

# Which Side Are YOU On?

REPLY TO THE OPPORTUNISTS OF THE  
REVOLUTIONARY UNION, OCTOBER LEAGUE,  
AND THE GUARDIAN NEWSPAPER

BY

THE LEAGUE FOR PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

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THE REVOLUTIONARY UNION'S  
"NEW TURN"

It is our fortune that the Revolutionary Union (RU), in its articles in the April and May, 1974, issues of Revolution ("V I Lenin" and "Build the New Party to Lead the Masses") has provided us with the opportunity to clarify the two-line struggle within the communist movement -- the struggle between Marxism-Leninism and opportunism -- reflected specifically in the struggle to build a new communist party versus the bowing to the spontaneous mass movement. And it is equally fortunate that communists have access to the invaluable knowledge of Lenin's fight against opportunist groups just like the RU, clearly summarized in What Is To Be Done?

The article on Lenin states:

*. . . it's more important than ever to be totally clear about the essence of what we inherit from Lenin.*

We absolutely agree! In What Is To Be Done?, Lenin, for the first time, exposed the ideological roots of opportunism, showing how they consisted in worship of the spontaneous working class movement and the belittling of the role of socialist consciousness; he showed the importance of theory, and of the party as a leading force for the spontaneous movement; he uncovered the ideological foundations of a party; in short, Lenin's great work meant a complete ideological defeat for Economism, for the ideology of opportunism. But the

RED STAR PUBLICATIONS  
P.O. BOX 40417 STATION C  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA. 94110

RU has neither inherited, nor do they defend, Leninism.

How did Lenin characterize opportunism?

When we speak of fighting opportunism, we must never forget a feature that is characteristic of present-day opportunism in every sphere, namely, its vagueness, diffuseness, elusiveness. An opportunist, by his very nature, will always evade formulating an issue clearly and decisively, he will always seek a middle course, he will always wriggle like a snake between two mutually exclusive points of view and try to 'agree' with both and to reduce his differences of opinion to petty amendments, doubts, good and pious suggestions, and so on. (One Step Forward, Two Steps Back, 1904)

They take Lenin's famous quote "without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement": And here's how the RU improvises on it:

But he also emphasized that there could be no revolutionary theory without 'the real moving force of history - the revolutionary struggle of classes'.

The RU abstracts the latter quote from an entirely different article, "More on the Duma Ministry" (Collected Works, Vol II, p.79), which itself is taken from a larger sentence which reads:

What is the main flaw in all these opportunist arguments? It is that in fact they substitute the bourgeois theory of 'united', 'social' progress for the socialist theory of the class

struggle as the only real driving force of history. According to the theory of socialism, i.e. of Marxism . . . the real driving force of history is the revolutionary class struggle; reforms are a subsidiary produce of this struggle . . .

What is Lenin's point? It is that theory is based on the objective class struggle, the motive force of history. And it is from this that we must draw our theory. The RU is saying nothing more than "what even schoolboys know" -- that there must be a reality in order for it to be analyzed. Stalin addressed himself to the same kind of opportunists:

. . . I have read Plekhanov's articles in which he analyses What Is To Be Done? This man has either gone quite off his head, or else is moved by hatred and enmity. I think both causes operate. I think that Plekhanov has fallen behind the new problems. He imagines he has the old opponents before him, and he goes on repeating in the old way: "social consciousness is determined by social being," "ideas do not drop from the skies." As if Lenin said that Marx's socialism would have been possible under slavery and serfdom. Even schoolboys know now that "ideas do not drop from the skies." The point is, however, that we are now faced with quite a different issue. We assimilated this general formula long ago and the time has now



come to analyze this general problem. What interests us now is how separate ideas are worked up into a system of ideas (the theory of socialism), how separate ideas, and hints of ideas, link up into one harmonious system -- the theory of socialism, and who works and links them up. Do the masses give their leaders a program and the principles underlying the program, or do the leaders give these to the masses? If the masses themselves and their spontaneous movement give us the theory of socialism, then there is no need to take the trouble to safeguard the masses from the pernicious influence of revisionism, terrorism, Zubatovism and anarchism: "the spontaneous movement engenders socialism from itself." If the spontaneous movement does not engender the theory of socialism from itself (don't forget that Lenin is discussing the theory of socialism), then the latter is engendered outside of the spontaneous movement, from the observations and study of the spontaneous movement by men who are equipped with up-to-date knowledge. Hence, the theory of socialism is worked out "quite independently of the growth of the spontaneous movement," in spite of that movement in fact, and is then introduced into that movement from outside, correcting it in conformity with its content, i.e., in conformity with the objective requirements of the proletarian class struggle.

