

THE COMMUNIST LEAGUE:  
CLASS STRUGGLE OR CLASS COLLABORATION?

The following is a reprint of the Spartacist League statement distributed in May to a Detroit meeting of the Communist League. The statement is still relevant to the CL and its political line. Moreover, in this period of polemics within the Stalinist/Maoist movement, including the cynical overtures to the need to build the "mass revolutionary vanguard party" and the wave of mutual "Trotskyite" baiting, this statement stands as a clear exposition of the basic principles of revolutionary Trotskyism and lays out that which is totally absent from the theory or practice of any of the Stalinist/Maoist organizations—the revolutionary program of Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky for the international proletarian revolution.

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The Communist League, and those groups participating in the "Continuations Committee" such as the Motor City Labor League, claim to be involved in the building of a revolutionary vanguard party based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism. We assert that this claim is a sham and a fraud and intend to begin to demonstrate its fraudulence in this leaflet. The Spartacist League with its youth section, the Revolutionary Communist Youth, has dedicated its entire existence to the building of an international communist party capable of leading the masses of workers and oppressed in all countries in revolutionary struggle for world communism. Standing in the tradition of Lenin and the Bolshevik party, we realize that this party will be built in irreconcilable political struggle against all forms of revisionism: social democracy, pseudo-Trotskyism like that of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), and Stalinism (whether of the rightist CPUSA or the more leftist CL variety.) Our polemics at the CL and its supporters are thus aimed at not only discrediting their false ideology but also at demonstrating to the best, subjectively revolutionary comrades of the CL that authentic Marxism is represented today by the Trotskyist banner of the Spartacist League.

The Revolutionary Program

What fundamentally separates the Spartacist League from other so-called Leninists is our insistence on, and practice of, the construction of the vanguard party on a revolutionary programmatic basis. That program, concretizing the party's strategy for the epoch, must serve to bridge the gap between the existing consciousness of the class, ~~held~~ through their misleaders (the Woodcock's, Meany's and Chavez's) to the rotting corpse of capitalism, and their objective interest in socialism. Hence it must provide a transition from the day to day struggles of the workers to the necessity of proletarian revolution.

Such was the program of Lenin in the Russian Revolution. After a vigorous fight in the party (most notably against Stalin and Kamenev) Lenin won the Bolsheviks to a series of demands that met the immediate needs of the workers ("Bread, Peace and Land") but also led inexorably to the economic and political expropriation of the capitalist class ("Nationalization of Industry under Workers Control," "All Power to the Soviets.") Not limiting themselves to a few "reform struggles" nor to standing on the sidelines calling for "Marxism-Leninism," but struggling for these transitional demands enabled the Bolsheviks to discredit the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries in the eyes of the masses and become the mass party that led the October Revolution.

The young Communist International codified this programmatic approach on the International level:

"...the alternative offered by the Communist International in place of the minimum program of the reformists and centrists is: the struggle for the concrete needs of the proletariat and demands, which in their application, undermine the power of the bourgeoisie, organize the proletariat, form the transition to proletarian dictatorship, even if the latter have not yet grasped the meaning of such proletarian dictatorship."



(emphasis in original, "Theses on Tactics", Third Congress of CI 1921)

Trotsky's Transitional Program, adopted at the founding conference of the Fourth International in 1938 is the fundamental programmatic document on which the Spartacist League stands and is essentially the codification of the lessons of the communist movement in the epoch of imperialism. The basis of this program is a series of transitional demands which, while focusing on the felt needs of the workers, transcend the bounds of any particular struggle, enabling revolutionaries to point the way forward to proletarian revolution and socialism.

