

# Building the New U.S. Communist Party

## The October League (M-L): A Cover for Revisionism

This is the fourth in a series on building the new U.S. Communist Party—Ed.

The dogmatic, counter-revolutionary line of the so-called "Communist League" is in the process of being thoroughly exposed and defeated.

CL's thinly veiled attack on the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese international line of forming the broadest possible united front under the leadership of the proletariat to defeat the two superpowers; CL's insane assertion that the organized sections of the working class are the bribed tools of reaction and the social base not for revolution but for fascism; its fairy-tale version of the national question in the U.S. and its rabid insistence that the communist movement advocate independence now for the Black people by setting up a new state in the "Black Belt" South, which under present objective conditions really means advocating bourgeois nationalist separatism—all of this and much more has revealed CL's true colors, which are anything but red, and has led most genuine and honest revolutionary forces to put as much ideological, political, and organizational distance between themselves and CL as possible.

And some of those forces that have tried to cuddle up to CL and its counter-revolutionary line have found themselves in the position of spurned lovers. The much-ballyhooed "Continuations Committee" which was supposed to bring together all kinds of forces to join with CL to form a new Communist Party is collapsing like a house of cards.

The Black Workers Congress and the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization, which were given a big "welcome home, comrades!" in the May issue of CL's newspaper, *People's Tribune*, less than two months later have been unceremoniously booted out of the "Continuations Committee," for reasons yet to be made clear. But it becomes more apparent each day that the "new" Communist Party CL is talking about creating will hardly be anything more than CL in a new wrapper, and more importantly, with the same old reactionary CL line which has isolated CL from the masses, which is based on complete contempt for the masses, and which objectively stands opposed to the needs and revolutionary interests of the masses.

The struggle against CL and what it represents is of course far from over, and all of us must continue to expose this line until it is thoroughly discredited both in the communist movement and among the masses. At the same time, it is important for all of us to recognize that there is another incorrect line developing in our movement—around building the new U.S. Communist Party and other key, related tasks—which also must be exposed and defeated and which presently and in the long run represents a greater danger to the development of the revolutionary movement in this country than the out-and-out reactionary line represented by CL.

### Right in Form and Essence

In contrast to the "left" in form, right in essence line of CL, this other line is characterized by rightism (reformism) both in form and in essence, and is represented most clearly at this time by the October League (Marxist-Leninist). Unlike the CL line, which is in black and white and clear for everyone to see, the OL line—as is typical of all lines that are rightist in form as well as in essence—must be dragged kicking and screaming into the light of day where it can be seen for what it really is and defeated.

Anyone who reads OL's newspaper, *The Call*, knows that OL, rather than clearly and consistently putting forward its line and showing how it is used in practice and with what results, prefers instead to put forward what can perhaps best be described as a "smorgasbord line"—there is something there for everyone. OL tries

to justify this "take what you like, we're just here to please" approach by talking about how it is trying to unify the movement, while simultaneously attacking communist forces who clearly put forward and fight for their line as "ultra-left" and "sectarian."

But OL is increasingly less able to cover its own line by attacking other organizations like the RU for putting forward their lines. To show where OL is really coming from and what they're up to, let's begin with the fundamental question of what is the correct strategy for making revolution in the U.S. Both the RU and OL say this strategy is building the united front against imperialism under proletarian leadership (although that isn't *always* what OL has put forward, as we shall discuss later).

In a 1972 "unity statement" between OL and a group called the Georgia Communist League, we find the following: "the U.S. proletariat, led by a genuine communist party must unite around itself all those forces who can be united into a broad united front, to oppose monopoly capital, defend democratic rights, oppose the menace of fascism, improve living conditions, oppose imperialist arms expansion and war, to defend world peace and to actively support the revolutionary struggles of the oppressed nations" (p. 21 in the 1972 statement, slightly revised in the 1973 version, p. 16).

### Chinese 1963 Proposal

We have no quarrel with this statement, although we think OL-GCL, in the interest of fairness and honesty, should have mentioned that it is almost a verbatim quote from "A Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement," written by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in 1963. But what does concern us much more than this petty plagiarism is how OL deals with what the CPC Central Committee emphasizes just a little later in the same 1963 proposal. According to that proposal:

"The proletarian parties in imperialist or capitalist countries must maintain their own ideological, political and organizational independence in leading revolutionary struggles. At the same time, they must unite all the forces that can be united and build a broad united front against monopoly capital and against the imperialist policies of aggression and war.

"While actively leading immediate struggles, Communists in the capitalist countries should link them with the struggle for long-range and general interests, educate the masses in a Marxist-Leninist revolutionary spirit, ceaselessly raise their political consciousness and undertake the historical task of the proletarian revolution. *If they fail to do so, if they regard the immediate movement as everything, determine their conduct from case to case, adapt themselves to the events of the day and sacrifice the basic interests of the proletariat, that is out-and-out social democracy.*" (As quoted in *A Selection from the Red Papers 1, 2 and 3*, p. 37, emphasis added here.)

In its 1972 "unity statement," OL once again quotes the above CPC statement almost verbatim, although once again failing to mention that is what it is doing. But in the revised "unity statement" published exactly one year later, in May 1973, a revised version, by the way, which OL doesn't call to the reader's attention, referring to it instead as only a "reprint," the political heart and soul is cut out of the above CPC position. In OL's 1973 "reprint," here is all that remains: "The working class and its party must maintain their political and organizational independence and initiative within the united front, by leading the day to day struggles, by promoting the fight for reforms in a revolutionary manner and by pointing out, in this context, the final aims of the movement."

It is no accident that in this "reprint," OL drops

the key point that communists must link the immediate struggles of the people with "the struggle for long-range and general interests, educate the masses in a Marxist-Leninist revolutionary spirit, ceaselessly raise their political consciousness and undertake the historical task of the proletarian revolution." Nor is it any accident that in this "reprint," OL drops the CPC position that a failure to do this, to regard instead "the immediate movement as everything," is social democracy pure and simple, petty bourgeois reformism that wraps itself in the cloak of socialism.

None of this is any accident because in practice, OL is developing a rightist social-democratic line *in opposition* to the revolutionary CPC international line as expressed in the 1963 proposal. OL, as we will show, is not linking up the immediate struggles of the people with a long-range revolutionary strategy, and is not ceaselessly raising the people's political consciousness and educating the people in a Marxist-Leninist revolutionary spirit.

The united front against imperialism is a strategy for revolution. It is a strategic alliance between the proletariat and other strata and sections of the people for the purpose of overthrowing the imperialists and establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat, socialism. At the very heart of this united front is the merging of the political struggles of the multinational proletariat and the struggles of Black and other third world people against their national oppression.

The multinational proletariat must have ideological and practical leadership in this united front, exercised through its own party, a genuine Communist Party, and must lead the struggle against all forms of oppression. Only if the proletariat has leadership in this class alliance is it possible to unite all who can be united not merely to reform the present system, but to overthrow it, to totally smash it, and build a totally different society in its place.

If the united front is not under the leadership of the proletariat and its party, but is instead led by petty bourgeois and "liberal" bourgeois elements, then it will of course not be revolutionary and will rapidly degenerate into a tool of monopoly capitalist rule. For years, the revisionist "Communist Party," USA has been pushing precisely for this reformist united front, or what they call the "anti-monopoly coalition," and this is precisely what OL seems to be pushing for, too.

### OL on Fascism

In *Red Papers 2*, in our article entitled "The United Front Against U.S. Imperialism: Strategy for Proletarian Revolution," we point out that "the right opportunists, led by the so-called Communist Party, USA (Revisionist), are more difficult to isolate" than the "left" opportunists "because they continually call for 'unity' and 'united front.' What they mean is 'unity' with the imperialists and 'united front' behind the so-called 'liberals' in the ruling class... They join with the people's forces only to lead them from the path of anti-imperialist struggle and proletarian revolution into the swamp of class collaboration and social imperialism..."

"In calling for an anti-monopoly alliance, the CP mutters something about the leadership of 'labor and the Negro people.' But it is clear from the practice of these traitors that what they mean is an alliance behind the 'liberal' imperialists, with labor fat cats and black bootlickers as the front men."

And it is clear from its practice that this is exactly the kind of alliance OL is talking about, too. Examine, for instance, OL's position on Nixon. The character of the present U.S. economic and political crisis has made the struggle to oust Nixon an important tactic of the revolutionary movement. But faced with

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this crisis, the bourgeoisie—or sections of it—push the idea that Nixon alone is responsible, that getting rid of Nixon will solve the problem, that Nixon is a crook and we need "honest politicians," etc. All these ideas have some influence among the masses, and the danger of tailing behind these ideas is increased by the necessity and the correct policy of uniting with and mobilizing the masses in struggle to throw Nixon out.

In this present situation of sharpening conflicts within the ruling class, OL puts forward the position that Nixon represents the fascist section of the ruling class, as opposed to the "anti-fascist" section. OL says that Nixon initiated "fascist measures prematurely," but these "were met with widespread popular opposition, especially from working people, students, minorities, and influential sections of the ruling class itself." (*The Call*, Dec. 1973, emphasis ours.)