The conclusion (practical deduction) to be drawn from this is as follows: we must raise the proletariat to a consciousness of its true class interests, to a consciousness of the socialist ideal, and not break this ideal up into small change, or adjust it to the spontaneous movement.

We quote at length from Stalin's letter because it so clearly sums up what the opportunists wish to ignore: theory is developed independently from the spontaneous movement in accordance with the objective laws of the class struggle. What the RU doesn't want to do, however, is draw any theory from the class struggle. Why else would they need to rewrite Lenin?

Returning to Lenin's emphasis on theory, here is what he said, quoted accurately:

Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. This thought cannot be insisted upon too strongly at a time when the fashionable preaching of opportunism goes hand in hand with an infatuation for the narrowest forms of practical activity.

It was precisely in opposition to the belittling of the importance of consciousness, of socialist theory, to the negation of the true significance of theory, that Lenin was speaking. What makes the RU's distortions seem purposeful is their deliberate quoting out of context, refusal to state sources, and the cutting up of

quotes to fit their own opportunist ideas, ideas that are the very subject of Lenin's criticism and hatred.

It is impossible to understand the significance of the differences between Lenin and the opportunists without reference to the party-building history, which the RU sadly reduces to dates and events. What was the context in which Lenin was writing? The St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, which Lenin formed in 1895, had marked a new stage in the Russian movement -- the start of the unity of Marxism with the working class movement. The League was the embryo of a revolutionary proletarian party in Russia, its formation being followed by that of Marxist organizations in most industrial centers. In 1898, the first attempt was made to unite these organizations, which were scattered ideologically and organizationally throughout Russia, into one centralized, revolutionary political party of the proletariat. The Economists were the principal opponents of the creation of such a party, and it was against them that Lenin directed his main blows. This important struggle is summed up in What Is To Be Done?

True to opportunism, the RU does not come straight out and oppose the need for a party. Instead they veil their attacks by leaving out this important pre-party history and reducing the struggle between Lenin and the Economists to wanting a party with members "who acted simply as 'trade union secretaries' instead of 'tribunes of the people' saying that the tasks of communists was to take up every struggle against oppression . . ." As with the

example of revolutionary theory, the RU refused to state the difference between communist tasks and reform work, refuses to state what is really primary, namely, to bring political consciousness to the workers and build a communist party. Why? Because what the RU really wants is a party based on a mass reform movement.

*The "Economists" no longer dared openly to contest the need for a political party of the working class. But they considered that it should not be the guiding force of the working class movement, that it should not interfere in the spontaneous movement of the working class, let alone direct it, but that it should follow in the wake of this movement, study it and draw lessons from it. (History of the CPSU (B), p.35)*

How else can we account for RU's distortion of Lenin, who was so clear on the importance of theory and the need for a revolutionary party:

*The role of vanguard fighter can be fulfilled only by a party that is guided by the most advanced theory. (What Is To Be Done?)*

Listen to how the RU tries to cover their opportunism by admitting the need for a party in the most vague, diffuse, and elusive terms:

*Lenin's battle for the party was against those who denied that the real aim of the masses' struggles all through history*



*has been for their own emancipation, and that Marxism is the ideology of the proletariat, born in struggle. He fought those who simply 'declared' the party in name, and showed how a real advanced, organized detachment of the working class had to be created through struggle.*

And:

*This party was not just a great idea born from Lenin's head. It developed in close connection with the mass movement and the fight against opportunism to develop Marxism to serve the mass movement.*

Having distorted Lenin to justify their anti-party views, the RU is now trying to give the appearance that Lenin too would oppose the building of a party now. The fact is that Lenin's opponents called him a dogmatist and over and over said that he was overemphasizing the role of consciousness. We hear this same cry from the RU today, who understands Marxism as an encyclopedia on the mass movement rather than as a scientific tool to overthrow class society.

