

# What Is the Communist Labor Party?

At a conference held over Labor Day weekend in Detroit, the left-Maoist Communist League (CL) declared itself to be the Communist Labor Party, vanguard party of the American proletariat. While this pretentious declaration doubtless escaped the attention of 99.99 percent of the U.S. working class, it has had a very big impact upon the various self-proclaimed Maoist organizations.

In the months leading up to its Labor Day conference, the CL was the object of lengthy and bitter denunciations by virtually every Maoist tendency in the U.S. The epithets flung at it ranged from the mundane "out and out counter-revolutionary tricky-dicks [?!] and political imposters and swindlers" to the ultimate in Stalinist invective—"Trotskyite!"

Internecine warfare among the Mao cultists is nothing new, of course, and they routinely trade slanders, accusations and brickbats. This is to be expected. After all, while all the myriad Maoist tendencies are scrambling after the Chinese franchise, the "Great Helmsman" sits in Peking, detached and Olympian, apparently uninterested in revealing which of the several interpretations of his thought is correct. Thus the Maoist pot is perpetually simmering.

Still it is unusual for one group to draw such a heavy fire as that directed at the CL (now the CLP). Just what is the CLP? How does it differ from the other ostensibly Maoist groups and why has it been the target of so many vitriolic polemics?

## Origins of the Communist Labor Party

The CLP, under the leadership of one Nelson Perry, is the sole surviving heir of the first of several pro-Stalin oppositional groupings to emerge within the U.S. Communist Party (CP) in the wake of Khrushchev's 1956 denunciation of Stalin. Upon quitting the CP in 1958 this tendency formed the Provisional Organizing Committee to Reconstitute the Marxist-Leninist Vanguard Party in the USA (POC). The POC was especially enamored with Stalin's "leftist" Third Period and in particular with the slogan "self-determination for the Negro Nation in the Black Belt."

The POC existed for nearly a decade as a stagnant and isolated cluster of diehard Stalinists, largely black and Puerto Rican, who supported the Chinese CP in the Sino-Soviet dispute. But by 1967 the POC had begun to drift in a direction in some ways parallel to that taken by the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) several years later. According to the CL, the POC at this time "...began searching for the roots of revisionism and like the PLP found these roots with Stalin, Dimitrov, the 7th World Congress of the C.I. and took steps to throw Mao in for good measure."

—"Dialectics of the Development of the Communist League"

Unable to embrace this new line, Perry and his West Coast POC group were expelled from the organization shortly after its 1968 convention.

"The Labor day 1968 POC Conference in New York, spelt the end of a period.... By that time, the POC had completed the turn and now it was thoroughly disgusted with the Anglo-American working class; it held the Trotskyite position on the Soviet Revolution and it was increasingly steeped with hatred for the leadership of the Revolution, especially Mao, whom they labeled as the chief revisionist."

—*Ibid.*

Perry quickly "reconstituted" his followers as the California Communist League (CCL), an organization dedicated to defending Stalin against "Khrushchevite revisionism," singing hymns of praise to Mao Tse-tung and advocating

the slogan of immediate independence for the "Negro Nation." While the POC has since disappeared, the CCL has grown from about a dozen members into an organization which boasted that over 500 delegates attended the recent CLP founding conference.

It is the organizational success of the CL/CLP vis-à-vis the other Maoists over the past several years that is doubtless a cause of much of the venom directed toward it by the October League (OL) and the Revolutionary Union (RU). The more left-posturing RU in particular feels threatened by the CLP's recent growth and its own loss of black members. In the past year the RU has seen two of its ex-bedfellows, the Black Workers Congress (BWC) and the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization (PRRWO), enter the CL orbit (only to be shortly and unceremoniously ejected—whereupon they have since declared their own little attempts to build a "party").

In the wake of a general lack of results from "mass [i.e., opportunist] work," many independent Maoists and restive RUers are being attracted by the CLP's emphasis on "party-building," its significant industrial implantation and its sizeable core of black and minority cadre, including the more militant elements of Detroit's late League of Revolutionary Black Workers. Playing upon this attraction a CL leader recently bragged that the CL is "about 1/3 Anglo-American, 1/3 Negro national minority, and 1/3 Latin national minority; 60 percent women and 100 percent working class" (*Peoples' Tribune*, May 1974).