For instance, while reformist labor misleaders bargain for a share of the diminishing job market, A SLIDING SCALE OF HOURS (shortening the work week so as to divide all work among all available workers) unites the class—both employed and unemployed—in the quest for full employment that moribund capitalism cannot grant. A SLIDING SCALE OF WAGES (unlimited, full cost of living raises) and WORKERS COMMITTEES TO CONTROL PRICES AND RENTS are demands raised to fight inflation and erosion of the workers living standards. ORGANIZE THE UNORGANIZED WORKERS and special demands to fight the special oppression of minority, young and women workers, such as EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK, EQUAL ACCESS TO HIRING AND UPGRADING AND AN END TO RACIAL, SEXUAL AND NATIONAL DISCRIMINATION are demands which unify the class across the barriers erected and exploited by the capitalists to keep the workers divided. GOVERNMENT OUT OF THE UNIONS, LABOR STRIKES AGAINST IMPERIALIST WARS AND LABOR OFF ALL GOVERNMENT BOARDS are demands which emphasize the necessity of labor's independence from the capitalist state in a period in which the government is trying to tie the unions ever closer to the state. NATIONALIZATION OF INDUSTRY UNDER WORKERS CONTROL and the formation of a LABOR PARTY TO FIGHT FOR A WORKERS GOVERNMENT are demands which expose the bureaucracy's loyalty to the capitalist parties and pose the concrete solution to capitalist oppression, socialist revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The Bolshevik tradition embodied in the Transitional Program is apparently quite foreign to the CL, which shows little interest in the central question: Which program to lead the working masses? The typical article in People's Tribune contains an attempted analysis of a particular situation and concludes by calling for a "communist party of a new type" and "Marxism-Leninism." What is glaringly missing is an awareness of how to programmatically intersect existing struggles and lead the workers forward to the revolutionary conquest of power. The CL's analysis of the British miners strike is only too typical. In the midst of Britain's most serious political crisis in decades, which caused the toppling of the Tories and the election of the Labor Party, the CL did not mention what attitude the workers should take towards the reformist British Labor Party, much less the "left laborites" or the CP betrayers at the top of the National Union of Miners.

The absence of a revolutionary program leaves the CL to some variant of the old social-democratic "minimum-maximum" program: a minimum program of involvement in existing reform struggles and maximum of what Lenin called "speechifying" for socialism in the abstract.

This approach inevitably leads to reformism. As the CL would have to agree, the reformist consciousness engendered by reform struggles in no way leads to socialist consciousness. But equally false is the idealist notion that the idea of communism, if presented often and forcefully enough, can win workers to the actual struggle for communism.

The CL's bankruptcy in this regard is amply demonstrated in its approach to the UFW struggle. While condemning the Teamster/grower alliance to smash the UFW (the CL's inability to distinguish between a union under reactionary leadership and a "Facist Labor Front" notwithstanding) and criticizing Chavez's class collaboration and pacifism, the CL offers no alternatives to the endangered farmworkers. And in its practice, the CL drops even its literary criticism, marching in UFW picketlines in no way distinguishing themselves from the RU/OL "left" lawyers for Chavez's betrayal. In contrast, the SL has fought for demands which pose the alternatives necessary for a new leadership and a victorious struggle: For Armed Self-Defense of Strike Picket Lines; For a State-Wide General Strike to Defend the UFW; for "Hot-Cargoing" (refusing to handle) all Scab Goods; No Reliance on Liberal Politicians; Dump the Bureaucrats; Build a Workers Party, Forward to a Workers Government !



## THE NEED FOR A PROGRAMMATIC INTERVENTION IN THE LABOR MOVEMENT

The task of breaking the hold of labor's misleadership today is centered in the organized trade unions, the only mass organizations of the working class in this country. The pro-capitalist union tops, a bribed layer of the working class which functions as the agents of the bourgeoisie within the labor movement, cannot be circumvented or ignored, but must be politically exposed and defeated before the workers who are now left to their devices will be won over to the vanguard party.

