

The formation of the PLM (Progressive Labor Movement, later to become the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) in November of 1964 was part of the continuous tradition of the left-wing of the U.S. Communist movement attempting to break away from the revisionism of the "C" PUSA (Communist Party of the United States of America) that goes back to the 1930's and 1940's (see Theoretical Review July-August, 1979). Of all of the attempts to break away ideologically, politically and organizationally from this cancer on the U.S. working class the formation of the PLM was the most significant and will be seen in history as a move that prepared the way for the eventual formation of a Communist Party worthy of carrying that name.

As has been demonstrated in the July-August issue of Theoretical Review the struggle against revisionism in the U.S. Communist movement is nothing "new". It did not start in 1956, 1960 or with the current activities of the various "pre-party formations", "study groups", Marxist-Leninist Collectives" and "Partys". The struggle against revisionism has always been the main thrust of the left-wing of the Communist movement in this country, many times taking a "left" form but quite often being right in essence.

Many of the organizational problems and ideological roadblocks that we faced in the early years of the PLM, were not resolved, which led to the degeneration of the PLP / just another unimportant sect. / we see these /problems and roadblocks /reappearing in the current formations that are emerging. In fact, the left/ the uncanny knack of not being very good at studying and learning from the mistakes that were made by our forerunners. It is some of these same organizational problems and ideological roadblocks that appear in "A Joint Statement on: 'The Party Building Line of the National Network of Marxist-Leninist Clubs" by the "Tucson and Boston Theoretical Review Boards" (July-Aug., 1979 and hereafter referred to as "Joint Statement") that prevented the PLP from developing and eventually led to its isolation and degeneracy.

In this discussion I will attempt to point out some of the problems and roadblocks that appear in this statement that are often a one-sided reaction to some of

the more obvious mistakes and errors of the "C" PUSA and the PLP. As we will demonstrate further on in this article the formation of the PLM was also a one-sided response to the "C" PUSA. The Joint Statement in response to "The Party Building Line of the National Network of Marxist-Leninist Clubs (Network) attempts to grapple with a contradiction (theory and practice) that has been on the top of our agenda for a number of years and comes out on the side of the "primacy of theory" line. Well, let's examine how this one-sided and undialectical approach to party building can lead to a dead end for the Marxist-Leninist movement in the U.S.

The network's attempt to use 1956 as a line of demarcation between the "C" PUSA being revolutionary and revisionist and the Joint Statement viewing this "at first glance" as appearing "sound as a criterion for scientific analysis..." makes us question what is being called "scientific analysis". (p.3) What science, least of all Marxism-Leninism, says that the development of anything can be precisely pinpointed and is not part of a continuous process that develops, lives, grows, confronts and resolves contradictions, ebbs and flows? The development of a thing is a process and in this process there may be leaps and eruptions that may be more precisely pinpointed but even these leaps and eruptions are part of a flow process. Even bourgeois scientist are beginning more and more to understand the dialectical process of development.

Revisionism does not have a time, date and place. It has been a continuous trend (that ebbs and flows) since the inception of Marxism. Karl Marx began struggling against revisionism in the International Workingmen's Association and that struggle has not ceased in the Communist movement up to the present and will never end! There will be times when revisionism will be more blatant (a leap or eruption), i.e. the dismantling of the "C" PUSA in 1945, the seizure of power by the revisionist Khrushchev group in the Soviet Union, the Euro-Communist movement in Europe and the ^{REVISIONARY} coup in China in 1976. But this revisionist trend always existed in the world communist movement and always existed in all of these partys, and conversely a revolutionary trend also exist and is constantly and inexorably fighting for the working class.

This reactionary trend and assault on Marxism-Leninism in addition to taking on the forms listed above also comes under attack from its "friends" who periodically declare that there is a "crisis of Marxism". And usually, upon declaring this "crisis" our "friends" then proceed to "revise" it, breath new life into it, take a "fresh view", liberate and renew it so Marxism-Leninism can "correspond to the present conditions". In the current "crisis" our "friends" would like to "transform" Marxism-Leninism so "it can bring about the renewal of Marxism, give new force to its theory, modify its ideology, its organizations and its practices, opening up a real future of social, political and cultural revolution for the working class and for all working people." (Theoretical Review No.7, Sept.-Oct., 1978, "The Crisis of Marxism" by Louis Althusser)

Althusser is not the first to declare this "crisis" and no doubt will not be the last. The detractors of Marxism always raise these doubts whenever there is a strong attack upon and deviations from Marxism by various forces in the world who declare themselves "Marxist" or what they are doing as the "concrete application of Marxism". All kinds of fakes, charlatans and political hustlers parade around as Marxist-Leninist and confuse the masses and help to create the "crisis". But there are also serious students of Marxism-Leninism who are studying, learning and practicing but who make serious mistakes and the detractors say, "Ha, another Marxist failure, you see, it doesn't work!" In addition, it has been our experience in the 1960's and 70's that the U.S. ruling class has set up phoney "Marxist-Leninist" organizations to disrupt and confuse. And we must not leave out the tens of thousands of bourgeois intellectuals who's role is to attack Marxism-Leninism from every conceivable angle.

Yes, it is true that there is a frontal assault on Marxism-Leninism of an unprecedented nature in this period. Not only is it being assaulted by the bourgeoisie but it is being attacked in the name of Marxism-Leninism from its "friends". Many times the "friends" respond by declaring that there must be something inherently wrong with Marxism-Leninism to allow these deviations to occur and as a result Marxism-

Leninism has to be revised so these mistakes will not happen again. And whether these revisions come from "friend" or foe they always, in the final analysis, become right deviations.