## The CLP's Stalinism

Unlike its OL and RU rivals, whose leaders first came over to Mao and then to Stalin via petty-bourgeois New Left protest politics, the CL/CLP from the outset looked to Stalin.

"It was the theoretical and ideological defense of Stalin that built the Communist League. We know and history has fully confirmed the fact that a Party cannot be built in the United States unless it takes full account of the teachings of Lenin and Stalin...."

—*Peoples' Tribune*, March 1972

The CLP's route to Mao grew out of solidarity with Mao's defense of Stalin against "Khrushchevism."

Hence, as opposed to its ex-New Left competitors, the CLP prefers above all to worship Stalin and tends to relegate Mao to the status of a secondary deity. As the RU correctly points out, "CL claims not only to be the great standard-bearer of Marxism-Leninism, but of Stalin's work in particular." For example, in the introduction to its pamphlet "The Negro National Colonial Question" the CLP asserts that "This statement... is a reaffirmation of the position of the Communist International and the position of V. I. Lenin and J. V. Stalin, the greatest of all thinkers on the question of oppressed peoples and nations." ("Note," hisses the RU, "that Mao Tse-tung is not included.")

An index of the CLP's attachment to the "Great Father of the Soviet Peoples" and to *all* Stalin thought can be found in its attitude toward Trotskyism. Castigating the OL for seeking an "anti-imperialist" bloc with the SWP (which the CLP wrongly believes to be Trotskyist), the *Peoples' Tribune* shamelessly lectures:

"What is the Marxist-Leninist position on Trotskyism? We have always held that the Trotskyites are counterrevolutionary agents whose role is to be the center and rallying point for the enemies of the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Trotsky himself was an agent of the German fascists, actively trying to destroy the Socialist Revolution in the USSR. Trotskyism is *not* some incor-

rect trend within the Communist movement to be bargained with or argued with. Stalin makes clear that: 'Trotskyism is not a political trend in the working class but a gang: without principle, without ideas, of wreckers, diversionists, intelligence service agents, spies, murderers, a gang of sworn enemies of the working class, working in the pay of intelligence services of foreign states.'"

—*Peoples' Tribune*, March 1973

It is truly pitiful that the CLP imagines it can get away with such shame-faced lies. Any serious militant willing to take the time to examine the real history of the October Revolution can quickly convince himself or herself that such tales about Trotskyism were the smokescreen behind which Stalin organized the murder and imprisonment of the best militants of Lenin's Bolshevik Party.

Does the CLP really believe that anyone remotely familiar with the facts of the case will be gullible enough to join it in concluding that the overwhelming majority of Lenin's Central

splitters looked to Stalin (who, fortunately for them, was no longer alive) and his "theories" as an antidote to the CP's policy of class treason. In this manner the CLP has been led to take a number of positions whose Alice-in-Wonderland qualities would do justice to J. V. Stalin himself.

Thus, with a perfectly straight face the CLP can assure us that:

"The world wide impact of the 7th World Congress was largely lost on the C.P.U.S.A. Their concepts of the United Front could be summed up as: In the labor movement, a left center coalition with the center in the leadership. Politically, develop an international and national struggle against fascism under the leadership of Roosevelt and the Democratic Party. When Roosevelt took Browder out of jail in 1941 and then invited him to the White House for dinner, the fate of the Communist Party was sealed. To this day the C.P.U.S.A. has not broken the style of work that makes them the tail of the beral bourgeoisie."