### Masses as Pressure Group

OL's "strategy" based on this sort of analysis is to build a "broad anti-fascist movement," and the clear implication of their line is that it is correct to unite with the supposedly "anti-fascist" section of the ruling class against the supposedly "fascist" section represented by Nixon. And while giving lip service to mass action to oust Nixon, in practice OL raises and supports the non-struggle slogan, "Impeach Nixon." In one of their editorials they let the cat out of the bag and end up openly in the revisionist camp when they put forward the idea that a mass movement is needed merely "so that pressure remains on the Congress to act," thus reducing the role of the masses to a Congressional pressure group. (See *The Call* editorial, April 1974.)

As we have said in previous articles about the movement to get rid of Nixon, the present situation has created greater opportunities to *make use of contradictions* within the ruling class and not to do so would certainly be a mistake. But a line that is based not on relying on the masses but on using the masses as a mere pressure group leads into the trap of *sidling with and relying on* one section of the ruling class against another, and not utilizing the opportunity to raise the consciousness of the masses that the real enemy is not Nixon, another one or two politicians, or *one section of the ruling class* (the so-called "fascist section"), but the entire monopoly capitalist ruling class.

In the July *Revolution*, in dealing with the same tendency of CL to see everything as "fascism just around the corner," we point out that "To label every case of ruling class corruption and every act of repression as the sure sign of impending fascism is not only to spread defeatism, but more than that to cover up the nature of bourgeois class rule, to conceal the fact that the bourgeois democracy is a form of *dictatorship of the bourgeoisie* over the proletariat, and is always marked by violent repression."

We don't deny the *possibility* of fascism, especially as the revolutionary workers' movement grows stronger and the position of the imperialists grows weaker. The point, however, is that only by now building a powerful revolutionary mass movement to overthrow the imperialist ruling class can fascism be prevented. Fascism can't be prevented by ideologically and politically disarming the masses and tailing behind the "liberal" bourgeoisie. The political history of Germany, Italy, Spain, Japan and other countries during this century stands as clear testimony to *that*.

But the essence of OL's (and CL's) effort to justify every milk and water non-struggle position they take by raising the spectre of fascism in the midst of every battle is precisely to limit the consciousness of the working class and oppressed people to bourgeois democratic demands instead of advancing it to revolutionary consciousness. This is the essence of the revisionist line—the imperialist system does not need to be overthrown, but can be saved through bourgeois democratic reforms—and stands as a barrier to the building of proletarian leadership of the developing united front and allows the "liberal" bourgeoisie to dictate the form and content of struggle. This super-defensive strategy is the strategy of defeat.

This OL-CL line of developing a non-struggle anti-fascist united front as a substitute for mass struggle under the leadership of the working class, and the CP's obsession with the "ultra-right," all come down to a petty bourgeois elitist distrust of the masses'

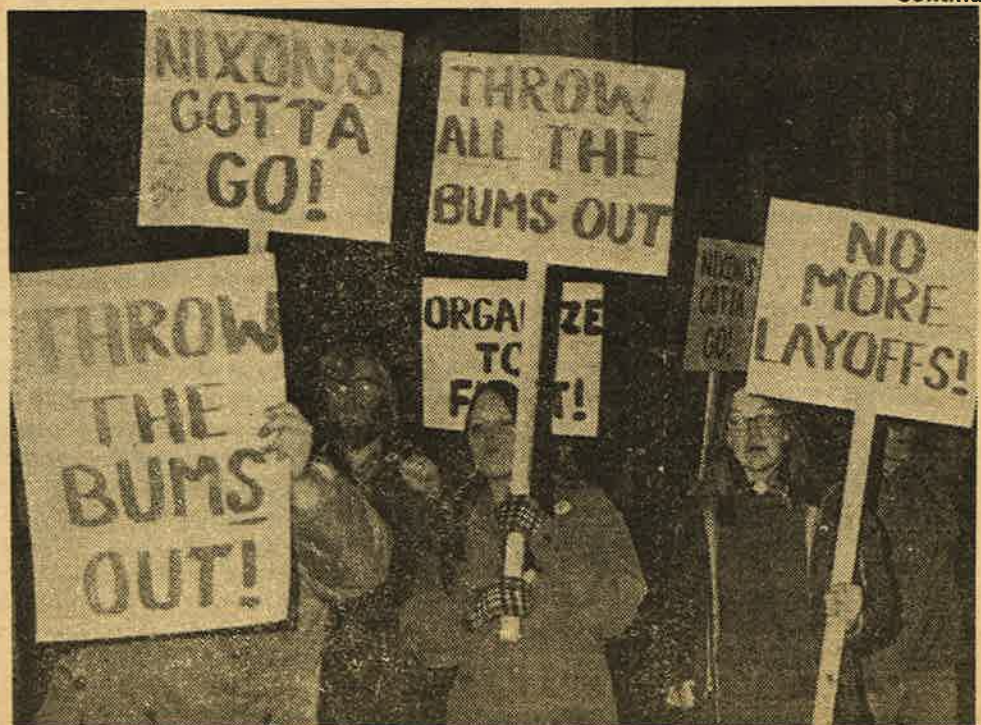
ability to grasp revolutionary principle and to organize for struggle. The line that gets peddled is "the enemy is strong and the people are weak."

### Mao on the U.S. Situation

To dispel the ideological smog coming out of L.A. and elsewhere, we recommend the reading or re-reading of Mao Tsetung's "Talk With the American Correspondent Anna Louise Strong," in August 1946. (*Selected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 97-101.) The situation is that World War 2 has just ended, U.S. imperialism is vastly strengthened while all other imperialist powers, allied and axis alike, are greatly weakened, and the U.S. ruling class is preparing to establish hegemony over the colonial and capitalist world, waving the atom bomb and threatening war against the Soviet Union, which was then still a socialist country.

The "American Century," in other words, is about to commence, so tremble all ye faint-hearted. In the face of all this, and with the Chinese people themselves still fighting against the imperialist-backed Chinese reactionaries, Mao says: "All reactionaries are paper tigers. In appearance, the reactionaries are terrifying, but in reality they are not so powerful. From a long-term point of view, it is not the reactionaries but the people who are really powerful...Speaking of U.S. imperialism, people seem to feel that it is terrifically strong. Chinese reactionaries are using the 'strength' of the United States to frighten the Chinese people. But it will be proved that the U.S. reactionaries, like all the reactionaries in history, do not have much strength. In the United States there are others who are really strong—the American people."

And, indeed, Mao's analysis has turned out to be entirely correct. The "American Century" has turned out to be just another imperialist pipe dream, and yet here we have so-called revolutionaries trying to frighten us into cringing before the bourgeoisie with all their talk about impending fascism. In fact,



The struggle to oust Nixon is an important tactic of the revolutionary movement. But it must be linked to the struggle against the entire ruling class—something OL discourages in its efforts to cozy up to "liberal" politicians and trade union bureaucrats. Top photo shows NYC demo last March 9 to protest "Woman of the Year" award to Julie Nixon Eisenhower; bottom shows part of crowd of 250 greeting vice-president Ford when he tried to get over in Cincinnati last Feb. 20.

this is a time to be greatly encouraged, as the U.S. imperialists go from one crisis to another and their strength in the world shrivels and their credit among the people of the U.S. falls faster than the dollar. Our job is to unite with the people on the basis of a revolutionary strategy and programme and build mass revolutionary struggle, and not go around preaching a rightist and defeatist strategy of relying on the "liberal" bourgeoisie.

In the final analysis, this rightist line leads to adopting the stand of the "liberal" bourgeoisie, subordinating the proletarian line to this bourgeois line, and, in the long run, to liquidating the proletarian line altogether. We have described in a number of previous articles in *Revolution* how OL does just that in relation to the oust Nixon movement, attacking those who want to raise broader political concepts and ideas, and who see the need to rely on the masses and not on the "liberal" bourgeoisie, as "ultra-left." (See article on the Throw the Bum Out and anti-Nixon demonstrations in the Feb. 1973 *Revolution*; also, in the May issue, see "Unparalyze Congress or Organize to Fight?" a criticism of an OL editorial in the April *Call*.)

The truth, of course, is that taking such a position is not "ultra-left," but that OL must scream "fascism" and "ultra-leftism" at every turn to cover up its own rightist line. This can be seen very clearly in OL's line on the workers' movement, and where that line leads in practice.

## OL on Workers' Movement: Toddling Behind the Hacks

Just as OL's strategy on Nixon calls for uniting with one section of the ruling class against another section, which means surrendering the initiative to the ruling class, OL's strategy for building the workers' movement calls for uniting with one section of the trade union bureaucracy against another section—the "progressive section" against the "reactionary section." This, too, ultimately comes down to relying on the labor bureaucracy as a whole, and also the bourgeoisie because it controls the labor bureaucracy.

The correct policy is to rely not on one section of the labor bureaucracy, but on the rank and file—mobilizing them and raising their political consciousness through struggle—and on the basis of this strength, forcing certain trade union officials to unite with the rank and file. The way to view unity with trade union officials is as a tactic within the overall strategy of building the struggle, consciousness and revolutionary unity of the working class, and its leadership in the anti-imperialist united front. Sometimes it is correct to unite with trade union officials, depending on the particular conditions, sometimes it isn't. But uniting with trade union officials, no matter how "progressive," can never be the basis of a revolutionary strategy.

And even when we do unite with them, our support must always be conditional, depending on how willing they are to support the rank and file in their struggles. We never give 100% support to the trade union officials, as OL demands. We give 100% support only to the rank and file and partial, "critical" support to the officials insofar as they will support the rank and file.