Let us briefly summarize a few more examples of how the RU distorts Lenin.

(1) "Lenin's main contribution ... came from thoroughly understanding the works of Marx and Engels, from carefully examining the concrete conditions of his day, and from a great ability to learn from the people". We hear once again the view that theory must slavishly follow and never step ahead of the workers or the movement. Does this bear any resemblance to the materialist theory of knowledge? To hold that knowledge can stop at the lower, perceptual stage, is one error.

But the RU does worse. They would have us believe that Lenin failed to transform perceptual knowledge into rational knowledge, and apply the knowledge of the laws of the objective world to change the world.

(2) "He declared that the 'flesh and blood' of Marxism was that the political struggle and the economic struggle had to be welded 'into one integral whole' and that the final aim was the overthrow of the czarist autocracy and all forms of exploitation and oppression". First, the RU never makes clear how Lenin's interpretation of political and economic struggle differed from the Economists' interpretation. This is no minor point, for it was around this very question that clear lines were drawn. It was the economists who used phrases like linking the economic struggle with the political, raising the economic to the level of politics, etc. It was Lenin who stated that politics has to be primary, politics meaning the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Second, the overthrow of the czarist autocracy was not the final aim, but the minimum program of the RSDLP at the Second Congress in 1903 (History of the CPSU (B), p.41), a task to be achieved before the overthrow of the capitalist system. The RU wishes to make all political tasks purely utopian and relegate them to one finale when all forms of oppression will 'someday' be ended (we dare not ask the RU when and by whom). Third, because of the RU's practice of borrowing at random bits and pieces, we cannot determine the original quote

from Lenin, or the context in which it was written. This is true throughout the entire article. The RU's intention is none other than to confuse people. Lenin summed it up well:

*In falsifying Marxism in opportunist fashion, the substitution of eclecticism for dialectics is the easiest way of deceiving the masses; it gives an illusory satisfaction; it seems to take into account all sides of the process, all tendencies of development, all the conflicting influences, and so forth, whereas in reality it presents no integral and revolutionary conception of the process of social development at all. (The State and Revolution, 1917)*

(3) ". . . the root of all revisionism, no matter what form it takes, is 'lack of faith in the masses, fear of their independence, trepidation before their revolutionary energy instead of thorough and unstinting support for it'". The RU makes it appear that Lenin says that the root of revisionism is lack of faith in the masses. Lenin's quote about lack of faith in the masses is from "One of the Fundamental Questions of the Revolution" written in 1917. Speaking of the vacillation of the Socialist Revolutionaries who had control over the Soviets and who wished to pass up the opportunity to seize state power so as to bargain with the bourgeoisie, Lenin said:

*Lack of faith in the masses, fear of their independence, trepidation before their revolutionary energy instead of thorough and unstinting support for it -- this is where the S.R. and Menshevik leaders have*

*sinned most of all. This is where we find one of the deepest roots of their indecision, their vacillation . . . (Collected Works, Vol. XXV, p.370)*

The roots of opportunism and revisionism have been described by Lenin; the capitalist system and bourgeois policy developed a petty-bourgeois ideology among many leaders of the working class movement which led to a vulgarization of Marxism-Leninism. One result of opportunist and revisionist thinking is a lack of faith in the masses, but the roots of revisionism and opportunism have a material basis. The RU is simply demonstrating once again its slavishness to the mass movement; its confusion between spearheads and tailfeathers. Eventually, like the old economists, the RU will graduate from having infinite faith in a mass movement which lacks communist consciousness, to having no faith in a mass movement when it has communist consciousness.

Having "prepared public opinion" by distorting Lenin almost beyond recognition, the RU proceeded to announce in the very next issue what they consider to be a new discovery: the objective conditions for building a party have just come into being.