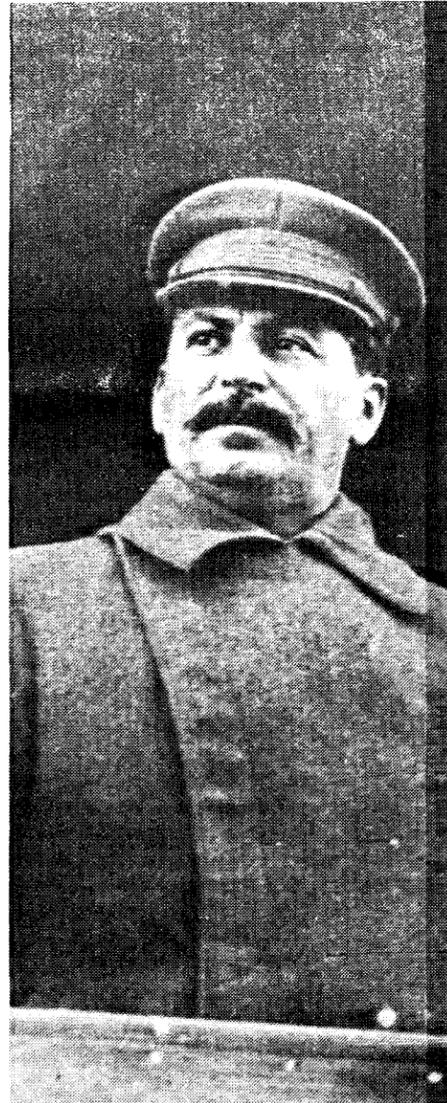
—"Dialectics of the Development of the Communist League"

For hack Maoists like Avakian and Klonsky, everything the CP did in this period that is too gross to cover up was simply Browder's fault. But as good opportunists they hesitate to reject everything the CP did from 1941 on, both from fear of smearing Stalin with some of the responsibility for the CP's betrayals and from a desire to keep their own collaborationist options open.

The CLP leadership has no such qualms. It has also read Stalin—more carefully than the RU and OL. Thus, the CLP points out that while Stalin criticized Lovestone-Pepper for American exceptionalism, he was also careful to note that William Z. Foster was not without faults. The CLP is therefore led to adopt the consistent Stalin position that at bottom the CPUSA was never quite a Leninist party and has always been plagued by white chauvinism, American exceptionalism and criminal factionalism. How could it be otherwise? Stalin, you see, was infallible. Whatever blunders or crimes the various CPs committed could not be *his* fault; they must be laid at the doorsteps of local CP leaderships.

The only problem is that the CLP is not so consistent as Stalin in maintaining this theory. Rather than maintaining that *every* Communist Party in the world, everyone in fact save J. V. Stalin, was guilty of original sin and was some sort of national chauvinist and a criminal factionalist, the CLP imagines the problem of class collaboration stopped at the U.S. borders. It has no criticisms of the Stalinist parties of Spain, France, Chile, Cuba, etc. during the same period. Unfortunately for the "American exceptionalist" CLP,

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Joseph Stalin

Committee of 1917, leaders of the Bolshevik Party, the October Revolution and the Communist International, were ultimately to end up "agents of Hitler and the Mikado?" Such fairy tales are an insult to the intelligence of any honest militant. By spreading them, Stalinists like the CLP only help to create cynicism and anti-communism and do not at all succeed in hiding their political bankruptcy.

## The Fundamental Contradiction

In fact, the CLP's militant defense of Stalin and his crimes manages to do nothing more than lead it to tie itself up in a unique and fundamental contradiction. The split of the central cadre of the CLP from the CPUSA back in 1958 was to the left and did reflect a genuine revulsion with the CP's gross class collaboration. But at the same time, the

## CORRECTIONS

The article "Left' Cretinism in the NDP" in *WV* No. 53, 27 September, refers to a "convention" of the Ontario New Democratic Party in 1972 when the left-wing Waffle Caucus was ordered to disband. It was actually at the Orillia provincial council of the ONDP, in June 1972, that this occurred. By the ONDP convention in December the Waffle had already left.

In *WV* No. 55, 25 October, the article on "Racist Terror Shakes Boston" refers to a march to the Boston Common on October 12. The correct date of the demonstration was October 13. In the same issue an article on Ireland refers to a "Special Measures Act" which first authorized internment. The law is actually entitled the Special Powers Act. This has been superseded by the Emergency Provisions Act.

# End U.S. Economic Blockade of Cuba!

It appears that the U.S. government is now considering proposals to lift its 13-year embargo on trade with Cuba. In April of this year Senators Javits and Pell introduced a Congressional resolution calling for a "review of United States-Cuban relations." Then, earlier this fall, the two Senate leaders travelled to Havana accompanied by a large number of newsmen. They returned to report that Castro was "friendly, frank, and warm" (*New York Times*, 1 October). Pell also walked off with one of Castro's cigars, which he presumably smoked before passing through U.S. Customs.