For example, as Bob Avakian, representing the RU, pointed out in his speech at the June 22, 1973, *Guardian*-sponsored forum on "Roads to Building a Workers' Movement," while it was correct to give critical support to the election of the reform slate headed by

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The masses of rank and file miners, like these shown at a Black Lung Association meeting in 1970, made a reform victory in the United Mine Workers Union in 1972-73 possible. But rank and file must continue to organize and struggle and can't rely on trade union officials—even so-called "progressive" ones like UMW's Arnold Miller. OL, however, says we all must give "full support" to reform slates like Miller's, and pushes reliance on trade union bureaucrats.

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Arnold Miller in the United Mineworkers Union, it is wrong, and misleading the masses, to view the election one-sidedly.

But this is exactly what OL did, saying things like "the possibilities [that the new slate can put its program into effect—Ed.] appear to be bright," without pointing out the limitations of that program and the contradictions within it that, in fact, will make it very difficult to put into effect, and without emphasizing the necessity of the rank and file to continue to build their movement and to rely on themselves to keep things moving forward.

In the August 1973 *Call* editorial, OL attacked the RU for saying that the short-comings and limitations of such reform slates must be pointed out. OL said that it was the duty of communists to give "full support" to such campaigns and that "It became clear in practice that the RU line of 'critical support' meant *No Support At All.*" (their emphasis.)

Anyone who has followed our articles in *Revolution* or is familiar with our work knows this latter statement is entirely false. We did give critical support to the Miller slate, while at the same time emphasizing that the rank and file should keep the initiative in their own hands and continue to jam the union and not to rely on it. As later events have proved, this stand was absolutely correct. First of all, the Miller slate, since assuming office, has attempted to put an end to the various militant rank and file groups, such as Miners for Democracy and the Black Lung Association, claiming that there is no longer need for such groups now that Miller and other "progressives" are running the union.

### What Does This Progressiveness Amount To?

But just what does this "progressiveness" amount to? It is true that the Miller slate has come up with some reforms, but there is another side to the picture, too. For instance, in the miners' "no gas—no coal" strike in February-March this year—a tremendous struggle in which 27,000 West Virginia miners struck for 20 days against gasoline shortages and a state rule limiting the amount of gas a person could buy—Miller sent his right hand man into a meeting to tell the miners that they "had made their point" and should return to work. The right hand man was booted right off the stage.

And overall, the role of Miller and the reform leadership during the strike was characterized by "efforts to trick the miners back to work before their demands were met, by promoting a policy of relying on the efforts of a few and ignoring the driving force of the rank and file, and by preaching about the need to bring 'common sense' to the capitalists and their legal system as the way to solve the miners' problems." (See story on the miners' strike in the April 1974 *Revolution*.)

Despite this and other examples of the Miller slate's efforts to head off the continued growth of the rank and file miners movement, OL still persists in putting

him forward as a hero and the driving force in the union. The July 1974 *Call*, in its article on the recent miners' protests in Alabama against the importation of coal from South Africa, credited the action to "the reform movement led by Arnold Miller and the Miners for Democracy Caucus, which threw out the corrupt Tony Boyle leadership a year ago."

This approach negates the fact that the demonstration's great strength lay in the participation of thousands of miners who walked off their jobs, and the rank and file organizing and work of other forces, including communists, who helped put together the May 22 Birmingham demonstration against Southern Co., which plans to import the coal.

This approach also covers over the fact that Miller and the reform slate supported the demonstration only in a limited way, emphasizing only the question of how the importation of coal would mean fewer jobs for the miners and trying to appeal to the miners' narrowest interests. Many of the miners, however, had a much broader and more internationalist outlook than this, as can be seen in the signs they carried: "Southern Co., Georgia Power, are Attacking U.S. Miners' Jobs and South African Miners' Fight for Liberation", and "Stop Slavery in Africa, Stop Imperialism, Stop Southern Co.—Local 7813."

### Another Example

Another example of OL's propensity to build up reform labor "leaders" at the expense of the rank and file was their "full support" stand on reform candidate Ed Sadlowski's campaign in District 31 of the United Steelworkers of America. (*Call* editorial, August 1973.)

As we pointed out in the November 1973 *Revolution*, "While Sadlowski's campaign did raise issues that speak to some of the pressing needs of the workers in the mills, many workers were led by the Sadlowski forces into believing that by just backing Sadlowski's campaign, they could take control of the union structure and make significant changes, without building a mass rank and file movement."

During the campaign, the Sadlowski forces refused to come out openly for the abolition of the no-strike agreement because they didn't want to endanger their election. After the election was stolen from the reform slate, the Sadlowski forces still refused to come out strongly against the no-strike deal for fear of jeopardizing their chances for a new election, and have said that it would be useless to try to fight it now, calling on steelworkers to wait until the next time the contract comes up.

Contrast this stance with the determined organizing going on all across the country by rank and file steelworkers against the no-strike agreement, including the militant demonstration by 200 people—steelworkers and their supporters—in Milwaukee on May 26 against I.W. Abel, USWA president and chief engineer of the sellout no-strike deal. (*Revolution*, July 1974.)

Where does OL's "follow the labor leader" line lead to in practice? This is demonstrated most clearly in OL's position on the Brotherhood Caucus at the General Motors plant in Fremont, Calif. OL built this caucus up as just about the greatest thing in the world, and just a year ago was lauding its "leaders," especially the main leader, to the skies ("uncompromising stance against the company," "active fighter," etc.; etc.). After the Brotherhood slate won significant

support in the local's elections in June 1973, with "the leading spokesman for the militant Brotherhood Caucus" elected to the key position of Shop Chairman, OL heralded the victory as a "New Voice—New Day" for the UAW local. (*The Call*, July 1973.)

In addition, the election, according to OL; "should break the stranglehold of the International UAW leadership, set a new militant direction in the local's struggles against GM, and significantly influence the struggles for rank and file control of other UAW locals around the country."

But just one year later, in the July 1974 *Call*, OL finds itself in the embarrassing position of having to strongly criticize these very same "leaders" who they used to laud and asked the rank and file to unconditionally follow. Commenting on the efforts of "a variety of forces" to "sabotage" the June 2 demonstration outside the UAW Convention held in LA—a demonstration aimed primarily at getting the UAW to stop buying Israeli bonds—OL is forced to say: "Perhaps the most damaging sabotage came from a few of the top leaders of the Brotherhood Caucus who, after issuing the call for the demonstration and agreeing to support it, backed out at the last minute and would not join the picket line. Inside the convention, while stopping short of voting for Woodcock, they did nothing to oppose him or his policies." So much for the "New Voice—New Day" and the broken stranglehold of the International UAW leadership!

### Line Wrong From Beginning

But why in fact did OL find itself in this position of having to eat crow? Precisely because its line on the Brotherhood Caucus was wrong in the first place. Precisely because they gave "100% support" to the leaders of this caucus, especially the Triple O (Opportunist Out of Office) who headed it up. The caucus in its first days did have some progressive aspects and did reflect some of the rank and file's immediate needs. But rather than dividing one into two, rather than pointing out and uniting with the progressive aspects while exposing the backward and bad aspects and emphasizing to the rank and file the importance of keeping the initiative in their own hands, the OL called on everyone to support the caucus leaders "all the way," labeling any criticism as "ultra-left." The results speak for themselves.

And if OL would be willing to learn from the workers rather than trying to force them to trail obediently behind various "labor leaders," they might have seen what was happening to the caucus much earlier. For instance, a member of the Brotherhood Caucus pointed out the sellout direction of the leadership in an article in the *Bay Area Worker* in November 1973, seven months before OL was forced by events to make its criticism:

"Since the election, the Brotherhood has failed to remain an independent force. There has been only one caucus meeting, only one issue of the newspaper has been printed, and only a couple of leaflets have been distributed.

"Now that many Brotherhood heavies are in positions of union leadership, they seem to have forgotten their election promises... The rank and file believed that once the Brotherhood leaders were elected to union office they would take care of business for the workers. Instead, the leadership has gone into business for itself. As a result, shop conditions are just as bad as they ever were."

And OL, with its rightist strategy of uniting with and relying on one section of the labor bureaucracy—the "progressive section"—against the "reactionary section," helped to foster these illusions among the rank and file and helped set them up for another sellout. This, we must say frankly, is hardly a sterling example of good communist leadership.

But despite OL's miserable record, and despite what this shows about the fundamental incorrectness of their line, they see fit to attack the RU for what they term our "united front from below" line, in their words, "an old scheme aimed at avoiding the important struggles for the leadership of the unions." OL goes on to charge that the RU's "view of the trade unions is static and they give up the efforts to push these unions, the basic organization of the working class, to the left." (*Call* editorial, August 1973; see also *Call* editorial, June 1974.)

First of all, we have never used the phrase "united front from below" to describe our work in the trade unions, although for the life of us we can't see why OL wants to heap scorn on this approach, as opposed to a "united front from above," that is, an alliance between communists and trade union hacks. What we have emphasized and will continue to emphasize, no matter how much the revisionists and groups like OL throw around terms like "ultra-leftism" and "sectarianism," is that the key thing in work in the trade unions and working class work in general is to concentrate on building rank and file organization that does not tail behind the union leadership, but that can take up

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issues and act independently.

