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TO ALL MEMBERS

Dear Comrades,

Reports from a couple of areas indicate that the Maoist Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) and its youth group, the Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade (RCYB), may be about to (or already have) split into two groups.

The attached article from the Spartacist League's Workers Vanguard has some information. The "facts" contained in this publication, of course, should be taken with more than one grain of salt.

The purpose of this letter is to encourage comrades to seek out information on this development, to try to talk with members of the RCP and the RCYB to find out what political issues are involved, and how they see these events, and to forward reports to the National Office. Also local Maoist papers may carry reports. As soon as we can collect this material, the Militant will prepare an article on the developments.

Comradely,



Larry Seigle
for the Secretariat

What was once the largest Maoist organization in the U.S. is ripping apart at the seams over the China question. Long-simmering clique warfare in the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP—formerly Revolutionary Union) exploded last weekend in Cincinnati as club-wielding supporters of the "Gang of

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Four" had it out with backers of the current Hua/Teng regime in Peking.

This is the largest and deepest split in New Left Maoism since SDS fractured in 1969. But unlike that split, from which emerged a "pro-working-class" wing as well as a hardened petty-bourgeois nationalist current, the RCP has divided along well established clique lines with no political left wing. Followers of RCP Chairman Bob Avakian in California are certainly no less reformist than the faction grouped around Mickey Jarvis in New York.

As we go to press it appears that the RCP will lose more than a third of its 600-700 members—not only the bulk of the

East Coast but also key chunks of its Midwest industrial concentration and the entire youth operation outside the West Coast. Consequent demoralization will certainly produce additional resignations. The RCP has been split and wrecked by bureaucratic cynicism and political incapacity.

News of the split has traveled in shock waves through the ranks of the organization. And no wonder they're shocked. Their party has been blasted apart and they have only the fuzziest idea what it's all about. As a matter of conscious policy, both wings of the leadership have worked to keep the ranks in the dark, with hints and rumors their only clue to the crisis shaking the organization.

Even when the Jarvis faction, after a long underground existence, surfaced within the leadership following the mid-December Central Committee plenum, the membership was shut out from the desperate struggle at the top. There were the frantic whispers about secret meetings and hidden positions: "Bob's for the Gang"; "Mickey's backing Hua." But the severity of the crisis was not for the ranks' tender ears.

The purpose of this conspiracy of silence was more than the simple

invocation of bureaucratic privilege. Unity of the warring leaders against the membership is as organic to the RCP as it is to the Chinese Communist Party or any other Stalinist formation. At all costs, those on top must prevent a critical discussion of political questions. For the RCP, the immediate question is China. And any serious examination of that question raises the dangerous spectre of the "Russian question": the nature of the USSR and Stalinism vs. Trotskyism. The RCP tops must avoid this issue like the plague. But burning questions sometimes burn out of control.

The chasm separating the RCP from Leninist norms of democratic centralism is evident in the fact that many of the RCP ranks will learn of the most wrenching internal struggle in the history of their own organization in the pages of *Workers Vanguard*. But more importantly, this is also the only way they will learn the political meaning of the split. For when the "discussion" does at last trickle down to the ranks, it will be drained of political content, obscured by a tradition of Stalinist lies, packed with self-serving bureaucratic cover-up.

The RCP split is a dramatic shift in the political landscape of the U.S. left. But given the ultra-bureaucratic, Stalinist practices of this organization, many RCP members are ignorant of what really is happening in their own party. They ought to get the story straight and political—no Mao-talk, no phony-baloney, no moralizing nonsense. And they'll only get it here.

One Divides Into Two

In its factional explosion the RCP ludicrously aped its mentors, the Chinese Maoists: the split was the final explosion of a prolonged clique war marked by secret positions held for years. Its characteristics were the exiling of oppositionists to the sticks; leaderships reshuffled by bureaucratic fiat; whole branches put on probation—with scarcely a word to the bewildered party ranks.

The issue was, of course, the mantle of Maoism. The Avakian supporters solid- arize with the "Gang of Four" and, of course, Mao (the Gang of Five?) while the forces around Jarvis opt for the present Peking regime and (need we add) Mao. The spectacle recalls the 1969 SDS split in form, where both sides waved the Little Red Book and furiously quoted Mao at one another. But in

substance, the connection is that of tragedy and farce. The deepening radicalization of the Vietnam war period propelled many thousands of impressionistic petty-bourgeois youth toward New Left "anti-imperialism," but in the absence of a forceful Trotskyist alternative to discredited Communist Party (CP) reformism, they overwhelmingly embraced Stalinism in its "Third World"/Maoist variant. Ten years later, the once-idealistic student youth who passed from collectives to "party-building" have become the demoralized pawns of maneuverers like RCPers Avakian and Jarvis, and Mike Klonsky, head of the "official" pro-Maoist organization, the Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist) [CP(ML)].

The present RCP factional line-up reflects the RCP's origins in the New Left. A series of scattered Revolutionary Union collectives was amalgamated in 1975 primarily through the patchwork merger of Avakian's Bay Area stronghold with the East Coast operation built by Jarvis out of the crumbling remains of SDS's RYM II faction. Avakian's RU was New Left Maoist pure and simple. The clot headed by Jarvis—a red-diaper baby who left the CP in 1969 with a pro-China line—has always tended toward a more classic Stalinist coloration based on sycophancy toward the "one country" in which "socialism" was presumably being built. Hence the Jarvis clique is terrified of "isolation" from the Peking regime, while the Avakian wing is more responsive to the old "anti-imperialist" milieu whose admiration for China was badly shaken by Peking's role in Angola and embrace of NATO against the Soviet "superpower."

While Mao was alive his authoritative bonapartist role between the wings of the Chinese bureaucracy sufficed to hold the RCP together. But with his death, it soon split apart. Demonstrating that the organization never transcended its initial federalism, both sides are taking out roughly what they put in, with Avakian's stronghold remaining the Bay Area and Jarvis' New York.

