

## WHERE THE MAOISTS STAND TODAY

by Jon Hillson, Boston local

The purpose of this contribution is to assess the present state of the Maoist forces in the United States, their perspectives for unity and growth, and to raise some ideas on our relationship to them.

The re-emergence of Maoism as a political tendency in the radical left began in late 1972 and the early part of 1973, although the roots of such a development can be traced to the Students for Democratic Society.

Since that initial stage of the intervention of Maoist groups into political activity, the publication of tendency papers and the "conversion" of the Guardian to Maoism, this milieu has undergone modest growth.

Where does that growth stand today?

### The Revolutionary Union

The Revolutionary Union (RU) is the largest of the Maoist groups. It has branches in 25 cities and may have upwards of 600 members. It also runs the Revolutionary Student Brigade, which is dealt with in another part of this piece, which may have upwards of 600 members.

The RU is in the process of being isolated in the "new communist movement." Such a situation reflects a turn-about in the Maoists current, in which RU maintained effective sway for a period.

The reason for RU's isolation stems from a complete about-face it made on the national question in the early part of this year. The RU theoretically held, essentially, that it was correct for revolutionaries to champion the special demands of oppressed nationalities. They supported the right of self-determination for Blacks and other oppressed nationalities. Their actual position, however, boiled down to an ultraleft presentation of the nationalism of the oppressed, reflected in slogans like "Black workers take the lead," etc. This position was a holdover from the RU's "third-worldist" adaptation to ultraleft nationalism in the 1960s when RU was part of SDS. Such an adaptation to nationalism was the basis for RU's bloc with the Black Workers Congress, the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization and the Chinese-American I Wor Kuen group, in 1973.

This bloc was designed to form a new, multinational "communist party."

The RU's turn on the national question was to the right.

The RU was developed in a workerist perspective. This workerist outlook tended to become more and more dominant given the general ebb of the struggles of oppressed nationalities that has marked the 1970s. As such struggles declined, and as the US economy worsened, RU's Maoist workerism has led them to reject any concrete support to the special demands and struggles of the oppressed nationalities. They claim to have corrected an "ultraleft" error. In reality, they were at one time forced by the objective pressure of the nationalist movement to adapt to it--in an ultraleft and sectarian manner. In the absence of such struggle, the RU found that perspective a roadblock to adapting to the "working class" or, more precisely, backward white workers whose dividends from racist exploitation present an obstacle to embracing the demands and struggles of oppressed nationalities.

RU still maintains Blacks have the right to self-determination and separation, but now call for a "working class unity" against "narrow nationalism" and "white chauvinism." Decoded, this means the RU tail ends the racist backwardness of white workers in opposition to the independent dynamics of the struggles and rights of oppressed nationalities.

The practice of this perspective leads to the break up of the RU bloc with PRRWO, BWC and the IWK, in public and amid a continuing avalanche of lengthy polemics. The BWC has denounced the RU as "social fascist," hardly an apt description, but an indicator of the depth of animosity that now has taken the place of "unity."

The evolution of RU's line--which objectively has the same ring of anti-nationalist workerism that characterizes the Workers League, the Spartacist League and other sects--can be seen in that organization's shameful adaptation to white racism in Boston.

In the wake of a racist offensive against desegregation, the RU has crudely and fruitlessly sought a "progressive" side to the anti-busing "militancy" of the white workers and white working class youth who have sought to stop desegregation. The fact that the source of the anti-busing drive is an open attempt to preserve all white schools; that racist epithets have filled the air in Boston since school opened; that the anti-integration drive is directly organized by and serves the class interests of the capitalist, racist rulers of Boston are subsidiary features, debatable at that, according to the RU.

The Militant has carried polemical articles on this

subject, as will the YS, that amplify the logic and roots of such a perspective.

The RU has been a target of sharp polemics in its own circles as well. The Guardian has blasted them, the rival October League has characterized their perspective in Boston as racist, and virtually all other radical organizations have slammed the RU for their capitulation to white racism.

This event is a key source of RU's isolation. The past year of their turn on the national question has served two other purposes as well. First, it has thinned out the RU's Black membership, including all its Black central committee members. Second, it has provided a bridge to the most backward elements of the radical movement to join the organization, a factor that will deepen the logic of this "turn" in other areas, such as women's liberation struggles.

Accompanying the RU's posturing towards and prettifying the sexist, racist ignorance of the most privileged elements of the working class--the minority of the proletariat as a whole--is a "style of work" that flows from the group's sectarianism and isolation.

Fifty RU members "visited" the Guardian staff to "discuss" politics. Harassing staff members, they picketed the office. In Cleveland, RU members jumped and beat CP leader Rick Nagin. Threats and gutter level polemics reflect the organization's troubled situation.

The RU has called for a "new communist party" as soon as possible. Such a perspective means the RU will turn itself into a party, to the exclusion of virtually all other Maoist tendencies.

As well, the RU has embarked on a national campaign with a front group called the Unemployed Workers Organizing Committee seeking to garner one million signatures in an ultraleft campaign against unemployment outside the union movement. Such bravado is geared to enthrone its membership and is bound to result in much less than the overprojection it is.

The RU likewise has launched a series of supra-union front groups designed to "jam" or "put up against the wall" various union bureaucracies. These fronts assembled, for instance, in Atlantic City to demonstrate against the no-strike clause being discussed at the Steelworkers convention there. One of their more interesting chants was "Abel you slob, get a job."

This infantile leftism in--or, more precisely, against--the union movement also promises a short life expectancy.

As well as setting up narrow fronts dominated and controlled by the RU to involve non-RU elements, these Maoists

have breathed new life into the corpse of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War. They play a leading role in the Iranian Students Association and are a motive force in the purges racking that organization, first against Moscow Stalinists, later against some supporters of revolutionary Marxism, and now against other Maoists.

The RU, while supporting China's perspective of lauding the "anti-imperialist" Shah of Iran, calls for the overthrow of the monarch.

RU opposes the Equal Rights Amendment, abstains from and tends to oppose work around abortion rights, generally abstains from and opposes the Coalition of Labor Union Women. It has recently been scandalized by the publication of an especially vicious piece of anti-homosexual prejudice which lays out RU's opposition to the gay movement, why it bars homosexual members, etc. The Guardian featured an entire letter page attacking the RU on this position.