*The point is that different forces have come to Marxism-Leninism from different directions and have gone to the working class and masses on that basis. In the course of this, practice has been*

accumulated, ideological struggle has been carried on and different tendencies have developed. So now it has become possible - in fact, it has become crucial - for the revolutionary forces to sum up these developments more systematically, conduct ideological struggle on that basis on a higher level and in a more concentrated way, and unite all who can be united around a Marxist-Leninist line and Programme, and in this way form the Party. (p.9)

What the RU is saying is that the objective conditions for the party have just come into being. But we know that the objective conditions for the party depend on the historical experience of the proletariat, which means that they are here and have been here for a long time. What doesn't exist are the subjective conditions, the presence of adequately trained leaders. The RU is doing what the Economists of Lenin's time did in a far more sophisticated way: they are shifting the blame for the relative backwardness of the communist movement upon the "absence of conditions" rather than honestly recognizing that the unpreparedness and shortcomings of the communists are principal. It is not, as the RU would have us believe, that the masses have been unprepared or that they have not had sufficient experience to engage in revolutionary struggle. This is nothing more than the theory of spontaneity, which the RU clings to as a justification for their reformist practice.

What does the RU say about the communist movement and the mass movement?

*It is important for all of us to*

*recognize that both the communist movement and the mass movement in the US have now come to an end of a period in their development, and both now stand at crucial cross-roads.* (p.1)

Let us examine this "new period" with respect to the communist movement. The RU argues that the old period was "characterized by the development of separate collectives and organizations working in relative isolation from one another." The new period is one "in which the various revolutionary forces and individuals must come together to form a single vanguard communist party that can lead the working class and the masses of people in general". It isn't bad enough that the RU belittles the experience of the masses. Here they turn and belittle the work of genuine communists. Surely the RU knows that communists have, for a long time, recognized the need to form a party and have actively and seriously worked towards that aim. They must have known it, because they have consistently and actively attacked those forces. Perhaps they have just realized that the lack of a party "has been a serious obstacle to the development of the struggle". But we don't think so. What they may have realized is that the development of a party will be a serious obstacle to them!

In Red Papers I the RU "stressed the need for establishing the party as soon as possible" but "at the same time we did not consider building the party the central task at that time, and that has been the case until now."



What reason do they give for not making it central then, but crucial now?

*A primary reason for this is that the CPUSA deserted to the camp of revisionism and imperialism, depriving the mass struggle of the leadership of a genuine communist party, a single general staff capable of uniting these struggles, systematizing the revolutionary ideas among the people and basing struggle firmly on the working class. (p.9)*

Just imagine! the RU believes that the CPUSA just deserted the proletariat! In fact, the struggle to build a new party, as opposed to reconstituting the old CPUSA, has existed since the early sixties, since the split in the international communist movement. Since it took the RU all these years to acknowledge the death of the CPUSA as a revolutionary party, shouldn't they at least spend a few years in mourning? What else do they say about the communist movement and its new period. They tell us that it is possible for the communist movement to sum up its accumulated practice and engage in ideological struggle and unite into a party. This is worse than a short-sighted view of history. The proletariat has had vast and sufficient practice for years. They have been ready and able to comprehend a scientific analysis of capitalism for years. The summation of that experience has been possible for years, if only those who call themselves communists would practice Marxism and not revisionism. The RU refuses to believe that history began before they emerged, and they continue to think that the tasks and abilities of communists emerged on the basis of their deep roots in the masses. Fortunately for

us, history will not stop with or for the RU!

It is clear that the RU is out of touch with history and the urgent tasks it presents us with. Still, they keep repeating the same basic truths known to common sense but apparently new to the RU:

*Reality is more complicated than a book, class struggle does not develop in a straight line or as quickly as all of us would like. Revolution, it turns out, will not be made in a day.*

We would like to thank the RU for its insight. And we would like to ask the RU: is this why you need Marxism-Leninism, to explain such drivel to the masses?

It is clear that all their reasoning about the new period and the communist movement rests on their view that the mass movement is also entering a new period.

