

THE DECLINE OF THE RCP



**A
POLEMIC
BY THE
ORGANIZATION FOR
REVOLUTIONARY UNITY**

THE DECLINE OF THE RCP A POLEMIC BY THE ORGANIZATION FOR REVOLUTIONARY UNITY

POLEMIC WITH THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY

When the revisionists rose to state power in China in the 1970's, the international communist movement was dealt a devastating blow. It is to the credit of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA that it rose in defense of the historic contributions of Mao Tsetung and the revolutionary left in China.

At that historical juncture the groups that went on to found the Organization for Revolutionary Unity shared some common viewpoints with the RCP, USA on repudiating Chinese revisionism as well as rejecting the "reversal of verdict" by the Party of Labor of Albania on Mao Tsetung and the Chinese socialist revolution. It is these seemingly common views on critical questions that make it necessary for the ORU to explain to other communists and revolutionaries why it has deep and substantial differences with the RCP.

Beneath a superficial unity there were significant differences from the outset on how to assess the setback in China. As has become more evident lately with the RCP's more comprehensive critique of Mao Tsetung, longstanding ideological tendencies in the RCP ran against the grain of much of Mao's theory and practice. These tendencies help to explain why when the RCP arose and developed with some significant initial promise, as did many other groups in the anti-revisionist movement world-wide, it has now become an increasingly isolated and opportunist sect.

RCP has grappled with many of the burning contradictions challenging Marxist-Leninists in the USA who have been struggling to forge the necessary strategy and tactics to make a revolution in an advanced capitalist country. This is why examining the RCP necessarily involves us in a much broader assessment of the anti-revisionist movement as a whole. Although our polemic with the RCP, USA will concentrate on our differences with that organization, we do not mean to imply that it has made no significant positive contributions to the revolutionary movement in this country or that it has ceased altogether to make any further advances. A number of the efforts of the RCP have helped, whether directly or indirectly, to push forward the development of the whole anti-revisionist movement.

In the last few years, the RCP has done much in publications, public forums, and demonstrations to champion the contributions of Mao Tsetung and the revolutionary left in China. At the same time, it has played a key role in exposing the reactionary role of the Chinese revisionists led by Teng Hsiao-ping and Hua Kuo-feng. Not confused by the claims of the Chinese revisionists that Mao authored the theory of three worlds as a strategic line for world revolution, the RCP has polemicized against this theory and exposed China's counterrevolutionary alliance with U.S. imperialism. The RCP also was quick to rebut the Party of Labor of Albania when it treacherously reversed its verdict and began to openly attack Mao's contributions, the role of the Chinese Communist Party, and the advances of socialism in China.

There are also some positive aspects to the RCP's recent efforts to build international unity among Marxist-Leninist parties and organizations, especially its translation and publication of documents from other groups and the sponsoring of tours in this country. Until recently when the direction of RCP became clear with the publication of Bob Avakian's "Conquer the World", much of RCP's theoretical work, despite obvious problems, appeared to be more advanced than its practice. This seemed to be the case, for example, with its critical examination of the history of the international communist movement, such as in "On the Outcome of World War II and the Prospects for Revolution in the West" and "The General Line Proposal (1963), - A Critical Appraisal".

What is now evident is that these theoretical efforts are culminating in the consolidation of an idealist, ultra-left, and Trotskyite ideological general line within the organization. Whereas before, one of our main criticisms would have been that RCP's defense of Mao Tsetung in theory was contradicted by its bad practice, we can see now that the theory has been revamped to serve and justify such practice.

To gain a better understanding of why the RCP is fast departing from a Marxist-Leninist ideological and political line on revolution in this country and on world revolution, it may be useful to briefly relate the history of the organization. The predecessor of the RCP, the Revolutionary Union, formed in 1968 in the San Francisco Bay Area. Although a few of the founding members had been members of the Communist Party, USA, most of its membership were young students and intellectuals new to the communist movement. While the early RU tended to fight for a Marxist-Leninist perspective on the revolutionary struggle in the USA, it was still heavily influenced by many New Left ideas and practices. It still tended to accommodate a Marxist stand with the prevalent adventurism and counter-cultural approach of the revolutionary youth movement. The most important influence in the early development of the RU was the Black Panther Party. Although the RU followed some of the positive motion of the Panthers in calling for armed revolution and popularizing the works of Mao

Tsetung, it also tended to conciliate to the negative aspects. Prominent among these were narrow nationalism, glorification of the lumpen-proletariat, and blatant male chauvinism.

We are not implying that RCP should be criticized for some of its unorthodox views and practices in the early years, just that these origins shed light on some of the deeply ingrained ideological tendencies in the history of the organization - tendencies that seem to be shooting up again in full force. In some interesting ways, the RCP appears to be vainly trying to recapture some of the spirit of its youthful experiences. Those experiences occurred in the context of a period in which millions of people world-wide were propelled into revolutionary motion, sparked by the Vietnamese liberation struggle and the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Here in the USA, the Black and Latino liberation movements added impetus to this motion.

Given the fact that this revolutionary movement was still in its early development, much of the "leftist" excesses of the period were understandable. And the Revolutionary Union was no stranger to such excesses and unrealistic expectations. But in the 1980's it seems a cruel irony to find what should be a mature Marxist-Leninist organization trying to ape much of its early practice in order to artificially rekindle some kind of lost or misplaced revolutionary spirit of the 1960's.

White Chauvinism and Trotskyism: Some History

In the early years, the Revolutionary Union played a generally progressive role in upholding and propagating Marxism. Thus, it was not unexpected that the incompatible mixture of Marxism and New Leftism would lead to some form of political and organizational split. In 1970 a faction within the RU split away and formed a short-lived group called Venceremos. The positions that the Venceremos group were advancing represented a reworking of the Weatherman position that the oppressed nationalities were the most revolutionary force.

Venceremos charged that the oppressed nationalities in the USA were living under conditions of fascism and that the correct strategy for revolution was the model of urban guerrilla warfare. Venceremos probably came closest to representing the general world-wide strategy of People's War as advocated by the anarchist ultra-left wing within the Chinese Communist Party during the period of the Cultural Revolution. This position postulated that the world was gripped by a high tide of revolution and that the principal revolutionary forces were the oppressed peoples of the colonial and dependent countries.

The majority of the membership of RU repudiated the line of Venceremos and upheld the leading role of the multi-national industrial working class and the strategy of armed insurrection in a developed imperialist country like the USA. On the whole, the split with Venceremos was positive, with the RU able to identify and reject anarchism on these major line questions. However, one unwelcome by-product of this split was the development of a position on the relation between proletarian class struggle and the national movements which tended to liquidate the independent revolutionary character of the latter.

While the RCP had repudiated the anarchist ultra-leftism of the urban guerrilla warfare strategy, its struggle with the revolutionary nationalist position of Venceremos propelled it in the direction of a Trotskyite stance on the national liberation struggles. The primary ideological source for this Trotskyism was the strength of white chauvinism within the organization, with the great majority of the RU cadre coming from white and middle class backgrounds. These cadre are to be censured not for their background but for their relative lack of success in overcoming its ideological baggage.