In addition, we will continue to insist that what we must build is not a reformist but a revolutionary workers' movement which takes up the struggles of all sections of the people and leads the fight against all oppression, uniting all who can be united in the process. Communists must help to make those links between different struggles as well as build struggle inside the plants, all the while raising the level of political consciousness as to the nature of the capitalist system and class struggle. If this is what OL means by building a "united front from below" and criticizes us for, then we once again are more than happy to plead guilty.

OL, on the other hand, says that its "strategy" is to "move the trade unions to the left." Is it wrong to try to "move the trade unions to the left?" Of course not, but this is not a strategy for building a revolutionary workers' movement, or for proletarian revolution. To the contrary, it's a strategy for moving the workers' movement to the right by tying it to the tail of the labor bureaucracy and the bourgeoisie.

Communists must, of course, work in trade unions, even the most reactionary, and support and build trade unions and the day-to-day economic struggles. But communists do this in order to seize on the sparks of political consciousness that are generated through such trade union struggles and raise the level of politi-

cal activity, understanding and organization of the class.

And in this process, wherever and to the extent possible, we must confront trade union officials with a mass movement that forces them to take a stand in support of the struggle, or be exposed for failing to take a stand and be pushed aside. To the extent possible, we should "move the trade unions to the left" in the sense that, by relying on the struggles of the rank and file and raising the workers' political consciousness, we can get the trade unions, locals in particular, to take progressive stands, to officially support progressive struggles, to make use wherever possible of the apparatus of the union to inform workers of these questions, etc. But we certainly cannot rely on the union apparatus to mobilize the masses of workers for struggle, and still less to raise their class consciousness.

It is this reliance and tailing behind the trade unions that OL means by "moving the trade unions to the left," as demonstrated not only by their words but also by their actions, and it is *this* that we and all Marxist-Leninists will always stand opposed to. This rightist line of OL's reduces the role of communists and advanced workers to following around behind the union bureaucrats, hat in hand, begging for action. And if that action doesn't come, as it usually doesn't, this approach comes down to peddling defeatism and a "how can we win, we're so weak without official union support" line to the rank and file.

This is just what happened in the recently-ended wildcat strike at the Dasco paper products plant in Oakland, Calif., where OL and other forces blamed their own political backwardness and lack of dare-to-struggle spirit on the workers' "unpreparedness" and "lack of organization." The truth is that many of the workers were willing and ready to continue the fight and try and win over the other workers who were not as advanced. But OL and the others weren't. (See summation of the Dasco strike in this issue.)

As we said in an article on the Coalition of Labor Union Women meeting, in the May 1974 *Revolution*, "This idea of making union work and 'moving the unions to the left' the strategy of our movement...in practice means reducing the revolutionary united front strategy to a reformist, militant trade union strategy, where the major thing becomes passing resolutions, trying to replace 'bad' union leaders with 'good' ones, etc. These things must be done, but in order to help build the revolutionary movement and our own organizations, not to substitute for them."

OL on the Farah Strike

We want to give one more example of OL's line on the workers' movement which we think helps to make things perfectly clear. This is OL's position on the Farah strike. The 22-month long Farah strike, as we pointed out in the April *Revolution* and in an article in *Red Papers 6*, represents an important victory for the entire class and also in the struggle against national oppression. In addition, it also represents an important victory in the struggle for women's equality and rights, as well as a step forward in unionizing the largely unorganized Southwest.

The tremendous determination of the Farah workers inspired literally tens of thousands of workers and other oppressed people across the country, and led to the creation of dozens of Farah Strike Support Committees that helped spread the major political lessons of the strike, while at the same time giving concrete support to the strikers and further developing their political understanding and strengthening their resolve to bring Willie Farah to his knees.

What was OL's position on the Farah strike? First of all, *The Call* had almost nothing to say about the strike during the 22 months it lasted. There were a few short articles giving little information and absolutely no analysis of how the strike was going, the development of support work nationally, and what the political significance of the strike was for the overall class struggle and the struggle against national oppression. For all intents and purposes, *The Call*, OL's national organ, acted as though the strike didn't exist.

Then, suddenly, when the strike has ended, *The Call* comes out with a big front page banner headline in its March issue, "Farah Strike Victory! Union Recognition Won." And OL proceeds to devote a good deal of the article underneath the banner headline to a joint statement by Willie Farah and officials of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of American (ACWA) announcing the end of the strike!

There are no statements from the strikers themselves, there is no mention of the development of the support work around the country and what role it played, and, most importantly, there is still no analysis of the political lessons of the strike.

But this is not the end of it. In the May issue of *The Call*, there is another article on the strike (we have literally gone from rags to riches), "Why the Farah Strike Won." At last we get OL's political analysis of the strike.

The reasons for the victory, according to OL, "lies

in the developing upsurge of the last five years of the Chicano liberation movement throughout the Southwest." This movement, continues OL, has always "been closely connected to the working class." This movement, OL says, is a movement "for national rights," and "To a larger degree than ever before, the labor movement, with strong influence from the left forces, mobilized in support of the workers in El Paso and San Antonio a boycott of Farah products . . ."

OL points out that the National Organization for Women also supported the strikers, and that, given the support the strikers were getting from many quarters, "even the Roman Catholic Bishop of El Paso and the El Paso City Council put pressure on Willie Farah to settle. This pressure finally forced Farah to allow for a vote among the workers. . ."

"But it was the merging of the movement of the Chicano people for their national rights in the Southwest with the general workers' struggle that made the difference," *The Call* article sums up.

Struggle Not Limited to "National Rights"

Notice what OL has done here. On the one hand, it has reduced the Chicano liberation struggle, an anti-imperialist and revolutionary struggle, to a bourgeois democratic struggle for "national rights." Are the Chicano people struggling for national rights? Yes, they are. Is it a just struggle? Yes, it is, and should be supported by all revolutionary-minded and progressive people.

But is the Chicano liberation movement just a struggle for democratic rights? No, it is not. The Chicano liberation movement is part of the overall revolutionary movement to overthrow imperialism and establish socialism, and it is only under socialism that the Chicano people's full rights can in fact be achieved. But OL says that the Chicano liberation movement is one and the same thing as the struggle for national rights, and in so doing, OL reduces this revolutionary movement to a struggle for reforms.

On the other hand, OL has done the same thing with the working class movement. It has reduced the revolutionary workers' movement to the "labor movement." OL claims that "the labor movement, with strong influence from the left forces," organized the boycott of Farah products. This stands everything on its head. The truth is that the labor movement—that is, the organized trade union movement—and especially the ACWA leadership, dragged its heels all the way on the boycott and other support activities, and it was only because certain communist organizations and other revolutionary forces linked up with and mobilized rank and file workers and others that the boycott was so successful.

If OL's "labor movement" had had its way, the boycott would have been strictly a token affair. In other words, it was the developing revolutionary workers' movement and its communist leadership, and not the reformist "labor movement" that played the key role in building for the Farah strike.

But more than that, it was this developing revolutionary workers' movement that brought to thousands upon thousands of people all across the country the political significance and lessons of the strike, something that OL's "labor movement" didn't do and never would do. It was explained that the strike was not only a struggle for unionization, although it included that; that the strike was not only a struggle for the Chicano people's national rights, although it included that, too. The strike was part of the overall revolutionary working class struggle against the monopoly capitalist class and its state apparatus (courts, police, etc.) and, at the same time, part of the overall revolutionary struggle of the Chicano people and all other oppressed nationalities against that same monopoly capitalist class.

And more, it was explained that the strike represented the merging of the revolutionary struggle of the multinational working class with the revolutionary struggle against national oppression, and represented a concrete example of the working class taking up the struggle against all oppression. This is what gave the strike its tremendous importance and its tremendous strength. And this is precisely what OL's analysis completely fails to recognize, reducing the strike, instead, to a struggle only for immediate reforms, and giving major credit to the Catholic Bishop of El Paso and the El Paso City Council for putting pressure on Farah to settle ("This pressure finally forced Farah to allow for a vote among the workers . . .").

In its May Day editorial, "Revolutionary Leadership Needed in Workers' Fight Back" (*The Call*, May 1974), OL says straight up that "May Day is a day for communists to unite with the militant rank and file forces and consolidate this unity in the labor union movement." The RU's overall slogan for May Day this year was "Workers Unite to Lead the Struggle Against All Oppression!" These two approaches clearly indicate, we believe, the difference between a line of building a revolutionary united front against imperialism under proletarian leadership and a line of toddling along behind

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Rank and file workers, people from the communities, from the Chicano movement, students and others organized support for the Farah strikers all around the country and played an important role in helping the strikers to win. Top photo, Farah Strike Support Committee-jacket line in Seattle; center photo, support activities in New York, and, bottom, in Chicago.

# OL...

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the "labor union movement."

OL talks about "revolutionary leadership" in this editorial, but given OL's actual practice in the working class movement, some of which has been summed up here, this only shows that even the devil himself can quote the scriptures. Building working class revolutionary leadership means building the workers' consciousness, struggle and revolutionary unity and proletarian leadership in the united front, and this is exactly what OL's line and practice stand opposed to building.

Just as OL's line on Nixon and fascism means in practice trying to get the masses to tail behind and rely on the "liberal" bourgeoisie, so does OL's line on the working class movement mean in practice trying to get the workers to tail behind and rely on the "progressive" trade union bureaucrats. And as we can already see from OL's position on the Farah strike and the Chicano liberation movement, OL's line on the national question in the U.S. is also reformist rather than revolutionary.