*Among the masses, experience has been accumulated through struggle pointing to the fact that only so much can be gained through spontaneous struggles isolated from other struggles, and without a unified center to lead, unite and advance them. (p.9)*

What Is To Be Done? clearly summarizes the lessons of the trade union movement and the relation between consciousness and spontaneity. No revolutionary should be confused about the conclusion: Marxist-Leninist ideology developed independently of the spontaneous struggles of the working class; by itself

the workers' movement can develop only trade union consciousness. Further, the spontaneous struggles of the working class will never become genuine "class struggle" until led by a strong organization of revolutionaries, which must inject revolutionary consciousness into the working class movement and divert it from its spontaneous gravitation towards reforms and subordination to the bourgeoisie. What accumulated experience of the masses has pointed to these conclusions? Aren't these principles of Marxism which the RU should have learned simply by studying What Is To Be Done? Did the RU learn these ideas from the masses? This is tantamount to saying that the theory of consciousness, like consciousness itself, is learned from the masses. And this is precisely what the RU believes. If the case were otherwise, the RU would have concluded that what the masses are lacking are scientific socialism and revolutionary practice. We would have to ask the RU, do you believe that the masses understood the necessity of a communist party in the 1920's and the 1930's but then, somewhere along the line, the masses "forgot" the experience which lead them to that conclusion in the first place? Isn't this to say that the lack of a communist party is the fault of the masses?

As though the RU hasn't thrown up enough barriers to the formation of a party, they conclude their article with an extreme vulgarization of the party-building movement:

*There has been a wrong line in this country for several years that building the party can and should be done in isolation from the mass struggles,*

*that in fact mass struggle is useless and 'economist -- no advances can be made -- until the party is created. (p.9)*

We ask the RU: who has really put forth such a view? Who is really isolated from the masses? It is precisely the opportunists who isolate communism from the masses. We know that spontaneous struggles are not useless; they exist and recur independent of communism. They are an embryo of consciousness. The question we are faced with is what is the correct relation of communists to these struggles. We have answered this question more than once and we have never suggested that building the party will be done in isolation from the masses. We say that the next real advance of the spontaneous movement, an advance towards revolution, depends on the formation of a new communist party. We ask, what advances do you think will be made without such a party?

No, we won't "smirk and say that the RU has finally seen the error of its ways". (As if we were saying that the party "would have been possible under slavery and serfdom"). We say that the RU has not learned the errors and continues to belittle the role of theory and the task of communists. They will continue to remain isolated from everything except opportunism; we have no illusion about the RU seeing the error of its ways. In fact, in the same issue the RU continues its struggle against the formation of a new party in its critique of Charles Loren's book The Struggle for the Party. Responding to Loren's analysis of RU's opportunist

practice in a bay area Laborer's Caucus,  
RU states its own side:

*The caucus was running a slate for union office and certain dogmatists within the caucus, affiliated with the 'Communist League', insisted on putting out a lot of sectarian nonsense, including a call for the creation of a new vanguard party, in the leaflets supporting this slate. Several members of the caucus objected to this, feeling that instead, leaflets should emphasize the issues of concern to the mass of workers in the union. The RU shared this criticism. (p.19)*

Could there be a better statement of RU's opportunism, of how they look upon communist demands as dogmatic and sectarian! How they try at every opportunity to keep communism from reaching the workers! The more ammunition they give us, the sooner will the working class have its communist party, free from the dead weight of opportunism!

LETTER TO THE CALL  
January 12, 1974

Comrades,

Some time ago at the Guardian Forum it was stated that the question of the relation between the united front and the building of a communist party was of urgent concern to all communists. At another forum, the question was put to both the Revolutionary Union and the October League; which do you place primary, the building of a united front or the building of a party. The RU said the united front, the OL said the party.

At the same time, and increasingly in recent months, the OL has found itself quite at home with the RU while in vehement opposition to groups and organizations which place the building of the communist party first in importance. Your New Year's editorial, for example, contained no mention of the party-building task. The question naturally arises: do you say these words only to avoid what you know to be theoretically indefensible (the putting of the united front first)? Do you say these words only in order to maintain credibility in the communist movement while having no intention of applying this concretely in the determination of alliances and political unity? Or is it that you believe that this question, and the answer to it, are not very important in determining with whom you unite? We would like to state our position on this question in relation to the current exchange between the OL



and the Communist League. We think that this question, and the answer to it, is the concrete touchstone dividing Marxist-Leninists from opportunists and petty-bourgeois radicals.

