

Call Flails At July 4 Demo

Pathetic Attack Exposes Class Role

On the morning of July 4th in Philadelphia, as the marchers began to assemble in the street for the Rich Off Our Backs demonstration, it was truly impressive. The discipline and organization, the determination and the aims of the march—through all this the character of the working class stood out powerfully in the thousands who were gathering there.

At the same time, on the sidewalk, staying carefully under the watchful eyes of the police, a cluster of people stood around sporadically trying to sell their newspapers to those in the street. They claimed they were communists, and because of the leading role communists had played in the demonstration, this was enough to make some people interested in them. When they were asked, they pretended to be in favor of the march—although this fog of "support" proved self-dispelling for the few who bought their paper and read its hackneyed attack on the demonstration. This slimy behavior, in such sharp contrast to the march, had to raise some questions as to what these people represented and what they thought they were doing there.

They were members of the October League (OL), with their newspaper *The Call*. Some of us have had long experience with their counter-revolutionary bag of tricks dressed up in red, but for others they were something new.

Furthermore, the OL is—for the umpteenth time—trying to clean up its act, strutting around in new political plumage like some molting peacock, hoping no one notices the discredited old lines it is shedding as well as the rotten core that remains. Their actions around the July 4th demonstration provide a good opportunity to pin them down and learn about the true nature and role of these types and others like them who pop up in the course of the struggle.

Their nature is rooted in the characteristics of the petty bourgeoisie, a social grouping that suffers attacks under the monopoly capitalist system, but which is also frustrated by it in their own aspirations to become big shots. The working class must try to unite with people from these strata and in the process remold them. Those who take up the revolutionary stand and outlook of the working class it welcomes into its ranks. But it must also recognize that there will be some among the petty bourgeoisie who will insist on following out their bourgeois aspirations. One form this takes is consolidating into political trends that claim to be revolutionary in order to try to pimp off the working class struggle and sabotage it.

There is a passage in the *Programme of the Revolutionary Communist Party* that analyzes where outfits like the OL come from: "petty bourgeois hustlers who refuse to take up the stand of the working class, but, recognizing its revolutionary role, proclaim themselves the leaders of the proletariat and try to ride the workers' backs to power. These forces pose as 'communists' or 'socialists' and in this way are able at times to attract some sincere revolutionaries, even a few from the working class. But the leaders of these groups are deadly enemies of the working class, acting as agents of the bourgeoisie in attempting to confuse and demoralize the proletariat, split its ranks and derail its revolutionary struggle. When the workers refuse to follow them into the swamp or into an ambush, they viciously attack the proletariat and its Party." (*Programme*, p. 91)

The working class and its Party have to expect attacks from the capitalists as long as classes exist, as well as from its agents and others who promote its interests and outlook. Our attitude towards all these attacks must include trying to learn from them, since the enemy is often very good at sniffing out our weaknesses in order to find the best place to stick the knife. The universally disappointing thing about the October League, though, is that all they come up with to attack us with is lies and slander, with little relation to the real world, and about the only thing we can learn from them is more about the nature of OL and similar reactionaries.

New Low

Their article "reporting" on the July 4th demonstration, however, is a new low, even for them. The whole idea behind it is that, according to them, there wasn't any class struggle around the Bicentennial—which of course is exactly how the bourgeoisie would like to present it.

"July 4th Protests Safe and Harmless," their article is headlined. "It was in the spirit of reforming and perfecting the rule of capitalism rather than of overthrowing it," they begin. To "prove" their point, they quote the July 5 *Chicago Tribune* article which called

the Puerto Rican Socialist Party-led opportunist July 4th Coalition's actions "a tribute to the spirit of the Bicentennial" and turn reality upside down, lying and claiming that this quote was about the Rich Off Our Backs demonstration. In fact, the *Tribune* was nervously contrasting the two demonstrations, referring to the Rich Off Our Backs demonstration as "a portent of the confrontations that may await Americans [the ruling class—Ed.] in the country's third century."