## OL on National Question

OL has just come out with a pamphlet, "For Working Class Unity and Black Liberation," which in essence is publication of a "resolution on the Afro-American People's Struggle" adopted at OL's Second National Congress in July 1973. In the introduction, OL warns the reader that this resolution should not be viewed "as a complete analysis of this important question," but rather "as a summation of the experiences and the study of our organization up to that point."

Having read the pamphlet, it is easy to understand why OL felt compelled to issue this warning. The pamphlet is a helter-skelter jumble of facts, distortions, quotes from Marx, Lenin, etc. which are there, apparently, to try to add some credibility, and an "analysis" full of contradictions and inconsistencies—all adding up to the fact that OL's line on the national question remains as hazy and obscure now as before.

We can't go into the pamphlet in depth here, and really can't see much purpose in doing so anyway. But we would like to focus on one particular question and ask OL to give a clear, straight answer. OL insists that Black people in the "Black Belt" South are a nation, but that Black people outside the South are not a nation, but a national minority. You can search high and low through this pamphlet, but you will not find any scientific (i.e., Marxist-Leninist) analysis of why OL has come to this conclusion and what it means for developing the struggle for national liberation and the overall struggle for socialism.

To prove this position, OL would have to show that the situation for Black people in the South is qualitatively different than for Black people living outside the South. CL, which takes a position very similar to OL's on this question, tries to prove it by pretending that history has stood still for the last 40 years or so, by pretending that the overwhelming majority of Black people are still concentrated in the South, that they make up the majority of the population there, and that the form of exploitation and oppression that most Black people there still suffer is semi-feudal.

The least you can say for CL is that it takes its totally absurd analysis (see July *Revolution*) to its "logical" conclusion and raises the cry, "Independence for the Negro Nation now!" But OL does not develop the same kind of analysis. Not only that, but some of OL's facts actually go against the position that Black people in the South are in some way in a qualitatively different situation than Black people elsewhere.

For example, according to OL's pamphlet, there are 25 million Black people in the U.S., and "90% of them are workers." (This, we should point out to OL, means that over 22 million Black people are workers, not 15 million, as is stated later in the same pamphlet.) OL also says that the great majority of Black people, "even in the South, are urban dwellers and proletarians."

Well, if it is true that the overwhelming majority of Black people in both the North and South are workers—meaning that most Black people suffer under capitalist and not semi-feudal exploitation and oppression—then on what basis does OL say Black people are a nation in the South but not in the North? What is the magical dividing line between a Black worker, say, in Birmingham or Atlanta and a Black worker, say, in Chicago or Detroit?

When all is said and done, OL's "proof" is some petty bourgeois demagoguery about how the "Afro-American people still suffer from the yoke of the plantation system which carries the stench of the slave market into the industrial centers of the North and South," and how in the rural areas of the South, "the share-cropping system still keeps thousands chained to the land like cattle, completely at the mercy of the



*The mighty contributions and heroic struggles of Black people in the U.S., such as the Black slave Harriet Tubman pictured here who led many other slaves to the North before and during the Civil War, are completely missing from the CBS production, "Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman." But OL, revealing its rightist line on the national question, says the film was "excellent" and accurately portrayed Black people's history.*

white landowners."

This is demagoguery because it tries to get people to accept the idea that Black people in the South are a nation and not elsewhere, not on the basis of scientifically showing why it is so, but rather by appealing to people's emotions and to their righteous anger at the way Black people have been exploited and oppressed for centuries and are still being exploited and oppressed.

### Main Economic Basis of Oppression the Same

But this "stench of the slave market" stuff doesn't alter the fact, as we state in the July *Revolution*, that "The caste-like oppression of Black people in the industrial working class—their concentration in the lowest-paying, dirtiest jobs and their double rate of unemployment—and not the share-cropping system, or even the general backwardness of the rural South—is what today marks the main economic basis of oppression of Black people, in the South as well as North."

Nor does it alter the fact that "the 'Black Belt' as it existed in the past—as an area characterized by the concentration of Black people in rural areas in pre-capitalist forms of exploitation and political domination (Black codes, etc.)—no longer really exists as such today, despite remaining concentrations of rural poor Blacks and the general pattern of discrimination in areas like the Mississippi Delta and South Carolina, especially."

OL, apparently, does not agree with this analysis. Fine. All we ask is this: will you please explain to everyone what is your scientific analysis, your application of Marxism-Leninism to the concrete conditions in the U.S., that leads you to a different conclusion (i.e., that Black people are a nation in the South but not elsewhere, versus the RU's position that Black people throughout the country are a nation, a "nation of a new type" for all the reasons we give in *Red Papers 5, 6, etc.*), rather than resorting to cheap demagoguery and verbal hocus pocus?

We further call on OL to explain, since they fail to do so in their pamphlet, what their unproven "nation in the South—not a nation elsewhere" position comes down in concrete practice, in terms of organizing people in the South in contrast to organizing people outside the South. Should the demand for self-determination (i.e., political separation) be raised in the South (but not in the North) and demonstrations organized around this demand?

OL says it opposed CL's "independence for the Negro Nation" slogan, but what everyone wants to know, given the fact that OL's and CL's positions are so similar on this question, is what does OL propose. Surely this position of OL's must make some difference

in the real world, in terms of what the revolutionary forces must do, otherwise what's the point of it?

### In Practice, Tailing Once Again

Of course, judging from OL's own work around the national liberation struggles, this position of theirs doesn't seem to make any real difference, because in all of their work—North, South, East and West—OL's line has been to push to the forefront certain "progressive" petty bourgeois and bourgeois elements in the Black and other third world movements, just as their line in the workers' movement has been to push forward certain "progressive" trade union bureaucrats.

Look, for example, at how OL dealt with the election of a Black mayor, Maynard Jackson, in Atlanta. The article in the December 1973 *Call* takes an essentially favorable stand on the election. The article does point out that, "In an effort to undercut the growing mass movement, Black candidates are allowed to run in order to steer the Black struggle into strictly electoral channels."

But the whole rest of the article essentially ignores this point. According to *The Call*, the mayoral election victories of Jackson, Bradley (L.A.) and Young (Detroit), "in the face of the most blatant racist campaigns, strike a blow against white supremacy." The most negative thing OL wants to say about Jackson is that he has a "reputation as a weak compromiser on the civil rights struggle," while on the other hand OL points out that Jackson has "taken some progressive positions, especially against police brutality."

All this is quite interesting in light of the most definitely unprogressive role Jackson played in late June, when hundreds of Atlantans took to the streets to protest the police murder of a 17-year-old Black youth, the 23rd such killing in the past 18 months. On June 26, mounted police viciously attacked 400 marchers, beating and trampling many of them, including children who couldn't get out of the way.

Jackson, conveniently, was not in Atlanta that day, but he has not denied knowing that the attack was going to take place and has not claimed that he was against the attack. In fact, there is every reason to believe that he not only knew the attack was planned, but agreed to it. (For more on this situation in Atlanta, see article on p. 19.)

The December 1973 *Call* article on Jackson's election also makes the astounding assertion that "the local power structure of bankers, realtors, corporate heads and downtown businessmen can no longer decisively influence local elections." In the next issue of *The Call*, there is a letter from a person in Detroit pointing out that the December *Call* article left the question of support for Jackson open, and more importantly, that "we should beware of tailing the capitalists' move to use Black mayors as their front men in attacking Black liberation. We must be careful not to foster illusions about candidates like Jackson, Young or Bradley and certainly not entertain any notions that the monopolies do not thoroughly control the electoral machinery." (January 1974 *Call*, p. 10, emphasis added.)

Then, in the February 1974 *Call*, there is a self-criticism by the "Atlanta *Call* Committee," which wrote the article on Jackson. This Committee agrees with the Detroit letter that their analysis was "sloppy" and that, "by implication," the article was "creating illusions about the class nature of elections in general." The Committee concludes its self-criticism by saying it will "try to avoid such sloppy analysis in the future."

Well, we certainly agree with the Detroit letter about what the December *Call* article did, but we can't agree either with the Detroit person or with OL that all of this simply amounts to a case of "being sloppy." What, when you think about it, does sloppiness have to do with it? Sloppiness may have something to do with people's methods of work, but this *Call* article has nothing to do with method. Some people in OL, perhaps along with some other people close to OL, sat down and, we take it, consciously wrote an article on Jackson's election victory which consciously included the idea that the Atlanta power structure "can no longer decisively influence local elections," and *The Call*, OL's national organ, consciously published the article.

Now, if OL wants to criticize itself for putting forward the wrong line on the Jackson election and on Jackson in general, if they want to say that this wrong line on Jackson stems from their general wrong line of tailing behind and relying on "progressive" Black petty bourgeois and bourgeois elements like Jackson, that would be something. But simply criticizing themselves for "sloppy analysis," as though the problem was one of method rather than line, amounts to no self-criticism at all.

### Another "Sloppy Analysis"?

Does OL also want to claim that its article in the May 1974 *Call*, "A Century of Black Struggle: Story of Jane

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Pittman," is just another case of "sloppy analysis"? On Jan. 31, 1974, CBS presented "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman," sponsored by the Xerox Corporation. "Jane Pittman" is not a real person, but supposedly a composite of Black women from the time of the Civil War up to and through the civil rights struggles of the 60's. It is through the 110-year "experience" of this composite person that CBS and Xerox give us their version of a century of the Black people's struggle.