In his documents Jarvis defined his faction as the right opposition to Avakian's "left idealist" tendency which, in "giving the Gang a home," was leading the party into "degeneration and isolation." For his part, Avakian had declared war on the "bourgeois headquarters" headed up by Jarvis, the "second center" in the RCP which had been "intriguing, conspiring and working for a split" for "years." The period of actual debate—of course restricted to the RCP elite—was brief and quickly

resolved itself into tense confrontations complete with bodyguards, and worse.

Whereas in China the working people learn of their leaders' magical transformations from proletarian heroes to "capitalist roaders" through wall posters pasted up after the fact, the RCP ranks have been kept entirely in the dark, expected to follow along when the time comes on the basis of whoever first recruited them.

RCP Ducks the China Question

The story properly begins with the death of Chairman Mao, which found the RCP leaders preoccupied above all with keeping the reverberations of the shake-up in the Chinese regime from affecting their own organization. Unlike the RCP's more left-wing predecessor, Progressive Labor (PL), which tried in an infantile way to cope with the Mao/Nixon alliance and, spinning off into the realm of "left" anti-Leninism, actively dug its own political grave, the RCP tops simply stuck their heads in the sand.

In the fall of 1976 Avakian and Jarvis, playing for time, reached the agreement that while the arrest of the Gang of Four by Hua "looked like a bad thing," it required "further investigation." This enabled the center to publish its one and only statement on the Chinese events, the 15 October 1976 *Revolution* article which while, in Avakian's words, "upholding socialist China had a clear 'tilt' in the direction of the line of the Four." But with the rehabilitation of Teng Hsiao-ping and the 11th Party Congress Jarvis became increasingly restive over the "tilt" and a "compromise even-handed" stance had to be taken.

With their only public statement rendered moot by Teng's rehabilitation and Avakian and Jarvis unable to reach a further "compromise," the RCPers spent the next year and a half crawling pink-faced through their public work. In November of that year they managed to get themselves in the ridiculous situation of holding a "Conference on the International Situation" where they were baited on all sides for having no line on China.

For a while they could fake it. Avakian was happy to say nothing which could make things worse for him in China. Jarvis, in his inimitable clique style, was sticking to the compromise whenever Avakian's agents were in earshot, while whispering his dissatisfactions on his own turf. This had the effect of landing some of the more naive Jarvisites in periodic hot water as they occasionally tried to raise criticisms through regular RCP "channels" only to get smashed by the Bob/Mickey combo.

Avakian describes this period in a document:

"It often happened that when things 'got out of hand' and the Party center stepped in to struggle with these lines and forces that Comrade Jarvis would then take part, even vigorously take part, in the struggle along with the center. But the effect of this was usually to produce in those forces he had unleashed a feeling that he had 'punked out' to the center and had, in fact, 'set them up'."

—Central Committee Report,"
(Volume 3, Number 1)

As the months went by, events continued to press down relentlessly on the RCP. Externally Peking was forcing the issue by granting its "franchise" to Klonsky. Internally the subterranean factionalizing was reaching epidemic proportions. A hot issue was the question of changing the name of the youth organization. Things had gone so far that while Avakian was pushing for a "communist" youth group, Jarvis was actively lining up the non-party youth against the center in favor of a "mass" organization. The real issue was power politics: the Jarvis clique's challenge to the Avakian leader-cult, as a document by "the Chairman" makes clear:

"... in many ways the Party as a whole has been effectively split for a year or more. This has come out around various issues, including the questions involved in forming a young communist league. This went so far that some comrades took a factional attitude toward the Party as a whole and a hostile attitude toward the Chair. This was objectively encouraged by Com-

rade Jarvis who at one point told the Chair he had no right to speak on this question because he hadn't investigated (in fact, the Chair had done some investigation), and who while 'upholding the line in some ways also 'floated' ideas to these comrades that encouraged them in their wrong thinking and their tendency to oppose the Party politically and organizationally."

—Ibid.

Avakian put down the youth revolt only by putting the fear of Mao into the dual members about what would happen to them if they did not fight for the center's line at the mid-November youth conference. This tactic was to eventually backfire on Avakian. His heavy-handed approach to the youth members marked a watershed in Jarvis' decision to surface the faction and was to cause Avakian to lose much of the RCYB in the split.

"Rectification"

Following the youth name-change confrontation, the Central Committee and other leading members were called to Chicago in mid-December for a meeting, ostensibly to set guidelines for opening a discussion within the RCP on

China. But by the time they arrived Avakian had decided to wage his fight in a more exclusive body, and the center ordered the CCRs to spend the weekend discussing the "Worker" newspapers. With the organization paying the plane fares, the disgruntled cadres left Chicago muttering "No Taxation, No Representation."

With their departure the real leadership of both sides got down to business. Avakian began by introducing his factional document, "Revisionists Are Revisionists and Must Not Be Supported, Revolutionaries Are Revolutionaries and Must Be Supported," hot off the press. Though prior to this the internal discussion on China had only taken place in whispers among an elite few, the document was rammed down the body's throat. The vote was not reassuring for Avakian. Only by ignoring the sizable "silent minority" who simply abstained could he claim a two-to-one victory in the vote. (The Jarvis faction of course counts the abstentions differently and arrives at an almost even split.)

In any case Avakian got what he had come for. At long last there was a

majority line and he could move against the Jarvis "headquarters." His "rectification" campaign, patterned after the Chinese CP's "ideological criticism and self-criticism" campaigns used to justify revolving-door purges, called for "organizational steps" against the opposition. In typical fashion Jarvis and his supporters voted for the "rectification," which included throwing themselves off the Central Committee and exiling themselves from the major party centers. In a classic Stalinist statement, Avakian reported:

"The Central Committee has made arrangements for [Jarvis] to undertake work to make contributions to the Party, has assigned him some leading responsibility in the Party and while struggling with him has expressed every hope that he'll change in the course of work and study."

—Ibid.