What RU has become is a lightning rod in the radical movement for prejudice, bigotry and backwardness imbued in the working class by bourgeois ideology.

A semi-militarist pose (when RU leader, Bob Ayakian, toured the country, he was guarded by thug-like devotees carrying bats and table legs and all attending his speeches were subject to thorough frisks) designed to impress the unconvinced about RU's "hardness" echoes the group's caricaturing of "the worker."

In my opinion, the RU faces a grim struggle for survival. An anathema to most Maoists, isolated in its own milieu, the organization is in the process of a conservative turn that includes strident sectarianism and hooliganism.

The first big domestic test the Maoists have faced is the crisis in Boston, and the RU has sided with racism against the Black community and desegregation--they have sided with the ruling class against the proletariat. A reflection of that is to be seen in the November Revolution, the monthly paper of the RU. It takes up some of the best criticism of the RU perspective in The Militant. The RU spends more time in this article on the SWP than in all of its previous issues over the last two years. The fact that our polemics have penetrated the thick, sectarian hide of these Maoists who for the sake of convenience do not consider Trotskyists "part of the left" is an indicator of the pressure they feel.

In attempting to answer our criticisms, as well as those of other groups, the RU moves deeper into the racist muck of the anti-busing movement. At a recent public debate in Boston, an RU spokesperson declared: "We are sensitive to and share the concerns of white parents for their children's

safety." The RU is in the process of seeking to form a "defense committee" for a leader of the South Boston racists who was arrested, he claimed, for attempting to stop the beating of Jean Louis Andre Yvon, a Black man being attacked by a white mob. This racist stated in Boston papers he was against busing, but disagreed with the mob violence; his fight at the scene of the lynch was with the cops, who South Bostonians despise, . . . not out of any progressive mood, but because the police have stood, albeit unenthusiastically, between them and the Black students they seek to drive from the all-white neighborhoods.

The RU has involved this thug in the meetings of the Mass Worker, its "anti-imperialist" workers paper. It sought unsuccessfully to build a similar defense for another racist "cop-hater" facing a federal civil rights violation rap.

The RU has begun, in practice, to enter the anti-busing movement, a logical process which flows from its belief that busing is a bourgeois plan designed to split the proletariat. In other words, that desegregation is a burden imposed on white workers who justifiably rebel. While the RU claims to be anti-racist--rather vociferously, lately--such rhetoric flies in the face of reality. The RU refuses to build the December 14 March, and was not present on the November 30 Demonstration of 5,000.

A key source of RU's capitulation to white supremacy--and sexism, among other backward ideologies--is its definition of an "advanced worker." The orthodox Leninist view holds that the advanced worker is one who most surefootedly grasps, works to implement, win others to the struggle, issues and program of revolutionary socialists. This is a political characterization which bases itself on the level of consciousness of the advanced worker, not that of the militant worker or activist trade-unionist. But the RU defines the advanced worker as one whom other workers "go to with their problems and look with respect to." While this worker is, according to the RU, against the bosses, what is fundamental is their popularity. Such a worker, by definition, could easily be a racist, an opponent of equal rights for women, etc. This definition conveniently allows the RU to circumvent the real relationship of advanced consciousness which goes beyond, but sees the necessity for, really building the union movement. Concretely, the RU's "advanced worker" is a gimmick, a short cut to phonily "proletarianize" the organization. This "advanced worker" in Boston, then, is the white worker who hates the boss, desegregation, and wins the "respect" of fellow workers with the militant bus-blocking tactics the RU has informally stated are justifiable. The logic of such a perspective is obvious.

New, big tests of the class struggle are sure to come. The chances are that such challenges will catch the RU still reeling from its most recent problems. This reality offers

little perspective for the group's growth and influence, although over a short period they stand to keep picking up the more demoralized elements of the Maoist milieu.

#### The October League/Guardian

The Guardian, while feigning the title of "independent radical newsweekly," accurately reflects the politics of the October League, an organization of perhaps 300 with branches in seven or eight cities around the country. The OL was formed about three years ago, nearly four years after the RU.

I believe that the OL-Guardian combination is the leading tendency in the Maoist milieu. It has a political perspective offering a more lengthy tenure in the radical movement than any of its rivals.

The professional looking appearance of the Guardian paper, its circulation of 21,000 and its history as a mouthpiece for a variety of ultraleft schemes over the past several years are a part of this potential.

Where the RU maintains what amounts to a dual-unionist perspective--building "anti-imperialist workers organizations" outside the union movement--the OL-Guardian calls for "moving the unions to the left." This perspective combines both an opportunist tailing of the liberal union bureaucracy and premature and sectarian struggles for power against the bureaucracy through narrow caucuses.

While the RU creates the most transparent front groups for its "mass work," the OL-Guardian states its readiness and has worked with authentic united front type formations which included the CP, the Democratic Party, other reformists and the revolutionary socialists of the SWP and the YSA--something which the RU excludes in principle.

The OL actively intervenes in CLUW--not, however, with the intention of building CLUW as a union women's organization. Rather, the OL seeks a "working class women's organization," a coded description for a decision to "take on" the union bureaucracy through "left wing" CLUW chapters. In some areas, the OL has imposed, through initiating CLUW pre-chapters, this perspective, and has thus stymied the real growth of CLUW.

The OL supports and has worked for the passage of the ERA. It maintains a more open attitude to abortion struggles, though it likewise is tenuous on commitment as a result of its subservience to the Chinese bureaucracy's glorification of the "working class family."

The OL has no bar on gay members. Its style of work lacks the look of thuggery and machismo that characterizes the RU.

