

Why U.S. Maoists Fail to Form 'New Communist Party'

By Jon Hillson

Of particular importance has been the emergence and dramatic growth of new communist organizations—both multinational groups such as the Revolutionary Union (RU) and the October League (OL) and organizations among the oppressed nationalities, such as the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, the I Wor Kuen and the Black Workers Congress.

The practical experience, theoretical investigation and fraternal relations among these groups and others—including many individuals who are not now members of any particular group—is laying the basis for the emergence of a new communist party in America.

—Editorial, the *Guardian*, November 28, 1973.

Stalin is the bridge between Lenin and Mao theoretically, practically and organizationally . . . we do not conceal our bias: Since the imperialists and their ideological running dogs, the Trotskyites, have not spared themselves in abuse of Stalin . . . we have the tendency to want to defend him and do so.

—"Against the Brainwash," by the Revolutionary Union.

The Trotskyites have a no-win strategy. They haven't won anywhere. That's why Ho Chi Minh took care of business with the Trots. That's why Chairman Mao did. And that's why we're going to, you can be sure.

—Michael Klonsky, Chairman of the October League (M-L), in a speech in Boston, January 13, 1974.

* * *

Since the disintegration of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the leading ultraleft-spontaneist organization of the 1960s in the United States, those of its members who remained active, and those in the succeeding years who repeated their errors and embraced their mistakes, have

sought a pole of attraction around which to reconstitute an organization.

In the process of that search, some of these radicals joined the American Trotskyist movement—the Socialist Workers party and the Young Socialist Alliance. Others turned to a handful of sects laying claim to revolutionary Marxism. Some joined the Communist party.

But aside from the large majority, who dropped out of left politics, most of these militants remained committed to the creation of some new organization that could, at a more mature level than the wild last days of the SDS, embody their ultraleft heritage.

While the American Trotskyists were gaining recognition for their positive role in the mass antiwar, women's liberation, and student movements, this ultraleft layer went through various experiences, from unproductive implantation in factories and living and working in collectives to participating in study groups. They joined ill-defined local coalitions, set up embryonic national gatherings, mobilized in "radical" caucuses at national meetings of various mass movements.

As followers of the *Guardian*,* the ranks of this current were characterized not only by ignorance of Marxist theory, but by rejection of the forms of struggle and central demands thrown up by the mass movements. They impressionistically adapted to and were demoralized by the periodic

* The *Guardian* was founded in 1948. Dedicated to supporting the Progressive party headed by the left-bourgeois politician Henry A. Wallace, its main backing came from sympathizing circles of the Communist party. With the decline of the Communist party, it too went into decline. After the Khrushchev revelations in 1956, it moved to the left, offering critical support to candidates of the Socialist Workers party. Under successive new managements, it shifted erratically, eventually becoming the de facto SDS paper. Today as an out-and-out apologist for Maoism, it is trying among other projects to rehabilitate Stalin.

downturns encountered within the general rise of the mass struggle.

Running through all their utopian, workerist, sectarian, and ultraleft experiments, an unusually uniform theme emerged: irreconcilable hostility to the American Trotskyists.

In the last few years, this layer has attracted new elements—those who were unable to assimilate the key lessons of the student antiwar struggle and its impact on the American scene, those who backed away from the new challenges posed by the rise of the women's liberation movement, and those who feared the estrangement of white workers from socialism if revolutionists fully embraced the struggles of the oppressed nationalities. Anti-Trotskyism provided the mucilage holding them together.

What was lacking was a consistent political analysis giving form and focus to the outlook of this layer. Innovations couched in the rhetoric of American exceptionalism had failed. Anarchism and spontaneism had spectacularly flunked the tests of struggle in the late 1960s. Moscow, whether seen as state capitalist, social imperialist, or simply bureaucratically moribund, had been discredited. Trotskyism, in their view, was historically obsolete and counterrevolutionary; or, at best, infrequently capable of some progressive work only because it rode the crest of petty-bourgeois student protest.

The driving ambition of the central, most ideologically conscious elements of this layer was to articulate a thorough critique of Trotskyism and concomitantly develop an apparatus—a centralized national party—to fight Trotskyism and lead the American revolution in the way they envisioned.