RCP: Bureaucratic Nightmare

After some debate in Chicago, it was decided that China was a "tactical" question; thus, upon return to the branches, there would be no more said about China. That's right—Avakian directed that there be *no* discussion of events in China: not in meetings, in corridors, in cars or closets. As for the regional leaders and branch chairmen who were simply to vanish after the Chicago meeting, not a word of explanation was to be given. These regulations led one baffled cadre to ask, "If China is not a principled question for an organi-

zation which claims to be Maoist, what is?" In the RCP, as in China, the only "principled" question would appear to be the survival of one's own bureaucratic clique.

The Chicago meeting was the beginning of the end. The Jarvis people headed to New York for the holidays, en route to their reassignments, and began furiously scribbling documents. Sliding over his vote for the "rectification," Jarvis wrote:

"In looking over the rectification bulletin one can say that the lack of theoretical and political line is astounding. One-half of the standing committee is removed, one-half of the political committee removed, almost one-half of the voting Central Committee members removed, suppressed or surrounded, and not a word of explanation...."

A suspicious Avakian showed up in New York to ensure that the line voted in Chicago would be taken down to the membership; the task of the cadres was simply to "absorb" it, under the Stalinist dictum, "unity of will, unity of action." According to Avakian only the majority document was to be discussed, only sections at a time, only through regular RCP "channels" (with leading cadres required to present the center's line in lower bodies) and only twice:

"This report on China as well as on the revisionist line and headquarters of course represents the line of our Party. Leadership of all units has the task of leading their units in study and struggle to grasp and apply this line. If there are any disagreements, they should be raised for struggle only in the highest body one belongs to.

"For six weeks, beginning the first of the year, the discussion should center on the line on China in the accompanying report. One or at most two initial discussions of the part of the report dealing with rectification should be held during the period."

— "Central Committee Report," (Volume 3, Number 1)

Meanwhile the hyperactivism of the RCP—exemplified by campaigns such as the "People's Bicentennial," Kent State and NUWO, designed to keep the members too busy to think—would be stepped up:

"Mass work becomes our main emphasis, unlike in the period of forming the Party."

— *Ibid.*

Even in the RCP, Politics Will Out

The spectacular fracturing of the RCP over China is more than poetic justice. It is a demonstration that even in the RCP—where absorption in idiot adventurism and stultifying workerism, as well as pervasive cynicism toward political questions, work against the drawing of political lines—political confrontation, though suppressed and distorted, cannot be indefinitely staved off.

Certainly this revision of the organization along old clique lines recalls previous splits in which disputes were papered over until the divergent groupings (e.g., the clot around guerrillaist Bruce Franklin, which formed Vencemos, or the Steve Hamilton grouping which was to become the Bay Area Communist Union) finally departed to go their own ways, without causing undue static in the rest of the organization. But while Avakian's and Jarvis' efforts to shift the blame for various domestic disasters onto their clique rivals played no small part in the split, the China question—long shoved out of sight by mutual consent—finally provoked the unstoppable escalation of the discussion and made a deep and bitter split inescapable.

The Avakian and Jarvis wings of the RCP have come up with two mutually exclusive attempts to escape the problem. Of course, the lengthy internal documents hastily produced by the two sides on the China question never pose this problem directly, but it is the basis for the morbidity of the RCP: *Klonsky has the China franchise*. And that simple fact makes a Peking-loyal Maoist RCP unviable—and not just the RCP, but all the formations outside the CP(ML) who continue to back the ruling bureaucracy of the Chinese state. To openly break from the Chinese for their only real "crime" in the eyes of a U.S. Maoist—not the suppression of the Chinese proletariat, not the systematic betrayal of international revolutionary struggles, but the selection of the wrong American epigone for the "franchise"—means that one is no closer to the seat of power anywhere in the world than is a miserable "Trotskyite." But to refuse to break deprives the RCP of any reason for independent existence outside Klonsky's CP(ML). Neither wing of the RCP can escape this dilemma, for both accept the Stalinist framework of a bureaucratic caste where policy and privilege are determined by reshufflings at the top, whose American "comrades" are selected not for their capacity to lead the U.S. working class to state power but for their slavish services as publicity agents for whomever is currently top dog in Peking.

Perhaps a less gutless Avakian might have seen in the purge of the "Gang of Four" a means for carving out a niche for himself by frontally challenging the legitimacy of the Hua regime's claim to the mantle of Maoism. This would have meant an eventual split with those in his organization for whom apologetics for China mean more than cultist devotion to Avakian. It would have meant renunciation of the vicarious participation in the perquisites of power in China which consoles American Maoists for

their irrelevance to the American working people.

Worst of all it would have brought the RCP up against the spectre of Trotskyism, for Stalinism without a country is unstable in the extreme, as Progressive Labor found out. Warding off that spectre, Progressive Labor embarked on the path of political slow death. The collapse of PL's impressionistic centrism and its reformist spiral into oblivion is the unacknowledged deterrent for leftist impulses in the RCP. But the PL horrible example is probably superfluous for Avakian, whose own New Left parochialism would itself be sufficient to preclude any attempt at global Stalinist revisionism in the style of the old Progressive Labor. So he opts for the no-win policy of public silence on the question of the present Chinese regime.

Thus the line of Avakian's documents—now the officially adopted line of the RCP—is that "a revisionist coup has taken place" in China. "The capitalist-roaders are not only still on the capitalist road, they have usurped supreme power and are taking China down the capitalist road." And what is the RCP going to do about it? Well, they are going to publish articles about "capitalist restoration" in the USSR, they are going to commemorate the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" whenever possible, they will seek to avoid "contributing to building up the current rulers in opposition to the Four" in the U.S.-China Peoples Friendship Association. They will try to avoid incidents like that of the appointment calendar produced by RCPers in Philadelphia, described by Avakian:

"This calendar is a factional calendar, particularly because of how it handled the Chou En-lai question when it was well known to some that this was a very controversial question which would soon be summed up. It has two pictures of Chou—one of the type reserved only for the "Big 5"—Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao. It printed the Central Committee statement on his death, praising him for 'upholding the red flag against all enemies within and without,' which in today's context of Chou being praised in China for fighting the Four is a back-door way of taking a position on this struggle. While we have not officially repudiated that CC statement, neither have we been repeating it, any more than we have been repeating the *Revolution* article of October 15, 1976...." (our emphasis)

— *Ibid.*

And they are going to preserve a discreet silence about China in public and even in their own youth organization (see box accompanying this article), except when dealing with "those who will understand why they should keep what we say to them about China confidential"! In other words, Avakian knows that for admitted Maoist Stalinists, the RCP's line on China is actually *shameful*;

rather than fighting for it, they must keep it secret. The staggering cynicism of these exhortations to secrecy is matched only by the stupidity of putting them down in black and white. Perhaps Mao backed by the armed forces could pull it off. Avakian can't—as our readers can read for themselves.