In Boston, the OL has not been able to intervene in the struggle against the racist offensive against desegregation. The OL has characterized the anti-busing drive as racist. It has shakily raised the demand for troops. It has done zero work to mobilize the Black community and its allies. It has mistakenly seen the anti-busing effort as "fascist," a convenient, alarmist slogan which fundamentally misses the reality of this racist movement, which is organized by capitalist Democrats and Republicans. The OL has made public "self-criticisms" for a "rightist" attitude at the outset of the effort to stop desegregation--that is, apparently, a do-nothing attitude that tended to capitulate to "tailing" the pro-busing forces uncritically. The OL has issued empty-headed calls for "white communists" to go into the central anti-busing neighborhoods to "struggle" to win white workers to support the democratic rights of Blacks. The key test of practice takes rhetoric out of the sky. The OL was absent from nor did it build the November 30 demonstration of 5,000 people for desegregation in Boston. It is unclear if it has a similar attitude to December 14. Such shilly-shallying is a reflection of their practical confusion on the burning questions of the day posed by the racist offensive.

Its liberal, social worker's perspective in Boston denies the fundamental need for a political mobilization of the Black community--which will serve as a powerful pole of attraction for its allies among white workers and others--to defeat the racist offensive in the streets. They lack a mass action approach. They schematically separate the "tasks" of "oppressed" and "oppressor" nationality communists into private "community work" in the Black and "white" communities. The OL ends up abstaining in reality from the real struggle. They rarely sell their monthly press in general and have been able to initiate two meetings, one a tour for OL leader, Lynn Wells; the other, an in-groupish forum on busing with other ultralefts.

If the RU's position in Boston is so abysmal, it is to the advantage of the OL, which has produced no coherent strategy to influence events and is most interested, at this point in time, to utilize the Boston situation to score debater's points against the RU in the debate in the Maoist milieu.

The OL maintains a "Black belt" theory as the source of its support to the right of self-determination for the Black population. So-called because of its soil color, the Black belt is allegedly a crescent of territory from East Texas to Southern Maryland. The OL states clearly it believes secession by the Black nationality would be an error, a position that denies in reality a revolutionary position of unconditional support to the right of self-determination, including separation. If Blacks were to embark on such an "erroneous" course, the OL believes the new, Black state must be where the "historic homeland" of Blacks is--the Black belt South. This position, again, denies the right of

self-determination because it prescribes where a separate state must be.

This Stalinist, idealist notion of the "Black belt" being the historic homeland of Blacks and the foundation for the right of self-determination is an antique dredged up from the Communist Party of the 1930s. The OL believes it; in fact, on her tour speech, Lynn Wells described herself as from Atlanta, "which is right adjacent to the Black belt."

Both the OL and RU theorems on the national question are practical evasions of the reality of the combined character of the coming American revolution--a struggle which is forged in the working class battle for socialism and the drive for national liberation by the oppressed nationalities. The Maoists seek in vain for a correct appreciation of this situation because they reject the theory of permanent revolution: both the OL and RU hold to the two-stage theory of revolution in the colonial world.

If the Guardian and OL have seemed to appear more level-headed on the Boston question, it is because the RU has served to make them virtuous by comparison.

The OL-Guardian have a perspective to bring the "new party" into existence in the next year or so, it seems, based upon the rapidity of isolation of the RU. While numerical estimates are hard to make, their combination could have as many as 1,500-2,000 or more supporters at one or another level of activity.

The OL's "style of work" differs from the RU. Maintaining a very low profile, the OL has entered healthy, new formations, like CLUW. As well, it has moved into such former CP allies as the National Lawyers Guild, the Southern Conference Education Fund, etc., to assume leading positions. It has played a leading role in forming the U. S. - China People's Friendship organizations, which produce a very professional quarterly, New China, and seeks to win liberals, scholars, academics, etc., enamored of China to a support organization. China Day celebrations organized by this group have been quite sizable--upwards of several thousand in major cities. Such work around China is geared to win Peking's franchise and corner the market on China supporters. As well, the OL rather slavishly holds to Peking's foreign policy perspectives. It opposes the call by revolutionaries, for example, for the overthrow of the Shah of Iran--such a perspective, states the OL, reeks of "national chauvinism." They hold a similar view on the "anti-imperialist" president of Mexico, Luis Echevarria. They have been mildly rebuked by the Guardian for this "flunkeyism," and the RU has been able to keep a modicum of respect among unaffiliated Maoists by pointing out that "Marxists-Leninists" are in a different situation and have different responsibilities than the Chinese government--that they can call for the overthrow of bourgeois

figures. The real relationship between the OL and the RU is their fundamental opposition to a Leninist program of socialist revolution for struggle in the colonial world.

The sharpening of differences between these two major poles in the Maoist current has aided recruitment to both, though it seems clear the RU is on the losing end--and has lost members and supporters to the OL-Guardian.

The OL, however, puts priority on industrially implanting its membership, which has allowed the RU's youth front, the Revolutionary Student Brigade, an open field on the campuses. On this, the Guardian and the OL have appeared to differ. In recent months, however, the OL has written on the need for "reviving" the "revolutionary student movement" and has begun to enter the RSB--and appears to lead it--in parts of California and Florida.

We should expect an increase in student work by the OL, both through the RSB, in its own name, or through the launching of local student groups in the coming period.

#### The Other Tendencies

The Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization and the Black Workers Congress remain in a bloc, having perhaps 100 and 300 members respectively. Both have gone through splits, and more splits. The PRRWO is active only in New York, and has reissued its newspaper, Palante, after a year long hiatus. The Communist, the paper of the BWC, resembles Palante. Both are written essentially as internal bulletins for the Maoists milieu and are monthlies.

There is, especially among the American Maoists, a tendency for personality splits, tensions, cliques and mini-cults to play a large--not necessarily dominant--role in political life. These factors, plus a hide-bound sectarianism, are features of the troubled existences of those two organizations, who, it appears, are left with little choice as an independent tendency.

The Communist League, which for a time played a role in the Maoist regroupment, is an insignificant and byzantine group, which has turned itself into the American Communist Labor Party.

The BWC is reportedly prepared to announce a new formation reflecting its multinational character and, perhaps, a merger with the PRRWO in so doing. The BWC holds a Black belt position. This tendency has jumped on the anti-RU bandwagon. While more sectarian than the OL, it seems likely that it will move towards some sort of reconciliation with them. The OL has publically stated the need for this. Such a regroupment would bring a relatively large number of Black and Puerto Rican Maoists into a party formation. Numbers, however, are secondary in impact to

program and strategy and tactics in the real world, a factor which objectively reduces the significance of the role these forces can play in the long run. Whether the BWC formation attempts to replace the RU as the partner of the OL-Guardian in the "two line struggle" for the new party remains to be seen.