A growing number of this layer had in fact come to realize that a party is essential. They reached this conclusion in the period of frustration and reflection following the breakup of the SDS during which they had an opportunity to see what a revolutionary cadre organization, as represented by the American Trotskyists, can do in

practice. However, Trotskyism with its hard insistence on revolutionary principles was repellent to them.

The trouble with Trotskyism, as they saw it, was its isolation—that is, its lack of ties with any state power. It had neither a Rome nor a pope.

Not able to stomach the crass class collaborationism practiced by Moscow, they turned to Peking as offering an attractive alternative. Peking countenanced the most bizarre forms of ultraleftism, yet offered the spiritual satisfaction to be found in a cult with a holy center and an infallible oracle.

'Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom Together'

During the 1960s, Peking granted the Maoist franchise in the United States to the Progressive Labor party (PL). That organization had emerged from splits in the Communist party paralleling the differences in the emerging Sino-Soviet conflict. PL's leaders were devotees of William Z. Foster, an early CP leader who played an active role in expelling the Trotskyists during the consolidation of Stalin's dictatorial regime.

PL developed rapidly into a shrill, sectarian, ultraleft group which, at its peak, reached 1,000-2,000 members. The organization won infamy in the radical movement for its rigid opposition to Black nationalism and its strident workerism, as well as an aggressive entry into SDS that played a major part in shattering that organization.

In the last year of SDS (1969), the anti-PL leadership and some layers of the ranks also embraced Maoism, especially its Third World orientation and its military strategy of "people's war," two components of the Maoist line that PL tended to steer clear of. At the split national conference of the SDS, the PL and anti-PL factions accused each other, in the words of Mao, of "waving the red flag to defeat the red flag."

PL's interpretation of Mao Tsetung Thought turned out to be inflexible. With Peking's betrayals of the Bengali and Sri Lanka uprisings in 1971, PL announced its break with Mao. It stated that the victory of the Mao wing of the bureaucracy in the "cultural revolution" had ushered in a period of capitalist restoration that was now complete. Proclaiming that

only the Paris Commune and the cultural revolution were workers revolutions (the October 1917 Russian revolution was a peasant uprising, realizing a dictatorship of the peasantry) PL gave up the American franchise for Maoism. PL is now a shell of its former self, an opportunist sect functioning in a few cities.

The Bay Area Revolutionary Union (BARU), founded in San Francisco in 1968 as a small Maoist nucleus, had opposed PL in SDS, posing as the orthodox, pro-Peking current. Some BARU leaders were converts from PL, having disagreed with that organization's understanding of Maoism. A smaller group consisted of veteran CPers who had left the Moscow wing of Stalinism out of sympathy with Peking in the Sino-Soviet dispute.

BARU's entry into the SDS was modest and subdued compared to PL's, and in harmony with the general trend of the anti-PL leadership toward Peking. The BARU called for SDS to transform itself from a large, amorphous, and politically heterogeneous student organization into a Marxist-Leninist party.

The anti-PL faction was known as the Revolutionary Youth Movement (RYM). It, in turn, was divided into a majority, RYM I, which evolved into the Weatherman terrorist grouping, and a minority, RYM II, which dissolved itself after a year of independent existence and dwindling influence. RYM II advocated industrial concentration and opposed RYM I's heavy emphasis on the need to organize military units of white street youth for assaults against the capitalist system.

BARU blocked with the RYM faction against PL. Inside RYM, it lined up with RYM II, but criticized it for its "social pacifist" aversion to violence and opposed the "white skin privilege" line that both RYM I and RYM II shared.

The "white skin privilege" line, which was widely held by ultralefts at that period, postulated that working-class unity between Blacks and whites could only come about through conscious repudiation of the "privileges" bestowed on white workers by racism, and that this process had to occur independently of and, if necessary, prior to the actual struggles of the Black people. It rejected the need for a multinational party and uncritically

supported any self-proclaimed Black leadership.

Unable to regroup SDS after it broke up, its disagreement with RYM II growing in sharpness, BARU soon became a national organization, the Revolutionary Union (RU).

Three central leaders of RYM II took different paths that would cross again. Lynn Wells, a leader of the left-liberal Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC) that SDS expelled as a fraternal organization in 1969 because of its alleged "CIA ties," became a founder and leader of the Georgia Communist League, based in Atlanta, the site of the old RYM II's national headquarters.