The RCP's Private Line

Trying to back the right horse has never been easy in the Stalinist movement, where heads have to roll to excuse the defeats and betrayals which are the bureaucracy's stock-in-trade. But it is harder under the ghost of Mao than it ever was under the Stalin monolith. In a masterpiece of unintentional humor,

Avakian hails as “prophetic” Mao's statement that:

“The right in power could utilize my words to become mighty for a while. But then the left will be able to utilize others of my words and organize itself to overthrow the right.”

The dilemma for Maoists in not being able to communicate with the dead is evident in Avakian's document, whose thesis that the “Gang of Four” represents the continuity of orthodox Maoism is now the official, though secret, line of the RCP. Not that the “Great Helmsman's” last words matter, except to sycophants like Avakian or Jarvis.

Thus Avakian can only guess:

“In fact there were, as subsequent events have made abundantly clear, powerful forces in the Chinese leadership who strongly opposed the campaign against Teng and the right deviationist wind... But exactly because Mao threw his weight behind this campaign, these forces had to beat a temporary and partial retreat and go along with knocking down Teng. But they certainly were not about to allow one of the Four to become acting head of the Central Committee and the country in effect. Therefore they backed Hua, someone who, as an analysis of his line and role has shown, was politically in their camp but was not such an easy target with long years of brazen revisionism to attack, like Teng.

“Under these conditions, with the balance of forces being what they were, Mao had to go along with Hua's appointments....

“Mao knew that the deeper this struggle against the right deviationist wind went and the more thoroughly it was carried out, the harder the blows at the rightists and the more favorable the conditions for the left... And we have seen what happened to that struggle after Mao died—those who were actively leading it, the Four, were almost immediately smashed and the target of the struggle was shifted from the right to them, the (genuine) left.”

—“Revisionists Are Revisionists...”

Essentially the Jarvis document, “Uphold the 11th Party Constitution,” simply denies Avakian's assertions about Mao's attitudes toward “the

Four” and toward Chou En-lai and asserts the opposite. Avakian claims Chiang Ching was carrying out Mao's line against Chou, Teng, Hua, etc.; Jarvis insists Mao and Chou were united against “the Four”:

“But even more underhanded is the attempt to imply that Mao and the gang were in fundamental unity. On the very points mentioned, it was with the gang that Mao had very sharp differences. On the necessity of stability and unity and pushing the national economy forward, it was the gang who in fact stood in the way of these correct thrusts by metaphysically opposing them to ‘revolution’ and ‘class struggle.’”

—“Uphold the 11th Party Constitution”

Where Avakian says that Mao supported the “Criticize Lin Piao and Confucius Campaign” as a means of attacking Chou, Jarvis says Mao prevented the Gang from using that campaign to attack Chou:

“Once more rewriting history is used to say that the Lin Piao Confucius Campaign was led by Mao and aimed at Chou. The truth is quite otherwise. The gang distorted the Lin Piao Confucius campaign to try and aim it at Chou and their veteran cadres and at the masses.... The gang may have wanted to aim at Chou, but what they did [was] aim at Mao and the CCP. Mao told them to stop it, to stop weakening the campaign.”

—*Ibid.*

One of the most striking aspects of Jarvis' and Avakian's documents is that both sides are utterly in the dark about what really goes on in the Forbidden City. Lacking any substantial communication with CCP leaders they are reduced to reading the tea leaves of *Peking Review* to find out who's on top or what Mao really meant. To make sense of it all they have to resort to bourgeois sources. Thus Avakian relies on a compilation of translations by the U.S. government while Jarvis takes a particularly damning quote from Chiang Ching from a CIA-connected Taiwanese propaganda mouthpiece. What else can they do—their own oracles are silent.

These polemics are rather reminiscent of the Japanese film *Rashomon*, in which several witnesses gave flatly conflicting accounts of a rape and murder. In the movie a medium contacts the murdered man's spirit (who presents yet another version). Since the RCPers posture as being Marxists (i.e., materialists), they cannot claim to commune with Mao's ghost. Even if they could, that ghost would oblige them only with more of the forked-tongue epigrams of a bonapartist balancing between the competing interests of bureaucratic cliques and the empty moralizing about “revolution” designed to cover the systematic betrayal of the Chinese and international proletariats.

“Cultural Revolution” Mystification

If the “Gang of Four” was so bad, why did Mao tolerate them—if not actively support them—in positions of power? This is the main theme of Avakian's document, to which he returns again and again.

It is indeed an awkward question for Peking's present rulers. The Hua regime has been compelled to supply a series of not very convincing answers. For one thing, they claim that the Gang's crimes escalated sharply in the last months of Mao's life. Second, Mao was, as all Maoists know, the very soul of comradely tolerance, and was patiently seeking to get the Gang to change its evil ways. And third, Hua supporters contend that if Mao had not been ill or had lived longer he would have taken action against the Chiang Ching clique.

In one sense Avakian is right. The Chiang group were Mao's people, a clique whose positions of power depended solely on his personal sponsorship and protection. Thus they could be axed when the Chairman's corpse was scarcely cold. However, Avakian's contention that Mao was engaged in a major struggle with Chou En-lai, Hua, Yeh Chien-ying is no less fantastic than the counter-claim that he would have purged the “Four” had he been healthy. As representatives of the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy, Hua and Teng are also Mao's legitimate heirs.