Because Marxism-Leninism is under this fierce attack doesn't mean that it is in a "crisis" situation as the science for working class revolution. The real "crisis" is that the longer it takes to organize and launch our counter-attack in defense of Marxism-Leninism the more penetration bourgeois ideology will make in our ranks and our work will become that much more difficult. Even in this period when bourgeois ideology is making deep penetrations into the ranks of Marxist-Leninist it is also displaying its growing weakness. There is currently all-around and general decay and degeneration in bourgeois culture and thought. Never has the bourgeoisie been so devoid of intellectual development to plead its own case. Never has their ranks been so depleted of intellectual thinkers. One can correctly say that bourgeois ideology is in a "crisis" also. This lack of intellectual ferment no doubt has had its effect on Marxist-Leninist.

The "crisis" is not in Marxism but in the inability of the Marxist-Leninist forces to fully grasp this science and put it into practice. At some future date we will offer our analysis on how to organize and launch the counter-attack in defense of Marxism-Leninism but for the moment we offer the brief sketch above.

The Joint Statement is correct that "a party should be judged by its practice, not by its stated goals" and if the "C"PUA was revisionist in its practice long before 1956 then it was a revisionist party! Its political program and its constitution could be filled with statements about "workers seizing power", the "dictatorship of the proletariat", "overthrowing the bourgeoisie", etc. but if in practice it tells the U.S. working class that it must support Roosevelt/in practice then the words are lies!

One has to ask the Network what's so magical about 1956? What happened at the 16th Party Convention that was different from what was taking place in practice in the "C"PUA? We were carrying out a revisionist line in our trade union work in New York and in our community work in Harlem long before 1956! And we suggest that this was the case around the country even though there may have been isolated pockets where genuine revolutionary work was being done. This tampering with history is also contained in the Joint Statement's response to the Networks stressing "the continuity of U.S. Communist history..."

The Joint Statement says that it is "compelled to stress the discontinuity of our history, and the need to start the production of a general political line for our movement from the present conjuncture". (p.4) History, like all things, is a dialectical process. It has both continuity and discontinuity. There is continuity in the class struggle. There is discontinuity in the class that rules. There is continuity in the fact that there is a class that exercises dictatorship over other classes. For us, the primacy of the continuity of the class struggle stands out as having particular importance. It is our understanding of the continuity of the class struggle that will make or break our attempt to break with revisionism and begin building a genuine Marxist-Leninist Party.

How can we say the present is our starting point? There is no present without a past. Did the "present state of the class struggle" begin in the present? We think not. It has a continuity. Marx and Engels in the opening sentence in the most important book ever written, state without equivocation that "the history of all

hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle." The "C" PUSA grew out of the Socialist Party and the "new" Communist Party that will emerge will have grown out of the "old" "C" P. The working class struggles in this country have a long and bloody history and it is this past that greatly accounts for its present economic status. The black peoples' fight for our liberation spans nearly four centuries and it is this past that shapes and guides our movement today and will take us to victory. Yes, it is important to understand the present state of class struggle, i.e. where the concentration of workers are, what are the population trends, what is the state of the economy, how does income match buying power, what is the quality of life of the working class, what is the political mood of the working class, etc., but this cannot be done isolated from the past history of this class as it relates to present conditions.

Further on (page 4) Joint Statement once again separates theory from practice. It questions the Networks use of some standard Marxist-Leninist phrases and wonders "how does repetition of these formulations by the Club Network represent a significant break with the past? How will the Clubs insure that these same formulations do not lead to the dogmatism and empiricisms into which previous organizations which used these phrases have fallen?" It is not the formulations alone that lead these previous organizations to dogmatism and empiricisms. It was primarily their ^{incorrect} practice and lack of theory!

If one depended on formulations alone than the argument that the "C" PUSA was revolutionary until 1956 can be viewed as accurate. We may also say that, in the main, many of the dogmatist sects use the "correct" formulations in their printed material but none of us judge them by what they say alone but by what they do-their practice. If there is no method to judge how they interpret these "phrases" in the only arena where proper scientific judgement can be made-in the class struggle among the masses aimed at the bourgeoisie-then they become empty, isolated theoretical formulations.

One has to assume that when we speak about "rectification" (p.5) (a campaign launched by Mao in 1942 against "subjectivism, sectarianism and stereotyped

Party writing" within the ranks of the Chinese CP) it has some relationship to the campaign launched by Mao in the Chinese CP since among the Marxist classics it is only in the Chinese revolution that we find this term. The problem here is that to ascribe this term that characterized a process that took place within the Chinese CP 37 years ago to today's conditions in the U.S. is ludicrous.

First of all there is no unified CP that has developed a style of work that has to be "rectified". This does not mean that there are not a whole string of errors that have been made by the "C" PUSA and communist in this country that cry out for correction. Every collective, study group, etc. should strive in their study and practice among the masses to constantly make these corrections. The problem is that one group has decided in an extremely elitist manner to launch the "rectification" of the "C" PUSA line asserting that the general line of the "C" PUSA pre 1956 was basically a correct one. This is bad history, undialectical and turns out to be an attempt by one group to assume hegemony over those groups and forces who are working diligently in many ways to build a Marxist-Leninist party in the U.S.