What is communism? It is "a complete system of proletarian ideology and a new social system" (Mao). The ideology is expressed in programs, theories, plans, policies, etc., which move masses of people from a particular set of concrete conditions toward the goal of the communist social system, toward proletarian revolution and the abolition of classes. But right at present, in the particular set of concrete conditions we are given in this country, the principle task of the communist movement is not the abolition of classes, nor is it the seizure of state power. The principle task of the communist movement at present is the construction of a communist party; it is an anti-revisionist, party-building movement. We are aware that there are many united fronts on many different levels of the struggle, and that the uniting of the overwhelming majority of the people against the imperialist ruling class is not only desirable but a necessary task of a communist organization in its day to day work. But it should never be forgotten that the results of this work depend on the independence and initiative of the proletarian revolutionary line and the revolutionary organization of the proletariat. The line of putting the united front first is an opportunist line which finds no justification anywhere in the literature and historical practice of the international communist movement. An attack on the groups and organizations who are calling together

Marxist-Leninists to discuss their theoretical positions and build a communist party is an attack on the communist movement.

Moreover, your article on the CL's "sham congress" is sham polemics. It is a gross vulgarization of the Marxist-Leninist method of ideological struggle. It is dishonest. By putting quotes around "run by revisionists" you deliberately give the impression that CL said that China is run by revisionists. But no such quote has ever appeared in CL's press. Similarly, earlier in 1973, you gave the impression that CL said that the Allende government was "worse than fascist". This was also untrue. We ask, is this the way to conduct ideological struggle, to develop Marxist-Leninist theory? Or is this the way to obstruct such development? We look forward to your self-criticism, a clarification of your line, and your theories on the burning questions of the communist movement.

REPLY TO CARL DAVIDSON  
BY THE SAN FRANCISCO  
MARXIST-LENINIST ORGANIZATION  
March 1974

We would like to take this opportunity to answer Carl Davidson's slanderous attack on the movement to build a new, non-revisionist Communist Party. With his denunciation of Charles Loren's book, The Struggle For The Party, the principle issue facing the working class movement is now out in the open. Will the working class movement have the scientific, proletarian leadership of a new, non-revisionist Communist Party or will it continue to have bourgeois leadership? Will we continue to worship spontaneity in the form of the Guardian, the October League (OL), and the Revolutionary Union (RU); will we continue to conciliate to the hideously bankrupt CPUSA? Or will the conscious communist forces put their views on the table and struggle to build a new, non-revisionist Communist Party and adopt a Party program which represents the aspirations of the working class movement?

According to Davidson's article, forces that insist that the Party must be built by class conscious elements are violating Chairman Mao's mass line, "from the masses to the masses". If we were to swallow Davidson's argument, then we would have to conclude that Chairman Mao did not understand or follow the science of Marxism-Leninism, a science which demands that class

conscious Marxist-Leninists build the party, a science which resolutely opposes all those who argue that the party will "develop" spontaneously from the mass movement. If Davidson would only read What Is To Be Done? he would see that this is true.

When we examine the quotes Davidson uses, we see that Chairman Mao is writing at a time approximately twenty years after the founding of the Communist Party of China and at a time when the Party was leading more than 100 million people to victory! If Davidson had only read the first page of the Red Book, he might have realized that the "force at the core leading our cause forward is the Chinese Communist Party". If he had read further to the next quote, he would have seen:

*Without a revolutionary party, without a party built on the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary theory and the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary style it is impossible to lead the broad masses, the working class and broad masses of the people in defeating imperialism and its running dogs. (Quotations, p. 1)*

How is it possible to apply Chairman Mao's mass line when we have no Party to apply it? How can the core link up with the mass movement when there is no core?