Michael Klonsky, whose father is a district leader of the Southern California CP, became a founder and leader of the October League (Marxist-Leninist), based in Los Angeles.

Carl Davidson, an early SDS leader and student-power theoretician, was to emerge as a leading ideologue of the *Guardian*.

In 1972, the October League and the Georgia Communist League merged, taking the OL's name, with Klonsky elected as national chairman.

In the aftermath of the collapse of the SDS, the *Guardian* had called for a "new new left." As recently as a year and a half ago, in its "Voices of Revolution" column, it printed Trotsky on fascism one week and Stalin on the national question the next. Today, as the principal national forum of the Maoist regroupment, such errors of "egalitarianism," as Chairman Mao might put it, are excluded.

A series of articles in the *Guardian* in 1973 attacking Trotskyism has been issued as a pamphlet "Left in Form, Right in Essence." This first critique of Trotskyism by the regrouped ultralefts is quite unoriginal and amateurish even by the crude standards of Stalinism. Taking special aim at the American Trotskyists, author Carl Davidson—the former student syndicalist—shows himself to be an industrious student of the Stalin school of falsification.

Because of their semiclandestinity, it is hard to accurately estimate the size of the RU and the OL, the two cadre organizations. The RU is the larger, having branches in about seventeen cities and claiming chapters of the Attica Brigade, a student front organization, on some twenty to thirty campuses. It has perhaps 200-400

members.

The OL, a newer group, with branches in about six major cities has 100-200 members.

In competition with the RU's monthly paper, *Revolution*, the OL publishes the *Call*. The circulation of these two papers is far below that of the *Guardian*, which is around 20,000, a reduction of several thousand from its peak in the heyday of the SDS.

RU has a small pamphlet series and an irregular theoretical journal, *Red Papers*, which has appeared six times since 1969 to announce major RU policy statements. The OL has begun a small pamphlet series, and the *Guardian* publishes a small number of pamphlets consisting of reprints of articles from its pages.

The apparatus of the regroupment includes a variety of local eight- to twelve-page monthly "workers newspapers," a majority fed by the RU, although some are products of small, local Maoist collectives unaffiliated to the major groups. There are perhaps twenty of these papers in the United States.

The entire movement—that is, those genuinely interested in constructing a new communist party: the national Maoist organizations, the Black, Latino, Chicano, and American-Asian groups, the politically conscious periphery of the *Guardian* (a modest fraction of its total readership), and the local groups and collectives, whether in the big cities or on the larger college campuses—probably includes between 1,800-3,500 persons.

Maoism and the National Question

While the key organizations are the RU and the OL, both of which are multiracial and multinational organizations (with the *Guardian* posturing as a latter-day *Iskra* for the yet-to-be-formed "new communist party"), groups composed of members of oppressed nationalities play a significant role in the Maoist regroupment in the United States.

These groups—the Black Workers Congress (BWC), the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization (PRRWO), and I Wor Kuen (IWK)—number perhaps 100 each. All of them have expressed their inclination to join in forming a multinational party. They have collaborated with each

other and with the OL, RU, and the *Guardian* in propaganda projects and joint actions.

In the spring of 1973 the *Guardian* sponsored a forum series in New York City that featured leading members of the Maoist regroupment, including representatives of Black, Latin, and American-Asian organizations, on questions of strategy, tactics, and party building. The forums averaged approximately 500 in attendance, with the presentation on the construction of a new communist party drawing upwards of 1,300.

The BWC withdrew from the *Guardian* forum series, stating its loyalty to Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao, and its incapacity to define a line on the national question.

IWK, which has forces in the Chinese communities of San Francisco and New York, is involved in community organizing. It bases itself on the rise in sympathy for the People's Republic of China in the Asian-American communities. In virtually all of the Asian-American organizations in the Bay Area, which has the largest concentration of these groups in the country, Maoism is the dominant trend.

The PRRWO, which evolved from the Young Lords party, a Puerto Rican emulation of the early Black Panther party, took a sharp antinationalist turn, partly in response to advice received by a delegation visiting China. Reversing its orientation toward the Puerto Rican community, it moved in a workerist direction, and is now being bypassed by groups like the larger, more influential, and much less regroupment-prone Puerto Rican Socialist party. The PRRWO's newspaper, *Palante*, ceased publication six months ago.