Hua/Teng can legitimately argue that the purge of the “Gang of Four” is the logical culmination of a trend that began in late 1967 when Mao decided to suppress the Red Guards. Since late 1967 the most prominent victims of the Mao regime have been the original leaders of the Cultural Revolution (Wang Li, Chen Po-ta, Lin Piao), while most “capitalist roaders” purged in 1966-67 have been reinstated.

As a result of his sponsorship of the disastrous “Great Leap Forward” (1958-61) Mao lost much of his authority among the CCP old guard. In 1965, in alliance with Lin Piao, he moved to restore his former dominance. This was the origin of the Cultural Revolution. But the veteran party cadre proved to have considerable powers of resistance, including the ability to mobilize groups of workers against the student-youth Red Guards. So in the end Mao had to retreat and come to terms with so-called “capitalist roaders” like Teng. Mao's personal authority remained sufficient to—through the mediation of Chou En-lai—work out a rapprochement with the old guard.

September 1967 was a decisive turning point in the Cultural Revolution, when Mao moved sharply against the Red Guards and their supporters in the regime. Because of massive popular resistance to the "radical" Maoist Red Guards, particularly among the working class (e.g., the Shanghai general strike in January 1967), Mao had to call in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in early 1967 to "support the revolutionary rebels." The conservative PLA officer corps, of the same flesh as the civilian party and government bureaucracy, naturally neutralized rather than supported these "rebels." Frustrated by the nature of the PLA's intervention, some Red Guard groups came out for extending the Cultural Revolution into the army, mobilizing the soldiers against the officers.

The army is the core of bureaucratic rule in China. As a representative of the bureaucracy, Mao was committed to maintaining the army as an effective repressive apparatus against the potentially rebellious Chinese workers and peasants (e.g., the army was brought in to break the nationwide railway strike in January 1967). Mao declared in no uncertain terms that the PLA was off-limits to this so-called "revolution":

"The army's prestige must be resolutely safeguarded and there can be no doubt about that.... The chief danger of the moment is that some people want to beat down the PLA!... There must be no chaos in the army."

—*Survey of the China Mainland Press*, 5 November 1967

With the liquidation of the Red Guards came the purge of those Cultural Revolution leaders most closely associated with them. In September 1967 Wang Li and two associates were purged from the Group in Charge of the Cultural Revolution as "ultra-leftists" who encouraged attacks on the army. In 1971 a far more important Cultural Revolution figure, Chen Po-ta, head of the Group in Charge and Chiang Ching's closest associate, was also purged as an "ultra-leftist." Soon thereafter came the purge of Marshal Lin Piao, Mao's officially designated successor. Mao, who had no intention of becoming overly dependent upon any individual, clique or power bloc within the bureaucracy he headed, moved to destroy Lin's influence and in so doing created a situation in which Teng and the other purged "capitalist roaders" were restored to power.

Avakian himself is forced to admit that Mao restored Teng in order to counter the influence of Lin's followers in the PLA. He accepts this as a justifiable tactical maneuver:

"...after Lin Piao died and his closest co-conspirators alive were arrested, his followers and the problems his camp created were far from cleared up, especially but not exclusively in the armed forces. It should be remembered that the PLA played a huge role during the Cultural Revolution up to that point—army people were everywhere, in every major institution, in city and countryside—playing a leading role, and this Mao had only begun to seriously

cure when the Lin Piao affair happened....

"While both [Mao and Chou] agreed that the immediate task was to clean up on the remaining problems left by the Lin Piao affair and that a certain amount of 'uniting all who can be united' against Lin's forces and line was necessary, they disagreed over how much this should go on and how far to take it....

"Prominent in all this is the question of Teng Hsiao Ping. I believe that Mao and Chou agreed that it was necessary to bring back Teng at that time—his return began in 1972, very shortly after Lin Piao crashed.... Mao, I am convinced, did not trust Teng and recognized that upon returning to office Teng was likely to resume his old ways. Mao agreed to his rehabilitation for the reason that Teng would be a powerful—and at that time necessary—force in cleaning up the remnants of the Lin Piao forces, especially in the PLA where Teng has long and many close ties with key commanders."

—"Revisionists Are Revisionists..."

So according to Avakian, instead of mobilizing the masses against Lin Piao's nefarious followers, Mao formed a bloc with the leading "rightist revisionist" in China and restored him to power. Thus in his own way Avakian acknowledges that Mao was an opportunist bonapartist whose options were defined by the exigencies of bureaucratic rule.

The "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" was not a revolution, and had even less to do with the proletariat than it had with "culture" (see "Maoism Run Amok," *Spartacist* No. 8, November-December 1966). It was a massive bureaucratic conflict which, provoked by the spectacular failure of the "Great Leap Forward," was extreme in form and ferocity. The dominant Mao forces mobilized student youth, backed up and restrained by the army, on the basis of radical-sounding demagoguery. When the deluded youth threatened to get out of hand, Mao smashed them with the army.

For all wings of the RCP, the only question is which part of the Maoist bureaucracy to support. Even in his indictment of the incumbent Chinese regime, Avakian dares not flirt with the only revolutionary alternative to the Maoist bureaucracy: political revolution by the Chinese proletariat to oust all wings of the bureaucracy and establish democratic control of industri-

al and governmental policy through proletarian soviets. For the gulf between bureaucratic purge politics and the revolutionary action of the working masses under the leadership of the authentic proletarian vanguard party is the gulf between Stalinism and Trotskyism.

In a most revealing remark, Avakian says: "A genuine revolution now can only come from the 'bottom,' and frankly I don't expect to see such a revolution in the near future." So he must hide in his closet of secret criticism of Hua/Teng while the real revolutionaries, the Trotskyists, not cowed by the magnitude of their task, struggle to build the international party of proletarian revolution over the political corpses of the Avakians, Jarvises and Klonskys.

