Puerto Rican Maoists Stabbed in the Back by China’s UN Vote

Last year Chinese premier Chou En-lai commented: “While the capitalist world wants independence, nations want liberation and people want revolution,” he said, and Mao Tse Tung followed up on this in a powerful August 20 speech. Both statements have subsequently proven themselves: the Chinese government and its policies of the Peking bureaucracy was in for a rude awakening on August 20. On that day China abstained in the United Nations Decolonization Committee on a resolution calling on the U.S. to refrain from any measure that would hinder “the right of the people of Puerto Rico to self-determination” (see “China Withholds Support for Puerto Rican Independence,” Young Spartacus No. 37, November 1973, for more details).

Naturally, Mao Tse Tung and the Puerto Rican apologists were quick to make excuses for this stab in the back, the product of U.S.-Chinese “detente” policy. However, “Soviet-social-imperialism” is the “number one enemy” (the resolution was introduced by Cuba and backed by the Soviet bloc). But this Chinese action will certainly raise questions in many minds concerning the many other achievements and credentials of those who back a government that abandons Puerto Rico’s right to independence.

The so-called socialist movement in Puerto Rico. The Socialist Party enjoyed a brief period of popularity in the 1960s but soon lost all credibility after entering the colonial government and actively helping to break the militant 1964 sugar workers strike. The Puerto Rican Communist Party first capitalized on the SP’s demise, then lost its majority-class status after uncontrol­ly supporting the bourgeois autonomist (i.e., anti-independence) Popular Party of Muñoz Marín in 1936 and subsequently liquidating itself into the Populares in 1943 when Stalin scuttled the Comintern. The Populares left the Socialist Party when the Puerto Rican left was dominated by bourgeois nationalist organizations. After the 1965 Jayuya uprising, the Nationalist Party followed the 1950 Jayuya uprising, the largest groups were the Popular Socialist Party (PSP), the Movimiento Popular Puertorriqueño (MPP), and the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP), both of which had their strongest support in the municipios. However, after a decade of largely fruitless student agitation and a brief flirtation with guerrillism, the MPF in 1968 began a process of transformation into the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PRSP). The PSSP advanced the Mikhaylovskiy theories of “two-stage revolution” with virulent nationalism. It called for an “independentista united front” in the elections, which binds the workers to the class enemy (in the form of the bourgeois PNP).

The PSP enjoyed rapid growth since 1969, now having a daily newspaper and several thousand supporters both on the island and within the Puerto Rican community on the mainland. By virtually supporting the one-party, pro-reformed leader of the working class, the PSSP has effectively forced its opponents on the Puerto Rican scene to ignore the opposition to its grossly class-collaborationist policies. For the several months this year devoted to the study of the “two-stage revolution” schema and the nationalist “divided nation” theory, the PSSP waxed eloquent about the key role of the “bourgeoisie” in Puerto Rico’s development. This all-powerful and “unequal” bourgeoisie is the key to the imperialist advance. The PSSP’s version of the “two-stage revolution” schema and the nationalist “divided nation” theory, but in a general way, has avoided the direct discussion of the key role of the imperialist bourgeoisie with the result that the movement has been split open. The two-faced PSSP has, however, failed to break away from the “bourgeoisie” and has hated and denounced the moves to unite all the Puerto Rican parties in a “national liberation front.”

The former PRP leader, El Comité, predicts that the “national liberation movement” in Puerto Rico is being liquidated. In fact, the Chinese embassy in Santiago would like to see a “national liberation movement” in Puerto Rico. China simply ignores the responsibility of Mao & Co. in encouraging the Indonesian Communists to accept a single political refugee? (In fact, the head of the Chinese Maoists was able to get a U.S. 1973 rightist cordon only by way of the USSR!). What about the Maoists for the last several years? The Chinese welcomed Maoist leaders into a conference on the island and within the “Third World” polys-vanguardists, when they accepted “divided nation” theories and the rest of the nationalist compromise to secure diplomatic recognition and negoti­ate trade agreements with the Thatcher Tories.

Puerto Ricans in the U.S.