With a growing interest in Marxism developing among sectors of the movements of the oppressed nationalities, smaller, unaffiliated Black and Chicano organizations have linked up with the regroupment, although their trend towards Maoism is not matched in the Black and Chicano communities as a whole.

All of these groups have had to wrestle with the contradiction between the dynamic of independent struggles shaped by the nationalism of the oppressed and the Maoist call for "proletarian unity."

While they pay literary obeisance to national liberation struggles, the Mao-

ists—no matter what their internal differences on this question—have sought in practice to contain and block independent political action by the oppressed nationalities. At the same time they seek to somehow adapt to them for organizational gains. The autonomous struggles of the Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and American-Asians are indeed portrayed as important; but only secondary, a prelude to the "real class struggle," that is, the struggle of a unified proletariat unhampered by the claims of those who insist on fighting as nationalities for equality, self-determination, and emancipation from white supremacy.

Nowhere has this been more apparent than in the struggle of the predominantly Black, Puerto Rican, and Asian residents of inner-city District 1 in New York to win community control of their schools. The struggle, which has challenged the racist union bureaucracy of the American Federation of Teachers headed by Albert Shanker, a right-wing Social Democrat, has received national attention in the capitalist communications media. The meager coverage of this struggle in the *Guardian* (which is published in New York, where the struggle is going on), the PRRWO's opposition to it, the silence of the RU press and the abstention of its New York members, and the abstention in practice of the IWK, testify to this milieu's real attitude toward the struggles of the nationally oppressed.

The contortions of the Maoists on the Black liberation struggle have left their mark in the pages of the *Guardian*.

Noting that Stalin's criteria for nationhood are not met by the American Black population (who are dispersed without common territory in a variety of urban areas, lack a common national market, a language, etc.), the *Guardian* denies the Black population the right to self-determination. But the *Guardian* supports the "democratic content" of the nationalism of the oppressed and is for the "Black belt" theory advanced by the American CP in the early thirties.

According to this schema, the "Black peasant nation" in the rural South had the right to self-determination. Moreover, on the basis of this theory, the CP itself was in position to raise the demand for a separate Black state. The *Guardian* holds that though Blacks have the right to self-

determination in the Black belt, the new communist party to be formed would be well-advised to subordinate this slogan to demands for equality that pose less of a dilemma for white workers.

In a polemic with the RU, the OL backed the *Guardian's* thesis. According to the RU, Stalin's criteria are not applicable to the U.S. Black population, which is a "nation of a new type."

While advocating self-determination for Blacks on paper, a position that bends to sentiment in the Black community, the RU is far from consistent. In its demonstrations and in its press, it stresses the "class unity" formula in mechanical opposition to the nationalist dynamic. And it holds that separate organization of the Blacks is a temporary phenomenon that will be superseded by a class consciousness transcending the need for independent Black action and organization.

The "Black belt" theory of the *Guardian* and the OL is taken to its logical extreme by the Communist League, a small sect some of whose cadres consist of former members of the RU, PL, and the CP, as well as former Weathermen. This organization calls propagandistically for a separate state and refers to the Black belt as the "Negro nation."

The most notable feature of the Communist League, which is largely underground and engages primarily in setting up study groups and colonizing members in factories, is that it took the majority of the once influential League of Revolutionary Black Workers that emerged out of the militant Black caucuses in Detroit's auto industry in the late 1960s.

The central issue that split the LRBW was the national question, with the majority evolving into the Communist League, and the minority evolving into the workerist economist Black Workers Congress, which, as mentioned earlier, withdrew from the *Guardian's* series because of its confusion as an all-Black organization over what its line on the national question should be.

The contradictions that broke up the LRBW, that have apparently incapacitated the BWC theoretically, and that have turned the PRRWO into a hostile spectator in the most explosive struggle of the Puerto Rican community of New York City in the past several years will inexorably grow in

acuteness in the organizations of the oppressed nationalities that adhere to Maoism.

Where They Stood in the Antiwar Struggle

Lacking an analytical approach, many of our comrades do not want to go deeply into complex matters, to analyse and study them over and over again, but like to draw simple conclusions which are either absolutely affirmative or absolutely negative.

—Mao Tsetung, "Our Study and the Present Situation."