The October League even tries to rob the Coalition of its name, dropping the word "rich" to call it simply the "Off Our Backs Coalition" all the way through the article. But there was a clear target for the demonstration, as everyone who was there or got its literature knows. And in Philly and in the work leading to it a clear class content was given to that target—the capitalist class and its antagonistic contradiction with the working class. But since the OL wants to treat the demonstration as if it has no class content, they not only change its name, they don't even dare to refer to even one of its slogans and demands in their article: "We've Carried the Rich for 200 Years—Let's Get Them Off Our Backs," "Jobs or Income Now" and "We Won't Fight Another Rich Man's War."

We certainly weren't treated as "safe and harmless" "reformists" by the political representatives of the bourgeoisie in city hall and the courts. Maybe the bourgeoisie didn't bother to let their flunkies in *The Call* office know what was up—or maybe the capitalists are using dual tactics, the strong arm of the Philadelphia cops beforehand to try to intimidate us and the limp wrist of *The Call* and others afterwards to rewrite history and cover up their failure.

Which side the October League is on is pretty clear by the way they mimic the poverty pimps on the federal payroll who Mayor Rizzo dragged into court to testify that the Rich Off Our Backs Coalition was just a bunch of whites trying to get Blacks in trouble, and that therefore the courts should stop the demonstration. The OL repeats this lie, saying that the march was "made up mainly of white, middle-class youth, even marching through the heart of Philadelphia's Black community." In fact, a large part of the demonstration was made up of Blacks and other minority nationalities and one of the most inspiring things about it was workers of all nationalities uniting around a line representing the working class.

At bottom, the whole approach of the October

League's leaders is the same as that of the poverty pimps. They see in the struggle of the Black masses a chance to build their careers by peddling narrow nationalist ideas, by trying to keep the struggle of Black people separate from that of the whole working class, so they can pose as special saviors of Black people.

What other explanation is there for their sole article on the Bicentennial up until the week preceding July 4th—a piece of trash in the February *Call* entitled "A White Bicentennial!"? In the face of a broad political and ideological offensive against the whole working class and the masses of American people launched by the bourgeoisie on the occasion of their birthday, the article doesn't mention the working class once. Indeed, the OL's sole complaint is that "the role of Black and other minorities in history has been completely covered up"—an echo of one of the lines the capitalists ran around the Bicentennial: their "freedom," their revolution is just what everyone needs—what a shame, say their spokesmen, that a few people got shortchanged out of all the wonderful things the 1776 Revolution won for the majority.

With such shoddy wares to vend, it comes as no surprise that the OL, like the bourgeoisie, cannot abide the sight of people of different nationalities uniting on the basis of struggle against the capitalists, who are the source of oppression. Like those they serve, the OL could not bear to see not only the people who came to Philly to march, but neighborhood residents too, taking up the slogans and revolutionary line of the demonstration or applauding the UWOC speaker at the rally who said, "I came here partly out of revenge, remembering my grandparents. They had chains they could see. I have chains I can feel. I too am a slave—they was told that that was the only way—I am told that this is the only way. Just as they broke their chains, we will break the chains of wage-slavery!" Faced with this reality, the OL lapsed into the dream world of *apriorism*—trying to make the world conform to their preconceived notions. Since from their view such unity is neither possible nor desirable, why then it couldn't have happened and therefore there weren't any Black people at the march.

War

Having thus wished away the class struggle over the Bicentennial and the strongly working class and multinational character of the demonstration, which even the bourgeois media nervously commented on, *The Call* article proceeds to expose even more clearly what the OL is up to with a third criticism. The Coalition in general and the RCP in particular, it seems, didn't "prepare people for the inevitable world war which lies ahead" and "failed to educate people about where the danger of a new world war is coming from—the two superpowers and especially the Soviet Union."

Now one of the two demands of the demonstration was "We Won't Fight Another Rich Man's War" and speech after speech hammered at the bourgeoisie's war plans and the rulers of both superpowers, whose cutthroat rivalry for world domination is leading to war. The VVAW speaker, for example, said, "[The U.S. imperialists] point at the Soviet Union and say, 'look at those thieves. . . on the prowl sneaking in everybody's back door. We got to stop them. Look at the Soviet Union in Angola, look at Czechoslovakia, look at Eastern Europe, look at the lives of the workers in the Soviet Union. And what you've got to do is join us, join Rockefeller, join Dupont, join Ford, your American brothers, and let's defend this place, our place, and keep the Russians from getting what we have all worked for. . . ."