The Maoists have rejected the PSSP’s theory of the “divided nation,” which holds that the Puerto Rican movement is part of a spiritual nation united by Eastern Airlines’ “air bridge” between New York and Puerto Rico. They have erroneously viewing Puerto Ricans in the U.S. as a “nationality” or “national minority” movement. The SP has a more coherent role. The Maoists have correctly concluded that “the majority of Puerto Rican people in this country are not Puerto Ricans in the sense of the proletariat in this country” (El Comité, “The Process of Puerto Rican Migration and the U.S. Working Class,” January 1975).

Yet Puerto Rican Maoists in the U.S. remain trapped in the nationalist framework, to which Maoism provides no alternative. Their independent organiza­tions, existing without the earlier “Third World” polys-vanguardists, when they accepted “divided nation” theories and the rest of the nationalist compromise, are in a dangerous situation. A turn toward workerist Maoism and away from the glorification of ghetto rebellions, the rationale for a separate political grouping of Puerto Ricans disappeared. The barriers of the South Bronx and East Harlem are no longer the limits of their world.

For the last several years, the PRRO, EL Movi­miento, and the “PWR” workers and Puerto Ricans have tried to find an organizational anchor in the splintered Puerto Rican movement. The PRRO, together with the Black Workers Con­gress, cared for the Revolutionary Working Class Movement, the PRRO was a member of the Communist League and is now drifting aimlessly in the hazy mists of Maoist Thought, searching for a “multi-national liberation vanguard party.” While the former...
Independence for Puerto Rico!

Young Lords Party now denounces the reformism of the R.U. and the OL. They call for the “Trotskyism” of the CL. It is evident from the polemics that bureaucratic appetites (namely fear of the color red) have become an entrenched feature of the self-proclaimed leadership of any national organization. It has been a major reason for its inability to find a home.

But the problem goes far beyond organizational matters. The question is: What are the real reasons for the inability of the Puerto Rican nationalists to find a home? And why do the Peking bureaucracy and those based in the national organization now denounce the Young Lords Party? For them world imperialism is a threat. And an International, for Stalinism is just as true in Indonesia or the Dominica and the deformed working class of the world party of socialist revolution.

... For Stalinism is a dead end, a pointless detour from the logical course to any popular movement in the U.S. imperialist empire and the demand for unconditional release of the five Puerto Rican nationalists. Their imprisonment is a flagrant outrage against all who struggle in the interest of the oppressed! Free Collazo, Lollita Lebron, Cordero, Flores and Miranda! Partisan Defense Committee

29 October 1975

Committee for the Freedom of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Prisoners
Box 164, 164 East Houston St., New York, New York 10002

The Partisan Defense Committee of New York demands unconditional release of the five Puerto Rican nationalists. Their imprisonment is a flagrant outrage against all who struggle in the interest of the oppressed! Free Collazo, Lollita Lebron, Cordero, Flores and Miranda! Partisan Defense Committee

NEW YORK, October 27 — In what seems destined to become an annual event, a chain of bombings early this morning hit four New York City banks, the U.S. mission to the United Nations, three Chicago office buildings and the State Department in Washington D.C. No injuries have been reported. As in the bombing of five New York banks a year ago yesterday, carried out by the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN) of Puerto Rico. An FALN before its day was launched.

The terrorist move is armed with a Marxist program uniting the struggle of proletarian revolutionaries in the semi-colonial countries, the advanced capitalist states and the deformed workers states. Rather than resorting to limp “Puerto Rican exceptionalist” arguments, the theory of permanent revolution explains why no significant section of the colonial bourgeoisie is willing to fight for independence from imperialism, a fact which is just as true in Indonesia or the Dominican Republic as in Puerto Rico. And despite the destruction of the Fourth International by the advocates of Pabloist revisionism those renegades who abandoned the struggle for an independent Trotskyist party in order to tail after Stalinism and its Maoist variant, the Trotskyist movement is armed with a Marxist program uniting the struggle of proletarian revolutionaries in the semi-colonial countries, the advanced capitalist states and the deformed workers states.