The RU's deviations on the national question were the main factor which precipitated the second major split in its organization in late 1973. Since 1972 the RU had been meeting with the Black Workers Congress and the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization in a National Liaison Committee, which was to lay the basis for the formation of a new communist party. Within the committee, the RU waged a correct struggle insofar as it pointed out that Marxism-Leninism is not to be confused with the ideology of revolutionary nationalism. But this correct struggle turned into its opposite when it eventually led to the position that Bundism, or narrow nationalism, was the main danger and had been for some time within the new communist movement. This led to an irreversible split with the BWC and PRRWO; and a small grouping, including a significant number of its Black members, left the RU.

The RU's new stand on the great danger of Bundism provided a convenient cover for the organization's longstanding problem with overcoming white chauvinism within its own ranks. This problem with white chauvinism very soon bore fruit when in 1974 the RU put out the call to smash the Boston Busing Plan. In calling for this action, the RU objectively put itself in the camp of the reactionary forces who were opposed to busing for racist reasons. This was the result of RU's general line which pitted its false idea of working class unity against real multi-national unity.

In subsequent positions on busing in other cities, the RU backed off from full-scale opposition to busing as a means for redressing educational discrimination and generally tried to soften its Trotskyite liquidation of the revolutionary aspects of national struggles. But this change represented only a half-hearted political retreat, for as we can see now, Trotskyism has rebounded to full favor within the present RCP. While Bob Avakian once railed against Bundism as the great danger within the communist movement in the USA, in his recent pronouncements in "Conquer the World" he has elevated nationalism to the principal problem of the international communist movement since its beginning. This is Trotskyism returned with a vengeance, Trotskyism masquerading under an increasingly thin "Maoist" facade.

Economism and Chinese Revisionism: Some History

Following the split with Venceremos back in 1970, the RU plunged headlong into the task of attempting to fuse Marxism-Leninism with the working class. Not surprisingly, much of their practice in this period could be characterized as rightist in essence; economism, pragmatism, "workerism" were typical deviations. Still, this rightist practice involved in trying to fuse with the working class was forced into a shotgun wedding with much of the ultra-left rhetoric, techniques, and tactics left over from RU's New Left period.

The rightism of this middle period is not unexpected for such a young, inexperienced revolutionary organization facing such a difficult task. In the 1970's the U.S. working class as a whole and the industrial workers in particular were still relatively backward in terms of their political consciousness. Having come off an unprecedented period of economic prosperity and a rising standard of living which had lasted through much of the 1960's, the workers in the U.S. were not ripe for revolutionary struggle and not even very militant in defense of their narrow economic interests. There seemed to be a common assumption underlying RU's practice at this time that if its members integrated themselves well enough into the level of economic struggle of the working class, they would be well positioned to give leadership to the imminent revolutionary struggle into which this same working class was about to throw itself.

With the formation of the Revolutionary Communist Party in 1975, rightism in the organization reached a whole new stage of development. Although RCP was making some progress in understanding the economist nature of its past work and was struggling to overcome it, its line that economic struggle was the center of gravity of the party's work still boxed the organization into economist positions and practices.

This struggle against right opportunism intensified and became a full-scale battle with a 'revisionist headquarters' within the party after the death of Mao Tsetung in 1976 and the seizure of power in the CPC by revisionist elements led by Hua Kuo-feng and Teng Hsiao-ping. When a majority of the leadership of the RCP, led by its chairman, correctly summed up the events in China as a defeat for the Marxist-Leninists and tried to arm the organization with this understanding, a faction within the central committee split from the organization and took with it approximately a third of the membership. This faction formed itself into the Revolutionary Workers Headquarters and distinguished itself by defending the revisionist leadership in China and wholeheartedly embracing much of the economist practice which had plagued the RCP for the previous few years.

While at the time this split with the Revolutionary Workers Headquarters seemed justified and necessary, it also tended to unleash with full fury some of the longstanding ultra-left tendencies within the RCP. In what seemed to be a generally correct struggle against revisionism, opposition to ultra-leftism was apparently disarmed. The Revolutionary Workers Headquarters was able to foretell some of the impending degeneration of the RCP when it focused its criticism on what it called RCP's "left idealist" line. Sure enough, RCP entered upon a new stage of development in which its main weaknesses assumed the form of left opportunism.

It is not pre-ordained, of course, that every split in an organization like the RCP has to assume the form of a pitched battle between Marxism and revisionism. There is always the alternative that the slings and arrows that each faction hurls at each other could be on target. In the case of the RCP, ultra-left lines, policies and practices have gained in such strength in recent years that the positive contributions it has made in defending Mao Tsetung and the revolutionary left in China are fast being undermined.

One of the more absurd although sadly predictable manifestations of this ultra-leftism was the emergence of an infantile cult of personality devoted to the RCP's chairman, Bob Avakian. The cult seemed to spring up rather spontaneously during the period of the split with the Revolutionary Workers Headquarters. This probably represented, at least in part, the confusion of cadre poorly prepared ideologically, searching for some sort of idolatrous certainty. If the cult of personality was initially spontaneous, it was soon to be consciously manipulated by the RCP during the Mao Tsetung Defendants

campaign. At that time, the patently ridiculous assertion that a U.S. revolution was impossible without the leadership of Bob Avakian become commonplace among RCP cadre.

With much of the impetus apparently coming from its chairman, the RCP is rapidly constructing a new ideological edifice for what is described as a "revolutionary communist/proletarian internationalist trend". One of the chief new tenets of this trend is that "Maoism without Leninism is nationalism . . . and bourgeois democracy". (Conquer the World, p. 39) Mao is criticized, among other things, for a tendency to view world revolution as a process which happens principally country by country. Instead, RCP is now emphatic that revolution is conditioned mainly by what happens in the world as a whole and that we are dealing with an integral world revolutionary process which assumes a spiral development leading up to the decisive global conjunctures.

In the present conditions in the world, RCP argues further that the principal contradiction is no longer that between the great imperialist superpowers and the peoples of the colonial and neo-colonial countries, but instead has become the contradiction between the two superpower blocs headed by the USA and USSR. (Basic Principles for the Unity of Marxist-Leninists and for the Line of the International Communist Movement, RCP-Chile, RCP-USA, p. 2 and 7) This situation heightens the danger of world war, and thus dictates a more intense struggle against nationalism, especially social chauvinism.

When this analysis is translated by RCP into a political line and practice, the effort to fight national oppression and unite the working class movement with the struggles of the oppressed nationalities is pushed into the background. As evidenced by the 1980 May Day actions and since, RCP's attempts to mobilize and organize the class conscious proletariat customarily assumes the form of superrevolutionary elitism, adventurism, and anarchist propaganda by the deed. With the highly charged campaign around boosting the distribution of the Revolutionary Worker, RCP exhibits still another fullblown deviation, committed by an abundant number of other so-called anti-revisionists, of an idealist revolution-by-rhetoric line which tends to absolutize the role of agitation and propaganda and belittle the leadership role of communists in mass struggles for reform as well as for revolution.