Yet the CL has no perspective for this task. For a group supposedly "the most solidly based organization in the plants of the city of any communist group outside the CPUSA itself" (Political Line of the MCLL-ML, p.37) it is particularly revealing that the CL could put forward no perspective, even in its press, for the workers upsurge around the '73 auto contract. The CL's failure to do so is rooted in its inability to provide a counterposed program to the bureaucracy's. The basis of Nelson Perry's statement in a recent forum in San Francisco (26 January 1974) that the CL's trade union program was "still in committee" (this after Perry's decades in the workers movement and 5 years of the CL's existence!) is revealed in an interesting passage of the the recent heavily CL-influenced Political Line of the MCLL-ML. While on p.26, the MCLL puts forth 3 concrete components of injecting revolutionary class consciousness-- 1)Marxist-Leninist study; 2)reform work; 3)putting forth revolutionary goals and program-- on p. 46 we find "we have not yet determined what are the correct revolutionary goals and slogans given the present objective and subjective situation." This admission is revealing in two ways. One is that the CL's abstention is not due solely to their pre-occupation with the study of Marxism-Leninism, or a "tactical retreat" but due to the absence of a revolutionary program. Second, their admission that no program yet exists necessarily leaves only private study classes and...reform work! The CL's future in the trade unions is presaged by its UFW work--calls for Marxism-Leninism on paper and betrayals in practice.

While appreciating the CL's rejection of the mindless activism so characteristic of the RU/OL's pretensions to "mass work," the SL supports the conduct of exemplary work by those forces in the unions committed to a class-struggle program. While the raising of such a program will not result in the immediate "conquering of the masses" it is absolutely necessary to begin to lay the basis for a tested leadership capable of winning the workers' confidence when their inevitable upsurges occur. As the Communist International pointed out:

"Even the smallest communist units must not rest content with mere propaganda. In all proletarian mass organizations, they must constitute the vanguard which must teach the vacillating masses how to fight, by formulating practical plans for direct action, and by urging the workers to make a stand for the necessities of life." (Theses on Tactics, Third Congress of the CI, 1921.)

The Spartacist League thus supports such groups as the Militant Solidarity Committee at UAW local 905, Mahwah Ford, whose candidates recently drew several hundred votes in a spirited though unsuccessful race for delegate to the UAW Constitutional Convention. The MSC, like similar groups in Chicago Local 6 (International Harvester) and Fremont, California Local 1364, has raised the compelling necessity of "International Industry-wide Strikes to Fight Lay-offs," while linking this fight to a full anti-capitalist program. These campaigns have pointed to a class struggle alternative to Woodcock and Co. by calling for international workers solidarity, labor strikes against imperialist wars, an end to racial and sexual discrimination through a union hiring hall on a first come, first serve basis, a shorter work week to provide jobs for all, expropriation of industry under workers' control, and the impeachment of Nixon, new elections and a labor party to fight for a workers government. Such groupings are taking the path of militants in other unions, like the National Maritime Union's Militant Solidarity Caucus, the Communication Workers of America's Militant Action Caucus and AFSCME's Militant Caucus. The SL points to these exemplary demonstrations of class struggle work in the unions in stark contrast to the CL's inability to forge an alternative to class collaborators.

## THE UNITED FRONT

Recently the Communist League has further previewed its inevitable class collaboration on the question of the united front. As used by Stalinists of all varieties, the United Front has been converted from a tactic of the vanguard into an opportunist strategy that both liquidates the party and subordinates the working class programmatically to the bourgeoisie. The roots of the Stalinist abandonment of the earlier CI's orientation were at the 7th Congress in 1935, when Stalin and Dimitrov's "United Front against Facism" and "Popular Front" were adopted in the wake of Hitler's rise to power in Germany. Flip-flopping from the criminal policy of the German CP (which had labeled the social democrats "social fascists" and refused to call upon them for joint working class action to stop the fascists) the Communist International turned to class collaboration with the so-called "anti-fascist" bourgeoisie. The "Popular Front" policy under Stalin's lead carried the CPUSA into support for FDR, the French CP into support of a coalition government between Blum's SP and a leftist bourgeois party, and the Spanish CP into crushing the workers' and peasants' struggle for factory and land seizures into a "democratic"- simply bourgeois-opposition to Franco.