The actual logic of Maoist polemic reflects the need of the Chinese bureaucracy to limit the framework of inter-bureaucratic rivalry to the in (revolutionary road) group and the out (capitalist road) group. Such an efficient method allows the victor the spoils and the vanquished the axe because it bases itself fundamentally on the need for the bureaucracy in general against real political, proletarian opposition. The general level of attrition, demoralization, splits, fusions, etc. that characterize the Maoists flows from the need to, sooner or later, attribute to one "line" bourgeois ideology and the other "proletarian" politics. Such a narrow perspective reduces the impact a "third" tendency can have until one tendency is banished to the netherland of "capitalist roading."

#### Why the Maoists Grow

The emergence of the Maoist tendency and its general growth may have appeared to come a bit fast. There are several reasons why these "new" Stalinists are picking up forces. They act as a measure of currents in the radicalization as well as a barometer of the impact of domestic and international events.

1. The detente in general, and specifically, the detente with China, has served the Maoists well. Publicity surrounding and accustoming Americans--and American youth--to China represent the reality of a new, big power. Among radicals this power has a magnetic force embodied in the reality of a victorious revolution. The identification with a triumphant revolution--which, we note, has made huge strides forward--by the Maoists increased their attraction. A reflection of such impact is the sending of a solidarity telegram to China by the last New American Movement convention. NAM also petitioned the Peking regime for permission to organize a tour to China. An element of NAM has also begun to consider itself "Marxist-Leninist" although has not yet made peace with the Stalinist orthodoxy the American Maoists demand. The superficially distinguishing features between the Moscow and Peking bureaucracies as well give the appearance that China is "to the left" of the Soviet Union.

2. At the same time, the Chinese Stalinists' fundamentally and historically counter-revolutionary program of peaceful coexistence and socialism in one country has more and more shed its radical veneer of "people's war" over the past several years. The culmination of this process of cosmetic surgery is reflected in the detente. The Soviet

Union to the Peking Stalinists is the number one enemy of the people of the world--not U. S. imperialism, as was the paper statement of five years ago. The key task for the Chinese state is the direct alliance between it and any and all bourgeois governments against the Soviet sphere of influence. NATO, the Shah of Iran, the Pakistani dictatorship all have "progressive" character. This "turn" by China over the last several years from ultraleft rhetoric in the service of a counter-revolutionary political perspective to the most blatant class collaborationism and opportunism in verbal perspective parallels the "turn" of a layer of American radicals over the same period. The ultraleft rebels of the 1960s who lauded the Red Guard now echo the somber pronouncements of the Peking hierarchy who war against "ultraleftism." The American Maoists have taken a "right turn" in reality that is nurtured by the shedding of ultraleft excess baggage by the Chinese bureaucracy. Part of that baggage is the eight million Chinese rebel youth impounded in the countryside in the ruling elite's campaign against "intellectuals."

3. The "right turn" of the former SDS spontaneists, the residue of May Day and other ultraleft gimmicks flows from an adaptation to the present ebb in national mass actions that has been a hallmark of the post-antiwar period.

The petty-bourgeois radicals of the 1960s rejected revolutionary Marxism because they rejected the revolutionary potential of the working class. Their ultraleft feminism, their "third worldist," uncritical romanticism of the Black Panthers, armed struggle, etc., their confrontationalist tactics in the antiwar movement all reflected an adaptation to the prevailing level of conservative consciousness among a large element of white, male workers and the absence of direct proletarian participation in the radicalization.

The changing nature of the period, the toll taken by such incorrect perspectives, the penetration of basic Marxist and Leninist concepts into this layer posed the question of party-type organization. As well, the fact that these forces lost battle after battle to the Trotskyists--as well as their healthiest elements who joined the SWP and YSA--provided an anti-Trotskyist glue that holds them together.

These factors, the emergence of China through the detente, the "rediscovery" of Stalin, etc. all are a part of the Maoist regroupment.

4. These above forces from the 1960s and early 1970s are the backbone of the Maoist regroupment. They are the ideological backwash of that period, with each tendency--OL-Guardian and the RU--reflecting tendencies of middle-class radicalism within the SDS. They recruit, in general, from the more demoralized and conservative elements of the present period.

The Maoist milieu is a petty-bourgeois current in the workers movement. Yesterday, a primitive expression of such a current denied the revolutionary potential of the working class and adapted to the most extreme and ultra-left expressions of social layers who rebelled, in the absence of a conscious workers radicalization. Today they recognize the revolutionary potential of the working class and in one way or another reject the independent demands and struggles of the specially oppressed sectors of the working class: the oppressed nationalities, women, gays, etc. They fundamentally deny the struggles of Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Chicanos and women the immense strategic weight they have in the class struggle as whole. In 1974 they make the same mistake of 1969, but on the other side of the coin. Justifying and solidifying this perspective is their adherence to Maoist-Stalinism, its bizarre and metaphysical "dialectics" and its anti-revolutionary, anti-working class foreign and domestic policies. They politically adapt their own pessimistic perspective--a product of their inability to grasp the present radicalization and its implications, here and internationally--to the class collaborationist policies of Peking, coating it with the seal of approval of a "revolutionary" power.

5. This is not to say that sincere rebels don't become Maoists. Radicals who have no contact with our movement; those who are genuinely struck by the awe and scope of China's revolution and take for good coin the leadership that retarded its coming and threatens its existence, etc. represent healthy forces who may, over the course of struggle, be broken from Maoism. Some of them will eventually be recruited to our movement. What should, I think, be understood, is this: fundamentally, the RU--most crudely--and, because of that, the OL more subtly each objectively exploit the absence of mass political actions that shake the government. These groups oppose the character of and do not have a perspective to build such independent mobilizations, whose reality enlivens and confirms on the most concrete basis... our program. The lack of mass action breeds a generalized cynicism among young people--a key part of which is also a growing and continued rejection of the capitalist system--which lends credibility to the unprincipled, low level, anti-revolutionary politics of the Maoists.