If we accept Lenin's dictum that Marxism is a "concrete analysis of concrete conditions," then we must look at our present situation and ask, "What is missing?" Is it that the working class is unwilling to fight or lacking militancy? Not at all. At the time of this writing for example, most of San Francisco

is shut down by a strike of municipal employees, who in turn, are supported by bus drivers and mass transit workers. Clearly, the tide of militance has been rising in the working class for the last three and a half years. No, the U.S. working class is not now, nor has it historically been unwilling to fight. What is missing now and what has been missing for over thirty years is the class conscious core of advanced workers that Lenin refers to -- an advanced detachment able to "saturate the proletariat with the consciousness of its position and its tasks." That task is to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. Without the class conscious leadership of a non-revisionist party, the mass movement will continue to wander aimlessly from strike to strike unconscious of the ultimate aim of socialism and unable to get off the treadmill of economism and bourgeois ideology. The spontaneous mass movement which Davidson, the RU and OL glorify ad nauseam is a bourgeois movement. Without the leadership of a non-revisionist communist party to bring that movement under the wing of proletarian ideology, it will remain a bourgeois movement. It seems ridiculous to have to reiterate a point that Lenin and Stalin made clear over seventy years ago:

*'The working class spontaneously gravitates toward socialism, but the more widespread (and continuously revived in the most diverse forms) bourgeois ideology nevertheless spontaneously imposes itself upon the*

*working class still more.'* This is precisely why the spontaneous working class movement, while it is spontaneous, while it is not yet combined with socialist consciousness -- becomes subordinated to bourgeois ideology and gravitates towards such subordination. (Stalin, Collected Works, Vol. I, p. 99)

Communists, Lenin's phrase, must give conscious expression to what is now unconscious and therefore bourgeois.

Davidson apparently disagrees with Lenin, Stalin and Mao. He criticizes Loren for putting the leadership of the mass movement at the "bottom of the list" behind study of the Leninist classics and an exposure of revisionism. Worse, Davidson stoops to the lowest levels of demogogy by describing party-building as "another version of hippy radicalism -- 'first we got to get our own heads together'." If Davidson would only read Chairman Mao's "On Contradiction" and apply it to the present, he would see that he is putting out a bourgeois line, pure and simple. In any contradiction, one aspect is principal and decisive and the other aspect is secondary; thus if we have a dual objective -- forming a core and linking it to the mass movement -- one aspect must be principal. The aspect which is principal determines the character of the thing. As we have already painstakingly pointed out, a mass movement without any Marxist-Leninist core is a mass movement led politically, ideologically, if not organizationally, by the bourgeoisie. Chairman Mao points out that



only unmitigated mechanical materialists would argue that practice in the mass movement is always primary. "The creation and advocacy of revolutionary theory plays the principal and decisive role in those times of which Lenin said, 'Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement'." ("On Contradiction" p. 116)

So we see that the missing link is a class conscious core of advanced workers, a Marxist-Leninist party which can lead the working class and oppressed nationalities in the long and complex struggle to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. There are two lines on how to build such a party.

One line, represented by the Guardian, RU and OL, maintains that the party will "emerge" from the mass movement as it grows in size and militancy. Even though this line gives lip service to party-building, in practice it maintains that the party depends upon the further development of a militant mass movement. This line actually liquidates the task of building a new Communist Party. It condemns us to tail behind the mass movement, muttering such sophisms as, "Where does this party come from? Like correct ideas, it does not drop from the sky. It must be forged from mass struggles." (Guardian, April 25, 1973) The Guardian - RU - OL line would have us continue to muddle along like the person "who is flabby and shaky on questions of theory, who has a narrow outlook, who pleads the spontaneity of the masses as an excuse for his own sluggishness." (What Is To Be Done?, p. 155)

The other line -- the correct line -- maintains that the new Party must be built by the most class conscious forces and based in the most oppressed and exploited sections of the working class. This line holds that the contradiction between an unconscious mass movement and a conscious vanguard changes qualitatively in the process of the coming into being, development, and increasing political influence of a vanguard communist party. It becomes a different mass movement. The point is to resolve the contradiction between the vanguard and the masses in favor of proletarian leadership. Only in this way will we be capable of leading the broad masses to socialism. As Lenin said:

*The moral to be drawn is a simple one: if we begin with a solid foundation of a strong organization of revolutionaries, we can guarantee the stability of the movement as a whole and carry out the aims of both Social Democracy and of the trade unions proper. If, however, we begin with a broad workers' organization, supposed to be the most 'accessible' to the masses . . . we shall achieve neither one nor the other of these aims . . . (What Is To Be Done?, p. 147)*

The question is not one of the unwillingness to integrate with the working class as Davidson poses it. We know of no Communists(!) who are unwilling to take the ideas of scientific socialism to the proletariat. Rather the essential issue is the unwillingness of petty-bourgeois intellectuals to relinquish their freedom to dabble in the spontaneous movement and instead to join the struggle to

build a new Communist Party.

Concretely, we feel that the best way to build a new Party is to expose all revisionist influences and the bourgeois misleaders of the labor movement. This means we must defeat not only all forms of Trotskyites, the influence of the labor aristocracy, but also the CPUSA, and -- finally -- the conciliators of revisionism, namely, the RU, OL, Guardian, and yes, yourself, Mr. Davidson.

Davidson's essay is a concise statement of the Guardian's tendency to rationalize right opportunism. Following the leadership of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao, we believe that at any one time there can only be one central task. At present that central task is the construction of a communist party. In the early stages this is primarily a theoretical struggle. You can't have it both ways; you can't build the mass movement and the party at the same time. Unless you revise all of Marxism-Leninism, the party cannot "flow" out of the mass movement. The History of the CPSU (B) describes the similarities between Davidson's essay and the Economists of Russia in these terms:

*The Economists no longer dared openly to contest the need for a political party of the working class. But they considered that it should not be the guiding force of the working class movement, that it should not interfere with the spontaneous movement (our emphasis) of the working class, let alone direct it, but that it should follow in*

*the wake of this movement, study it and draw lessons from it.*

*(History of the CPSU (B), p.35)*

Yes, Mr. Davidson, we do have to get our heads together. We have to purge ourselves of our amateurishness. We have to build a non-revisionist Communist Party which can lead the working class and oppressed nationalities to the dictatorship of the proletariat. We know, of course, that this task will take years. But we must begin now. We must begin with the advanced workers "that every working class movement brings to the fore, those who can win the confidence of the masses, who devote themselves entirely to the education and organization of the proletariat, who accept socialism consciously." (Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. IV, p.280). We must not appeal to the masses as an excuse for our own slavishness. We must unite on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and in opposition to revisionism. Under the slogan "Marxist-Leninists Unite!", we urge the Guardian, RU and OL to attend the Congress to help build a new, non-revisionist Communist Party this fall.

To conclude, Comrade Stalin told us a long time ago that:

*Even schoolboys know that 'ideas do not drop from the skies'. The point is, however, that we are now faced with quite a different issue . . . What interests us now is how separate ideas are worked up into a system of ideas (the theory of socialism), how separate ideas, and hints of ideas,*

link up into one harmonious system - the theory of socialism, and who works and links them up . . . (The) theory of socialism is worked out 'quite independently of the growth of the spontaneous movement,' in spite of that movement in fact, and is then introduced into that movement from outside, correcting it in conformity with its content . . .

The conclusion (practical deduction) to draw from this is as follows: we must raise the proletariat to a consciousness of its true class interests, to a consciousness of the socialist ideal, and not break this ideal up into small change, or adjust it to the spontaneous movement. (Stalin, "Letter to M. Davitashvili", Selected Works, p.45)

CORRECTION

On pg. 29 there appears the sentence, "...we urge the Guardian, RU and OL to attend the Congress to help build a new, non-revisionist Communist Party this fall." The letter to the Guardian containing this invitation was written in March 1974 before the local Continuations Committee was formed. The League for Proletarian Revolution recognizes that only the Continuations Committee has the authority to invite individuals or organizations to attend the Congress, and furthermore that thoroughly opportunist elements such as the Guardian, RU and OL have no place at the Congress.