By standing on this heritage, the CL's more and more frequent calls for a "united front against fascism" previews its own betrayals. While the CL polemicizes against the OL's liquidation of party building into the United Front, its own call for an ongoing alliance of trade unions and the popular front (People's Tribune, Vol.6, No.3) and its "call upon all revolutionary and democratic forces to lay aside our differences and as independent political organizations discuss the formation of a United Front Against Fascism" (Peoples' Tribune, Vol.5, No.9) opens the door to the "unity" with "democratic" forces like the bourgeois parties preferred by Stalin in the 30's which will only unite over a program that does not challenge capitalism, that subordinates the working class's interests to the framework of capitalist politics.

The other side of the CL's understanding of the United Front is its sectarianism when dealing with principled United Front proposals. The Spartacist League recently called on left groups and trade unions for a series of nationwide demonstrations in defense of the British mineworkers' strike under the slogans of "Victory to the British Mine Workers" and "For International Working Class Solidarity," slogans even the CL would be hard pressed to disagree with. Only the CL's rabid and politically cowardly anti-Trotskyism precluded their participation (with full rights to have a speaker, distribute propaganda, and raise their own slogans and banners) thereby sabotaging the fullest mobilization of the Detroit left and working class forces to defend the miners.

### ARE TROTSKYISTS COPS?

The CL has been among the most virulent of Stalinist groupings in denouncing Trotskyists as splitters, wreckers, and cops and has continually dredged up some of the most grotesque and discredited Stalinist slanders to fling at the SL. Under the slogan of "no dialogue with Trotskyists" the CL proposed that we be excluded from a Detroit meeting of the April 27th Coalition.

MEMBERS OF THE CL KNOW WE ARE NOT COPS! They have stated so to us. Yet the "cop" charge is continually in the air at public left functions when the SL confronts the CL. Instead of dealing politically with our criticisms, the CLers find it much more convenient to throw the "cop" label at us.

When Stalinists accuse us of doing "the cops' work" what they really mean is that the Spartacist League is making opportunism difficult. Liberals and Stalinists have always united around the "splitters and wreckers" charge because for class-collaborators, the revolutionary criticism of communists is an unwelcome intrusion. We hold that it is the duty of communists to polarize on class lines those blocs which subordinate the interests of the proletariat to the class enemy. Lenin was called a "German agent" for his ruthless criticism of the "unity" of the Mensheviks, SR's and Cadets; in his tradition we shall continue to politically expose all the reformists and revisionists.

## STALINISM AND REFORMISM

The CL's conceptions do not, of course, "fall from the sky." Though the "Dialectics of Development of the Communist League" derides the entire history of the CPUSA, central cadre of the CL spent many years in the CP dutifully betraying the working class. Only when Khrushchev attempted to polish up the Soviet bureaucracy's tarnished image by denouncing Stalin's "excesses" did a revolt occur (which produced the POC, a section of which became the California Communist League and now the Communist League). The attempt to counterpose Stalin and Mao to Khrushchev only reveals the inability to recognize class collaboration in practice as well as in theory, or to seek its roots.

For many years, open collaboration between the Maoist CCP and the major imperialists was blocked by the fact that the imperialists were not reconciled to either the Chinese state or its influence in Asia. But with the tactical decision to withdraw from Vietnam combined with intensified inter-imperialist rivalry, an opening was created that was hitherto occupied by the Soviets. The Mao-Nixon love affair has quickly replaced most of the left phraseology of the earlier Sino-Soviet split period, complete with demonstrations of "responsible behavior:" the CCP's support for the capitalist Common Market, its insistence on the maintenance of NATO (which all Marxists had always considered an imperialist military pact) and its despicable refusal to open its embassy in Chile to militants seeking asylum from the bloody junta, is only outdone by its rapid recognition of the bloodthirsty regime.