6. On the other hand, in this period, the breakthrough of real actions, the impact of our propaganda campaign, the deepening process of a radicalization fed by Watergate, the energy crisis--inflation and recession at once--etc., produces every day a larger and larger element of angry young people who represent the best of their generation and who more and more listen to the principled, revolutionary socialist politics of the Trotskyist movement.

The best of the Maoists will be chipped away from their organizations most of all by the tests of the class

struggle, and their witnessing and agreeing with the objective political example of a revolutionary socialist vanguard in action.

The logic of the Maoists is to continue picking up such elements, including the more backward of the newly radicalized, to sift them through, and most of all, in their majority, to carry out the process of building the "new party." This is the pattern no matter how much bile their servility to Peking, the more privileged workers, or any other force they adapt to, demands.

### The Emergence of Maoism in the Black Movement

Much, I think, of the view expressed so far can be applied to a layer of Black radicals around the African Liberation Support Committee and the Congress of African People, and other groups.

The process through which formerly anti-Marxist nationalists have come to see the need for more all-encompassing revolutionary perspective is contradictory.

On the one hand, as we have noted in the past, such a development represents an authentic attempt to grapple with the necessity for a strategy for revolution.

On the other, the political context in which this attempt has emerged is one in the ebb of the nationalist struggles of the 1960s and in a broader sense, over a whole period of deepening leadership crisis in the Black community.

That crisis flows from the lack of leadership which can organize the latent militancy forged by the class and national oppression of Black people. Concretely, the tasks and perspectives of independent political action by the Black community have not been realized. The nationalist demagoguery of reformist Democrats; the failure of "narrow" or cultural nationalism (which stressed whites as the enemy--and usually accompanied an inadequate perspective for significant political action) etc., have, made to some the insufficient political forms which the nationalism of the oppressed reflected itself through; synonymous with the revolutionary potential and content that has yet to realize itself in this period.

That is, many of these Black radicals grappling with Marxism have, in the process of coming to a class struggle perspective, rejected whole aspects of nationalism more or less in general.

We believe that the revolutionary socialist strategy demands not a rejection of nationalist struggle or "transcending it," but the understanding and leadership of it by the most consistent fighters for national liberation, independence and self-determination--the revolutionary Marxists.

The twists and turns of the nationalist movement in this country have produced a situation in which some Black nationalists who identify their own mistakes in strategy and tactics as nationalists with the concrete dynamic of nationalism. As these elements seek out Marxist explanations, the most attractive ones, given this predicament, are those which contain elements of anti-nationalism.

And the most persuasive anti-nationalist arguments can be found in the Maoist current, which identifies with a social revolution made by the Chinese, by a non-white people against colonialism; and, as in the OL, adapts to nationalism.

Thus, we find a situation where many Black nationalists discussing Marxism are becoming Maoists, becoming supporters of China (which provides aid to many "progressive" African states), and who, in so doing, strengthen, deepen, justify and confirm a general demoralization produced by the long term crisis of leadership in and ebb in action of the Black struggle. The revolutionary perspective we offer for the Black liberation struggle bases itself on the coming nationalist upsurge in the Black community. This struggle, which combines with and is a source of the class radicalization of Black workers may be seen by many of these forces as utopian.

This aspect of the turn towards Marxism by these elements can be seen in the evolution of the Congress of African People, headed by Amiri Baraka. A year ago, CAP was vehemently anti-Marxist and lent support to Black Democrats--while maintaining a paper position of advocacy of an independent Black political party. At this point in time, CAP's monthly newspaper, Unity and Struggle calls for "mastering Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-Tung thought." Baraka, in defending Marxism, invokes the names of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Ho, Kim Il Sung and Albania's Enver Hoxa. The articles in the paper are rife with the jargon of Maoism. Aside from such surface adherence to Maoism, CAP has flunked the test of the Boston crisis.

For every radical Black organization, for the present leadership of the Black community, as well as for all socialist organizations, the racist offensive in Boston is a key test. CAP's first response echoed the perspective of the Revolutionary Union! Since that first error, CAP has drawn back a bit... but the Maoist, anti-nationalist workerism it has all too hastily linked up to has reduced CAP's analysis of Boston to a conspiracy to divide the workers introduced by Gerald Ford. CAP states the decisive issue in Boston is why there are poor schools in "working class communities." While citing its opposition to the racist offensive, CAP liquidates the necessity for the oppressed Black nationality to struggle for its democratic right to attend any school, anywhere, against the racist offensive designed to secure white privilege.

The paper support to the concept of an independent Black political party--a correct position--has been junked as CAP has unevenly come to grips with the reality of class oppression, an unevenness that is underscored by its weak and erroneous understanding of the national crisis in Boston.

The Youth Organization for Black Unity, a key force in the ALSC, has raised the demand of "quality education for all" and has stated a muted opposition to busing and support for an undifferentiated community control approach--which includes "the right to attend a quality school in one's own neighborhood." That is, YOBU dovetails the anti-desegregation perspective of the RU--while not coming out with a blatantly chauvinist outlook.

Unlike the Maoists, we do not believe the racism of white workers will be overcome through persuasion or the propaganda efforts of "communists." Such a reversal requires a show of force by the mobilization of the Black community, which, in inspiring its allies in the working class in general, can smash any racist mobilization, and, through the process of defeating and demoralizing such a movement, in the context of social crisis, win the support of white workers in opposing the common capitalist enemy. The Trotskyist perspective bases itself on our duty to support and extend--where possible, initiate--the independent mobilization of the oppressed nationalities and their allies. Lacking such a political perspective, the Maoists both underestimate the scope of national oppression and the tasks necessary to overcome it and overestimate the grip of racism on white workers. The Black Maoist milieu links up to this by, at one level or another, withdrawing from the fight against the racist backwardness of white workers and abstaining from mobilizing the Black community for fear of "exacerbating" division in the working class. "White communists" can go into South Boston from now until doomsday, but the white workers whom Trotsky aptly called "beasts" will not be broken from racism and the anti-working class movement they are now part of in Boston until sufficient power is galvanized in the streets to crush their hopes of victory over the Black community. The Black Maoists evade this all-decisive challenge.

