movement, as well. As Mao said, "We must have faith in the masses and we must have faith in the Party. These are two cardinal principles. If we doubt these principles we shall accomplish nothing."

Fourth, these struggles always got back to the basic question of class stand and ideology. The struggle always came down to a fight against idealism and metaphysics in one form or another, always involved in one form or another the question of one-sided reliance on either theory or practice, and a departure from the world outlook of dialectical and historical materialism, and the Marxist method of linking theory with practice.

Fifth, we should understand that revisionism, right opportunism, is the main danger overall, though "left" opportunism can at times have just as destructive an effect, and is rightist in essence. In our history, "left" errors have more arisen mainly under conditions when the communists were more separated from the working class struggle, and right errors have more arisen as our ties have deepened with the workers' daily struggles.

The causes for this are to be found in the concrete historical development of the RU and the Party, which have been mainly made up of revolutionaries who came from the petty bourgeoisie. What has tended to happen is an example of what Mao calls the "political tendency of the petty bourgeoisie which manifests itself in vacillation between the 'left' and the right because of its mode of life and the resulting subjectivism and one-sidedness of its method of thinking. Many representatives of the petty-bourgeois revolutionaries hope for an immediate victory of the revolution in order to bring about a radical change in their present status; therefore they lack the patience needed for protracted revolutionary endeavor, are fond of 'left' revolutionary phrases and slogans and, in their sentiments and actions, are given to closed-doorism or adventurism . . .

"But the same petty-bourgeois revolutionaries when placed in a different set of circumstances . . . may become pessimistic and despondent and express rightist sentiments and views, tailing after the bourgeoisie." (Appendix to "Our Study and the Current Situation": "Resolution on Some Questions in the History of Our Party.")

The cure for this is not to be found in cursing our composition, or branding our comrades of petty-bourgeois origin with an opportunist label. The cure is struggle for a correct *line* to guide the Party overall, as well as in various areas of work. Politically, in each one of our struggles against "left" or right deviations, we have combatted both tendencies with the line of building the political struggle and revolutionary movement of the working class and its leadership of the united front.

In taking note of the class basis for deviations, we should not fall into idolizing and promoting backwardness among comrades from working class origins. Comrades from the working class need remolding and education too. While the class position of workers provides the *basis* to grasp proletarian ideology, this does not happen automatically and there are other factors that push in the opposite direction. This is especially so in the U.S., given its position for several decades as top-dog imperialist and the fact that it remains one of the two imperialist superpowers. This has enabled the ruling class here to temporarily grant crumbs off the imperialist table to significant sections of the working class and strengthen the hold of its agents and political representatives over the workers' movement. Today this is breaking down, but it continues to exert real influence within the ranks of the proletariat. It is the tendency of petty-bourgeois forces in the proletarian movement to

accommodate themselves to such bourgeoisification. But it is also important to grasp the influence of these material conditions on the ranks of the workers themselves.

Marxism-Leninism is the ideology of a *class*, not the spontaneous ideology of individual workers. Opportunists in our history, and especially the Mensheviks, blurred this over and promoted opportunism among a handful of workers to serve their own purposes. This amounts to a petty-bourgeois line of revolution only for revenge (though revenge can be a stimulus to revolution) and personal improvement, not a communist line.

The *Communist Manifesto* points out: "The Communist revolution is the most radical rupture with traditional property relations; no wonder that its development involves the most radical rupture with traditional ideas." Communists must struggle to achieve both these radical ruptures.

A communist's life should be to struggle for the realization of communism and the liberation of all mankind. Anyone, from the petty bourgeoisie or the proletariat, who clings to individual, immediate and narrow interests and departs from this great goal is not a communist, at least no thoroughgoing communist. Party members should study Marxism, combat exploiting class ideology and remold their world outlook. Only by doing so can they continue to become more thorough communist fighters.

All this ties in with the sixth and final point we can draw from our experience in the two line struggle—our tasks in carrying it out.

New struggles will arise in the face of new contradictions. Things are bound to sharpen up in this country and around the world. New challenges and big opportunities are on the horizon for the proletariat. Inner-Party struggles will occur in various forms—from small, daily struggles in every unit over how to proceed, to periodic large struggles against a full-blown bourgeois line and headquarters.