The CCP has somewhat more experience playing power broker with more minor bourgeois regimes. Under the rubric of building the "united front against imperialism" the Maoists have consistently forsaken the International proletariat for the sake of their own bureaucratic privileges through self-serving diplomatic alliances. In Ceylon, the CCP praised and aided the Bandaranike regime while it gunned down Maoist youth in the JVP uprising. The Shah of Iran has regularly been hailed as the protector of his nation's sovereignty despite his recurrent torture and murder of Iranian leftists. The Pakistani government was supported by the CCP in its bloody attempt to crush the East Bengalis on the grounds of "preserving national sovereignty" (!), and the world working class was left with the sorry spectacle of the Soviet Union on their end supporting the equally rapacious Indian bourgeoisie's successful drive to subordinate the struggle in East Bengal to its army and appetites.

But the CCP's most startling betrayals were in Indonesia and Vietnam. The CL on occasion denounces the nationalist Sukarno. What it fails to note is that the large Indonesian CP, under the leadership of the CCP supported Sukarno as a "progressive anti-imperialist," leaving the Indonesian masses politically and militarily disarmed at the Suharto coup. Over half a million communists, workers and peasants died in the slaughter.

In Vietnam, the CCP found itself in agreement with the USSR and capitulatory DRV tops in lauding both the 1954 Geneva accords (which gave back half the country in exchange for the token promises of free elections) and the 1973 robbers peace as great victories. In between these two betrayals, the CCP sellout was cloaked in left phrase-mongering. When the Korean CP called for joint Russian/Chinese intervention in behalf of the Vietnam revolution, Lin Piao (then in Mao's favor) responded with "Long Live the Victory of People's War," the core of which was to counsel "self-reliance" to the Vietnamese. This statement served notice to the US that China would not intervene as it had in Korea and was probably instrumental in the decision to bomb North Vietnam.

## "SOCIAL IMPERIALISM" AND THE SOVIET STATE

The CCP's hostility to the USSR is justified in their rhetoric by the "theory" of "social imperialism." While Lenin's use of this term was very precise, describing those social democrats who were socialists in words but backed their own ruling class during WW I, various Maoists use the term only to cloak their own disagreement and confusion on the class character of the Soviet state. For example, the CL says that the Soviet Union is "social imperialist" but that capitalism has not yet been restored (what is imperialism but the highest stage of capitalism?!) while the Chinese CCP's use of the term means that a social counterrevolution has occurred



bringing a new ruling class to power over capitalist property relations.

The importance of this question is that the defense of the gains of the October revolution, badly deformed though they are by the revisionist ruling clique, is brought into question. What would the CL say if the imperialist US invaded the "social imperialist" Soviet Union? Would the CL apply the Leninist policy on inter-imperialist war: defeatism on both sides?

In contrast, Trotskyists have always stood for the unconditional defense against imperialism of the nationalized property, planning and state monopoly of foreign trade that remains in the degenerated workers state, while simultaneously calling for political revolution to overthrow the parasitic bureaucracy that has usurped political power from the working class. In countries like China, Cuba, Yugoslavia, and North Vietnam, the political revolution is equally necessary. The inability of peasant based "people's war" to establish a democratic workers state is shown by the fact that no soviets, or organs representing the workers will through democratic selection, exist in these deformed workers states. The absence of the independent and leading role of the proletariat, fundamental to Marxism, has meant that the workers in these countries remain politically expropriated to this day.

#### THE ROOTS OF SOVIET REVISIONISM

Maoism is unable to avoid the idealistic method of equating property forms and class relations with revisionist ideology because to attempt a historical, materialistic analysis would reveal the validity of Trotsky's analysis of the degeneration of the Soviet party and state under Stalin.