The general tendency to withdraw from the championing of nationalist struggle and demands by Black and other oppressed nationality militants runs counter to the direction in which the next wave of struggle of oppressed nationalities points. Such a reality that we can point to with our perspectives and program will win the ear of the most consistent revolutionary nationalists, the least soured and most serious elements. This will not be a majority of those involved in the current turn towards China. The likelihood is that this general layer will go through the experience of grappling with Marxism and, in their immediate large number who stay political, will adhere, for the time being,

to Maoism.

All the other pressures and tensions that have forged the Maoist milieu in general are part of the dynamic which make Maoism attractive to many of the nationalist minded militants.

The abruptness of the shift towards Maoism, in CAP, for instance, represents, as well, an all too hasty attempt by leading elements to force the conclusion of which tendency in the workers movement should be taken up. There are a number of references in CAP's paper about resignations, expulsions, etc. While CAP--and the ALSC--are the organizational reflections of the drift towards Maoism, such phenomena exists on a local level as well. There exists the real possibility that a too quick embrace of Maoism will have an opposite effect than one that is sought by the harder Maoists; that is, a more open, critical perspective. The successful sales of our pamphlet Maoism vs. Marxism to many revolutionary nationalist militants is an indicator of this. As well, the Trotskyists are increasingly recognized as a tendency within the Black liberation struggle. Our unavailability poses the real questions of revolutionary strategy for working class struggle and Black liberation to all but the most die-hard sectarian Maoists of the oppressed nationalities. In fact, we are part of this discussion about the direction of the "turn" towards Marxism. It is not the property of the Maoists.

Above all, it will be the living confirmation in action of the coming struggles of the Black community--including Black workers in the class struggle--that will break down the barriers of pessimism and demoralization that bind many of these militants to the anti-nationalist, petty-bourgeois, dead-end radicalism of the Maoists and Maoism.

It should also be noted that a similar development is occurring among certain Chicano nationalist elements as well in Colorado (where the Crusade for Justice, reflecting this, had its newspaper reprint articles from The Call, the newspaper of the October League) and in California.

An important way of assessing this development is that it is part of a whole historical process in which different layers and elements of the Black liberation struggle from its inception have sought out radical political explanations for the overturning of racist oppression. The "Maoist" turn that involves some militants today is an episode in that process, out of which new lessons will emerge. One of those will be, no matter the actual number that go to Maoism, the inadequacy of the Chinese-Stalinist perspective. That lesson will be conveyed in practice by the counterposed examples of our movement, and the expression of it by the recruitment to and development of some of these forces in the Young Socialist Alliance.



## The Revolutionary Student Brigade

The RSB is our most visible opponent on the campus, and, through the Revolutionary Union, is attempting to regain a foothold for Maoism in the student movement.

The RSB is an unprincipled front dominated and launched by the RU. It has a "shadow" program--RU's--and is formally bound by a two point statement of unity. This statement broadly supports struggles of "oppressed people at home and abroad."

The RSB claims to have 50 or so campus chapters.

The RSB is facing a big test over Boston. It has been scandalized by the RU's outright lunge for racist white workers. On the big questions that come up in the class struggle, the RSB will be stuck holding the bag; it does not pretend to have or want a program.

It organizes itself on the basis of substituting itself, its meetings, etc., for living campaigns and genuine united fronts. This is reminiscent of the Students for a Democratic Society, on which the RSB patterns itself and whose central mistakes it repeats rather accurately.

While many RSB members are relatively new to politics, the organization itself speaks in the language of the 1960s, parrots the ultraleft and sectarian errors of SDS and fashions itself as the "anti-imperialist student movement," much as SDS saw itself as "the movement."

SDS reflected an element of spontaneist rebellion on the campuses. It drew its real strength not from its own strategy or tactics--neither of which ever came together as a serious program--but because of the mass energy and power of the Black liberation struggle and the antiwar movement. SDS's confrontation politics, its jungle-like internal life, ungoverned by a democratically arrived at program and organizational principles, repelled thousands and thousands of activists and rebets who passed through it for a period. The big mass actions of the antiwar movement, the drive of the Black student movement, the emergence of the women's liberation movement--which initially took roots in SDS through opposition to the male chauvinism which characterized much of the group's leadership attitudes--posed the question of radical organization. As well, SDS emerged over a period in which the revolutionary potential and strategic role of the working class was rejected. The lessons and examples of principled revolutionary Marxist politics had been dismissed along with Stalinism as "the old left." The prosperity of the 1950s that objectively pacified working class struggle and the cold war which based its ability to purge America of radicals as a result of it, left a legacy which sprouted in the forms and dynamics of the 1960s radicalization.

Such an objective situation--with a key part of it the smallness of Trotskyist forces--will not occur again. The RU and the RSB cannot suck from its thumb a finished political period. In fact, the hundreds of cadre the Trotskyist movement has developed from its recruitment in that period are the real gains the working class leadership in this country has made, and continues, periodically, to make, as radicals and activists from the 1960s and early 1970s join the YSA.

The RSB's schemes and campaigns--from "throwing out the bum" to narrow initiatives around daycare, tuition hikes, cutbacks, etc.--are not based on a real perspective to lead the student movement. The RSB's silence or ambiguity on international questions--the detente, for instance--or on the big questions of the Black struggle, women's liberation--abortion and the ERA, etc.--place it on tenuous ground.

The RSB is fundamentally designed as a recruitment pool for the RU, posed as an "independent anti-imperialist youth group."

The utilization of self-criticism in the organization, the personalization of political differences serves to gel an anti-political attitude. By self-criticism I do not mean the healthy process by which Leninists assess work and program to advance clarity and to move forward. That kind of attitude is forged in objective political light, in which democracy and centralism are meshed to the benefit of united decisive action. It is not a "point on the agenda" but part of a living method embodied in the norms, traditions and principles of our movement.

The self-criticism these neophyte Maoists practice is from the Stalin school, where buck-passing and finger-pointing from the leadership down root out the bumbler who must take the blame for the fundamental strategic errors of the program of Stalinism.

In Maoist China, self-criticism is the method introduced by and employed for the benefit of the Stalinist bureaucracy. It is mass control, where personal habits, attitudes, ideas--as well as the hint of political difference--are subject to social scrutiny to snuff out dissent. On an individual level, it is designed to forge a character and personality subservient to an omniscient bureaucratic apparatus.

