

The Guardian sets out to build a new Maoist Communist Party

By DAN ROSENHINE

In recent months a number of Maoist organizations have begun a discussion on forming a "new communist party." The primary promoter of this discussion has been the *Guardian*, which describes itself as an "independent radical newsweekly."

On March 23 the *Guardian* sponsored a forum in New York City on the subject, "What Road to Building a New Communist Party?" More than 1,000 people, primarily young, attended—showing that the subject under discussion has evoked considerable interest in some circles in the radical movement. Speaking at the forum were Irwin Silber, executive editor of the *Guardian*; Mike Klonsky, chairman of the October League; Mike Hamlin, chairman of the Black Workers Congress; and Don H. Wright, a member of the central committee of the Revolutionary Union.

U.S. But with the detente between the U.S. and Peking, PL abandoned Maoism, going so far as to characterize China as capitalist.

As a step toward filling this political vacuum, the *Guardian* initiated a series of six monthly forums in New York, aimed at drawing together the various Maoist groupings. The first two forums, on "The Role of the Anti-imperialist Forces in the Antiwar Movement" and the Role of the People's Republic of China in World Affairs," drew 350 and 600 people.

The *Guardian* has focused much of its attention on a layer of radical activists who participated in Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), a New Left formation that disintegrated in 1969 for lack of a clear political perspective. The New Left youth in SDS first rejected Marxism as "irrelevant" and "obsolete" and then turned to Stalinism in its Maoist form and

among themselves. Despite their agreement on support to Maoism, their differences on concrete issues under debate among radicals are quite deep. Silber and other speakers said that to develop a program for the new party, "further discussion" had to be held in the areas of women's liberation, the Black struggle, work in the union movement, and other areas. A program would emerge in these areas, they said, by "daily work in the people's struggles."

But when a questioner from the audience asked how each of the panelists would relate their politics to the struggle to allow more Black students to attend a predominantly white school in Canarsie, Brooklyn, the only answer she received was a long, evasive reply from Silber, who said he was against "glib answers."

The submerging of political differences for momentary organizational objectives is characteristic of both Stalinist and New Left organizations.

It is clear that major differences exist, for example, between the *Guardian* and the Revolutionary Union. The RU newspaper *Revolution* has characterized the Soviet Union as "imperialist," while the *Guardian* does not. The RU is opposed to the Equal Rights Amendment, while the *Guardian* is for it. And the RU characterizes Black people as an oppressed nation with the right to self-determination, while the *Guardian* rejects this and views Blacks as an "oppressed national minority fighting for equality and full democratic rights within the oppressor nation."

Unlike the Chinese Maoists, none of the speakers explicitly characterized the Soviet Union as having returned to capitalism; either because they have not made up their minds or they disagree with each other.

The question of the Vietnam liberation struggle and the Paris accords, which these forces have portrayed as a complete victory for the Vietnamese revolution, was not mentioned at all—except in the context of attacking the Socialist Workers Party for its position critical of the conditions the Paris accords impose on the Vietnamese.

The Communist Party, for its "modern revisionism," and the Socialist Workers Party, for its "left opportunism," were listed as the two main opponents of the projected new formation. All of the speakers ritualistically praised the Mao regime and attacked Trotskyism.

Silber gave the most complete anti-Trotskyist exposition. Part of the political basis of the new party, he said, was rejection of the "ideas of Trotsky and his various followers, who deservedly earn their reputation as supporters of socialism everywhere except where it exists."

There was no discussion of the need to break the workers and oppressed nationalities from the Democratic Party and capitalist politics, nor any mention of the electoral tactic that might be pursued by a "new communist party." The *Guardian*, it will be remembered, gave backhanded support to George McGovern in the 1972 elections.

The *Guardian*, October League, Revolutionary Union, and the Black Workers Congress, as well as some other groups around them, are apparently agreed on resorting to incantation about Stalin and Mao Tse-tung. How quickly, or whether, they are capable of coming to agreement on current political perspectives and actually forming a party remains to be seen.



Maoist groups represented at the *Guardian* forum have different views on many issues, but they are all united in support of Mao's foreign policy, including China's "new friendship" with Nixon, which was achieved at the expense of the Vietnamese revolution.

Each of the four speakers agreed upon the need for a new party, based on a Maoist line, while urging that it not be formed "prematurely" or simply "proclaimed." With varying degrees of emphasis, the speakers stressed that the basis for forming such a party had to be laid through extensive discussion among the various Maoist groups and "work among the masses."

In the past year the *Guardian* has openly embraced Maoism. It has become an uncritical apologist for the Chinese bureaucracy's domestic and international policies, proclaiming the infallibility of the Mao Tse-tung leadership and defending China's role in siding with the reactionary regimes in Pakistan and Ceylon. The *Guardian* has wholeheartedly endorsed Peking's moves toward detente with Nixon, and has supported the Mao regime's refusal to give adequate support to the Vietnamese revolution.

The Maoists have thus far failed to build parties of significant size and influence in most countries. For a while the Progressive Labor Party claimed the mantle of Maoism in the

adventurist actions in the late 1960s.

The final national gatherings of SDS were characterized by contending factions waving Mao's little red book and attempting to "out-Mao" one another. After the collapse of SDS, a sizable number of SDSers left radical political activity. Others joined the Young Socialist Alliance or the Young Workers Liberation League. Still others grouped themselves in local collectives that advanced "Mao Tse-tung thought."

Organizations such as the Revolutionary Union and the October League drew much of their original membership from participants in the SDS fight. The October League was formed in Atlanta in 1970 as an outgrowth of the RYM (Revolutionary Youth Movement) II faction of SDS. The Revolutionary Union was also involved in RYM II after the SDS split.

The Black Workers Congress, the fourth group represented at the *Guardian* forum, is a Detroit-based organization established after a split in the League of Black Revolutionary Workers.

The speakers at the forum refused to clearly present the differences