We in the ORU believe that this is a period in which mass political consciousness must be developed by patient and consistent work among the masses together with the broad dissemination of revolutionary agitation and propaganda. While it is not impossible that a revolutionary situation might emerge from some cataclysmic change in conditions during the 1980's, we consider this very improbable. Ours is a protracted struggle within the strongest bourgeois fortress on earth

The development of objective conditions at home and the collapse of the imperialist system abroad will create the revolutionary opportunity, not the actions of a handful of rebels.

In the rest of this paper, we will attempt to expand on these points. The polemic will be divided into four main sections, covering the topics of the mass line, the united front, the nature of communist work in the trade unions, and the relation between proletarian revolution and the national movements.

The Mass Line

One of Mao's greatest contributions to the international communist movement in both theory and practice was the development of the mass line. There are many related aspects to the mass line, but its essence involves the struggle to achieve a revolutionary relationship between communists and the masses. If communists carry out the mass line correctly, they will remain inseparably linked with the masses while leading them to struggle for their genuine revolutionary interests.

When we recognize the particular historical context for Mao's efforts in developing the mass line approach, we can understand why the major thrust of what he is advocating emphasizes that communists must be good at integrating with the masses. Within China, Mao had to be most concerned with the historical task of combatting Confucianism and the heavy weight of the traditional Mandarin bureaucracy. In addition, Mao was in a position to sum up the experiences of several decades of building socialism in the Soviet Union and concluded that a major source of degeneration of the communist party and the proletarian dictatorship was their increasing bureaucratization, overcentralization, and the use of commandist methods in relation to the masses.

Hence, in order to combat these deviations from the mass line, Mao felt obliged to affirm and stress the revolutionary role of the masses themselves. In other words, what was important for communists to recognize was that before they could put themselves forward as teachers of the masses, they had to first learn how to be good Pupils. To be good pupils, they

had to adopt the orientation, as Mao says, that "the masses are the real heroes while we ourselves are often childish and ignorant. . ." (Preface and Post-script to Rural Surveys).

Since the split with the Revolutionary Workers Headquarters, the main thrust of RCP's activities appears to be cutting in the opposite direction from that of Mao. Whereas in the middle 1970's the RCP could have been justifiably accused of believing that the economic militancy of the U.S. working class would spontaneously intensify into full-scale political struggle, in recent years it seems to have become increasingly cynical about the revolutionary potential of the basic industrial proletariat of this country. It has gone in search of what it calls the "real proletariats" and resorted more and more to bold "vanguard" actions which will shock, jolt, and propel the masses into revolutionary motion.

The chair of the organization, Bob Avakian, has even been so bold as to question the applicability of the mass line to the conditions of this country. He is ready to concede that the mass line might have made some sense in China where the revolutionary movement could draw on the national sentiments of the people. But in the USA with such a large bought-off and bourgeoisified sector of the working class and the apparent necessity of going against the tide of nationalism in order to seize the opportunity of revolution out of the danger of world war, trying to put the mass line into practice would probably mean capitulating to imperialism.

Of course, this new ideological twist only serves to justify the kind of practice that RCP has been prone to, in one form or another, since the early years of its predecessor, the Revolutionary Union. For example, one of the more well-known tactics of the RCP for a long time has been the so-called "Single Spark Methods". In its 1975 program, RCP describes it as the method to "seize on every spark of struggle, fan and spread it as broadly as possible throughout the working class and among its allies" (p. 107). RCP further characterizes it as one of the key methods for building the united front against imperialism and one of the main weapons for both the party and the working class.

This single spark method of operation has usually taken the form of RCP cadre scurrying around to find out where the action is and intervening from the outside into an arena where there happens to be a high level of mass struggle. When the struggle dies down, they move on. This kind of method has always been a dead give-away for detecting the basic orientation of a group of petit-bourgeois revolutionists who prefer to avoid the protracted and mundane work of educating and organizing the masses on a daily basis to integrate their battles for reforms with the struggle for revolution. Of course, given the RCP's subsequent disdain for reform struggles, not even full-fledged prairie fires could attract their attention. Only global conflagrations need apply.

This seems to be one of the underlying reasons that RCP's overall activities typically take the form of one big, exhilarating public relations campaign after another. For a while it was Revolutionary May Day; then it was 100,000 Revolutionary Workers a week; and every new campaign is billed as a big qualitative leap in the revolutionary movement in the USA. Slower quantitative development is not exciting enough; RCP seems bent on making revolution in this country almost solely on the basis of flying leaps.

As Avakian puts it, the RCP is the "Silky Sullivan of the proletarian revolution" straining to catch up with the rapidly ripening conditions for world war and revolution. The party will have to make a lot of radical ruptures and dramatic leaps forward to meet the challenges of the coming conjuncture. On the face of it, it is difficult not to regard this approach as voluntarism run amuck. The results seem predictable: a lot of cadre end up taking a flying leap into a self-constructed brick wall, get burned out, demoralized, disoriented, and leave in disgust.

If we take a close look at the history of the RCP going back a few years, we can see that it has been grappling with some very real problems and contradictions involved in trying to link the day-to-day struggle of the masses with the revolutionary goal of socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat. It has struggled to stick to what it calls the "high, hard road" and carry out revolutionary work among sectors of the U.S. working class that have been only marginally responsive to the RCP's clarion call to take up such struggle.

We are not trying to argue that such a task is easy, only that we don't need a line, method, and policies which make a hard task that much more difficult. This task is definitely made more difficult by RCP's distorted understanding and implementation of the mass line.

The very real contradictions that have to be resolved in carrying out the mass line follow from the fact that the mass line is not supposed to just mirror the spontaneous level of consciousness of the masses at any given time, but is supposed to enable communists to give political leadership that the masses themselves have the potential to see is correct. The masses are not a "blank slate" but are predisposed to take certain actions based on their ideological preconceptions and

perceived needs. Under capitalism, where the dominant ideology is bourgeois, there will always be a contradiction between what the masses are conditioned to perceive as their needs and what their actual needs are.

The role of communists is to help the masses sum up their own understanding, initially unsystematic and contradictory, of what their real needs are. This task is accomplished by revolutionary agitation and propaganda in conjunction with giving leadership to the day-to-day struggles of the masses for reforms. Periodically, mass struggles will develop which have an inherently revolutionary thrust, but it would be a grave mistake for communists to try to manufacture or concoct some kind of "revolutionary struggle". The task of "following through" on agitation and propaganda and trying to integrate the struggle for reforms with the struggle for revolution is necessarily a protracted process with many twists and turns, setbacks and advances, wherein the masses learn from their own experience in struggle and are thrust into motion by the ripening objective conditions.