This method, outside of China, is a crude caricature. At least--and at most--the Chinese people have a workers state, albeit deformed, as a salutary strength. The American Maoists have Bob Avakian and Mike Klonsky. For the RSB, which engages in this practice, self-criticism is a process by which the group sifts out the most inquisitive, curious and independent-minded, blunting and putting a question mark over initiative and self-confidence. The tendency is for political differences and questions to be

resolved in battles which reduce the loser to varying levels of insecurity. The organizational relationship between the RU and the RSB allows for the RSB to meekly differ because the political context in which it operates is geared towards the pushing out of healthier elements who over a period could not stomach the RU's perspective.

Part of that perspective is the political belief that socialist organization is too "sophisticated" a form for students--that "anti-imperialist unity" is adequate.

We counterpose to this a perspective for a mass socialist youth organization geared to lead the student movement and youth in general. The rubric "anti-imperialist" is itself a joke. To be consciously "anti-imperialist" in America, the heartland of imperialism, one must be by necessity "anti-capitalist"--a revolutionary, a socialist. The RSB's concept is a catch-all which never cites what sort of society a revolution--if a revolution is necessary--is geared to bring about. Vacillating between ultraleftism and opportunism, bound to the RU in a dishonest relationship--if it were open and honest, it would even more narrow the appeal of the group--the RSB lacks a principled, political foundation to stand on.

But because the lessons of independent mass action which confirm our political method and strategy have become dimmed over the past several years among students, the RSB is likely for a time, to pick up recruits and grow. Some of these forces will come in areas where the RU does not exist and the directly debilitating influence of a Maoist-Stalinist's presence does not exert itself. These layers--a minority, it should be added--will be more open to our program and perspectives.

But among another layer, whose fundamental backwardness and conservatism seeks to "left cover" in the 1960s lingo and style of the RSB, plus the hint of identification with China--the RSB does not consider itself Maoist--this organization has a different appeal. It is among this formally uncrystallized, but real opponent layer that the RSB is providing an organizational framework. The logic for those who remain in it is to harden up, to find ideological and organizational expression for their disagreement with the perspective of the revolutionary socialist politics of our movement.

This process is exacerbated by the busing crisis in Boston.

The RSB has shouldered up to the racists; the semi-voluntary gag rule of the RU is no excuse for their pandering to white backwardness. In the November issue of Fight Back the article describing the situation in Boston never once characterizes the anti-busing offensive as "racist." They are abstaining from building or endorsing

December 14, as was the case on November 30. It appears, however, all the Maoists may group around an "anti-imperialist" contingent, the "Fred Hampton Brigade," through which they hope to indict the "Black bourgeoisie" involved in the action. The Guardian has called for such a perspective while endorsing the 14th.

As a modest, but nonetheless important part of our work to explain the plight of and defend the Black community of Boston against the racist anti-busing offensive we should make a point of posing the question to the RSB: whose side are you on?

Whether through letters in campus papers, seeking out united front type activities around the busing crisis, through sales of our press or campus forums to explain the situation, we should utilize the position of the RSB to explain the fraud of "democratic" rhetoric which surrounds the "anti-forced busing" movement. The RU and the RSB are the loudest echo of bourgeois ideology in the left on this question. They reflect the pressure of the racist, capitalist offensive against the accumulated gains of the civil rights movement.

Our job of winning allies to and helping to lead and organize the struggle for Black liberation requires a merciless expose of the "radical" elements that give "revolutionary" legitimacy to the ideology and practice of the enemy class.

We draw the sharpest line of demarcation on this question. Such an attitude on our part is an indicator of the refusal of the YSA to bow an inch to the campaign of racist mobilization and terror in Boston. It is a reflection of our confidence in the need for and capacity of the Black community to struggle against the racists and our profound belief that such a struggle, in the process of deepening economic crisis, must and will win white workers to its side. This confidence is in stark contrast to the frenzied middle-class pessimism that marks the RU and RSB's groveling before the bluster of Boston's bigots as a bridge to "working class unity."

While get-rich-quick schemes may win some initial gains to the RSB, as an organization they have no real future in the United States. While some sincere rebels will be momentarily drawn in by the group--through its initiatives, etc.--the best of them will not be kept long, under the hammer blows of the class struggle and when confronted with our political example.

The period of general demoralization among many students--who continue to radicalize and rebel at the same time--is the period in which the RSB can grow. The tests of program--which the RSB flunks daily--are demonstratively revealed in the major struggles, in the big mass actions and

campaigns that are now prepared by the increasing and rapid decay of the capitalist system. Boston is one such struggle. The corner out of the "lull" has not yet been turned. But the economic crunch that is coming begins to forcefully break away parts of the cynical crust on the student movement. That crust, the "lull," the adaptation to its moods, is the cement that holds the RSB together.

As that crust breaks, so too will the minimal attraction of the RSB--not, of course, without struggle, splits, or inevitable violence directed at radical opponents.

Our attitude to the RSB is one of both seeking out genuine united fronts in real actions and campaigns; of attempting to win the most healthy elements away from the pole the RU has provided--and through seeking and utilizing all tools available for the clash of ideas, to isolate their perspective and curtail their limited influence, both of which exist as an objective obstacle in the path of the forward motion of the student movement.

We should likewise be watchful of any sectarianism towards the RSB, especially newer members with whom serious discussion and joint work may make some impact. On some campuses, RSB initiatives may lack the tendency towards ultraleftism and sectarian ingroupishness which are their hallmark. The RSB at this point in time seems to be groping for a campaign. Such a campaign may emerge, as it has on some campuses, around daycare. With RU sympathizers in the Union for Radical Political Economists--as well as unaffiliated radicals in that organization--the RSB has sought to initiate teach-ins on the economy. As well, the group has attempted to launch narrow fights around cutbacks. All of these general areas bring them into contact with the YSA. Our political program, sense of outreach, our press (a comparison between Fight Back and the YS speaks volumes about the seriousness of the group), etc. are great sources of strength in the contention with the RSB for campus leadership in these, and any other areas.