Hua's Friends

A more seasoned Stalinist than Avakian, Jarvis has less difficulty than Avakian in accepting the gyrations which characterize a "flexible" Stalinist policy. If Avakian has on his side the evident empirical fact that Mao was the backer of the Gang of Four, Jarvis can counter that Mao (we might add, supported by the Chiang Ching clique) liquidated the Cultural Revolution. Jarvis correctly recognizes that the Cultural Revolution was an exceptional episode incompatible with the normal mode of Stalinist bureaucratic rule: "...as an outburst of intense rebellion, the GPCR could not continue indefinitely without turning into its opposite— anarchy and attacks on the masses." Poor Avakian is "stuck on the Cultural Revolution":

"The Cultural Revolution with its mass character and rebellion against reactionary authority made Marxism acceptable to large numbers of petty bourgeois revolutionaries. But these same forces summed up the Cultural Revolution without regard to condition, time and place, and many within our Party, as well as in China, have raised the forms and methods of the Cultural Revolution as an idealist 'best' method of carrying on the class struggle. In any and all circumstances. They have in a word, gotten stuck."

—"Uphold the 11th Party Constitution"

The key concern of the Jarvis wing of the RCP, however, is not to be found in his reply to Avakian's China document, but rather in his accompanying opus, which appeals to the ranks on the basis of organizational atrocities and domestic disasters (to be discussed in more detail in our next article). In the first page of this hodge-podge document he attacks Avakian's appeals to take "the high road" as "the road of rationalizing further isolation from our fellow workers than conditions demand." Counter-

posing a more classic Stalinist pitch to Avakian's New Leftist "leftism," his urgings combine the craving for a more "mass" line at home with a pitch to remain in the Maoist mainstream:

"While it will certainly take a different form for the RCP, the ideological and political line of the Gang now being embraced ('Give the Gang a home', as it is being said) cannot help but lead to political degeneration and isolation from the working class. For the Gang it meant becoming the target of the hatred of the Chinese working class and peasants and the hatred of millions of genuine communists of the CCP. For our Party it will certainly cause less emotion from the U.S. working class but in some ways it can be more tragic—stripping the U.S. working class of its Communist Party."

"Two-Line Struggle"?

The magnitude and ferocity of the RCP split is testimony to the preexisting instability of the organization more than to the seriousness of the differences. For indeed the Avakian and Jarvis wings of the RCP have a lot in common. They share not merely the responsibility for the theoretical ineptness, anti-democratic corruption, economist practice and gangsterism of the RCP, but also a common anti-Marxist analysis and anti-revolutionary program.

It is notable that both Avakian and Jarvis understand that China's foreign policy—defined first and foremost by the alliance with U.S. imperialism against the USSR—is Pandora's box. Had they undertaken a conscious conspiracy to divert attention away from the atrocities which have shaken the American Maoist movement (Peking's support to U.S./South Africa in Angola, its courting of the bloody Pinochet dictatorship in Chile, China's scandalous backing of the Shah of Iran, and its repeated calls for a strong NATO), the silence could scarcely be more complete. About the only thing that seems to upset Avakian, who holds no brief for the Hua regime, is that China has "reversed the verdict on Yugoslavia" by establishing diplomatic relations with Tito. Of course, this discretion is indeed the better part of valor for the RCP, which like any other Maoist sect would have an uncomfortable time determining where to locate a "degeneration" of Chinese foreign policy. From Sukarno's decimation of the Indonesian CP to Bandaranaike's massacre of Ceylonese youth rebels, the Maoists never allowed bloody repression to dampen their enthusiasm for "anti-imperialist" dictators so long as they maintained friendly state relations with China.

Avakian does attempt to distance himself a little from the "Soviet social imperialism" line:

"It is correct, as our Party has consistently pointed out, for the Chinese to target the Soviets as the main danger to them and to make use of certain contradictions on that basis; but there does seem to have been a tendency on the part of the Four and Mao (as well as the line of the latest major articles from China) to take this as far as saying the Soviets are the most dangerous source of war, the main danger to the world's people, etc."

—"Revisionists Are Revisionists...."

What this indicates is that Avakian—the New Leftist whose historic line has been the so-called "United Front Against Imperialism"—can view with equanimity the Maoists' campaign against the USSR so long as he can hang loose from a "united front" between the RCP and U.S. imperialism's "hawks."

Avakian and Jarvis also share the Maoist idealism which is a necessary underpinning of the concept of "capitalist roaders." Jarvis is appalled by the heresy of Avakian's characterization of the Chinese constitution as "fascist," but has no quarrel with the notion that the class character of a state resides in the ideas of its leaders, as summed up in Mao's dictum, "the rise to power of revisionism means the rise to power of the bourgeoisie."

The notion that under "socialism" classes are defined by the thoughts of individuals poses certain difficulties. Avakian explains:

"In capitalist society if someone occupies a certain material position—for example President of a corporation, or head of the finance department of the state—it is easy to identify such a person as part of the bourgeoisie. But in socialist society the matter turns not only and not even mainly on social position but on line—that is, the head of a ministry or manager of a big plant is certainly not part of the bourgeoisie by mere virtue of occupying such a position, but becomes part of the bourgeoisie only if and when he implements a revisionist line and more than that persists in taking the capitalist road."

This idealist gobbledygook, according to which class struggle is held to intensify under socialism (the achievement of which is moreover divorced from economic advancement, material plenty and the "withering away of the state"), is central to Maoist ideology. The concept of "capitalist roaders" is not merely the justification for bureaucratic in-fighting in China; it provides the means for evading a class analysis of the Soviet Union. For a real attempt to apply scientific Marxism—objective class criteria—to the "Russian question" would make an examination of Trotskyism mandatory for any serious revolutionist. But not even the combined efforts of Avakian/Jarvis and the

reformist ex-"Trotskyist" Socialist Workers Party can inoculate the ranks against Trotskyism. The Maoist movement is being shaken apart by its inability to address the fundamental questions which confront its cadres at every turn.