The RCP abandons such a materialist approach in favor of an idealist, semi-anarchist line which glorifies the model of a small, bold group of super-revolutionary heroes, pure and uncorrupted by reform struggles, who engage in isolated vanguard actions that are supposed to serve as electrifying examples for the masses themselves.

The RCP appears convinced that when it heroically goes against the tide and even gets itself isolated and scorned with thought-provoking slogans like "Red, white and Blue, We Spit on You", that in the end the masses will recognize that it was right all along. This is one of the principal reasons that it is undaunted in proselytizing the value of propaganda by the deed, shocking actions that will shake the masses from their bourgeois slumber. An example of this orientation can be found in its sum up of the 1980 May Day campaign: "In the same way that May First was a manifesto - jolting people awake, reawakening feelings and yearnings for a way out of this madness, and posing the alternatives sharply to millions - many of the actions that built for May First were themselves a powerful form of agitation." ("Welding of a Class-Conscious Force", p. 18 of *Revolution*, July, 1980) Among the actions it lists are "slapping the May Day manifesto on George Meany's coffin as it was carried into the funeral" and "the splashing of red paint in the faces of the U.S. and Soviet UN representatives".

Not surprisingly, these actions elicit a counter-attack from the ruling class. Having elicited the counter-attack the RCP desires, it then attempts to capitalize on its plight to manufacture greater publicity for its organization and its leadership. This whole mediagrabbing tactic is justified by the RCP on the grounds that "revolution proceeds by giving rise to a strong and united counterrevolution" (ibid., p. 19). What the RCP should seriously ask itself is whether its actions are doing more to unite and strengthen the counter-revolutionary forces than they are doing to build the revolutionary movement. To be attacked by the enemy is a good thing only insofar as the attack is in response to a successful effort to educate, organize, and mobilize the masses for revolutionary class struggle.

When other groups criticize RCP for adventurism and impetuosity, RCP usually responds that these groups are hopelessly reformist, "advising these workers to have more patience and accept the slow death of preoccupying themselves with struggles around 'the immediate concerns of the masses'". The RCP betrays its petit-bourgeois elitism and arrogance by not being at all troubled about the immediate concerns of the masses. RCP justifies this "revolutionary" indifference by pointing to the necessity of diverting the struggle of the masses around their immediate needs onto the high, hard road of revolutionary struggle for state power. As Avakian expressed it bluntly in his speech "Coming from Behind to Make Revolution", "I'll even say that we've got to have a conscious determination not to link up with all the struggles of the masses" (p. 14).

While Avakian qualifies his statement to assure his listeners that the RCP would support all genuine outbreaks of mass protest and rebellion, what his advice has led to in practice is a retreat all along the line from the immediate struggles of the masses, a disdain for winning reforms, and such fear of tailing the working class movement that little real linking up with its day-to-day struggles is now taking place.

Of course, this aloofness only fuels the anti-communist prejudices of the masses who have been well conditioned to view communists as being hopelessly impractical utopians who have little concern for people's needs but only want to use them for their own ends. RCP may fancy that it is heroically going against the tide of the bourgeois prejudices which are influential among the masses, but it is really only reinforcing them.

Consciousness and Struggle

RCP activities in recent years are clear evidence of a general retreat from giving any real leadership to the spontaneous struggles of the masses. This retreat has been justified on a number of different bases. RCP will commit itself only to "genuinely revolutionary struggles", not run-of-the-mill spontaneous mass struggles for reforms. Confining their attention

to revolutionary struggles considerably narrows the scope of their activities, especially when these struggles are defined usually as the semi-anarchist, adventurist, isolated actions of their own members and close supporters. For RCP, advocating organizing the masses to struggle for reforms of any kind smacks too much of a Menshevik, economist line of trying to "reduce the ranks of communists to promoting struggles for immediate, palpable results." ("Create Public Opinion, Seize Power!", p. 30)

Instead of trying to provide revolutionary direction to the spontaneous mass movements, RCP borrows a phrase from Mao, "Create Public Opinion, Seize Power!", to elaborate a line which focuses on revolutionary agitation in a newspaper as the central task of communists. The trouble with phrases when they are taken out of context and mechanically applied is that they do not often give very dialectical advice about the complicated task of making a revolution in an advanced capitalist country like the USA. If it is not obvious from RCP's theory, it should be crystal clear from its practice that it severs the dialectical relationship between struggle and consciousness.

RCP is correct in asserting that people's consciousness is incredibly important in preparing to seize state power. But what it fails to solve is how to build up people's revolutionary consciousness during what can be a very long preparatory period typified by nonrevolutionary conditions. Developing such revolutionary consciousness is affected by revolutionary agitation and propaganda, but to isolate these two factors as cause and effect is to lapse into an idealist analysis. What is missing is the living link established between agitation and propaganda and the experience of the masses gained directly in struggle.

When the role of communists is effectively eliminated in giving leadership to the struggle of the masses for reforms, their role as effective agitators and propagandists in creating public opinion is drastically diminished. What RCP fails to realize, even in being able to win the advanced, is that public opinion will be created in proportion to the success of its protracted and varied preparatory work of organizing the masses to fight for their interests. The masses learn principally through struggle and the summing up of this ongoing struggle against oppression.

When RCP makes revolutionary agitation the center of gravity of its work, it may be successful in combatting past economist errors, but it is certainly not assuring itself of developing beyond a small and irrelevant propaganda sect. This fate is being realized by the RCP largely because not only is it still groping in the dark to relate consciousness to struggle, but also it still only has the faintest idea about how to integrate the struggle for reforms with the struggle for revolution.

The United Front

A critical part of being able to integrate the struggle for reforms with the struggle for revolution involves understanding and utilizing united front tactics. Anyone who has witnessed the activities of the RCP in united front and popular front formations over the years can attest to its generally sectarian approach. The main reason seems to be that it is difficult for RCP to do political work in unity with other forces unless the unity is forged on RCP's terms.

RCP has usually resorted to the argument that what appears to be its sectarian approach to other political forces is based on the necessity to safeguard the leading role of the proletariat. But the leading role of the proletariat has no meaning unless the proletariat can establish some lasting alliances with other class forces and social movements. One problem is that RCP has harbored a deep-seated sectarianism towards movements which are not strictly proletarian, such as the women's movement and the various national movements. This sectarianism issued from a rigid ideological stance which could brook no joint action with petit-bourgeois feminism or nationalism.

For RCP, feminism and nationalism were too much of a threat to the all-important unity of the working class. It used to be the case that RCP tailored such unity to fit the prejudices of the relatively more backward sectors of the working class. The result was an economist unity of the working class based on objective support for the oppression of women and nationalities. Lately, this sectarianism has taken more of a strictly "left" form since the RCP is no longer interested in unity with broad sectors of the U.S. working class, but instead wants to link up exclusively with its advanced, class-conscious wing.