Secondly, if we are to use the Chinese model and accept the "rectificationers" bad history that the "C" PUSA's line prior to 1956 was basically a correct line then all we have to do is to join or for some of us, re-join, the "C" PUSA, fight within it to "rectify" their line, pick up the pieces from 1956, struggle within the "C" PUSA, reverse their betrayal of pre-1956 and, Voila! the Marxist-Leninist Party has been "rectified" and "reconstituted" à la 1945. This may not be what the authors of the "rectification" movement had in mind but it is the direction that their position would take us if we were to follow it.

We see no major difference between the Joint Statement's position on the "primacy of theory" line and the "rectification" line of the Network. Both of these lines stress the development of theory isolated from the struggle of the masses. One rarely finds in their writings references to the working class, organizing the masses, the racial minorities, the women's struggle, youth, elderly, testing theory in practice among the masses, confronting the ruling class, armed

struggle, etc. But one can always find an abundance of "cadre", "leaders", "our movement" (who is the "our?"), "communist organization", "provide advanced leadership", "leading comrades", etc. For example the Joint Statement expresses the following as a line of demarcation between itself and the Network: "It does mean that we see the formation of a leading center and a general political line as a collective process at all levels and not restricted to the individual efforts of leading comrades" (p.7)

We suggest that this is only a superficial difference because the "collective process" that they speak of is divorced from the workers and the masses and involves^{only}/those individuals who are participating in the "Party building movement".

Once again in an attempt to demonstrate the difference with the Network, because the Network's elitism is so blatant, we find the Joint Statement separating itself from this more crass attempt at hegemonism declaring, "it means creating the Communist cadre to actually forge a general political line and leading center in the heat of party building struggle, instead of limiting that process to a small circle of leaders." Using the phrase "in the heat of the party building struggle" surely sounds more militant than the purely intellectual and divorced from reality statements coming from the Network: but it is only a thin veneer to cover a line that also has a strong undercurrent of being isolated from the masses and workers and pure "intellectualism" even though the Joint Statement says ^{tongue}-in-cheek that it does not want its remarks misconstrued as being "anti-intellectual" (p.7)

And more. "To put forward the proposition that a correct general political line can be created by a few individuals before it is tested and fought out in a nation-wide struggle is to dangerously narrow the base of that general line..." We would like to ask what does "tested and fought out in a nation-wide struggle" mean? Who will participate in this fight and struggle? Workers, students, women, blacks, hispanics? Where will it be tested? In the factories? In the working class communities? On the campuses? In the PTA's? In the mass organizations? How will we know if the

"tested" line proves itself correct? Will the "test" be the formation of a "Party" or will the "test" be concrete Communist leadership of the people towards challenging, engaging and overthrowing U.S. imperialism? We suggest that the tenor, direction, method, class composition and who ^{this "test"} is directed at clearly point to a small elitist group and if this direction is continued without the formation of the political line being tested in mass struggle among the working class and its allies it will lead to yet another "Party" divorced, nay, in opposition to the masses of people in this country.

The Joint Statement says that the historical origins of these deviations (economism and empiricism) in our movement have the same source: our uncritical acceptance of the legacy of Soviet Marxism in the 1930's where the blockage and distortion of creative theory opened the door to empiricism and pragmatism, economism and voluntarism." What a cop-out!

First of all, what is "Soviet Marxism"? Is there a Chinese Marxism? A Cuban Marxism? How about a African Marxism?, etc. There is the application of Marxism to the specific conditions of the Russian Revolution that produced Marxism-Leninism. But I suspect that the authors are raising another criticism that they are not sharing with us because what does a criticism of "Soviet Marxism" mean? In today's world there is only one Marxism and that is the theory of class struggle and proletarian revolution as developed by Karl Marx. We do not think the authors intended on making a criticism of Marxism-Leninism but when one uses un-scientific phrases like "Soviet Marxism" it comes off, in fact, as a criticism of Marxism-Leninism.

Secondly, the "true character" of so-called "Soviet Marxism" was the application of Marxism-Leninism to the Soviet Union during and after the Russian Revolution, up to the seizure of power by the revisionist. This does not imply or suggest that there was not a strong revisionist current in the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) from its inception that because of errors and circumstances became the dominant current and eventually took over the Party and state apparatus. What it does speak to is the inability of our "theoreticians" to understand class struggle from any perspective

bourgeois
other than a petty / intellectual one.

What do you think the Soviet Union was from 1917 to World War II? A picnic ground or a peaceful university campus? Not at all! It was a bloody battleground where warfare was taking place between the bourgeoisie of the world and the working class of the Soviet Union. The entire world bourgeoisie had its armies poised on the borders of the Soviet Union prepared to attack and dismantle the first workers state. Thousands of agents of the western and eastern imperialist countries were sent in to sabotage and disrupt the revolution from outside and from within. The nation lost 20 million killed during World War II, many of them fine Party members. There were fierce ideological struggles taking place on all levels and where the question of how to conduct the class struggle after the seizure of power was debated, and not resolved. It was only when the "Cultural Revolution" erupted in China that the world communist movement began to understand this problem clearly. And finally, we must understand that when the bourgeoisie is expropriated it has only one "legal" avenue open to carry out its dirty work and that is within the ranks of the Communist Party!

No, my friends, it was not a "tea party" or a picnic or a theoretical exercise but a bloody life and death struggle that made its great contribution to Marxist theory and yet made its share of mistakes. It had its twist and turns, its defeats, its advances, its retreats. It was a battle that the world proletariat temporarily lost because bourgeois ideology was still more powerful and dominant, but a lesson that we all should learn well and profit from.