The first U.S. restrictions on trade with Cuba began in 1959, in response to expropriation of U.S. properties there following the overthrow of Batista. Eisenhower and Kennedy hoped that a boycott, in particular elimination of Cuba's sugar quota, would damage the island's economy and hinder the potential growth of its agricultural production. The U.S. also ordered its Latin American "allies" to close their ports to any ship that docked in Cuba.

The U.S.-imposed embargo made Cuba largely dependent on Russian credits, and for a while also curtailed trade with Europe. But neither the

economic blockade nor the CIA's Bay of Pigs invasion succeeded in reimposing imperialist domination. Now, as Britain and Spain have traded regularly with Cuba for years, and with the world price of sugar rising to 40 cents a pound (up from 6.5 cents in 1961), a resumption of trade appears advantageous to Washington.

Trotskyists are the *best defenders* of the social conquests of the Russian, Chinese and Cuban revolutions. From 1959 on we have opposed the imperialist economic blockade of Cuba. Trade with capitalist countries proved to be necessary even in the earliest years of the Russian Revolution, in order to obtain needed raw materials and advanced technology. Against the attempts by U.S. rulers to economically strangle the USSR, American Trotskyists continued to demand diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union even after Stalin had carried out a political counter-revolution, entrenching bureaucratic rule and purging the Marxists. We take the same attitude toward the Cuban deformed workers state.

Of course, increased relations with the imperialists pose dangers of counter-revolutionary subversion. This is



Fidel Castro. LEE LOCKWOOD/BLACK STAR

particularly true where, as in Cuba and the other deformed and degenerated workers states, there is no real workers democracy and the ruling group is a parasitic petty-bourgeois bureaucratic caste which seeks above all to protect its own privileges.

The only answer to the danger of capitalist restoration is a proletarian internationalist policy of extending the revolution. The Stalinists, who seek to conciliate imperialism, are incapable of carrying out such a Marxist policy, and it is no accident that today Castro has joined the Russians and Chinese in singing the praises of Henry Kissinger and détente.

In a recent television interview the "líder máximo" pointed out that the defeat in Chile was due to the fact that the military was not on the side of the working class (conveniently "forgetting" that he supported Allende before the coup). But Castro contrasts this with the "revolutionary" governments of Peru and Panama, where the colonels allegedly are on the side of the workers! "Peaceful coexistence," popular fronts with the "progressive" bourgeoisie and support for "anti-imperialist" military juntas—this is the logic of Stalinism.

Down with the U.S. economic blockade of Cuba! For unconditional defense of the deformed workers states against imperialist attack! For political revolutions to overthrow the parasitic bureaucracies from Moscow and Peking to Hanoi and Havana! ■

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an examination of the facts reveals that the CPUSA was simply carrying out a policy of class collaboration no different from that of any other Stalinist party, and further, that this policy originated with Joseph Stalin himself.

### The United Front Against Fascism

The policy of the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern, the proposal of a "wide anti-fascist Popular Front" which would also draw in the petty-bourgeois parties "or certain sections of them to the side of the anti-fascist Popular Front, despite their [bourgeois] leadership" advocated by Stalin and Dimitrov, was a panic reaction to the defeat of the German working class by the Nazis. This defeat was above all prepared by the "ultra-left" Third Period policies of Stalin—when he held that the No. 1 enemy was the "social-fascist" Social Democrats, and let Hitler march to power unhindered.

With the Seventh World Congress Stalin rushed to bloc not only with the Social Democrats, who only yesterday were supposed to be the "left wing of fascism," but also with the "democratic, anti-fascist" wing of the bourgeoisie. When the Communist International shifted its line from the Third Period to the Popular Front, the line of the American party shifted as well.