With the isolation of the world's first proletarian state power and the relentless pressure of imperialism upon the USSR, a Stalinist bureaucratic caste emerged within the Soviet Union. The consolidation of that caste wrested political power from the Russian proletariat and transformed the Communist International from a revolutionary world party into an instrument of pressure on the "democratic" bourgeoisies for "peaceful coexistence." The ideology of that caste was "socialism in one country"—the ideology of Stalin/Khrushchev and Mao, whose differences over which was the "one country" made the Sino-Soviet split inevitable.

To be sure, the existence of a nationalist bureaucracy—with its disorganization of the economy, its demoralization of the proletariat, its foreign policy sellouts that work against the extension of the revolution (which alone can protect and extend the dictatorship of the proletariat which still exists in the deformed workers states)—creates powerful forces toward capitalist restoration. But the fundamental class transformation from workers state to capitalist state cannot occur peacefully—through a factional struggle, a palace coup or any reshuffling of personnel at the top—any more than capitalist property relations can be destroyed through such changes in the composition of the bourgeois state; those who postulate a peaceful, gradual return to capitalism in the deformed workers states are merely, to quote Leon Trotsky, "unrolling the film of reformism in reverse."

A precondition for capitalist counterrevolution is the growth of an *economically*-based capitalist class, through the disintegration and disembowelling of the collectivized planned economy. A capitalist restorationist movement would be visible and aggressive, challenging the regime, polarizing society. In the face of such a movement the Stalinist bureaucracy—a brittle privileged layer—would split, with a conservative wing seeking to preserve their parasitic social position and another wing going over directly to the camp of counterrevolution. But the workers would move to defend their interests from the growing restorationist danger. Capitalism could triumph only through a civil war in which the class-conscious proletarian elements were defeated in the course of their struggle to defend collectivized property as the

economic basis for the transition to socialism.

Neither Avakian nor Jarvis can challenge the anti-Leninist doctrine of "socialism in one country" which, in response to the narrow needs of a privileged, nationalistic stratum, sets itself against the urgent needs of the working people of China and the whole world. These needs include the defense of all the deformed workers states, including China and the Soviet Union, against rapacious imperialism. Avakian's and Jarvis' commitment to the Stalinist bureaucratic framework in China allies them not only with the Stalinist traitors who undermine the defense of their own deformed workers state and sell out the working masses of the world from Chile to Iran, but also with U.S. imperialism in its ultimate aim of bloody reconquest of the USSR.

Whither the RCP?

Now that the split has smashed to smithereens any utopian dream Avakian had of keeping the RCP's China position in the closet, his choices are limited to the "high road" to PL-style oblivion or the "low road" to "socialist Albania." And while Enver Hoxha may claim to be the guiding light to the peoples of the Adriatic, he is surely the kiss of sectlet death for the RCP. Avakian remains essentially an unreconstructed New Leftist whose formative political experience was vicarious identification with the Red Guards of the Cultural Revolution. With the Jarvis faction's criticisms of his line

being in the main apolitical, focusing on the meager results of past opportunisms in the U.S. and the dangers of "isolation" from the Chinese regime, Avakian's support to the defeated side in China tends to give him the appearance of having vestiges of "principle." Thus, insofar as the ranks are not choosing on the basis of personality, Avakian will tend to get the people who favor a more critical posture.

Of course, this will not be many. The RCP has been built around cultist loyalty to the megalomaniac who walks around like the reincarnation of Mao, refers to himself as "the Chair" and accuses the minority of trying to "get to him" through his wife, whom he actually honored with the post of "head of culture." Ms. Avakian is nicknamed "Chiang Ching" by her enemies; so high does emotion run on this question that Avakian's loss of much of the membership in his own Chicago national center is alleged to be due largely to personal animosities toward his wife.

An unstable, New Left, demagogic tendency, the Avakian faction is capable

of both extreme adventurism and slavish capitulation to the worst backwardness of the working class. The post-split RCP will likely be simply a personality cult, crassly opportunist, violently sectarian and programmatically extremely unstable. It could go anywhere—from trying to seize Solidarity House to blocking with the Ku Klux Klan (as it did in hailing the anti-busing

mobilizations in Boston and Louisville as "fightback").

In background, training and appetite Jarvis has always stood politically closer to Klonsky than to Avakian. Less inclined toward flashy cultism—though not above it—he seems to tend more toward blocs with the bureaucracy and penny-ante shop-floor organizing than toward Avakian's pan-union gimmicks. His group probably contains a considerable spread on China, running from gut level anti-Avakianism to fawning Peking sycophancy to those who support the purge of the "Gang" but have remaining criticisms of Chinese foreign policy along the lines of the *Guardian*. This faction will either find a niche in the CP(ML) or become an irrelevant anti-Klonsky sect of Peking-loyal Maoism.

The CP(ML) is already hot on the scent, with an appeal for a "Marxist-Leninist unity committee" ("The Road to Communist Unity," *The Call*, 26 December 1977). The RCP's foam-flecked reply, "Repudiate the Call for Menshevik Unity," in the January 1978 issue of *Revolution*, contained a few aesopian slaps at the Jarvisites:

"Those who would like to embrace only one aspect of the CP(ML)'s revisionism will find that it comes in a package—if you take one bite you will be forced to swallow and choke on all of it.

"The CL(ML)'s proposed 'unity conference,' if it comes up at all, will be like the founding of a new conglomerate—each comes in with a certain amount of capital and in return receives an appropriate number of shares in the new enterprise. This is the basic theme that Klonsky hopes will appeal to other opportunist 'leaders': no one is so famous that we can't all share the pie...."

Needless to say, *Revolution* contained nothing else that could possibly be interpreted as a reflection of its split.

The Jarvis grouping's intentions toward the CP(ML) are not at all clear. His characterization of the Klonsky group as "careerists" who claim "there is no class struggle in China" would not seem devastating enough to preclude an eventual deal. Some of the ambiguity of the situation revolves around speculations that a venerable old man of the Jarvis clique may be the means for brokering a rapprochement between

Jarvis and the Chinese which would probably entail some kind of perspective toward the CP(ML). On the other hand, even the damaged ex-RCP cadres might have difficulty swallowing orders from the man of whom RCP honcho Clark Kissinger once said: "if the CCP elected a chimpanzee as chairman, Mike Klonsky would send it a telegram of support." While backing Hua, Jarvis has remained agnostic on the return of Teng, perhaps to preserve a reason to avoid becoming a Klonskyite.