After the initial flush of excitement over the size of the *Guardian* forum series, the American Maoists ran into a hard fact. The key components of the regroupment are divided on a wide variety of issues that cannot be resolved simply by promissory notes for seats on the Central Committee and Politburo of the projected "new communist party."

A brief review of some of the issues contested in the American antiwar movement should serve as background for a better understanding of these differences.

The antiwar movement witnessed a struggle between two contradictory lines. One line, in opposition to the two capitalist parties and their pro-war labor lieutenants, stressed the principled demand for unconditional and immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam. It advocated street demonstrations on the most massive scale possible. This line, first articulated and supported by the SWP and the YSA, represented the position of a tiny minority in the early days of the antiwar movement.

The other line (really a mishmash of lines) sought a course of least resistance to U.S. imperialism. It pushed a variety of demands—that the U.S. government negotiate with the Vietnamese; that the antiwar movement endorse the seven negotiating points of the Provisional Revolutionary Government; that the antiwar movement support the conditions imposed on the Vietnamese by the Kissinger-Le Duc Tho accords; that Nixon "sign" them, "honor" them, etc. Periodically other demands were added—in opposition to racism; in opposition to the exploita-

tion of workers; in support of victory for the various fighting fronts in Indochina. The proposed strategy ranged from symbolic gestures of civil disobedience to generalized confrontations between demonstrators and police. The participants who especially favored "confrontations" singled themselves out as "anti-imperialist contingents."

The Communist party constituted the largest sector of this bloc. Other sectors included the pacifists and the ultra-lefts, among them the Maoists.

As antiwar sentiment broadened to encompass the broad majority of the American people, the ultra-lefts declined in relative strength. Through the Student Mobilization Committee and the National Peace Action Coalition, the policy and strategy advocated by the Trotskyists came to the fore.

Within the ultra-left as a whole, the Maoists became increasingly dissatisfied over being manipulated by the Communist party through its antiwar fronts. The year 1972 marked an upswing for the "anti-imperialist contingents" who were critical of the CP but at the same time antagonistic to the central slogans and forms of antiwar struggle advanced by the Trotskyists.

In the fall of 1972, the American elections dampened the antiwar struggle by diverting militants into hustling votes for capitalist "peace" candidates. The courses followed by both Moscow and Peking in seeking a détente with U.S. imperialism acted as a further depressant. The fall antiwar actions were relatively small.

The Maoists organized narrow fronts to build their variant of the fall demonstrations. They demanded support to the "peace moves," a cessation of attacks by the bosses against the workers, and an end to attacks by the government against oppressed nationalities. These demonstrations—a few hundred persons in some areas, at most 2,000 or so in New York—were generally not as large as those supported by the Trotskyists, but they drew some attention just the same. And on January 20, 1973, on the eve of the signing of the accords, NPAC's San Francisco demonstration, which had gotten the grudging endorsement of the CP and its allies in the antiwar movement, drew 8,000 to 10,000 persons. In the same city, on the same day, the RU-inspired Inauguration Day Coalition demonstration drew 3,000-5,000. The

CP, PL, and, of course, the SWP were excluded from participating in building the action.

In Washington, D.C., on the day Nixon was inaugurated for his second term, NPAC's action drew 100,000, of whom 5,000-8,000 were in the "anti-imperialist contingent." The speakers representing this sector attacked the Trotskyists by name from the podium. In meetings that had discussed plans for the march and rally, their representatives toyed with ice picks.

The Maoists concluded from the size of their contingents that their regroupment was real and that they could contend with the Trotskyists and the CP. The *Guardian* forum touched off further exuberance.

In recognition of the détente and the Vietnam settlement, which was its first fruit, the *Guardian* voiced the heartfelt sentiments of the Maoists. As the editors saw it, the present period is characterized by "the emergence of People's China as a recognized world power" and by the imminence of the victory of the Vietnamese revolution, as shown by the accords.

'And a Hundred Schools of Thought Contend'

The momentum provided by these events has not proved sufficient to offset the differences among the contending schools of Maoist thought that stand in the way of consolidating a cohesive movement. The differences include the national question, aspects of the struggle for women's liberation, trade-union strategy, orientation to the student movement, and the relative priorities of building a party and building a "united front against imperialism." In other words, the issues involve the central aspects of strategy and tactics for the American revolution.