Thirdly, the greatest of all cop-outs and a display of the political, ideological and organizational immaturity/is to blame someone else for our mistakes. There is no question that revisionist ideology was powerful and temporarily won the battle in the Soviet Union and this same ideology was strong in most communist parties all over the world in the 1930's and 40's. But every Communist Party is answerable primarily to the working class in its own country about its activities. It cannot point somewhere else like a "cry baby" and say "its all their fault that

we led you down the wrong path." The American " Communist" Party cannot point to the Soviet Union or to China or anywhere else to account for its inability to apply Marxism-Leninism to the concrete conditions of the U.S. revolution. The Soviet Union is not to blame for us not developing our theoreticians and good communist cadre to lead the revolution in this country. And surely it is not because of our inability to assess the "long-term effects" of so-called "Soviet Marxism" on the "C: PUSA and the present movement that renders us "unable to locate the historical sources of the present crisis of our movement."

There is not doubt that the Soviet Union as the first workers state wielded an enormous amount of influence in the international communist movement and communist the world over looked to it for guidance. And history has proven that this influence was so great that a word from Moscow was taken as an "order". Well, if this "word" was in contradiction to the concrete objective conditions and reality of that country it was the duty of that party to reject that "word" and deepen its analysis and carry on its work. No party can call itself a Communist Party if it does not make its own objective analysis of its concrete conditions and develops its revolutionary process. It is only a party that has lost touch with its working class and the masses combined with a low theoretical level that will look to or accept direction from another party. What is even worst and more dispicable is if they point a finger and say "its all your fault".

Joint Statement once again misses its mark when it posed the question, "Is not the history of the new Communist movement a history of one sect after another, divorced from the rest of the movement, claiming that it alone is the depository of the correct line for all others to join or be damned?" (p9) We are sorry but we have to answer in the negative. The "history of the new Communist movement" is a continuation of the history of the "old" Communist movement of being remote from the U.S. working class and the masses! Just the fact that Joint Statement can make the above quoted statement gives us some insight as to what can develop when one attempts to develop theory outside of the laboratory of class struggle and divorced from the

raw material that lays the foundation for theory to be developed-the working class!

The "C" PUSA was basically remote from the U.S. working class, the PLP is remote from the U.S. working class and the "new" Communist movement is divorced from the U.S. working class. This remoteness/ unfortunately has had continuity.

The "C" PUSA grew and developed on the heels of the great Bolshevik revolution and during a period when there was a massive spontaneous movement among the masses in response to the great depression. The "C" PUSA was a part of this movement and ⁱⁿ some areas was able to provide independent leadership to the masses but it was not a party rooted in the working class and its leadership and leading cadre were primarily petty-bourgeois intellectuals. At its maximum numerical strength in 1944 it claimed 80,000 members about half of whom were in the party less than a year and of which 46% were classified as "industrial workers". (History of the CPUSA p.421)

Obviously this was not a party rooted in the working class even though some workers were drawn to it. It was some of these workers that were drawn to the "C" PUSA that were the initiators of the struggle in New York State that eventually led to the formation of the PLM.

In the mid-1950's the "C" PUSA was basically hiding "underground" from McCarthyism as opposed to doing underground political work. Our work in the trade union movement was the work of liberal democrats. Our work in the Harlem community can best be characterized as trying to hide ourselves in some mass organizations. We went from meeting to meeting, distributed a handful of the "Worker" newspaper and talked endlessly about what we should be doing. In our community work we ran a small insignificant electoral campaign for Ben Davis when he got out of jail. There was a small group of us in the Harlem Branch of the "C" P that was openly dissatisfied with the lack of progress in our party work.

One can also recall the great deal of confusion in our ranks when Elizabeth G. Flynn and Jim Jackson returned from the 20th Party Congress of the Soviet Union.

Jackson reported to the Harlem Branch Khrushchev's "secret" speech at-

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to this attack on Stalin who was revered by the "C"P for nearly 30 years

tacking Stalin and socialism. Some of us listened incredulously, and others just viewed it as another twist in the line and took it in their stride. The question of Stalin was to play an important role in our future development and for a time it became the line of demarcation between the "Militants" (we hadn't been given a label yet) and the others ^{because we saw the attacks on Stalin as a underhanded way to} We were also told not to read the book, "Long Live ^{attack} Leninism" which was a mild criticism of the Soviet revisionist line by the Chinese ^{socialism.} Communist Party.

Some of us in the Harlem Branch continued to demand more open party work in the name of the "C"P. We wanted more militant actions in the streets around the everyday problems the masses faced. Some of us ^{WERE} sick of the weak non-marxist reports and direction that would come down from the leadership. We had also heard and in some meetings seen that some of these same criticisms were being raised in the New York State trade union section.

Milton Rosen, the then N.Y. State Secretary of the trade union section of the "C"P wrote an article in Political Affairs of November, 1959 called "The Party and the Masses" in which he moderately criticized the leadership for being out of touch with the working masses and the party being divorced from the masses and not playing an independent political role among the people. This article had an effect on us because, in the main, it echoed the criticisms that some of us were making in the Harlem Branch. Events began to move more rapidly and our dissatisfaction with the leadership became clearer and better organized.

We knew of and were aware of the splits that had occurred at the 16th party convention that produced the POC (Provisional Organizing Committee) and a small group mainly centered in Boston that produced a newsletter called "Hammer and Steel". The POC had essentially written off anyone who remained in the "C"P after they split and never made overtures to us even though our paths would cross on the streets of Harlem when they would be conducting their periodic street meetings. "Hammer and Steel" worked much harder to influence the "C"P's cadre but since the center of opposition was in New York they were physically removed from it

and tended to be quite sectarian.