Facing this, we have a two-fold task: on the one hand to constantly stick to the high road in the course of our work, applying Marxism to every contradiction and deepening the correct line in opposition to incorrect lines; and on the other to be able to promptly see through and combat new bourgeois lines and headquarters that emerge to drag us off our path. While none of this can be done in isolation from building mass struggle, and while practice is the ultimate test, victory or defeat depends on the science of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought. That is why studying the science is so crucial for the whole Party.

Carrying through this task we can help strengthen and build our Party in the course of both great mass struggles and struggles between two lines. As Mao wrote: "If there is to be revolution, there must be a revolutionary party. Without a revolutionary party, without a party built on the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary theory and in the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary style, it is impossible to lead the working class and the broad masses of the people in defeating imperialism and its running dogs."

Explanatory Notes

1) The National Liaison Committee (NLC) was formed in the summer of 1972, marked by the coming together of the Black Workers Congress (BWC), organized in 1970, the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization (PRRWO), originally (1969-72) the Young Lords Party, and the Revolutionary Union (RU). At the time this was an important advance for Marxist-Leninist forces.

(For a time another organization involved in the NLC was I Wor Kuen, an opportunist organization brought into the NLC at the insistence of PRRWO. IWK quickly showed its bankrupt character and fled from the NLC.)

At its inception the NLC set for itself two basic tasks: common work and ideological struggle, that is, the linking up with the actual mass struggle of the American people especially the working class and the building of a new communist Party through forging a unified ideological and political line.

The NLC was formed based on the recognition that in the U.S. there is only one working class, a single multinational proletariat, and this multinational proletariat, especially the industrial proletariat, is the main and leading force of the revolution. The NLC was united around the need to build the Party of the proletariat to act as its vanguard at the earliest time in accordance with placing ideological and political line in the forefront and on the basis of establishing deeper ties with the masses, especially the working class. Further principles of unity of the committee were upholding Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought and opposition to revisionism and Trotskyism.

In the latter part of 1973, BWC and PRRWO began a rapid process of degeneration and disintegration—the result of a qualitative retreat by these organizations into nationalism and other forms of bourgeois ideology which were closely linked with this nationalist outlook—though all of this was put forward in the guise of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought. This turn toward opportunism, linked with the antics of D. H. Wright within the RU, resulted in a split between the BWC and PRRWO on the one hand and the RU on the other, and caused the breakup of the NLC in late 1973.

For more on the history of this period see the article, "Marxism, Nationalism and the Task of Party Building: History and Lessons of the National Liaison Committee," in *The Communist*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Fall/Winter 1977).

2) **The Black Belt Theory**, a dogmatist and narrow nationalist fantasy under today's conditions, is based on various resolutions on the Black national question passed by the Communist International (Comintern) in the 1920s and 1930s. It holds that the heart of the struggle for Black liberation is and should be for self-determination, the right to form a separate country in the Black Belt area of the South (a large, crescent shaped area in the South, named for the color of its soil).

Those who argue for this theory try to conceal their opportunism behind the fact that Black people are a nation and that this nation was forged in, and its people once lived primarily as sharecroppers and small farmers in, the Black Belt. But this theory ignores the tremendous changes in the conditions under which Black people are oppressed and exploited which have occurred since World War I and especially since World War II. Today Black people are overwhelmingly workers in the Northern and Southern cities and suffer national oppression under these conditions. Their struggle and demands reflect this central fact.

As the *Programme* of the RCP says (page 123):

"The right of self-determination, the right of nations to establish their own independent state, is a key aspect of equality between nations, and the proletariat supports this right in order to unite workers of all nations in the common struggle against imperialism. The proletariat and its Party in the U.S. upholds the right of Black people to self-determination, the right to secede from the rest of the U.S. and set up a separate state in the general area of the 'Black Belt.'

"But at the same time the *right* to form a separate state is not the same thing as the obligation to do so, and upholding the right to secede is not necessarily the same thing as saying secession is correct. The proletariat and its Party does not advocate this separation for Black people nor favor it under present and foreseeable conditions. Nor does it see that reconstituting Black people in the deep South in order to exercise their right of self-determination is the main thrust and highest goal of the Black people's struggle. Self-determination is a legitimate demand for Black people, but it is not the main demand.

"The main demands are those common to all oppressed nationalities in the U.S. The main thrust of the Black people's struggle is against these common forms of national oppression, against class exploitation, for proletarian revolution as the means to end both, and for socialism and communism as the highest goal."