The RU has come out against the Equal Rights Amendment for women, echoing the hesitations of the CP, while the *Guardian* and the OL have supported it. Both the OL and the RU currents reflect the esteem for the Chinese family voiced by the Maoist bureaucracy. They are also concerned about counteracting the fears of proletarian patriarchs in the United States—they warned that the Supreme Court's legalization of abortion pointed up in an ominous way the antichildren attitude of the capitalists. Both the

OL and the RU abstained from the struggle to legalize abortion.

The OL abstains from the student movement and centers its work almost exclusively in factories. The *Guardian*, like the RU, considers this to be erroneous. The RU has sought to "re-build" the student movement, this time as an "anti-imperialist" student movement to be headed by its student-front group, the Attica Brigade, named in honor of the prison rebellion in which inmates were murdered on order from New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller in 1972.

Membership standards in the Attica Brigade are reduced to agreement with its program, which opposes racism and campus cutbacks, and is for solidarity with workers struggles, for defense of political prisoners, and for solidarity with national liberation struggles. It has 300-500 members.

The organization has a low level of political activity, takes leadership from the "open" and "secret" members of RU assigned to it (the majority of RU's membership is not public) and excludes in principle joint action with the Trotskyists, the CP, or PL. The RU assigns secondary importance and few cadres to student work. Its newspaper rarely mentions student activities or the student movement.

At the fall 1973 Attica Brigade conference, RU leader Bob Avakian, who had recently returned from a European tour, in a moment of rare comradeliness called for the group to defend the Ligue Communiste, the banned French section of the Fourth International. In an equally rare show of independence, the audience booed him.

In the unions, RU favors the creation of "anti-imperialist" caucuses to relate to the advanced workers. They define "advanced workers" as those whom other workers respect the most and who are the most disciplined, not the most politically conscious (a designation that in actuality embraces economism and opportunism).

The OL, on the other hand, opposes such caucuses, implying that they are "dual unionist" in nature. They prefer to tail the bureaucrats uncritically as they have done in the strikes in which they have been active.

At the center of the disagreements between the OL and the RU are the national question and party building. The first issue has been considered above. It has led to public name-calling, with the OL branding the RU

as "idealist"—few crimes are greater in the lexicon of Maoism! The RU has charged the OL with "opportunism"—a step away from dread revisionism—and has implied that they are fake Marxist-Leninists.

Both organizations agree on the centrality of the party, on its need to be monolithic and free of factions, and on the programmatic objective of forming a united front against imperialism, that is, a bloc of four classes applied to American conditions.

On carrying this out, however, charges of opportunism and sectarianism have been exchanged. The RU, which excludes in principle the SWP, the CP, and the Democratic party from participating in demonstrations staged by its fronts, has built its own "mass" organizations, caricatures of the fronts set up by the CP in past years. Attempting to capitalize on the anti-Nixon mood in the country, the RU has initiated "Workers Committees to Throw the Bum Out," a slogan that ought to have been launched in Peking when the bum was clinking glasses with Chou and Mao.

Virtually all of the RU's work is handled through fronts, whether proclaimed in the labor movement, the student movement, or the women's movement. For the RU, the united front (right now, in anticipation of the breakaway of the progressive bourgeoisie) is the RU; that is, the RU consists of its fronts and the "mass" elements that turn out in response to its appeals. The RU is against placing primary stress on building the party at this juncture, and underlines the need to build the united front as a means of building the party. To recruit publicly and to stress the party are wrong in its view. As the RU's monthly paper, *Revolution*, puts it, it's an attempt "to rip off the people's organizations."

Anticipating both ordinary and fascist victimization for their "vanguard" work, the RU leaders talk about the need for revolutionists to master illegal tasks. The RU leans heavily on secrecy and its members may be "unpublic" for several years before revealing their affiliation.

The OL argues that the RU's perspective liquidates the party into the united front. According to OL, the united front must be built around stressing the need to organize the party. Although the OL tends to be more

open and less blatant in its frontism, it too equates the erosion of bourgeois democracy with the breath of fascism, calls for its members to prepare for illegal work, and maintains a posture of semiclandestinity.