No Marxist-Leninist is going to argue with the RCP that one of our key tasks is to seek out and unite with the advanced elements of the working class. The differences arise over the tactics on how to do that and keep the advanced integrated with the broad sectors of the class and recognized as mass leaders. Upholding the red flag of revolution, which can attract the advanced, is part of this tactic, and many groups can be accused of trying to avoid doing this in a really mass way. On the other hand, being bold in waving a flag can be personally exciting but politically futile unless communists also learn how to unite on a consistent and principled basis with progressive people who continue to disagree with a communist program and strategy.

In a complex, advanced capitalist society like the USA, many class forces and social movements will arise and come into opposition with the ruling class. If communists are to develop beyond an insignificant and impotent political current, they must become adept at forging unity with the progressive thrust of many of these movements. This approach applies especially to the effort to work with the many contending trends influencing the working class itself.

RCP arose in a political environment in which the struggle to demarcate from Soviet revisionism was of paramount importance. One of the weaknesses of the so-called "anti-revisionist movement" internationally, however, was that it allowed an ideological break with revisionism to dictate a universal tactical break. One of the guiding slogans of a section of the movement, for example, was "no united action with revisionism". It is obvious that one of the main motives at work here is the desire to consolidate a separate Marxist-Leninist identity, but when this identity is established on the basis of tactical inflexibility, the end result will invariably be sectarian isolation.

RCP has been a classic example of this dynamic, even in its relations with other groups that could have been considered part of the antirevisionist left. One of the factors contributing to RCP's sectarianism has been a consistent theoretical error in confusing the united front with the basic plan for the strategic disposition of forces based primarily on revolutionary class alliances.

The Revolutionary Communist Party was founded, for instance, on a program which recognized the United Front Against Imperialism as the strategy for proletarian revolution in the United States. As its program published in 1975 stated, "The united front against imperialism is one united front, it is the overall political plan of the proletariat for bringing together under its leadership all possible social forces and movements, in order to concentrate the most powerful blows against the ruling class and defeat it. It is the strategy for proletarian revolution" (p. 99). This position has remained basically unchanged since the early days of the Revolutionary Union when it published a lengthy article on the subject in Red Papers #2.

Initially, one would think that such a strategic perspective would tend to overcome any sectarianism by stressing the importance of uniting all who could be united. But, to begin with, the United Front Against Imperialism has to inevitably end up being a revisionist strategy for proletarian revolution in a developed capitalist country like the U.S. The basic reason is that the united front is a tactic designed to achieve goals short of proletarian revolution. These short-term goals are shared in common by differing political forces with divergent programs, and thus they can come together in tactical unity to achieve these goals.

RCP's error here results fundamentally from a confusion between tactics, such as the united front and popular front, the nature of which changes with the ebb and flow of the revolutionary movement; and strategy, which is the plan for the disposition of the revolutionary forces (the proletariat and its reserves), and remains unchanged throughout an entire stage of the revolution.

This confusion leads the RCP to a mechanical application of the united front against imperialism, which has strategic value for a national revolutionary movement in a colonial or dependent country like China, to an imperialist country in which the dictatorship of the proletariat is the direct goal of the revolutionary forces.

The UFAl, in the hands of the Revolutionary Union, became an uncritical copying of the Chinese revolutionary experience, which had to cope with qualitatively different strategic and tactical considerations than have to be faced in the USA. Twelve years after the publication of Red Papers #2, however, you would think that the RCP had developed its understanding enough, especially in relation to the theory of three worlds, to realize that it was promoting a strategic model which has little or no direct relevance to carrying out a proletarian revolution in the USA.

The roots of RCP's confusion, which it shares with a number of other anti-revisionist organizations in this country, go deeper and broader, however, than merely transcribing clumsily from the Chinese model. The original basis for this deviation was the revisionist distortion of the united front against fascism into a strategy for proletarian revolution in developed capitalist countries. This is the fountainhead for the present CPUSA's strategy of the "anti-monopoly coalition". In tracing these distortions back to their sources, we can begin to understand why the RCP's United Front Against Imperialism is more or less a "left" variation on the CPUSA's anti-monopoly coalition.

In confusing a strategic orientation with a tactical line, it seems that there are two major deviations that can be made. Your basic strategy for revolution can be vulgarized and lowered to the level of a tactical line which can dictate alliances with other political forces on a non-revolutionary basis. This is the right deviation, of which the CPUSA's anti-monopoly coalition is a full-blown revisionist example. The other alternative is to elevate your tactical line to the level of your

strategic orientation, and this method would dictate unity with other forces only on a revolutionary basis. This is the "left" deviation, of which RCP's United Front Against Imperialism is a good example.

Given RCP's ideological tendencies in its practice and its basic theoretical confusion on strategy and tactics, the sum and substance of its United Front Against Imperialism will be to help keep the organization in a state of acute political isolation, despite the superficial concern for a broad unity of class forces.

Communist Work in the Trade Unions

The RCP is correct when it looks back at much of the 1970's and labels its political work in the trade unions as having an economist character. It was economist in the sense that the economic struggle was, for all intents and purposes, made the center of gravity of the organization's work. But this assertion does not contradict the fact that there was also a strong left opportunist aspect to the rhetoric, tactics, and style of work that went along with RCP's practical involvement in the economic struggle. If RCP's practice has changed at all since the split with the Revolutionary Workers Headquarters, it is because it has divested itself of practically all economism, but has kept the left opportunism intact.

A lot of RU/RCP's practice in the 1970's took its inspiration from Mao's slogan, "a single spark can start a prairie fire". When Mao used this slogan in 1930, he meant that the objective conditions in China at that time were very favorable for a rapid growth in the subjective forces of the revolution. RCP may have harbored similar expectations about the situation in the USA in the 1970's, but this situation was far less favorable than in China. What the popularization of this slogan basically did for the RU/RCP was to justify a lot of militant posturing, adventurism, and the general 'left' spontaneity typical of newly radicalized students and intellectuals.

In this period, what RCP professed to be a Marxist-Leninist line really had a lot in common with anarcho-syndicalism. This was especially true of the "jam the unions" tactic, which equated the unions themselves with the reactionary bureaucracy as the main obstacle to the seizure of power by the working class, industry by industry.

Later, this basic line was modified by the introduction of the National United Workers Organization (NUWO), as the primary organizational form for carrying out the economic struggle. The basic idea seemed to be that the "single spark" would be struck in the economic struggle and would be fanned by NUWO's in their respective industries.

There were several problems with the NUWO idea. NUWO was supposed to be some kind of intermediate workers organization that would pull together the advanced workers to take up the economic struggle more militantly. But if this was the essentially trade union function that NUWO was being set up to fulfill, then it was a dual-unionist formation. We are not opposed in principle to organizing new unions independent of some of the existing bureaucratic unions, but the most important question is whether these new unions will be real mass organizations or just skeletons which will only tend to isolate the more advanced from the broad mass of the workers.

Not only was NUWO's function basically dual-unionist and economist, it also tended to downplay and displace the leading role of the communist party. We are not trying to argue that it is easy to establish this leading role among the U.S. working class, but such an effort gets undercut by re-defining communist leadership as militant leadership of the economic struggle.