For more on the Black Belt Theory, see the article, "Living

Socialism and Dead Dogmatism: The Proletarian Line and the Struggle Against Opportunism on the National Question in the U.S.," reprinted from *Red Papers 6* in *The Communist*, Vol. 1, No. 2.

3) **The question of the principal contradiction in U.S. society** was the subject of study and debate among revolutionaries in the late '60s and early '70s—reflecting the particular features of the revolutionary struggle in the U.S. in that period and for a decade or more earlier.

Speaking to underlying philosophical principles, Mao Tsetung writes the following about the question of principal contradiction: "There are many contradictions in the process of development of a complex thing, and one of them is necessarily the principal contradiction whose existence and development determine or influence the existence and development of the other contradictions." ("On Contradiction.")

There are always many sharp contradictions in society. The fundamental contradiction is the contradiction which determines the essence of the process as a whole. The fundamental contradiction in capitalist society is between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The principal contradiction at any time is the main contradiction in a particular stage of development of the process defined by the fundamental contradiction; it cannot represent the switch from one whole (or fundamental) process to another, for only the resolution of the fundamental contradiction can bring that about. In capitalist society, the contradiction playing the leading role (principal contradiction) is generally the same as the underlying (fundamental) contradiction, i.e., the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

But the situation was somewhat different for a period of time in the U.S. In the years following World War 2, because of the overall position of dominance of U.S. imperialism in the capitalist world, and secondarily because of the betrayal by the Communist Party in this country, the capitalists sabotaged and had some success in holding back the workers' movement. While the working class never ceased its struggle, there was a relative lull in the '50s and early '60s.

Still, capitalism produces resistance. As the Party *Programme* states: "The break-up of the plantation system in the South, the transformation of millions of Black people from serf-like sharecroppers to industrial workers—part of the single working class of the U.S.—and the tremendous struggle of Black people that arose in connection with this, were the major factors that

changed the face of this country, from the mid-'50s into the mid and late '60s. . . Especially as it developed from simply a civil rights movement into a Black liberation movement aimed more squarely at the imperialist system, it became the main force pushing ahead all other struggles against the capitalist rulers at that time, including the struggle of the working class itself." (*Programme*, p. 23.)

In other words, during this period the contradiction between Black people and the imperialists was the principal contradiction in the U.S. This principal contradiction arose from the fundamental contradiction and played the leading role at a certain stage of its development, but of course did not embody the fundamental contradiction in its entirety. This was an unusual historical circumstance which had its roots in both the survival and the breakup of the plantation system.

The RU, from its earliest days, had recognized this important fact—although it had said that the principal contradiction was between the “nationally oppressed peoples” and the ruling class. While this position was basically correct it was less than thoroughly scientific, basing itself only on what seemed to be the sharpest struggles and not clearly seeing the underlying importance of the transformations in the economic position of the masses of Black people—from rural farmers and sharecroppers to urban workers.

With developments through the '60s and early '70s, the Black liberation struggle—even as it delivered its most powerful blows to the enemy—began to run into the limitations imposed by the fact that the struggle of Black people alone cannot resolve the basic contradiction in society from which all social evils arise—the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Under these conditions, combined with further sharpening of the U.S. imperialists' decline and crisis and the sharpening struggle of the working class, the basic contradiction between the working class and capitalists came to the fore as the principal contradiction—as it is today. Struggles against national oppression, along with many other struggles, have not ended and are bound to continue, but they “must and will be developed as part of the overall working class struggle to overthrow capitalism.” (*Programme*, p. 24.)

Through the course of the struggle against the Bundists, and in the course of preparing the draft Party *Programme*, the RU recognized these changes and correctly summed up that the principal contradiction in the country had indeed changed.

For more on these questions, see the Party *Programme*,

especially the section, “The Development of the U.S. Has Been the Development of Class Struggle,” pp. 16-26.

4) The October League (now the CPML) represents the type of trend that would most likely form the core of a potentially large social-democratic, social-chauvinist, counter-revolutionary tendency. Their most overriding, consistent principle has been to adopt whichever line can gain the most for them as an organization in the short run, and their outlook historically can be characterized as one of opposing and sabotaging the genuine left and proletariat's revolutionary struggle, while veiling themselves in the cloak of opposing Soviet-style revisionism.