The CLP would like to blame Browder for a great deal of the CP's opportunism. Yet it is clear that Browder was placed in the leadership of the CP at Stalin's orders. Further, Browder faithfully carried out Stalin's Third Period line. When Stalin/Dimitrov signalled the switch to a policy of Popular Frontism, Browder obediently went along with the change. Does the CLP really believe that Stalin's back was turned when Browder liquidated the CPUSA (following the lead of Stalin who a year earlier had liquidated the Comintern!) and declared "Communism is 20th century Americanism" [!] or when Foster called the Roosevelt administration a *de facto* people's front, "a coalition among the worker, middle class elements, and the more liberal sections of the bourgeoisie"?

The CLP tries hard to keep up a left face. It was one of the few Stalinist tendencies

to criticize the Allende regime in Chile, for example:

"This Marxist government not only does nothing to free the working class from bourgeois political control, but actually condones it under the guise of 'unity against reaction'.... Of course, the Communist Party of Chile called for all out support to its policies. Right up to the very end they called upon the 'people' to support the 'patriotic' armed forces."

—*Peoples' Tribune*, September 1973

But *this is precisely the role the CLP would play* if it logically followed through with its theory of the United Front Against Fascism, i.e., Stalin's people's front. In fact, the schizophrenic CLP endorses in the case of Vietnam and the Philippines the self-same tactics that it so strongly condemns in Chile. Thus, in the very issue of *Peoples' Tribune* quoted above the CLP states the need to "first achieve a new type of national democratic revolution, a people's democratic revolution in the concrete semi-colonial and semi-feudal conditions of the Philippines, before reaching the stage of socialist revolution" (our emphasis).

Again, this is precisely the role the Spanish Communist Party, under Stalin's direct guidance and with the blood-stained assistance of such "veteran communists" as CLP member Admiral Kilpatrick (whose job, brags the CLP, was "rooting out the hidden agents of the bloc of rights and Trotskyites"), played in crushing the Spanish workers' revolution nearly 40 years ago. Here

is what Kilpatrick, the GPU and the Spanish Stalinists fought for, as quoted from the French Communist Party's *L'Humanité* in August 1936:

"The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Spain requests us to inform the public... that the Spanish people are not striving for the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, but know only one aim: the defense of the republican order while respecting private property."

—Felix Morrow, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Spain*

### Whither the CLP?

The CLP clings to Stalin, yet it cannot reconcile itself to the class collaboration of Stalin's CPUSA. It seeks to wriggle out of this contradiction by covering up the equally wretched records of other Stalinist parties and advancing an American exceptional theory of "revisionism in one country." Paper, as Stalin was fond of saying, will take anything that is written upon it. But insofar as the CLP attempts to construct a political party of the working class and intervene in the class struggle, it will only be able to reproduce the reformism it purports to fight. Indeed, despite its "leftist" impulses and ultra-Stalinism the practice of the CLP does not transcend the sub-reformism of its New Left Maoist competitors.

Of course the CLP arrives at its revolution-by-stages conclusions in its own unique manner. Stating that fascism is on the agenda (except in the Black Belt "Negro Nation" where, we are in-

formed, it already exists), the CLP advocates the classical Stalinist United Front Against Fascism (in which, we are assured, the CLP will be the leading force). Holding the position that the oppression of black people in the U.S. is a national oppression and that the "Negro Nation" (which doesn't exist—see *Young Spartacus*, No. 23, May-June 1974) is a colony of American imperialism, the CLP demands immediate independence for the "Negro Nation" and states:

"Our political outlook can be summed up—the state of the United States is very powerful and as a united whole cannot be overthrown. The overthrow of this state is possible only if it is first — or in the process — dismembered!" [our emphasis]

—*Peoples' Tribune*, July 1974

The CLP claims to have broken with the "theory" of two-stage revolution only to return to it through the back door. Such is the inevitable fate of all would-be revolutionaries who embrace Stalinism which, as history has demonstrated, is reformist to the core.

The CLP cringes in fear of the "united whole" of the American bourgeoisie. This is the essence of revisionism—a lack of faith in the revolutionary capacity of the working class and its vanguard to defeat the bourgeois state. The reformists seek, therefore, an "easier" path. There is one state power in the U.S. Only a united working class marching behind a single, united, multi-racial Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party will be able to overturn it and institute a workers government which will liberate all the oppressed. ■

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