Just prior to Rosen's article George Meany leveled a racist attack on A.P. Randolph the only black member of the AFL-CIO Executive Board at the AFL-CIO Convention in San Francisco. Black trade unionist all over the country joined ranks and formed the Negro American Labor Council (NALC) in response. The black communist in the trade union movement played a role in developing the NALC and party members in New York formed an active party caucus in the New York Chapter. The caucus would meet periodically with Rosen in his capacity as State Secretary and became a hot-bed of resistance to the "C"P's capitulationist line to Randolph. Another member and myself were both active in the party caucus and in the leadership of the Harlem Branch of the "C"P. A factional situation began to arise even though we were not actively or consciously producing one.

Meetings began taking place between some of us in the trade union section and others doing community work. We affirmed that no revolution can be made in the U.S. without a strong workers movement. We then decided to put these ideas on paper and distribute them among party members in New York and among contacts across the country. We published some of these ideas in the first issue of an internal party paper called Progressive Labor in January, 1962. The party leadership moved on us right away!

Rosen and some others were expelled. The Harlem Branch was essentially put into "receivership" and taken over by the party leadership (none of the blacks were expelled. We were just left to make our statements and leave or drift out). The "C"PUSA subsequently "leaked" a story to the New York Times that a "pro-Albanian" faction of the "C"P was expelled. Thus, P.L. as an organization was born.

Like the "C"P, pl was born during the period of the beginning of a major upsurge of the masses against racism and against the war in Vietnam. We also wanted to and in effect desperately counter the low profile anti-communism of the "C"PUSA. After a number and of organizational meetings to consolidate our ranks we immediately/openly declared that we were communist and would not hide our politics. We would challenge McCar-

thyism head-on. We opened a public office in Harlem and on the Lower East Side and declared ourselves to the world and those communities. Our ranks were quickly swelled with students and the worker base that we started with was eroded.

During these early days of PL's development we were counselled and guided by some of the communist who had waged consistent struggles against revisionism in the "C" PUSA in the 1940's and 1950's.

We had our study groups and our cadre schools but we were primarily "activist". We were essentially the other side of the coin-all practice and no theory! As long as the mass movement was going full speed ahead we could motor along with it and not see this essential gap in our development. We downgraded theory-not in words but in practice-as a result of our training (or lack of training) in the "C" P and pushed activism (practice) in response to the lack of "revolutionary practice" in the "C" P.

At this point I will turn the narrative over to a group of ex-PL'ers from the San Francisco Bay area who split with PL in 1977 and thoroughly research^{ed} the history of PL and clearly and accurately summarized the early years of PL.

~~CHAPTER I~~~~PLP AT ITS PRIME 1963-1966~~

It was the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) that in essence founded the Progressive Labor Movement (PLM) and PLP. They provided the theoretical guidance to the young movement on all levels. The first theoretical piece of PLM, "*Road to Revolution*" (1963) was basically an Americanized version of the Polemical articles then appearing in the Chinese press. It was neither as clear nor as sharp* as such Chinese masterpieces as "*More on the Differences Between Comrade Togliatti & Us*" or "*Long Live Leninism.*" But since "*Road to Revolution*" hewed carefully to the line being put forward by the CPC it was a sound theoretical foundation on which to build a new party.

It was easy for the young PLM to become the early favorite of CPC within the USA. The CPC was fairly conservative with whom it established fraternal relations, preferring people whom it had known and worked with. Milt Rosen and Mort Scheer, both had been full-time paid functionaries of the U.S. Communist Party (CP) for at least 6 years and were known to the CPC. Others of the founders were the sons or relatives of famous CP personages or had visited China under CP auspices previously. Thus PLM started out with the powerful backing of the largest communist party in the world.

The year 1963 began with the publication by the CPC of "*Leninism and Modern Revisionism*" and ended with the publication of "*Peaceful Coexistence - Two Diametrically Opposed Policies,*" the sixth general polemic against the Soviet CP. 18 Powerful documents were published by the CPC. These polemics against Khrushchev revisionism electrified the world. The CPC defended Marxism-Leninism and put forth the revolutionary concepts of Marx and Lenin that had been buried for at least a decade. Millions of communists all over the world were attracted to revolutionary Marxism and galvanized into action by the CPC polemics. This was especially true in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The pro-China parties the world over experienced rapid growth and great prestige as a result. The PLM, just 1 year old, doubled and redoubled in size.

*Nor could one expect that the first pamphlet of a fledgling organization would compare with the product of the dictatorship of the proletariat in China.

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The PLM entered a near vacuum in the U.S. mass movement. The two "socialist" parties the CP and the SWP (Socialist Workers Party) were conservative and isolated. The trade-union movement was dormant, thoroughly controlled by the ruling class. The ban-the-bomb movement had done some good in weakening the cold war mentality, but aside from the Fair Play for Cuba Committee there was no anti-imperialist movement at all. The big movement center was the civil rights movement then approaching its climax. But an organization such as PLM was sorely needed. The air was electric with bold new ideas, the polemics of the CCP, the charismatic influence of Cuba, the bold example of the civil rights movement.