The carnage of WW I and the civil war in Russia resulted in the death of thousands of leading Bolshevik cadre and proletarians and the almost total disruption of the economy. Worse, the failure of revolution in the West, particularly in Germany, left the Soviet Union weak and encircled by hostile imperialism. In this setting Stalin emerged following Lenin's death as the major spokesman for the stratum of office seekers, Menshevik and Czarist officials, former capitalist technicians who could and did demand special privileges from the fledgling Soviet state. The rise in power and influence of these elements in the party and state apparatus was accompanied by the development of Stalin's theory of "socialism in one country." This theory denied all previous Marxist teaching, which insisted that socialism was of necessity an international economy, and subordinated the task of spreading the revolution, especially to the advanced industrial countries, to the defence of the national interests of the Soviet state, which was the source of the bureaucracy's parasitic privileges. As Trotsky predicted, Stalin's "socialism in one country" necessarily transformed the Soviet foreign policy and the Comintern's practice into a pacifist and class collaborationist tool directing the foreign CP's to seek alliances with the "liberal, peaceful capitalists" to block the anti-Soviet designs of the "reactionary capitalists."

Stalin's "success" was accomplished with disastrous costs: over 90% of Lenin's Central Committee was shot in Stalin's drive to eliminate opposition, hundreds of thousands of proletarian leaders were imprisoned or murdered, and 20 million Russians died with the inevitable imperialist onslaught. Internationally, Stalin was the undisputed leader of the Comintern (until its formal dissolution in 1943 as a further guarantee to his British and American allies of his non-revolutionary intentions) when the betrayal of the international workers movement surpasses anything Khrushchev was capable of. Stalin was neither stupid, uninformed nor asleep at the switch. These policies were carried out with his knowledge, direction and approval. In the US, the American CP went from calling FDR "fascist" to supporting him and the WW II no-strike pledge. The French and Italian CPs, leading massive resistance movements, laid down their arms after the war and pledged to reestablish capitalism at a time when their bourgeoisies were weak, discredited and ripe for overthrow. In China, a rapidly growing communist party intersecting massive working class upsurges, was ordered to liquidate into the bourgeois Kuomintang (Chiang Kai Chek was made an honorary member of the Communist International's Executive Committee!!), a policy which led to the mass slaughter of the workers and communists. Right up to the seizure of power

by the CCP, Stalin was urging a CP-KMT coalition government! In Spain the CP's restriction of the masses' struggle to the bounds of capitalism led to outright counter-revolutionary activity, as the CP cooperated in the smashing of the workers and peasants movement.

#### FOR AN INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST PARTY

Since Marx' instrumental role in the First International, revolutionaries have accepted the necessity of an international party for socialist revolution. Yet, since Stalin's dissolution of the Comintern, Mao has done nothing in the direction of forming such an international. The famous Bandung conference statement and Chou En Lai's more current statements upholding peaceful coexistence demonstrate the reality of the Maoists opposition to revolutionary internationalism. Communists are not in favor of abstract legalism in respect to national boundaries and are not opposed to "interference" in the affairs of another nation. The Comintern, during its revolutionary period vigorously attempted to "interfere" in the "affairs" of capitalist nations: to organize revolutions! "Peaceful coexistence" of the CPSU or CCP variety, in reality serves notice to the imperialists that these parties have no intention of organizing and building international revolution.

We, revolutionary communists of the Spartacist League, standing on the tradition of the first four Congresses of the Communist International and the Transitional Program of the Fourth International, are working for the rebirth of the World Party of Socialist Revolution. Our building of an International Spartacist Tendency, which recently resulted in a European Conference with revolutionaries from 7 countries, is a crucial step for this rebirth. The Fourth International was both organizationally shattered by Nazi and GPU agents during WW II, and politically destroyed by the revisionism of influences like the ex-Trotskyist "Socialist Workers" Party, which pursues reformist, counter-revolutionary policies often indistinguishable from the CPUSA.

Those who are seriously committed to the struggle for proletarian revolution must come to grips with the counter-revolutionary heritage of Stalinism, and the revolutionary program of Trotskyism. Failure to do so can be the result only of political cowardice or outright renegacy.

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