The roots of Klonsky and company go back to Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). When the major split occurred in SDS in 1969 (at the important juncture in SDS where forces were looking toward revolution, and which road to take became the debate) Klonsky and others led in forming RYM II (Revolutionary Youth Movement II) in opposition to *Weatherman*. While *Weatherman's* line was then at best revolutionary infantile “leftism” and at worst anti-working class, RYM II opposed them, supposedly with the mantle of the proletariat. But in the hands of Klonsky and his like this mantle increasingly was turned into lifeless dogma (opposing for example the united front strategy), and just under the skin of this dogma was some very heavy rightism, reformism and notably social-pacifism.

With the falling apart of SDS, Klonsky & Co. became the October League. Similar forces grouped together in the Georgia Communist League (GCL), etc. The dogma evidenced in RYM II got even more stilted in the OL. Party-building was the central and virtually their only task. Uniting with struggles was only in order to build the Party. But of course, they weren't bringing workers Marxism, just lifeless dogma. And Klonsky & Co.'s dogma had none of the redeeming qualities that were part of what characterized *Weatherman* and similar forces at least at their early stages of development. His stale dogma was a method of adapting Marxism to reformism and a general retreat and standing above and aside from class struggle and revolutionary mass movements. And this retreat into lifeless dogma took place during a high tide of struggle (unlike the Bundist-dogmatists of a later time who reached an impasse and a change in the objective situation, and fell on dogma as an incorrect answer).

After uniting a few forces—particularly the merger of the October League and the GCL—Klonsky & Co. did a complete and

easy flip into open and aboveboard rightism. Since this dogmatism never represented any real revolutionary thrust in the first place and had taken them as far as it could in accumulating a few forces, right opportunism (still wearing the cloak of opposing Soviet-style revisionism) was more the order of the day as the means of adapting Marxism to reformism and doing their best to sabotage the road to revolution. Genuine and honest revolutionary forces had by then made some significant headway in sinking roots in the working class and were starting to have more impact on the struggle of the masses. "Left" sounding dogmatism was not the means to get over in that situation!

They truly began to thoroughly take on the look of pro-China Browderites—complete with a revisionist analysis of contradictions in the ruling class (pro and anti-fascist wings) which led to attempted alliances, siding with and promoting among the masses a section of the bourgeoisie and their agents. They had the same approach to the thoroughly bourgeois trade union hierarchy (reactionary and "progressive" wings) and relied heavily on the so-called "progressives" to make "changes." They clung to their "Black Belt" theory on the national question—but in this rightist phase, while still keeping their dogmatist analysis, they dropped taking this analysis out to the masses much. They concentrated on other forms of raising the national struggle above the class struggle with such a reformist, liberal tinge that it was hard to distinguish them from the NAACP and similar forces among Blacks whom they miserably tried to tail and promote. On the international situation they fell immediately into a line that in essence united with U.S. imperialism to oppose the Soviet Union. They also summed up (incorrectly, of course) that "ultra-leftism" was the main danger in the communist movement—aiming this criticism principally at the RU—when they had been the ones who only a few months earlier had represented lifeless "left" deviations.

In preparation for forming their "party" (CPML), they once again took on a slightly more "left" tinge. While their line was not quite the same lifeless dogma of a few years earlier, they did make easy left flips on a number of political questions (but not on all questions). For example, their rightist strategy of uniting with "progressive" hacks to "move the unions to the left" turned into superpower contention between OL and union officials. (They picked up the term "main blow" against phony progressives—this not only applied to union officials, but also to any seemingly progressive agent in the people's movement. Only a short time earlier

they would have cut off their left arm to speak on the same platform with such types!)

Fundamentally their line did not change because their *strategy* was still to move the unions to the "left"—only this time the CPML *alone* was the "left," and not them *and* "progressive" sounding union officials! So for awhile they would put out agitation aiming their blows at the union officials, still filled with paragraphs teeming with reformism but now with the addition of a few sentences about socialism and how communists were the only consistent fighters for the working class. Despite their use of nice Marxist terms and phrases, their line and outlook was nothing more than "vote for me and I'll set you free"!

Their flip to a new "left" tinge was probably due to a number of reasons. The Chinese CP had at that time correctly summed up the need to stress Lin Piao's rightism, and this was a heavy compulsion on the OL/CPML to drop their crusade against "left" opportunism. Also, none of the bourgeoisie's political agents, especially top union hacks, were interested in uniting with Klonsky & Co. at that time (which probably crushed Klonsky's hopes of getting the most out of his old CP connections). And last but not least, in building the CPML the OL had its eyes on merging with various forces (most of which had been part of the Black people's movement) who were committed (at least for the time being) to a certain amount of dogmatism—and adjusting a line to build his forces never bothered Klonsky before and neither did it then.