A new generation of revolutionaries was brought up under the ideological guidance of the CPC and the revolutionary appeal of people like Che Guevarra, Fidel Castro, Patrice Lumumba, Malcolm X, Mohammed Babu, Ho Chi Minh; in the U.S. this included Robert Williams, Fannie Lou Hamer, Bob Dylan and the SNCC people. PLM embraced them all and then in its boldest move organized in quick succession trips to Cuba in defiance of the government travel ban. It was a brilliant stroke. The audacity of the move won the admiration and support of the most left elements in the growing anti-imperialist movement, in the civil rights movement, and among the vocal civil liberties advocates. PLM now had a core of activists with enthusiasm, courage, and imagination, something which the ex-CP functionaries in and by themselves were unable to provide.

The new activists, inspired by the revolutionary polemics of the CPC and the growing mass movement, carved out for PLM and PLP a place in the vanguard of the rising anti-imperialist, anti-racist tide that was inundating the U.S. in the years 1963-1964.

- In January, 1963 PL sent food and money to Hazard, Kentucky starting a serious campaign to aid the embattled coal miners in their protracted violent strike. A PL sponsored trade-union solidarity Committee on January 24 held a support rally of 800.¹ Although in the end better-heeled forces took control of the support campaign, PL's efforts were useful.

- In February, 1963 PL started a new theoretical magazine, the *Marxist-Leninist Quarterly*. While it put out only 4 numbers and never replaced the influential *Monthly Review* it was a contribution to the CPC-led anti-revisionist struggle on the theoretical front.

- In June of 1963 PL organized 59 students to spend a month in Cuba in defiance of the travel ban.²

- In that same summer PL organized an election campaign for Bill Epton in Harlem and numerous rent-strike and other community based campaigns in the lower East Side of New York City.

~~THE FIVE RETREATS~~

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- The September HUAC (House Un-American Activities Committee) hearings were disrupted by PLM. The same month PLM physically defeated several attempts of Nazis and Cuban counter-revolutionaries to break-up meetings held by the returnees from Cuba in New York, Washington and San Francisco. In Washington, SNCC-led students from Howard were instrumental in PLP's victory. In December PL led hundreds in protests against the New York murder of Puerto Rican Youth.

- In April, 1964 PLM drove HUAC out of Buffalo after a broad-based protest movement. It was HUAC's last road-show.

- On May 2nd, 1964 PLM organized the first major anti-Vietnam march in New York City. The idea for the march was presented by Milt Rosen at a broad-based socialist conference at Yale. The May 2nd Movement (M2M) was formed out of the action, and subsequently led a whole series of actions to expose and publicize the growing U.S. aggression in Viet Nam. Two M2M demonstrations in Times Square in August, 1964 were heavily attacked by the police.³

- In June, 1964 PLM led a second contingent of students to Cuba. This time 84 students defied the travel ban to spend more than 2 months in Cuba.⁴

- In Spring, 1964 PL founded a weekly newspaper *Challenge* which almost immediately began agitating against the vicious police brutality in Harlem. Week after week there were street rallies in Harlem protesting the frame-up of the Harlem 6 and other police atrocities. In July, 1964 one Lt. Gilligan murdered a 15 year old Black youth. Harlem exploded into rebellion and PLM was there in the thick of it passing out "Wanted for Murder, Gilligan the Cop" posters, holding illegal demonstrations, forming a broad-based Harlem Defence Council. PLM leader Bill Epton appeared to be the personal leader of the rebellion. His subsequent arrest and trial for "criminal anarchy" provoked world-wide protests. Bill McAdoo, who organized the Harlem Defence Committee for PLM, in the fall spoke in San Francisco; 500 Black workers came on a moment's notice.⁵ Such was the fame of PL and the Harlem Rebellion. A vicious grand jury probe of PL's activities in Harlem resulted in a jail sentence for numerous young PL activists who refused to testify. But in the atmosphere of 1965 the police persecution could only strengthen PLM.

At its founding convention in April, 1965, PLP drew 300 activists around its anti-revisionist (pro-Chinese CP) line, its identification with Mao, Castro, Ho Chi Minh and its militant activity. The new PLP was conscious that it was up and coming. The young revolutionaries had a good mass style; while holding forth for communist

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~~PLP AT ITS PRIME~~

principle they united with diverse groups including the MPI (Puerto Rican Independence Movement, now the Puerto Rican Socialist Party), the National Guardian, the Freedom Now Party, Berkeley activists like Jerry Rubin and others. PL brought its militancy and its Marxist-Leninist line into movements it built around mass issues like "End Police Brutality," "Freedom to Travel to Cuba," "No Rent for Rats," and "U.S. Get Out of Vietnam." PLP openly proclaimed and fought for its communist beliefs but pitched in and fought around reform issues of almost any character. It was a formula for growth and influence.

A constitution for the new Party was approved by the convention. It was based on an article "On The Party" by Milt Rosen published in *PL Magazine* (V.4, n.1). The democratic aspects of the constitution were based on a firm conviction that the new organization would never fall into the bureaucratic habits of the old CP. The convention mandated a newly elected National Committee (NC) every two years, elected club and regional officers. Also it called for minority reports from NC meetings and regular criticism and self-criticism of the leadership. A twenty-person NC was elected.

The special place the Black Liberation Movement had in the hearts and minds of PLers was recognized by the establishment of a semi-autonomous Black Liberation Commission. This commission was to be solely responsible for formulating the slogans and tactics around issues of Black Liberation. The Convention also demanded the Party unconditionally support independence for Puerto Rico.