Since the split with the Revolutionary Workers Headquarters, the RCP has been progressively trying to strip itself of its past economist, and anarcho-syndicalist practice. Unfortunately, RCP has been trying to achieve this transformation by completely abandoning the economic struggle, the trade unions, and communist organization at the point of production. RCP's rationale for this flip is based on its interpretation of "diversion" as laid out by Lenin in *What Is To Be Done?*. In that book, for example, Lenin states:

"Hence, our task, the task of Social Democracy, is to combat spontaneity, to divert the working class movement from the spontaneous, trade unionist striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary Social Democracy." (*WITBD?*) p. 49

RCP mistakenly interprets Lenin's statement as an endorsement of a complete tactical diversion from the economic, trade-union struggle. In other words, in the process of trying to combat economism, RCP has ended up counterposing and pitting the economic struggle against the political struggle. To pull this off, RCP has to reinterpret or discredit key points established by Lenin in other writings like "Left Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder."

This feat is attempted by Bob Avakian in his *Conquer the World*. One of Avakian's main criticisms of Left-Wing Communism is that its emphasis on trade unions and communist work in them has been built up as "an article of faith of revisionism" (P. 11). Chairman Avakian is not so bold as to contest the importance of trade unions as a key mass organization of the working class in Lenin's time, but he argues that this really is no longer the case now in the advanced capitalist countries like the USA.

Born Again Wobblies

Avakian's statements are only the latest and most extreme example of the kind of theoretical effort RCP has been undertaking for some time to justify its new ultra-left, semi-anarchist line on communist participation in the economic struggle and the trade unions. Two earlier major historical articles were part of this campaign: "The Revolutionary Kernel of the IWW" (*Revolution*, September, 1979) and "Slipping into Darkness: 'Left' Economism, the CPUSA and the Trade Union Unity League (1929-1935)" (*Revolution*, February/March 1980). These articles make for interesting reading, and many of RCP's points and criticisms are valid. But the major mistakes in its historical analysis and its faulty and unwarranted conclusions only help to explain and justify its degenerating practical work in this entire arena of struggle.

In criticizing the IWW, the RCP is able to put its finger on the basis for much of the Wobblies' syndicalism and economism. But, not surprisingly, while the RCP recognizes the IWW's anarchism, it shows only a very superficial and narrow understanding of what this entails, basically identifying it with an anti-leadership stance.

Clearly, the RCP wrote this article on the Wobblies in order to highlight what they considered their revolutionary contributions because this would justify RCP's own practice. What the RCP considered contributions included many aspects of the IWW's anarchist spontaneism - the small band of heroes who travel from strike to strike, thumbing their noses at the conventional beliefs of the majority of the working class (particularly religion), leading bitter and bloody confrontations with the bosses.

It is this romantic image of the IWW that the RCP is hoping to repeat in their attempt to become born-again Wobblies, more political, more organized. One of the main differences between the IWW and the RCP is that the former did find a base among the working class of its time, whereas the RCP is still frantically searching for the "class conscious vanguards.

"Slipping into Darkness" is the RCP sum up of the entire body of CPUSA trade union work in the crucial years 1929-1935. Despite the fact that the RCP considers the CPUSA to have been at that time a revolutionary party, it basically writes off any progress that the CPUSA might have made within the trade unions and among the industrial working class.

Much of the RCP criticism of the CPUSA's economism seems valid in this article, but the blanket repudiation of the CPUSA's practice in this period only serves to justify RCP's present ultra-leftism. At one point, for example, the RCP states that ". . . the only way communists can compete head to head with the reformists within the limits of the trade union struggle is by becoming reformists themselves - and even there the old, original, proven reformists often have the advantage" (p. 44) . In the last analysis, what the RCP is really saying is that because it has not been able to master a method for carrying out Marxist-Leninist work in the trade unions, for linking the fight for reforms with revolution, it is going to just swear off this whole area of work, and take it for granted that the trade unions will remain under the influence of the reformists.

RCP's abandonment of working class struggles associated with the trade unions follows from its analysis of the strata within the U.S. working class. Basically, RCP no longer has any interest in trying to win over the more stable, unionized workers in this country. These workers are considered the social base of social democracy, whereas the more revolutionary-minded workers are to be found among those who tend to be unemployed, less stable, less privileged, and less bourgeoisified.

There is a sense that after a decade and a half of struggle, RCP is reverting to some of the anti-working class assumptions of the New Left, which regarded much of the U.S. working class as completely bourgeoisified. Avakian is clear about this new assumption in *Conquer the World* when he is talking about economism:

"But it's (economism) so much the worse when you're talking about it in an imperialist country with not only a powerful labor aristocracy, but broad, thoroughly bourgeoisified strata, where it would be stretching it to even describe a lot of the so-called economic struggle as struggle and certainly stretching things to call it any kind of significant struggle". (p. 40)

This perspective helps to explain RCP's frenetic activity since about 1979 (stemming from the decisions of the third plenary session of the Second Central Committee) to locate and win over the "real proletariat". If the "real proletariat" is where the RCP says it is, it hasn't yet found the RCP or given its revolutionary call much of a hearing.

Proletarian Revolution and the National Movements

The RCP played an important role in refuting the slanders about Mao and socialist China printed by Enver Hoxha in Imperialism and the Revolution. To its credit, RCP was also able to expose the Trotskyite essence of Hoxha's views on national liberation struggles in the era of imperialism. In its article in Revolution, "Enver Hoxha's imperialism and the Revolution - an Error from Beginning to End" (September, 1979), RCP spelled out the necessity of the revolution passing through a new democratic stage in the colonial and neo-colonial countries. While the RCP recognized with Mao, that anti-feudal, bourgeois democratic tasks were of paramount importance in the first stage of these revolutions, Hoxha was demanding that exploitation be eliminated at this stage.

Unfortunately, while RCP was quick to rebut Hoxha's Trotskyism in 1979, it has been moving full speed ahead itself in a Trotskyite direction ever since. With the publication of Avakian's Conquer the World and related commentaries, the RCP has almost completely embraced classical Trotskyist positions on national liberation struggles, the relation between internationalism and nationalism, and the possibilities of building socialism in one country. As we have suggested before, we are witnessing here a growing Trotskyite trend marching under a Maoist banner. RCP's longstanding problems with sectarianism and white chauvinism have provided much of the soil for the growth of Trotskyism within the organization.

We have already mentioned RCP's early problems with white chauvinism. The clearest evidence of this tendency could be found in RCP's liquidation of the independent revolutionary character of the Black liberation movement and other national movements in the USA. This tendency found theoretical refuge in such formulations as the "nation of a new type". Putting aside the question of whether Black people constitute nation or not, RCP's theoretical acrobatics could be clearly seen as handy device to undercut the validity of a separate national movement in the name of upholding a "single multi-national proletariat".