It is important to point out that there is much in this *Call* article that contradicts what OL says in its recently published pamphlet on the Black national question, which we referred to earlier. Here are some quotes from the *Call* article: "The film shows, through Jane's eyes, the realities of life in the Black South during that period [from the Civil War into the 60's—Ed.]—the racist attacks and lynchings, and the continuing plantation system, based now on share-croppers rather than slaves, which tied most Afro-Americans to the soil of the southern states." "The film does an excellent job of showing how the plantation system stayed intact throughout Jane's 110 years." "Jane's entire life was spent in the rural South, the heartland of the Afro-American struggle. Even today, 50 per cent of the country's Afro-Americans live in the South. During Jane's lifetime the majority of Black Americans were tied to the land. The signs of industry clearly read 'whites only.'"

The purpose of these statements, obviously, is to justify OL's position that Black people in the South are a nation because the plantation system still exists as the major form of exploitation and oppression for Black people there—it has "stayed intact throughout Jane's 110 years," the rural South is "the heartland of the Afro-American struggle," during Jane's lifetime (meaning into the 60's) the majority of Black people have been tied to the land, etc.

But in their pamphlet, OL points out that 90% of America's 25 million Black people are workers, that "the great majority of them, even in the South, are urban dwellers and proletarians," and that only thousands of the 25 million Black people are involved in share-cropping.

Well, what's it going to be, OL? This sort of "now you see it, now you don't" analysis is getting a lot of people angry. Is the plantation system still intact in the South and the major form of exploitation and oppression of Black people there, as you strongly imply?

Is the rural South the heartland of the Afro-American struggle today, as you say, even though the overwhelming majority of Black people, by your own statistics, live in the cities? If you really believe what you say in the *Call* article, then why don't you come out and say it in the pamphlet, too, and take the "logical" step of joining CL in calling for "independence for the Negro Nation now!" Or if you don't believe it, then why do you say it?

#### OL Pushes Ruling Class View of Black History

But all of this by no means represents the worst aspect of the *Call* article on Jane Pittman. According to that article, the CBS show "was one of the most progressive and talked-about shows to come along in many years. A century of the Afro-American liberation struggle was revealed as Jane Pittman told her life story to a reporter." "The film," *The Call* informs us, "points out the gains and setbacks of each period, always emphasizing that the struggle continues."

We can only wonder whether OL was watching the same show as the rest of us! This film does not document the struggle of Black people, but shows them instead as primarily oppressed and passive. In the one clear instance where the film does show some Black people fighting back (in a barn when they are suddenly attacked by some KKK nightriders), the Black people—and especially one Black woman who puts up the strongest fight—are shown getting hacked down.

There is *nothing* in this film about the heroic slave rebellions before the Civil War. There is *nothing* in this film about the heroic role played by Black people during the Civil War. There is *nothing* in this film about the militant and central role played by Black workers in the key organizing drives in auto, steel, etc. in the 20's and 30's. In fact, the whole brilliant and courageous history of struggle of Black people wouldn't have been that at all if most Black people had been as passive as Jane Pittman.

According to the *Call* article, "Jane tells the reporter that every time a new baby is born, the people ask if he is going to be the leader who sees them through to complete liberation. The point Jane is trying to make is that as long as there is racist oppression, people will struggle against it." Note how OL has to interpret things here for Jane: "The point Jane is trying to make . . ." But that is not the point that Jane (that is, CBS, Xerox and the entire U.S. ruling class) is trying

to make at all.

The point they are trying to make, and the point they make throughout the film in dozens of ways, is that the masses of Black people are incapable of relying on themselves and waging struggle, that they should be passive and must wait and hope and pray for a "savior," a "genius" or a "hero" to lead them out of the wilderness.

The masses of Black people and the masses of people in general, of course, do need leaders. But genuine leaders of the people recognize that it is not they as individual heroes who make history, who lead the passive flock of people into the Promised Land, but the masses of people themselves. True leaders of the people are those who can lead the people in making revolution. Obviously, this is not the kind of leader Jane Pittman-CBS-Xerox-the U.S. ruling class is talking about, OL's interpretation of Jane's remark notwithstanding.

All that remains to be said about the "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman," which you can see, by the way, in the fall if you missed it the first time around, is that by singing hymns of praise to it, OL clearly reveals to all its rightist line on the Black liberation struggle. This is not simply a matter of OL pushing into the forefront "progressive" Black petty bourgeois and bourgeois elements, which of course is bad enough; this is a matter of agreeing with and pushing to the forefront *the ruling class' own interpretation* of the entire Black liberation struggle. We fail to see how OL can possibly attribute this to mere "sloppy analysis."

#### OL on Woman Question: More Rightism Still

We can't go into detail here on OL's rightist line on the woman question. We have already discussed in a number of *Revolution* articles how this line comes down around such questions as the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and the International Women's Day march this year in Chicago. (See, especially, "Reply to OL on Woman Question: Why Working Class Must Lead," August 1973, and "Chicago IWD Sparks Two Line Struggle," March 1974.)

OL's work in this area essentially mirrors their work in the workers' movement, the national liberation

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## Fight to Keep Protective Laws!



Marches in San Francisco and Los Angeles (these photos are from the L.A. action) on June 1 protested the efforts of California's Industrial "Welfare" Commission (IWG), acting in the interests of the ruling class, to take away protective labor laws—on the basis of granting "equality" for women as called for by the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). The actions were organized by the Committee for Better Working Conditions (see story in *May REVOLUTION*), and drew workers and their supporters from all over the state. For instance, the San Francisco march of 400 included a number of household workers and attendants from the Sacramento Homemakers Association.



# OL...

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movement, the movement to throw Nixon out, etc. Rather than really linking up with and relying on the masses, mobilizing them and helping to develop their political consciousness, unity and organization in the course of struggle, and putting forward the need for the working masses, on the basis of their own strength, to unite with other sections of the people in order to develop the united front *under proletarian leadership*, OL prefers to unite instead with petty bourgeois elements, to try to get workers to follow this petty bourgeois leadership and to keep the struggle in the bourgeois democratic arena. More generally, OL limits the struggle for women's liberation to bourgeois democratic demands, rather than linking up these democratic struggles with the overall struggle for proletarian revolution and socialism—the only way the oppression and exploitation of women can be wiped out once and for all.

In the case of the struggles around women's liberation, it's primarily a matter of OL uniting with petty bourgeois women and labor union bureaucrats who support the ERA. Interestingly, the OL position on protective laws for women and the drive for the ERA was very different two years ago. In a pamphlet called "Women Hold Up Half the Sky," which contains a speech given on International Women's Day, 1972, by a member of the OL's Central Committee, OL says, "Protective legislation for women and children which our fellow workers fought and died for 50 years ago, is gradually being stripped away under the cover of 'equal rights.' The capitalists are trying to convince us that equality means taking everything away from us so that nobody has anything and therefore we are all equal!!!"

This, of course, is precisely what we have been saying in opposition to OL's present position. But this, of course, is also before the ERA got out of Congress, and before it was taken up in a big way by organizations like the National Organization for Women, an organization of mainly business and professional women, and more recently, by the Coalition of Labor Union Women, an organization made up primarily of labor union



*Women's struggles for equality must be linked up with growing revolutionary workers' movement, and women must play active role in all struggles of the people. Above: a few of the nearly 1000 people at this year's May Day rally in Oakland, Calif.*

bureaucrats. And this is before OL had further developed and *completely consolidated* its rightist line and defined communist work as tailing behind such organizations and such things as the ERA.

Contrast, for example, that 1972 speech with what OL says about the ERA and protective laws just one year later: "The short term disadvantages of losing some protective laws are offset by the gains to be made once women are entitled in large numbers to enter the bigger, better-paying and most organized industries [and where, given the growing imperialist crisis and growing unemployment, are all these jobs going to come from, we would like to ask?—RU] . . . Although laws alone cannot bring about equality, they can give women a somewhat better field to fight in. Not only working women, but all women will benefit once the *stigma of being a woman* is lifted. Equality under the law is a step in the right direction, giv-

ing great encouragement to millions of women to continue the struggle for full equality and democratic rights." (*The Call*, April 1973, emphasis ours.)

What this "equality under the law" comes down to in the real world is being demonstrated right now in California, where the ruling class, through a body called the Industrial Welfare Commission, in finding the ERA very helpful in stripping away that state's protective labor laws. OL, of course, can deny if they want that the IWC is using the ERA for this; they can even turn things upside down if they want, as a writer for the *Guardian* does, and say that what the IWC is doing is reversing the intent of the ERA.

But, as Engels said, "Facts, gentlemen, are stubborn things." And there are two major facts in this instance. One, that the ruling class, as can be seen by what is happening in California, is using the ERA to step up its attack on protective legislation, as part of its frantic, overall efforts to get out of the crisis it's in by squeezing even more profits out of the working class. Two, that in one year OL has completely changed its position on the ERA and protective legislation, and is now ready to sacrifice protective laws for the right to wait on the employment lines in the steel and auto industries, and for the blessed hand of Congress to come down and "lift the stigma of being a woman."

## OL on the International United Front

So, in every direction we turn, we find considerable evidence that *in practice*, OL's "united front strategy" closely resembles the "anti-monopoly coalition" strategy of the revisionist CPUSA. They are not helping to build a united front based on the *revolutionary leadership* of the proletariat. To the contrary, they are trying to get the proletariat to follow the reformist leadership of "liberal" and "progressive" petty bourgeois and bourgeois elements.