At the time of the Convention the only two areas of the U.S. that had more than two or three Party members were New York City and San Francisco. The New York-San Francisco axis would always remain at the center of the Party and at no time until 1977 would more than 50% of the Party be outside of the New York, Boston, or San Francisco branches. Since these cities are largely commercial, not industrial, the Party's inability to go beyond these two cities as its major centers presaged its historical failure to gain a toehold within the industrial working class. Nevertheless steps were taken in 1965 to build a more national Party. Two of the most promising young activists, recruited out of the mass movement, not of the old CP, Phil Taylor and Jared Israel, went to Los Angeles and Boston respectively to set up PL branches there. Within a year there was a core of 10 members in each of these two cities.⁶ Also Andy Rakochy went to Chicago for the same purpose but with less success and a former-CP leader in Seattle, C. Van Lydergraf, joined PLP with a large group of dissident CPers and he won a sympathizing group across the border in British Columbia, called the Progressive Workers

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Movement, to be a fraternal Canadian group. Besides the Chinese Communist Party, the South Vietnamese National Liberation Front (NLF), the Albanian Party of Labor and the Cuban Communist Leadership, the PLP established mutual fraternal ties with the Liga Socialista, Puertorriquena, the Peoples' Progressive Party of British Guyana, and the new revolutionary government of Zanzibar. *Challenge*, in its June 1st, 1965 issue featured special messages to PLP by leaders of various national liberation movements such as Frelimo in Mozambique, the MPLA in Angola, ZAPU in Zimbabwe, and the Algerian revolutionary leadership.

The activist PLPers and M2Mers plunged into the burgeoning anti-war movement in 1965. PL'ers in New York and San Francisco, and in Boston and Los Angeles were at the heart of the new anti-war committees that were springing up to protest U.S. aggression in Vietnam. PLP introduced the then radical slogan "U.S. Get Out of Vietnam"* and around this slogan organized a firm anti-imperialist Left within the generally pacifist or CP-dominated anti-war committees. Anti-imperialist contingents led by PLP participated in the April, 1965 SDS march on Washington, the Anti-war marches on the Oakland Army Base in the fall of 1965, the New York Fifth Avenue March in November 1965 and scores of militant actions like stopping the troop trains, campus anti-draft rallies, donating blood to the NLF, setting up the "free university" movement. Members of PLP spoke as open communists at the Vietnam Day Teach-In at Berkeley, the Teach-In at City College of New York, and elsewhere.

The anti-war phenomenon was immensely liberating after the 20 years of cold war. The SDS march on Washington, which had speakers ranging from a liberal Senator to SNCC's Bob Moses, was brought to its feet by Phil Ochs' devastating song "*I'm a Liberal*" which shattered so many cold war myths. The early Vietnam teach-ins were of this character. Liberals from the establishment trying to keep the protests mild and patriotic found themselves on the same platform with those who proclaimed solidarity with the NLF. The 1966 UCLA teach-in, which had heard a range of speakers from conservative to radical liberal was electrified when PLP's Bill MacAdoo bitterly denounced the white liberal mentality, then he openly called for the U.S. Army to mutiny: "Turn your guns on the Generals," he said to the shocked audience. "Treason at UCLA Teach-in," screamed the headlines the following day. Yet rally after rally

*The CP slogan was "Stop the Bombing - Negotiate," this implied the U.S. imperialists had a right to be in Vietnam and was a pacifist, Plague-on-both-your-houses slogan and PL was right to oppose it.

the cold war myths were smashed, the liberals were denounced, and hundreds of thousands of students became radicals and suddenly open to revolutionary thought. Demonstrations such as the one in Berkeley to stop the troop trains brought the militancy of the civil rights movement into this cauldron of the anti-war movement, where old myths were being shattered and revolutionary thought was becoming a respectable trend.

Through it all PLP urged the anti-war Movement to rely on the working class. This was a specific contribution of Milt Rosen who as early as 1964 wrote a key article, "U.S. Workers, Force for Revolution." In the summer of 1965 Rosen wrote a three-part series for *Challenge*, which while hailing the NLF and the U.S. Peace Movement pointed out the necessity of basing the anti-war movement squarely on the working class. In this task Rosen had to defeat deep ingrained anti-working class prejudices among many of the young PLP activists. Rosen helped educate a generation of U.S. revolutionaries on the necessity of class-based politics.

~~Nevertheless when it came to analyzing international events from a communist perspective Rosen was often at sea. In this period Rosen's inability to understand even the rudiments of how imperialism functioned was not very significant because the PLP followed the lead of the Chinese Communist Party, who understood these matters better. In October 19, 1965 Rosen wrote an article for *Challenge* on the two-week old fascist coup in Indonesia, directed by U.S. imperialism. In his article Rosen failed to realize how U.S. imperialism had controlled the Indonesian state structure all along through the U.S. financed fascist Army, and how President Sukarno, whom Rosen hailed as a "Left" force and whose writings had been reprinted in *PL magazine*, was never anything but a figurehead for the U.S. imperialist-controlled fascist ruling class of Indonesia.* Rosen's inability to analyze world events at times led him to make rash and subjective predictions such as the one in this article in 1965: "Sukarno re-affirmed Indonesia's solid support to revolution and anti-imperialist positions in Asia. . . It would appear that the coup has fallen far short of its mark. Sukarno has returned to Jakarta. (Actually he was under Army arrest.) The communists are participating in the parliament, while the other party leaders are organizing against the counter-revolution."~~

Although it is too early to fully predict the immediate outcome, it is safe to say that in the near future millions of progressive Indo-

*In hailing Sukarno PLP was following the CPC which beat the record in singing the praises of "Bung Karno."