When it came time for the Revolutionary Union to carry out a genuine struggle against white chauvinism and build a multi-national communist party in conjunction with groups like the Black Workers Congress and the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization in the early 1970's, then it raised Bundism as the main danger in the communist movement as a whole. Although narrow nationalism was indeed a serious deviation within the BWC and PRRWO, the RU's fulminations about "bundism" served, in part, as a cover for their own lack of struggle against white chauvinism. White chauvinism reared its ugly head soon enough in the political arena when the RU flung itself into the fiasco of trying to smash the Boston busing plan.

RU/RCP has always paid lip service to the notion that there is such a thing as revolutionary nationalism, but in the last analysis it believes that all nationalism means "my nation first" and is opposed to an internationalist equality of nations. When this perspective is applied to national liberation struggles in colonial and dependent countries, RCP takes very sectarian, even counter-revolutionary positions lambasting the leadership of these struggles when they correctly refuse to impetuously leap to socialism before the political and material prerequisites have been developed. For a group situated in an imperialist country like the USA, RCP takes a super-revolutionary chauvinist stance about how national liberation struggles ought to be organized.

Its positions on a couple of the most prominent recent struggles will illustrate this point about chauvinism. During the struggle to overthrow Nicaragua's Somoza, for example, the RCP did give some support to the Sandinista Front for National Liberation, but this support proved to be only superficial. Just six months after the fall of Somoza, the Revolutionary Worker ran a hyper-critical article entitled "Turning Point in Nicaragua," which attacked the FSLN on a number of points. This article condemned the Front for working with the national bourgeoisie, for stressing the importance of rebuilding and reforming the economy, and for taking up democratic tasks instead of moving immediately to socialist construction. Instead of understanding the difficulties associated with rebuilding a devastated economy, RCP almost reveled in the revolutionary possibilities of such destruction: "Isn't it a good thing that the 'economy' of grinding capitalist exploitation . . . has been destroyed . . . ?"

The path of the Zimbabwean revolution brought a similar response from the RCP. When the form of that revolution was active armed struggle, the RCP lent its support to the Patriotic Front, especially ZANU. But when ZANU and its leader, Robert Mugabe, agreed to participate in an election not completely on their terms, RCP labeled them sell-outs and capitulationists. RCP did not explain, of course, that part of the reason for ZANU's tactical compromise was the fact that British and U.S. imperialism were putting great pressure on the African states giving aid to ZANU, and these states were

beginning to withdraw military aid and the refuge of their borders. Despite the fact that representatives of the white settler regime retained considerable power under the terms of the election agreement, ZANU won an overwhelming majority in the elections and was put in a strong position to consolidate its power. RCP, on the other hand, could see nothing positive in the election gains and viewed ZANU's electoral tactic as a betrayal of the long history of armed struggle.

RCP is finding it increasingly difficult to really support any organizations leading national liberation struggles. These organizations are never considered revolutionary or internationalist enough to suit the RCP. In typical Trotskyite fashion, RCP refuses to support the organizations leading the liberation struggles, but still thinks it can actually support the masses who follow this leadership. Even revolutionary groups upholding the contributions of Mao Tsetung would be targets of RCP's criticism about not being internationalist enough. As Avakian stated in his axiom, "Maoism without Leninism is nationalism and bourgeois democracy." In fact, Avakian claims that it was nationalism which was the main cause of the defeat of the Marxist-Leninists in China - "shortcomings in how the relationship between the carrying forward of the socialist revolution in China and the overall world situation and world struggle was viewed and handled". (Conquer the World, p. 42)

The same Trotskyite line is used to criticize Stalin during the World War II period. As Avakian argues, "World War 2 on the part of the Soviet Union was fought on a patriotic - that is bourgeois democratic - basis" and "internationalism was flushed down the drain on a pragmatic and nationalist basis in order to defend the nation and beat back the attacks on it at all costs" (p. 22). These are classical Trotskyist positions.

We are not trying to argue here that a position which coincides with Trotskyist formulations is to be dismissed out of hand; or even that the CPSU committed no nationalist errors in the course of the second World War. What we have been trying to demonstrate in the course of this polemic is that the RCP has begun to clearly manifest a systematic Trotskyist deviation which has a longstanding ideological basis. Trotskyism is to be repudiated not just because of the historic demarcation that has been drawn in the Marxist-Leninist movement since the 1930's. It has continued to betray the interests of the working class and the oppressed people of the world both theoretically and in historical practice.

This is not the place to engage in a full-blown expose of Trotskyism in all of its bewildering varieties. What we would like to do is point out a basic error that Trotskyism has in common with the RCP. This is a mechanical understanding of the inevitability of proletarian revolution. For Trotsky the mechanism was the theory of productive forces - for the RCP it is the idea of "global conjunctures". What is meant by these conjunctures is not explained very well, but it often sounds as if this is a process that happens outside society. One example - 'Great earth-moving forces are stirring beneath the surface of the planet: a giant eruption is brewing and even as it brews, fissures and cracks are appearing in the still-intact crust, tossing upwards movements, people, turmoil.' (Accumulating Revolutionary Forces for the Coming Showdown, p. 12) This sounds as if people and social movements are the objects rather than the makers of history.

Assuming the inevitability of revolution leads either to reformist capitulation or ultra-left adventurism and sectarianism. Both of these tendencies can be seen in the history of the RCP. Increasingly though, the tendency is to adopt a go-for-broke attitude and condemn anyone who doesn't follow suit. If the proletariat doesn't flock to their banner, then they aren't the "real proletariat". If the Sandinistas see the need to make class alliances with the peasantry or the petty bourgeoisie and not move on immediately to proletarian revolution, then clearly, for the RCP, they are traitors. The RCP doesn't need to make an investigation of the concrete situation in Nicaragua or anywhere else. They already know that a revolutionary situation exists.

RCP adds a new twist to its Trotskyite bent by maintaining that the principal contradiction in the world is no longer between the imperialist powers and the people of the colonial and dependent countries, but instead is found in the contradiction between the two imperialist blocs headed respectively by the USA and the USSR. Mao comes in for some criticism in this regard for thinking that the prospects for revolution were to be found almost exclusively in the "third world" and not understanding how the world contradictions were sharpening up and coming together in a new conjuncture of war and revolution affecting even the advanced capitalist countries. With this kind of analysis, which is based on the imminence of world war, nationalism no longer has any real revolutionary content, as it could normally have in national liberation struggles, but instead has become ideological enemy #1.

As of this writing, RCP has not provided more than a sketchy outline of its analysis of conjunctures and the prospects of war and revolution. But what it has published so far only gives credence to the view that RCP is erecting a new Trotskyite ideological and political line on world revolution. In fact, RCP appears to be taking up the extreme ultra-left position once popularized by Trotskyists but now being abandoned. Since many Trotskyist groups still regard the Soviet Union as a workers' state, albeit deformed, they have inevitably become much more apologetic about the actions of the Soviet Union, in contrast to groups like the RCP, which came to agree with Mao about the capitalist and imperialist nature of the USSR.