What we say about the CP without any hesitation is increasingly what must also be said about OL: they continually call for unity and united front, but when you get beneath the surface and discover what this means as far as what they are *doing*, it turns out they mean unity with the imperialists and united front behind the "liberals" in the ruling class, "with labor fat cats and Black bootlickers as the front men."

OL can (and will) deny this until they're blue in the face, but as we've said before, the proof of the

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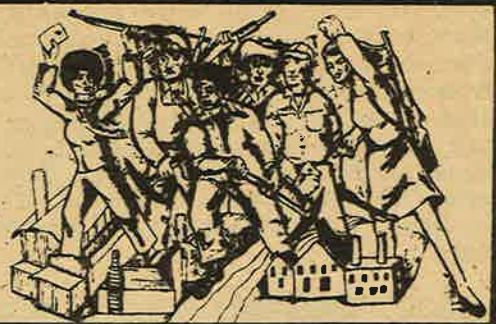
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# OL...

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pudding is in the eating. It doesn't matter how nice the pudding looks—it's the taste that counts. And while OL's "united front" may look nice and may on the surface look no different than the Marxist-Leninist understanding of united front, when you bite into OL's united front you discover that it doesn't taste good. It tastes all too much like the revisionists' "anti-monopoly coalition."

Given OL's rightist line on building the united front in the U.S., it stands to reason that their line on building the international united front against the two superpowers—U.S. imperialism and Soviet social-imperialism—would also be rightist. And it is.

The worldwide united front against the two superpowers has at its heart the international proletariat and the oppressed peoples, and includes other elements such as the progressive national and petty bourgeoisies of many Third World countries and even to some degree reactionary and other imperialist states who, for their own reasons, are opposed to U.S.-USSR hegemony. This gives an opening to the rightist line of tailing behind these reactionary and imperialist ruling classes, and to seeing revolutionary struggle inside these countries as "sabotage" of the united front.

Unfortunately, this is the kind of line that OL is beginning to push around certain things. For example, at several meetings of anti-imperialist forces, in some speeches, etc., OL has said that it is incorrect for revolutionaries in this country to call for the downfall of the Shah of Iran because he is against the penetration of the social-imperialists into the Middle East and the Persian Gulf area, and is ready to use weapons he is getting from the U.S. imperialists to oppose any Soviet incursions into Iran or anywhere else in the area.

And when the Shah of Iran visited the U.S. in July 1973, primarily to talk to Nixon about getting more weapons, *The Call* in its September 1973 issue simply ran a release from Hsinhua (China) News Agency which dealt with the facts and reasons for the visit. OL had nothing itself to say about the visit, and no analysis of its own about the situation in Iran. OL did essentially the same thing when President Luis Echeverria of Mexico visited the People's Republic of China in April 1973. They ran a Hsinhua press release and had no comments of their own about the situation in Mexico.

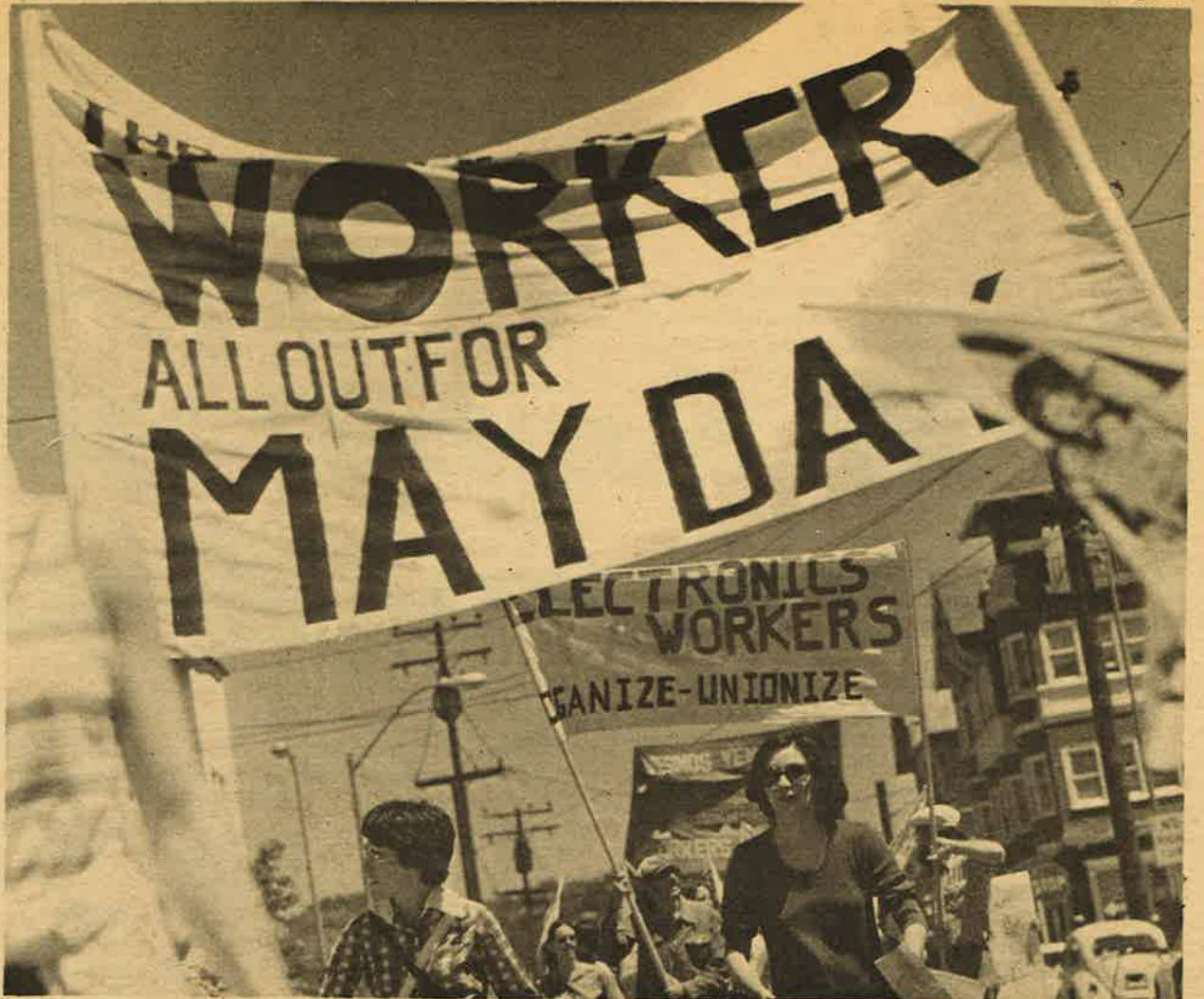
OL obviously is confusing the role of the People's Republic of China and the Communist Party of China in the world struggle with its own role and the role of Communist Parties and organizations that have not yet led the people in their countries to power. In doing this, OL has ignored the principle and the warning that Mao Tsetung set down back in 1946, when the then socialist Soviet Union was correctly attempting to maintain certain agreements with the U.S., Britain and France.

Mao wrote: "Such compromise does not require the people in the countries of the capitalist world to follow suit and make compromise at home. The people in those countries will continue to wage different struggles in accordance with their different conditions. The principle of the reactionary forces in dealing with the democratic forces of the people is definitely to destroy all they can and to prepare to destroy later whatever they cannot destroy now. Face to face with this situation, the democratic forces of the people should likewise apply the same principle to the reactionary forces." (*Selected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 87-88.)

Thus, while it is necessary and correct for the People's Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party to make certain agreements and compromises with imperialist and reactionary states, primarily to make use of contradictions between the two superpowers and in that way strengthen the overall united front and the people's struggle for liberation and socialism, it is not correct for communists in other countries, including the U.S., to do the same thing.

While the Chinese make certain agreements with the Shah of Iran, it does not follow that the revolutionaries in Iran should let up even the slightest bit in their efforts to mobilize the people to overthrow the Shah. And revolutionaries everywhere should not let up the slightest bit in explaining to the workers and oppressed people in their countries who the Shah is, what he represents, why the Iranian people are rising up to overthrow him, and why the exploited and oppressed people of all countries should support the Iranian people's just struggle.

And here in the U.S. where many of the descendants and relatives of oppressed people all around the world are part of the U.S. working class, where political exiles from the revolutionary struggles in these countries are forced to take refuge, and where students from these countries are joining together with the people of the U.S. to build support for the revolutions abroad and the revolution in the U.S., it is the responsibility of all U.S. revolutionaries to exhibit the firmest



The underlying basis of unity between "left" and right errors and lines is an idealistic and subjective world outlook which views the masses of people as hopelessly backward—incapable of linking up struggles and seeing the need for proletarian revolution. This flies in the face of reality, as growing revolutionary workers' movement and united front in this country attest to. Above: part of large 1974 May Day march in Oakland, Calif. which many workers as well as others participated in.

solidarity with these comrades.

Finally, we want to say categorically that the rightist line OL is beginning to push forward on the international united front is certainly no service to the People's Republic of China. In fact, by using China as a cover for their rightist line, OL is aiding the Trotskyites and revisionists who are vehemently attacking the Chinese and the international and revolutionary united front line the Chinese have been instrumental in developing.