Now the question arises as to what does all of this mean? What are the lessons to be learned? How do we learn how to learn and not repeat past mistakes? Well, let's see.

The Communist movement in this country has been plagued with activism and lack of theory. Activism because it has trailed the movement of the masses and been swept into struggle by the spontaneous struggles of the masses. Lack of theory because when we did engage in theoretical work we immediately stopped doing practical work and developed "ideas"-not theory-about events surrounding us because we were isolated from the masses.

When we read the history of the Communist movement in this country we always read about the practical work that was done on the international level, among the workers and minorities, in the communities, etc. But we almost never read about what theoretical contributions were made to Marxism-Leninism as a result of these struggles or in the course of the struggles. We have been notorious in not being able to master the dialectical method. We have always been one-sided!

The "C" PUSA was primarily activist during its heyday and downgraded theory. This accounts for its total inability to make independent judgements and analysis of the conditions that obtained here and thus made it subservient to the CPSU. This deficiency laid the groundwork for the "C" P to be wiped-out during the Smith Act indictments and the McCarthy period when a party that claimed 80,000 members and probably sympathisers in the millions, was totally annihilated without a shot being fired!

PL's response was that the problem was that their was not enough practice-not enough activism. We would go out and show them! So, PL took a one-sided approach in response to the one-sided approach of the CP. Activist and politically conscious people were attracted to the "C" P and PL because of their practical work-not by their clear exposition of the theory of proletarian revolution-and then, in turn, these people who had a low theoretical level began to lower the theoretical level that may have already been achieved.

As we tried to demonstrate earlier some of the emerging formations that are working towards building a genuine Communist Party in this country have correctly studied some of these errors of the past and have determined that under present conditions theory is primary. If they are saying that our practical work should come from a theoretical framework we will surely agree. But our reading of what they have said speaks to the contrary. What you are saying is that a small group of "theoreticians" isolated from the struggles of the working class have to study the various "questions", discuss them among themselves and-if they agree-then the time is ripe for forming the Communist Party with the theoreticians in leadership. This may sound like an over-simplification but this is what it all boils down to!

Well, what is Marxist-Leninist theory and what is theoretical work? Our theory, Marxism-Leninism, is the summation of the experience of the working class and its allies. Marxist-Leninist use this theory as "a guide" to action. That action is the organizing, educating, politizing and arming the working class to overthrow U.S. capitalism. Marxist-Leninist theory provides the framework within which we can find the answers to problems we are confronted with in our political and practical work. Thus there is inseparable unity between theory and practice. From this unity of theory and practice as well as the development of our theoretical work to a higher level we will be able to predict and control many events. We will no longer have to respond to the spontaneous motion of the masses because we will be able to control the motion so there will no longer be a need for spontaneity!

Marxist-Leninist theoretical work is not just studying our conditions and history from a dialectical materialist perspective and studying the history of the Communist movement in this country and the world. It is also studying and learning the economic laws that are governing U.S. imperialism, studying and learning the contradictions within U.S. imperialism, finding out the practical problems facing the U.S. working class and putting them in their proper theoretical framework, showing how everything in the superstructure is effected by the economic base, and, in turn, effects the economic base itself, explaining how the workers are exploited.

where the profits the bosses make come from and where they eventually wind up and what is the political economy of racism and sexism. These are some of questions our theoretical work must address and be able to give the answers to the working class in a form and manner that they can understand and use as a weapon against the ruling class.

We have also been one-sided and undialectical in our approach to "leading" Communist partys. First the "C" PUSA was slavish to the CPSU and then PL became slavish to the Chinese CP for a while. PL responded by eventually attacking the Chinese CP from a "left" cover that was right in essence at that time and then declaring its "independence" from all communist partys-respecting none other than itself. Our newer Marxist-Leninist rebound by attacking "Soviet Marxism". Both are incorrect!

It is correct that we should not be slavish to any Communist Party. But at the same time we must realize that they all have developed a great wealth of experience; some useful for adoption or applic^{ation} to our concrete conditions and others we can learn from by negative example. We also have to understand that revisionist deviations from Marxism-Leninism is not a local phenomena but have always been a world wide experience. So revisionism does not fall out of the sky. It is all around us, all the time, without letup, knocking on the door of Marxism-Leninism demanding to be heard and when we see it seize hold of one party we should be alerted because it has become stronger and more powerful and has made a leap. These are lessons we can learn by studying the history of the Communist movement in this country and in other countries and we should respect the work these partys did because, like us, they are operating in a period when bourgeois ideology is still the most powerful. "Let anyone without sin cast the first stone!"

And finally, how do we learn how to learn? It is often said that people find it difficult to unlearn things. This may be true to a certin degree especially in this country. We are taught from our very first day individualism, me-first, to be "upward/mobile", that whites are better than blacks, that blacks are inferior to

properly learn from the past.

Hence studying and mastering dialectical and historical materialism is the beginning step along our long road towards learning how to think as communist. In the process of learning dialectics we will unlearn bourgeois ideology and as we unlearn bourgeois ideology and integrate our theory and practice we will learn how to learn from our past history and from the history of the international working class.

We are on the threshold of launching a genuine Communist Party in the U.S. Never before have there been so many conscious anti-revisionist and anti-dogmatist forces in this country. Never before has the U.S. ruling class been in such a weakened position inspite of all the huffing and puffing it is doing and never before has the genuine left been so free from the control of Communist Partys outside of its borders.

Hopefully this analysis will contribute to the development of this Communist Party.

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