

## HISTORY OF AC/PRC (AMILCAR CABRAL/PAUL ROBESON COLLECTIVE)

In the early 1970's, a group of Afro-American and African students and faculty members at a public college in upstate New York came together to study Marxism. Members were from working class and petty bourgeois backgrounds and had experience in the civil rights, black national, and black student movements. The study circle was in response to our recognition of the fact that some liberation movements in Africa were being guided, to some degree, by socialist theory. Because of us were active in African liberation support work and recognized the links between the African and Afro-American struggles, we saw a need to acquaint ourselves with this theory.

We set as our task the grasping of the key components of Marxism and started reading Marx, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao Tse-Tung. Members continued liberation support work and maintained contacts with other movement activists in the area and NYC. We also established other study groups and attempted to propagate Marxism-Leninism around the campus. This met with some success but was more intellectual than anything else.

Through discussions with other activists, reading the left press and watching the crisis deepen around us, we decided to transform our study circle into an organization that would engage in the mass struggle. We expanded our ranks somewhat with the class composition remaining essentially the same. Our task in this period consisted of deepening our study of Marxism-Leninism, particularly Political Economy and the nature of the Soviet Union. We continued African support work and took a more active role in local campus struggles around Black Studies, etc. We had close contacts with the Black Student Union (BSU) and February First Movement (FFM) and entered into some joint study and practice with the latter.

We also established contacts with the "Wing" and attempted to take up the study of party building. We went through a period of withdrawal from previous activities and became more and more isolated from former contacts due to the left opportunist line that guided our practice. (We were not actually a part of the organizational apparatus.) We tailed behind this line for several months because of social relationships with some contacts in the "Wing," a low level grasp of theory and petty bourgeois liberalism.

Our break with the "Wing" came from a rejection of method first rather than line. Having made this decision, we undertook the work of having to trying to understand the "Wing's" politics and methods through the use of Marxism-Leninism. Through this and assistance from other comrades, we came to understand much more the ideological and social basis of left opportunism and some of its manifestations.

The Paul Robeson Study Group (PRSG) was started in the early 70's by a group of college students in the upstate New York area. The early history of the group is not clear because, at that time, a characteristic of the "leading" members was some developmental chauvinism meaning basically that uneven levels of theoretical and practical development were objective conditions. Yet, newcomers were not encouraged to actively struggle to grasp and understand material although physical presence at demonstrations and other activities was. A good deal of sexism and dogmatism (and conciliation to this) in the practice of the leadership served to discourage some people with initial leanings towards the group. The PRSG was composed of students, predominantly male, mostly of working class background although there were some of

petty bourgeois origin. Female participation was generally a result of personal relationships with one of the male comrades.

The outlook or political base was one of eclecticism. Nationalism seemed to be the principal trend although the reading of some M-L classics (*Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, *Four Essays*, *The State and Revolution*, the *Communist Manifesto*) was done. There was some anti-imperialist sentiment which was reflected in the line put out at various support activities for struggles in Africa and other parts of the world. Activity was, for the most part, centered around the issues of the black student movement, for example financial aid, housing, Black Studies programs, minority faculty, and some issues around the inadequacies of the campus judicial system.

The principal practical work of the PRSG at this stage consisted of programs at an Urban Center located in the downtown community. These programs were basically of a political awareness and cultural nature (films, discussions) and included some African support work around the liberation struggles in Angola, Mozambique, and Southern Africa. The group usually held an annual Paul Robeson Day in commemoration of Paul Robeson whose name had been chosen as a symbol of determination and struggle against a racist and imperialist system. These programs usually consisted of a film, presentation, discussion, a dinner and some songs, poetry or other cultural activity. Because of the cultural emphasis, the day would attract a relatively large number of people, students, some faculty, and a few community people, thus an opportunity to attempt to inject some enthusiasm into the campus movement. As the line of the organization was not a correct, consistent, and thoroughgoing one, these attempts were not effective as the call for unity among forces was not to be gained through struggle nor was the class composition of the campus as a whole taken into consideration. Practical work in general was of a very spontaneous nature, not linked to any long term strategy and not guided by revolutionary theory.

The PRSG had had some organizational contact with the Black Student Unions on other local campuses, FFM, YOBU, and SOBU on a national scale, and some individual contact with a study group in the area. In summary, around 1976 the problems of the group were numerous. By that time, the majority of the older members had graduated and/or left the area, not based on political decisions but essentially because that is the usual thing to do after graduation. However, leadership was "assumed" by some of the younger male comrades whose political commitment and orientation began to be challenged. Organizational deviations could be described as follows:

1. no consolidation around ideology and the theory of Marxism-Leninism;
2. failure to see the dialectical link between theory and practice;
3. two-line struggle not seen as the means of achieving unity and transformation, individual and collective, among forces;
4. concept of criticism/self-criticism not used; liberalism flourished;
5. dogmatic and pragmatic approach to theoretical and practical work;
6. eclecticism which allowed that metaphysics and idealism find a comfortable place in the organization;
7. sectarianism – no real struggle to unite with the struggle of the working class or to achieve multinational unity;
8. study – eclectic, dogmatic, intellectual exercise;
9. underlying careerism of the so-called leadership as well as some other forces who conciliated to this to cover their own careerism and failure to take on responsibility;

10. question of sexism and women's role in revolutionary struggle not as seen as a question in the movement requiring a theoretical and practical solution;
11. no united short and long range goals and a correct strategy and tactics to achieve them.

We decided to merge with the Paul Robeson comrades because we held similar views on the need to build the party, overcome theoretical weaknesses and isolation from the mass and community movements. We did some work with local comrades around the international situation. Our major deviation in this period was our failure to establish better ties with the working class struggle outside of the college environment. In trying to correct this, we fell into the vulgar proletarian line which said that our simply joining the ranks of the working class would serve to transform us into communists.

We attempted to be in contact with other organizations in the communist movement and started to literally shop around as we engaged in various activities. During this period we had contact with WVO, RCO, LPR, and COUS-ML. These contacts were beneficial in that we were able to deepen our grasp of their opportunism through contact and direct struggle.

Our practice at this time included Puerto Rican liberation support, Bakke, Miners' Strike support, Ethiopian support work through BSUNA, the polemic against social chauvinism, and those comrades who had moved to N.C. engaged in Wilmington 10, Charlotte Three support work as well as African liberation support work and local housing struggles. We still failed to sink our roots into the working class although we were engaged in some community struggles with the working class.

Through internal struggle as well as struggle with other comrades we decided to locate to another area where we would do communist work. N.C. was chosen because of the nature of the national struggle in the Black Belt South, the fight for unions, and personal contacts. After relocating we took up the theoretical task of deepening our understanding of modern revisionism and the polemic against Chinese revisionism. Our practice has been with community groups fighting for quality education.

In this period we felt our isolation from genuine communist forces was a problem as well as our failure to engage theoretically and practically in the struggle to build the party. Our recent open letter to some groups and our participation in the Multilateral Conference (MULC) is part of the rectification process. We are rectifying our isolation from the working class by entering production jobs and in participating in the trade union struggle in a staunch "Right to Work" state.