As the RU summed up at the beginning of the Party formation period: "But in any case, whatever form it may take, it is clear from the general direction of OL at this time that the 'party' OL wants to see is not a revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat but in essence a social-democratic, reformist organization. Here we are talking about the leadership of OL in particular, most of which has a long history of social-democracy and social-pacifism. And the tendency of this leadership will be to go into whatever formation will offer it the most comfortable career." And the RU called for "struggle against its opportunist line and the ideological roots of it—failing to rely on the masses—whether it takes a left or openly right form, or assumes aspects of both at once."

That the CPML are revisionists is especially clear now that the Chinese Party is in the hands of revisionists. While the OL/CPML supported the CCP when the latter was a revolutionary leadership, they did so for the wrong reasons—as capital to get over with revolutionary-minded people. Now Klonsky & Co. and Hua & Co. have fallen head over heels in love with each other, both

unabashedly promoting each other's revisionism, though there is no doubt that Hua & Co. play the dominant role.

Already the CPML is in the process of making another flip to the right, with the blessings and "guidance" of their revisionist mentors in China. The CPML has reached new heights of social chauvinism in supporting U.S.-bloc imperialist aggression in Zaire for example. In implementing the international line of the Chinese revisionists they are bound to go even further in repudiating any inclination—save the most superficial trappings—toward making revolution in the U.S. Instead, uniting all who can be united against the "Soviet threat" will be their hue and cry. What's bound to be on their horizon is an almost unimaginable foresaking of principal aimed at accommodating themselves to various petty-bourgeois and even bourgeois forces in this "united front."

The CPML like the OL before it definitely represents petty-bourgeois influence embodied in a full blown bourgeois line in the proletarian struggle. Petty-bourgeois ideology—which is ultimately bourgeois ideology—is not simply a question of class background. Unremolded petty-bourgeois intellectuals and other non-proletarian strata will carry such baggage into the workers movement and adapt it to spontaneous tendencies there, but these petty-bourgeois tendencies can be cultivated among the workers themselves. But as the pre-Party National Central Committee report of the RU summed up in what is still a basically good characterization of the CPML today:

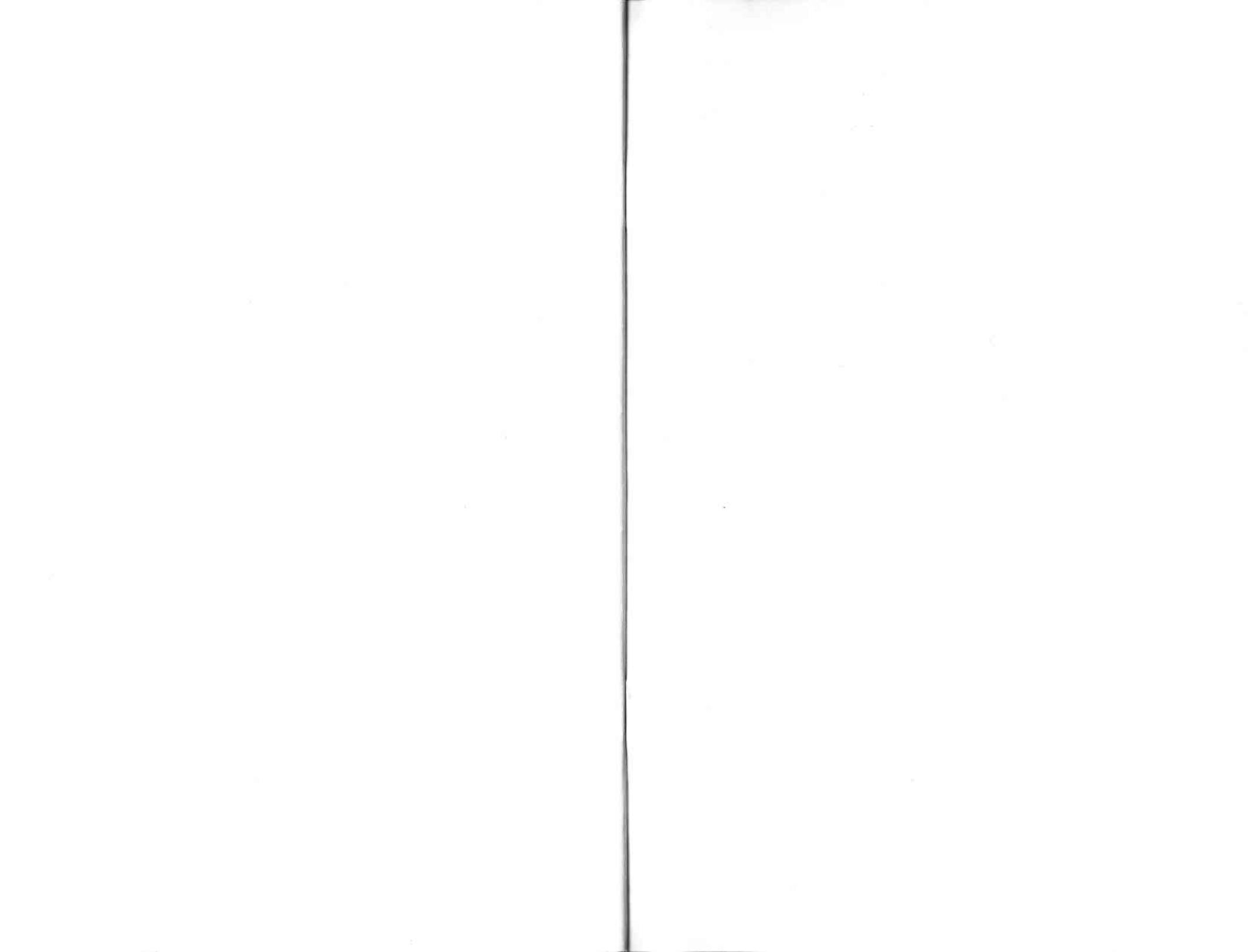
"The communist movement, which is still drawn mainly from the petty-bourgeoisie in this country at this time, carries with it much petty-bourgeois baggage when it moves to link up with these struggles. The form of this baggage changes, however. Generally speaking, it is an historic trend in the communist movement that the petty bourgeoisie, and petty-bourgeois intellectuals in particular, tend to be 'ultra-left' at times when they are divorced from the mass movement; but tend toward rightism when connected with the day-to-day struggle. As noted in the last NCC report, the 'spontaneous' tendency of the working class is mainly trade-unionism and not anarchism or adventurism—though these can find some social base among more unstable sections of the class. And the 'spontaneous' tendency of petty-bourgeois intellectuals, in the revolutionary movement, when actually involving themselves in the day-to-day struggle, is to tail behind trade-unionism, to fall into economism."

The revisionist CPUSA, while a problem, does not represent quite as great a danger as a tendency as the CPML-type trend does.

The Soviet Union in the main has been exposed as counter-revolutionary to many revolutionary-minded people in this country but with the intensification of the crisis in the U.S., and the degeneration of China, the Soviet Union could seem more attractive to some ("maybe it ain't so bad after all..."). But, more fundamentally, a revisionism that more thoroughly tails behind one's own bourgeoisie is more capable of sabotaging the class struggle—more reflects the pull of spontaneity—than revisionism that tails behind that ruling class' main imperialist rival. It would even be likely as the international situation sharpens that a split would occur in the CPUSA and some of these old-time revisionists would find a happy home in the CPML or some new grouping that emerged.

We cannot afford to be complacent about such forces as the CPML. While it's no sure thing that the CPML will be around forever and it's certainly possible that its many internal opportunist rivalries may lead to a shattering explosion, nevertheless, the type of line they represent is bound to continually infiltrate the proletarian struggle—our Mensheviks are a prime example of that. Just as the proletariat has to develop its consciousness in opposition to those of other classes, the same goes for the proletarian vanguard. If we try to ignore such tendencies, don't keep our guard up and continually struggle for Marxist-Leninist clarity, these types of opportunists will have a more negative impact on the class struggle than need be. And opportunities to smash particular opportunist groups could be missed. As the Party's *Programme* clearly states:

"These various agents of imperialism, in and of themselves, amount to nothing more than cockroaches which the working class could squash under its feet. But these types do pose a greater potential danger—they can act as the 'shock troops' for the development of a phony 'socialist' or 'progressive' movement that would aim at diverting the working class from the revolutionary path and setting it up to be smashed by the bourgeoisie." (Page 94.)



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