Is there a chance that some segment of the RCP, shaken in their smug anti-Trotskyist prejudices by the manifest bankruptcy of their clique-leaders, can be salvaged for the revolutionary cause? Certainly there is a chance, but the prognosis is not good. The much-abused cadres of the RCP have gone very far down the road to cynical destruction of any subjectively revolutionary fibre. It is a genuine tragedy that virtually an entire radical generation of "anti-imperialist" youth have had their consciousness systematically attacked by Maoist shysters, their revolutionary optimism eroded by taking the pronouncements of the "Great Helmsman" for Leninism, their energy consumed by trying to run an organization on the rationalizations of a petty-bourgeois caste committed to the building of "socialism in one country." But if in its grotesque death agony the RCP has served to shake up even a few of its supporters enough to impel them toward an examination of Trotskyism—the revolutionary Marxism of our time—then the RCP will have performed one useful service in the years of frantic opportunism which preceded its demise.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

RCP's "Secret" Position on China

Excerpts from "Revisionists Are Revisionists and Must Not Be Supported, Revolutionaries Are Revolutionaries and Must Be Supported," pages 75-76 [emphases added], by the Chairman [Bob Avakian], adopted by the Central Committee:

IV. What Do We Do Based on a Correct Understanding of What Has Happened?

I have put forward in blunt terms what I believe to be the undeniable truth about events in China. A revisionist coup has taken place, a serious blow has been delivered to the proletariat and its revolutionary leaders. The capitalist-roaders are not only still on the capitalist road, they have now usurped supreme power and are taking China down the capitalist road....

The situation presents us and genuine Marxists everywhere with many difficult and complicated questions.... Should we come out now and publicly support the Four and denounce the current rulers? No. ... Should we continue to put forward China as a socialist country? Yes, for now we should, because it is still an objective fact. But we should, in discussing China, put stress on Mao's line, the Cultural Revolution and the fact that in socialist society classes exist, class struggle is acute and the danger of capitalist restoration is ever-present and great.... We should avoid as much as possible giving any support to the current rulers of China and certainly continue not to congratulate them on any posts any of them assume, and most definitely not on any of their victories over the proletariat—i.e., the smashing of the "gang of four."

As far as our public position on China we should take the following approach. With the "general public"—that is people not close to us, including opportunists—we should say that there are obviously reasons for concern about what is happening in China... but we should put this in the context that China is a socialist country and that the class struggle under socialism always goes on and at times becomes very acute. In short, we should uphold China as a socialist country while pointing to problems and areas of struggle and say that we are closely following and continuing to study events in China. *On Teng*

Hsiao-ping, since our last public statements on him (correctly) labelled him a counter-revolutionary, but since he has since been restored to very high office, we should just say (to the "general public") that his return to office has to be viewed in the overall context of what is happening in China and that we are taking up the question of his return to office in that light and in the same spirit as we are following and studying events in China in general, as summarized just above. Comrades should keep in mind that what they say to workers and others whom we cannot count on as being completely reliable have to be put in the category of statements to the "general public," since they may very well become that (for example a worker may have contact with both us and the OL-CPML, and may not understand why he should not discuss with them what we tell him about our position on China).

At the same time, as stressed before, we must educate not only our own members but reliable advanced workers and others close to us (*those who will understand why they should keep what we say to them about China confidential*) about what is actually going on in China and give them the basis for grasping the real lessons of this. Otherwise there is no way we can carry out our duties as a Party or overcome demoralization that will inevitably set in as it becomes more and more clear what road China is taking. Further we should find the ways to do broader education on the crucial questions related to developments in China without commenting directly on the situation there—for example articles about the process and lessons of capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union, articles about the gains and lessons of the Cultural Revolution in China, etc.

Should we continue to work in U.S.-China [Peoples Friendship Association]? Yes, we should, but we must recognize the obvious fact that it will be an extremely difficult task to carry out. In particular it will be extremely difficult to balance building friendship for China as a socialist country, which is still correct at this time, with not contributing to building up the current rulers in opposition to the Four (not to go along with the Association's doing the latter will be impossible of course, and we should not put up struggle to

try to prevent it from doing this, though we should try to keep it from being the main thing the Association does, and as much as possible we ourselves should not contribute to it—as I said this will be extremely difficult). Careful guidance must be given to comrades doing this work....

* * * * *

Excerpts from Avakian's "Central Committee Report," pages 9-10 [emphases added]:

Public Stand on China

It is also important to grasp that, having taken this line internally, our purpose and task is not to undertake an anti-China crusade.... This means we will write articles in our press on such questions as studying the restoration of capitalism in the USSR and on the gains of the working class under socialism—focusing on gains of the Cultural Revolution, which now (though we won't go into this) are under attack. These articles will stress political line, without being open attacks on the Chinese leadership.

In talking to people outside the Party, we must draw distinctions. *We can speak about our whole line on this only to people who are very close to the Party and who can be trusted to grasp not only the line, but the reasons we are not expounding it publicly (this should be explained to them).... To others we work with, we should explain we uphold China as socialist, answer their questions by saying that many of the gains of the working class are under attack now... and then go on to explain even if restoration were to occur, this would not mean you cannot win, but only that the historic mission of the working class... can only be accomplished through twists and turns, temporary reversals, and hard struggle, but that it will inevitably be achieved....*

The RCYB [youth organization], because of its nature, should not have a line on this question (though, obviously, Party members within it have a line). Only those closest to the Party within the RCYB should be told our full position, as outlined above. Within the RCYB generally, our line on China should be the same as our broad public position. Articles from our Party's press which touch on relevant line questions can be used for RCYB educationals on the victories of and the class struggle under socialism, but in these discussions all-around conclusions about China should not be drawn....