Recently, the two organizations have competed with each other in trying to gain from the Watergate scandal. They stage "mass actions" for impeaching Nixon, posing as the "communist" pole in turnouts involving only themselves and their fronts. RU organizes around the slogan, "Throw the Bum Out, Organize to Fight," while the OL centers on the slogan, "Dump Nixon, Stem the Fascist Tide."

The demonstrations have ranged from 75 to 200 persons around the country. The inability to get together in such similarly motivated actions shows what formidable obstacles stand in the way of the Maoist regroupment process in the United States.

While the *Guardian* has attempted to cushion the struggle between the two groups, in some cities RU members and sympathizers have stopped attending OL events. It is not clear if the opposite is true. Thinly veiled references to each other continue to crop up, although each organization publicly calls for unity. Both the OL and the RU consider themselves to be only components of the regroupment process and are careful to avoid referring to themselves as *the* new party.

Maoist argumentation is generally carried on at a high pitch. It is a derivative of Peking's intrabureaucratic fights. The method is the "two-line struggle": the struggle, as official Peking ideology puts it, between proletarian revolution and the capitalist road; a clash, we are assured by the mouthpieces of official ideology, that is never-ending and universal. The method assures the victor the right to place the label of "class enemy" on the vanquished, fosters a purge mentality, and disallows an unheard of "third line."

This Stalinist method is aped by the neophyte Maoists in the United States and around the world.

As Mao Tsetung stated: "Opposition and struggle between ideas of different kinds constantly occur within the Party; this is a reflection within the Party of contradictions between classes and between the old and the new in society. . . ."

Perhaps sooner than they anticipate, the leaders of the Maoist regroupment

in the United States will begin, privately at first, to assess the "class struggle" going on in their circles and

will assign to the other tendencies the path they are obviously following—down the capitalist road. □

Interview With a Trotskyist Leader

Situation in Japan and the Activities of the Revolutionary Communist League

[The following interview with Tadamashi Nagai, a leader of the Japan Revolutionary Communist League, Japanese section of the Fourth International, was obtained in New York on January 14.]

* * *

Question. The rise in oil prices and the oil embargo have hit Japan harder than any other imperialist country. Could you describe what effects this might have on Japan's economy and on its imperialist role in Asia?

Answer. The oil crisis in Japan has hit harder than in other imperialist countries and, especially in Japan, it will spur on a recession. Already the Japanese government is asking companies to cut down 15 or 20 percent on oil usage. Production will go down to some extent. Although even without an oil crisis Japan might have gone into a recession, the crisis worsens the economic situation. I think this will influence the attitudes of the imperialists of Japan. They are more eager to tap energy sources from other parts of the world, especially Siberian natural gas. They are already talking with the Soviet government and there has been a conflict with the U.S. imperialists. In this regard, the Japanese imperialists might give more concessions to the Soviets to get the natural gas. Also, the oil crisis will accelerate the Tokyo-Peking negotiations to import Chinese crude oil. There will be a hardening of the contradictions between Japan and the United States.

Q. Would a recession in Japan have any effects on Thailand and South Korea, or any other country in which Japan has economic interests?

A. If a recession goes further, if it

affects the buying power of the Japanese economy, it will make it harder for many goods to be imported from South Korea or Taiwan.

Q. How has the working class responded to the high rate of inflation in Japan?

A. The rate of inflation has been at a very high level for ten years. Inflation is always a big problem for the Japanese people, and workers in Japan want to get some wage increases. Up to now they have gotten wage increases through their annual spring struggles. The wage increases have been a little higher than the rate of inflation. So there probably has been a general improvement in wages for Japanese workers. But inflation now is getting higher and higher and developing more rapidly. This year the workers struggle for wage increases to compensate their loss from inflation will be very big.

At the end of last year, workers initiated some special struggles against inflation. They wanted special compensations for the rapid inflation. They got a special bonus of 30 percent of their monthly wage. There were strikes by railway workers, post office workers, and others. There was a very interesting aspect to the struggle: When the bureaucrats of the post office union decided to accept conciliation, the workers got angry about the concession. The leadership of the Tokyo district of that union was dissolved. In this struggle the bureaucrats and the government made a strange compromise. Usually the workers of the public sector got some money at the end of the fiscal year in March, a traditional bonus. The bureaucrats told the workers that the special payment on inflation that they had won, the 30 percent bonus, was an independent gain for them. But the govern-