## From 'Left' to Right

Before concluding, we want to go briefly into some of the history of OL because it brings out the essence of OL's failure to develop a correct line, and also brings out the core of unity between "ultra-leftism" and rightism—the failure to rely on the masses of people and a subjectivist world outlook that fails to apply the universal truths of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought to the conditions of the U.S.

From its beginning about three years ago, OL has maintained that "the creation of a new communist party—one of the Leninist type—has become the principal task for all communists in the U.S." (From original "Statement of Political Unity of the Georgia Communist League (M-L) and the October League (M-L)," published by OL in May 1972.) This was reaffirmed in the first issue of *The Call* in October 1972.

But sometime between the first publication of the GCL-OL statement in May 1972 and its re-publication in pamphlet form in May 1973, OL's conception of what party building means changed. This is reflected in several important differences between two editions of the unity statement, even though the more recent one is distributed today as "published by the October League (M-L), May 1972, reprinted—May 1973." (*OL Unity Statement*, p. 23, our emphasis.)

Changes between the first and second editions were made, as we already pointed out earlier in this article, with no explanation by OL; in fact, no indication at all that there even had been any changes. But leaving that aside, these changes are important because they indicate the development of OL's line from "ultra-leftism" to the rightist line they hold today.

The original differs in a number of places from the "reprinted" version, but the key change occurs near the end, in the section, "Building the New Party":

"Especially important at this time is the struggle against narrow practicisms, or placing the day-to-day struggle of the working class ahead of its final aims. The tendency to bow to the spontaneity of the mass movement, to tail behind it, must be fought by linking Marxism-Leninism with the working class movement. We must develop propaganda and agitational organs that can bring communist ideas to the working class and unite the class in struggle. This must be done on a national scale with the emphasis now on broad political propaganda directed primarily at the advanced workers." (*Unity Statement*, May 1972, p. 26, emphasis ours.)

Shades of the Communist League, which OL heaps such criticism on now! What this "broad political propaganda" approach to the "advanced workers"

came down to in practice was scabbing on the struggles of the people (because they were "spontaneous" and therefore no good), while at the same time trying to rip the most militant and politically conscious workers out of the mass struggle and put them into study groups with OL members so they could become "communists."

But then something must have happened, because in their *Unity Statement* "reprinted" a year later, the above statement is nowhere to be found. Instead, on page 22 of the revised version, we read:

"While the principal danger in the general people's movement is posed by the right opportunist CPUSA, within the young communist forces the main danger is ultra-leftism. Due to inexperience and still shallow roots among the basic sections of the working class, the danger of a 'purist' view toward the mass struggle and negation of the united front pose an important obstacle. A manifestation of this ultra-leftist influence is the view of building a party first, then later engaging in the mass struggle. Sectarianism and unprincipled attacks within the communist movement are also symptoms of idealism and dogmatism."

From this and from statements in *The Call*, you would never know that OL itself was once a leading example of "ultra-leftism." A short time before the founding of OL, and before its merger with the GCL, some of the present OL leaders, including its chairman, were united together as much in opposition to the line of the RU as for anything positive. And they justified this opposition by saying that the RU was "revisionist," a long way from the charges of "ultra-leftist" hurled at us today by these very same people.

We were "revisionist" primarily because we said that the strategy for revolution in the U.S. was the united front against imperialism, which they claimed was "a gimmick" to sucker non-proletarian forces into supporting the working class, and was in fact "a smoke-screen" for the CP's "anti-monopoly coalition." (This, of course, is almost comical given the present line of OL.)

Surprise of surprises, then, when OL turns around in its statement of unity with GCL and says, as we quoted earlier in this article, that the united front against imperialism in fact is the correct strategy for revolution in the U.S. In approximately one year, and with no explanation of how or why, the OL leadership had changed their minds—the united front was no longer revisionist garbage!

(We understand that their chairman claims OL never attacked the united front against imperialism strategy as revisionist, and that it's impossible to find anything on paper to prove they did. Well, we're not going to search all the latrines in the U.S. OL can rely on the courts and sue us if they want, but we'll rely on the many people who heard them say it time after time in speech after speech and leaflet after leaflet.)

We are not saying that communists can never change their minds, can never change their analysis of key questions concerning the U.S. revolution. But we are saying that communists do have a responsibility to explain to the movement and to the masses of people

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# OL...

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why their viewpoint has changed, why they were previously in error. Communists are not like school children who try to correct an error before the teacher sees it. Communists are the conscious, organized detachment of their class, and if they make an error they must explain it to the people so things can be set right and the struggle can move forward.

This is even more crucial in a case like OL's, when their line on such a major question as the *strategy for the U.S. revolution* has done a complete flip-flop, and when one year OL sees the key thing as "propaganda to the advanced workers" and the next year sees the *main danger* as "ultra-leftism."

## Basic Unity Between "Left" and Right Lines

Nor are we going into all this just to nail people to the wall, or even to expose unprincipled behavior. It is necessary to go into this because it shows that when one incorrect line is held by individual revolutionaries or a revolutionary organization, and then changed without thoroughgoing struggle and self-criticism, without getting down to the *ideological roots* of the error, then it is likely that these same forces will take up another, equally incorrect line. The reason why OL has flipped from "left" to right in a short amount of time is because its basic ideological and political line has *not* changed.

What both "left" and right lines in the revolutionary movement—and in OL's history—have in common is that they both proceed from a subjective (the world is the way I want to see it) and idealist point of view, and neither relies on the masses. The people, according to this outlook, are too backward and cannot be won over to the need for and mobilized for active political struggle and revolution.

So OL first grabbed onto the line that tried to pull a handful of advanced workers out of struggle and into OL study groups, and that basically said, "Masses and mass struggle be damned!" And now OL has switched to another line that also preaches reliance not on the masses, but now on "influential" people such as "progressive" trade union bureaucrats, so-called "Black leaders" and "liberal" politicians.

This "new" line of OL's truly comes down to a gimmick—unity between OL and union bureaucrats, "Negro leaders," and "liberal" politicians—to replace their previous gimmick of unity between OL members and a handful of "advanced workers." The "advanced workers" gimmick is "left" in form, the other is right in form, but both lines are rightist in essence because both fail to rely on and mobilize the masses and raise their consciousness and revolutionary unity through struggle.

Rather than summing up correctly its past mistakes and advancing its understanding, OL 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." (*Selected Works*, 1965 edition, "Our Study and the Current Situation—Appendix: Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party," p. 216.)

This, we believe, is a very concise and very accurate description of the genesis, history and present outlook and line of OL.

## Reformist or Revolutionary Party?

Given the rightist road that OL is rapidly racing down, what do they mean when they talk about the central task being party building? What kind of Communist Party are they actually talking about—a revisionist, reformist Party that limits and stifles struggle and subordinates the revolutionary interests of the proletariat and the masses to the interests of establishing "unity" with the imperialists and the labor bureaucrats, "Negro leaders," etc. who front for them? Are they talking about a Party that fails to give the

people revolutionary leadership, that fails, as we say in *Red Papers 6*, to lead the people from Hell to Hallelujah and in fact just helps to keep them consigned to Hell? Or are they talking about a Party that is truly the conscious, organized detachment of the proletariat—the general headquarters of the revolution, closely linked to the people, capable of linking up all the struggles of the people into a mighty revolutionary tide, and uncompromising in its determination to lead the people to final victory, to socialism and then onward to communism?

If a revisionist Party is what OL has in mind, then we simply want to point out that there is already such a Party—the "Communist Party," USA—and the people certainly don't need another one. But if OL has a revolutionary Party in mind, then we must ask them quite frankly: what are you doing in the swamp of rightism and revisionism now?

OL criticizes the RU for saying that building the new revolutionary Communist Party in the U.S. has become the central task only "for a brief period ahead." OL says that "While party building is the central task, it is also a protracted one." (*The Call*, June 1974.) It is true that even after the Party is formed, it still faces the task of developing and consolidating its leadership in the working class and among the masses by proving itself in struggle, by proving that it in fact can lead the struggle forward.

But OL apparently does not mean this. According to the chairman of OL, as stated recently at a West Coast forum on party building, building the Party is the central task, but it is not the immediate task. This, to us, makes no sense at all. If building the Party is now the central task, then how can it not be the immediate task? It seems to us that OL is scrambling around for some explanation of why it says building the Party is the central task on the one hand, but does not want the Party to be built at this time, on the other.

For ourselves, we have tried to make it clear that we think it is now possible to create the new Party because, based primarily on the work of communist

forces over the last several years, based on going to the masses, linking up with them in struggle, learning from the people while giving them leadership, these communist forces can now agree on what is the correct line for moving the struggle forward and can develop together a programme for doing so.

We believe that the key link right now is for all genuine communist forces to unite to start developing the programme for the Party, because without a programme—the general battle plan—any Party that will be formed will be only a paper Party, incapable of leading the people.

OL pays almost no attention to this question of programme, and this suggests that perhaps OL is just interested in throwing around words about party building to appeal to some revolutionary-minded people who actually want to help form the Party, while OL at the same time continues to develop its rightist line and practice which, in fact, stand opposed to the building of a revolutionary Communist Party.

At this point, OL can make a contribution to building the new Party and a contribution to building the revolutionary movement only by getting out of bed with the revisionists, bureaucrats, "liberal" politicians and what have you, by beginning to rely seriously on the masses, and by entering into principled, hard-hitting ideological and political struggle with other communist forces, including struggle over and genuine self-criticism of its past and present incorrect lines. ■



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