#### The Perspectives for a New Maoist Party

From our experience over the past couple of years, we know the Maoists are a growing force. Such a growth, we note, exists in a certain period and responds to both the needs of limited, well-defined layer of radicals and reflects key international developments. The ability of a party to form remains, though clearly even the hollowest of unity between the major tendencies is most unlikely.

Emerging from sect-like obscurity as the mass movement ebbed, the Maoists increasingly attempt to pose themselves on a political plane.

A first wave of the regroupment process has bitten the dust. The RU appears to be following, as its Maoist foes

state, the path of the Progressive Labor Party into anti-nationalist sectarianism amidst a spectrum of miniature front groups. The completion of such an evolution may take several more years, but the RU's dogmatic refusal to side with the Black community in Boston is the clearest indicator of this trend.

In reality, this leaves the Guardian-October League and some former Black nationalist groups as well as some Puerto Rican, Chicano and Asian elements turning towards Maoism as appearing to form the nucleus of a "real" Maoist party in the United States. How long that creation will take remains to be seen, although the process set in motion by CAP's rapid embrace of Maoism, the calls for the quick formation of a new party by the Guardian and the OL, and the pressure to do so before the RU calls its party into existence are factors that should be kept in mind.

Such a party would probably be larger, numerically and momentarily, but not in authentic, seasoned revolutionary activists, than our movement. It would face the potential chaos unleashed in China by both Mao's death and the fight for power, as well as the eruption of turmoil as result of the long term affects of anti-working class bureaucratic domestic policy.

They face the constant tests imposed by Peking's seeking out of "progressive bourgeoisie" in the most unlikely places. They face the attrition of the American class struggle; for instance the expulsion from unions, the price paid for juvenile adventures in the labor movement. They face the rise of women's struggles, the unfolding revolutionary dynamic of nationalism. They face an unprecedented radicalization whose inexorable drive towards the question of power does not afford the 40 years of seasoning in the politics of class collaboration that is the heritage of the Moscow Stalinists. They must forge from the raw a bureaucratic method and a party apparatus in the real world, not in the editorial offices of the Guardian and the living rooms of neophyte October Leaguers.

Try as they may, they cannot deny the new historical relationship of forces between themselves and the Trotskyists.

They are babes in the wood compared to the American CP. And as China continues its "right" turn, more and more of their revolutionary veneer is dulled by the reality of such a posture.

On an international plane, the Maoists have no real communist parties, just ultraleft nuclei at best. They are a generally declining tendency in Europe, Latin America and Asia.

The Chinese bureaucracy competes for favors directly with the bourgeoisie, not through the intermediary of the mass CP--or American CP--which seeks to give it aid and comfort.

These are just some of the reasons--along with, importantly, the great industrial strength of the Soviet Union compared to China--why the Moscow Stalinists remain the most serious, consistent and dangerous foes of the revolutionary perspective. They are some--among many--reasons why in the United States the CP and Young Workers Liberation League, our major opponents, are the force to whom we pay the most political attention.

It is in this context that we view the Maoists, that we should familiarize ourselves with their press, especially the Guardian, their ideas, their perspectives, etc.

The YSA, I think, should step up its local and national educational efforts in polemically dealing with the Maoists.

We should have classes not only that deal with their evolution as a current, but take up some key positions. Most importantly, I believe, among these questions are those of strategy and tactics for the struggles of oppressed nationalities. We should familiarize ourselves with how the Maoists view their politics and how we understand what it all really means.

We should up-date through a YS pamphlet our arguments with the Maoists--specifically the RSB; what the student movement really was and is, and what a revolutionary strategy and organization really is.

When RSBers or other ex-Maoists join the YSA, we should encourage local campus forums on such a transition, articles in the YS about the differences between the two perspectives, etc. Contact classes, where appropriate, can take up a variety of questions raised by Maoist strategy.

There is a general, healthy curiosity among young people about China and its revolution--a curiosity, it should be added, that asks the very familiar question of "is bureaucracy inevitable?" This curiosity is open to revolutionary socialist defense of the workers state that calls for the overthrow of the system of deformations which have characterized it since birth.

We identify with the victory of the Chinese revolution and solidarize with its gains. We grant no monopoly to the Maoists whose slavish adulation of the bureaucracy en-

dorses a perspective that held back the revolution's victory and shapes its possible doom. We should be familiar with the history of the Chinese revolution to date as well as the more glaring anti-Marxist aspects of Maoist "philosophy."

We should be wary of speculation, of course. The evolution of the period we are in is unpredictable as are the international events which mold it. Chronological bets are unwise. But of this we can be certain. No matter which strain, the Maoists have hitched themselves to a political perspective whose unconditional servility to a counter-revolutionary bureaucratic elite merely underscores their lack of perspective for or confidence in domestic and international revolutionary possibilities. Given that, we should take them seriously, as they are attempting and have some forces to build a party. But dedication is nothing without a revolutionary perspective.

The big events which confirm our program in the tests of action in the eyes of the masses will also defeat, demoralize and disqualify the Maoists. On the day-to-day hurdles of the class struggle, against which the most serious rebels measure all tendencies, our record is spotless. The question of impeachment, the fight for democratic rights, revolutionary electoral activity, etc., we stand alone. The Maoist's record anticipates their crumbling in the decisive battles to come, as does the shoddy sloganeering that passes for theory and perspective on any number of issues.

The 1976 socialist election campaign combines a whole set of tests faced by revolutionaries in general and puts forward our movement in the public eye, more than ever before. Such an opportunity to advance the perspectives for the relief of human misery stands in sharp distinction to Maoist mindlessness about the dangers of "electoralism." They fundamentally lack the political confidence in their own program necessary to bring it to the masses. They become incidental in the real, political world. Such an objective pressure, however, may link the Maoists to some sort of coalition campaign or "critical support" to a "progressive" bourgeois third party.

Against the Maoist-Stalinists, the Moscow Stalinists and others who fraudulently claim to be the practitioners of Leninism, "we must assert as a matter of course that our party is going to lead the revolution," as James P. Cannon stated in 1946.

For us, that means the forging of the best elements of this generation into the ranks of the Young Socialist Alliance.

December 1, 1974