The very logic of RCP's position is pushing it toward questioning the viability of making revolution in any single country and constructing a socialist society there. With RCP's view that there is a very real material basis for revolution taking place primarily "on a world scale" and only secondarily country by country, socialism cannot really exist in a country like China, except insofar as the interests of world revolution are put ahead of its own national interests. As part and parcel of its increasingly idealist views in its analysis of socialism, RCP overemphasizes the importance of the political superstructure, the importance of leadership and line. They take Mao's correct stress on the vital importance of political line for the survival of the revolution one step too far. In their view, socialism does not at all resemble any kind of stable, substantial material reality, but is more defined in terms of the political and ideological line of the leadership of the state and communist party. In their view, as soon as the overall line changes for the worse, the society ceases to be socialist. But the socialist economic and political institutions and practices are material realities and do have some staying power which the capitalist roaders have to reckon with. The lessons of the reversal in China must definitely be learned, but not with this kind of idealist and defeatist theory.

Some Recent Developments

In the winter of 1983, the RCP came out with a Central Committee report entitled "Accumulating Revolutionary Forces for the Coming Showdown". At first glance, this appeared to be a step back from some of the errors, particularly sectarianism and adventurism, that we have criticized in this polemic. Unfortunately, a closer reading reveals a very confused document whose political and ideological orientation, such as it is, derives from those very errors.

On one level, the report makes sense in arguing that there cannot be continuous revolutionary upsurge and that war communism can't be maintained indefinitely. On the other hand, the RCP stubbornly insists on maintaining as "the main thing, our approach of 'Revolution in the '80s - Go For It!'". (Report, p. 12)

We are not arguing that revolution in the U.S. is impossible in the 80s - only unlikely. What's important is that the RCP makes no serious materialist effort to explain why this revolutionary conjuncture will develop in this decade. They do talk about increased superpower contention and the likelihood of war, but they don't seem to recognize that while war may be the proximate cause of a revolutionary situation, war is also the result of underlying social, economic and political contradictions coming to a head. On this level, the RCP's analysis is sorely lacking.

The main thrust of the report seems to be to try to shift RCP's tactical orientation to what they describe as a more patient approach. The authors talk about returning to the mass movements, even the factories. These are moves which, in the unlikely event we were asked, we would encourage. However, in the absence of a clean ideological break with the errors of the past, these tactical adjustments must ultimately fail.

First of all, this report actually exaggerates some of the errors of RCP's distortion of the mass line which we mentioned earlier. two examples - "As the Chairman recently pointed out, even among the Maoist forces there has been a tendency to think that the masses will at all times be with you if you are correct - and this has been a frustrating and ultimately deadly notion." (Report, p. 3) Also: "To try to base ourselves on the broad masses, even the broadest masses of the proletariat, under today's conditions can only mean disaster." (Report, p. 8). What "the Chairman" ignores is that while the masses may not always be with you, a real revolutionary must always be with the masses.

The other point which seems to doom this latest tactical flip-flop is that it is based on consciously seeking to consolidate ideologically on the errors of their chairman's worst crypto-Trotskyist theoretical excrecence, namely Conquer the World. As the report states, "In other words, it is time to emphasize the consolidation of the critical evaluation we've made, pulling together the synthesis (the basis of which exists especially in 'Conquer the World'. . . as well as the New Program and other basic party documents) and taking it out, rather than raising a whole lot of new and basic things up." (Report, p. 2)

Unfortunately, this central committee report makes even more sharp and telling the basic criticisms which we have advanced throughout this polemic. The best that can be hoped for is that the report's schizophrenic style is a manifestation of a serious internal struggle. We have no doubt that there are many honest and committed revolutionaries within the RCP. We hope that they are fighting to break with this bankrupt organization which in the last analysis represents capitulation under left cover.

Conclusion

Summing up the conclusions of the several sections of this paper, we would make the general conclusion that the RCP is moving increasingly in an ultra-left, sectarian direction. This has been the case since the split with the Revolutionary

Workers Headquarters, and especially since RCP's Central Committee meeting of 1979. There may be tactical retreats from this direction and certain modifications made, but the basic analysis and line seem fairly established by now. Faced with the setback in China and the switch in positions by Albania, with large segments of the international communist movement moving toward the right and toward revisionism, or dropping completely out of left politics, the RCP thinks it has come up with a solution to this situation by reverting to some old left-opportunist deviations and distortions of Marxism-Leninism. RCP taken these old distortions and provides them with a brand new elaboration and justification.

The Mass Line

Led by Bob Avakian, RCP is now questioning the applicability of the mass line in an imperialist superpower like the USA moving closer to world war with the USSR. The mass line does not apply, the RCP contends, because revolutionaries have to go against the tide of nationalism.

In practice what this kind of line has meant is that RCP ends up promoting semi-anarchist propaganda by the deed. This amounts to isolated media-grabbing actions by a small "vanguard" of party members and close supporters, which result more in fanning anti-communist prejudices among the masses than in winning the advanced to take up revolutionary struggle.

In addition, under the slogan of "Create Public Opinion, Seize Power", RCP has centered all its work on revolutionary agitation in a newspaper, but without figuring out how to link this task with leadership of mass struggles in order to consolidate the advanced and make real organizational gains.

The United Front

The RCP has been a deeply sectarian group for a long time, suspicious of stooping to tactical flexibility in what it calls "reform coalitions", especially those involving class forces and social movements stretching beyond the proletariat. Like many other anti-revisionist groups, RCP has never mastered united front tactics to be able to make revolutionary advances out of struggle for reforms. Part of this failure stems from a theoretical confusion which regards the united front as a strategy. As a result, RCP's basic strategy for revolution in the USA ends up being just a "left" revisionist alternative to the CPUSA's "anti-monopoly coalition".

Communist Work in the Trade Unions

Making a mechanical application of Lenin's ideological advice in What Is To Be Done? about combatting spontaneity and economism, RCP has endorsed an almost complete tactical diversion from economic, trade union struggles. RCP takes it for granted that trade unions will remain under the influence of reformists since the basic industrial proletariat in this country is substantially bourgeoisified.

Proletarian Revolution

RCP has had longstanding problems with white chauvinism. In the past this has led it to regard Bundism as the main danger in the U.S. communist movement and call for smashing the Boston busing plan.

This tendency has been reinforced and become a super-revolutionary chauvinist international line which is ready to condemn every national liberation struggle in the world as being led by nationalists and sell-outs. A complement of this Trotskyite line is the developing idealist view which now questions whether socialism is really viable in one country without the successful development of world revolution.

With the direction of development of RCP's general line on world revolution and revolution in the USA, it is difficult for the Organization for Revolutionary Unity to any longer hold the view that it shares some significant unity at least in theory with the RCP on upholding many of Mao Tsetung's ideological and political contributions. Even though RCP still says it upholds "Mao Tsetung Thought", this Thought is apparently becoming obsolete. Instead, RCP is making a fundamental break with Mao's contributions, and is degenerating into an ultra-left propaganda sect, with its ideological unity being resolidified around a new amalgam of idealism, semi-anarchism, sectarianism, white chauvinism, and neo-Trotskyism.