"But what they don't tell you and what they try to hide is that. . . there's a small group of people that's running the Soviet Union which basically stole a country which belonged to the working people from them, is the same thing as the rich that are in this country. There ain't no difference. And what we're saying is we ain't going to trade one slave master for another. We ain't going to go off into a war. . . to shed our blood. . . to fight for them so that when we come home we still got them on our backs because that ain't what it's about. We say no way!"

It is true, however, that the demonstration did not focus "especially" on the Soviet Union, but rather on America's rulers, the ones who are trying to line the working class here up behind their war preparations and, when war does come, will send us to fight and die to preserve their profits.

Whining about this stand shows how utterly divorced the October League is from the working class. You have to be pretty out of it not to be aware that today American workers are much more likely to understand that the New Tsars are pushing towards war than that our own capitalists are—our rulers are doing plenty of "education" on this point. Communists must bring out to the masses what they—and the October League—won't: the fact that our ruling class and the USSR's have the same capitalist class nature and show how it is this class nature that not only drives them to rob us every day but likewise impels them to war over which will be number one plunderer of the world's people. And we must concentrate our main fire on the enemy we face directly—our own rulers.

Once again, too, the OL's warped view of the world

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The strength and unity of the gathering forces of the working class stamped clearly the character of the Rich Off Our Backs march—in sharp contrast to the antics of a little band of October Leaguers who crept alongside for a while, peddling their paper attacking the demonstration.

Pathetic...

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mimics the bourgeoisie's. Lenin, the great leader of the world's working class, singled out for particular attack in the midst of the imperialist First World War the October Leaguers of his day, who, he said, "help their respective imperialist governments by concentrating attention principally on the insidiousness of their rival and enemy, while throwing a veil of vague, general phrases and sentimental wishes around the equally imperialist conduct of 'their own' bourgeoisie." (*Lenin On War And Peace*, Peking, p. 80)

In the end, they wind up their list of criticisms with what they consider their heaviest blow. In the speech at the rally by Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Party, according to the OL, "Avakian rambled through half an hour of confusing metaphors without pointing to the need for socialism." We can see how OL might find the metaphors and the political line confusing—although the workers didn't—because in his speech Avakian was applying Marxism—the science of working class revolution—to the experience of the masses in a down-to-earth, militant and lively way which characterized the whole rally. All this is beyond the comprehension of any bourgeois, big or small! [see p. 11 for excerpts from speech—Ed.]

But even making allowances for the fact this is the OL we are dealing with, their claim cannot be written off to mere ignorance, since a big part of his speech was how our movement of today relates to the overthrow of capitalism and the building of socialism and communism. They must spend a lot of time praying none of their readers were at the rally and that none of them have any source of information other than *The Call!* The very fact that they would stoop so low to try to slander the demonstration—and the fact that this was the best they could do—both reveal an awful

lot about the October League.

This article represents a concentration of their lines and methods, and shows how they represent and act like the bourgeoisie itself. Since these people really don't care to believe that the masses of workers and others oppressed by capitalism can be mobilized and united around a line and slogans like those of the Rich Off Our Backs demonstration, which represented the revolutionary interests of the proletariat, then they have to either give up their pretensions and admit their

Dead-End Rally Spares Enemy

The best that can be said of the Philadelphia demonstration by the July 4th Coalition is that it came and went. Organized mainly by the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, the Prairie Fire Organizing Committee (political supporters of the Weather Underground) and some others, including various Trotskyites, this "protest" turned out to be little more than just another Bicentennial event, leaving behind little unity, little understanding, little organization and more than a little confusion among some people who really wanted to take on some of the crimes of the capitalist system.

The march and rally in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park drew 12-15,000 people. There were few workers there and even more important, they played no organized role. Still, many people came to demand Free Puerto Rico—the only demand that gave the demonstration any unity or political character at all. Others, including a very large self-proclaimed "gay contingent," came to parade around whatever pleased them.

What it all came down to was one big mess, complaining at everything and hitting at nothing. "A Bicentennial without colonies. . . End forced Sterilization! Vote Socialist Workers. . . Down with Apartheid. . . Ho, ho, homosexual, sodomy laws are ineffectual. . ."—these were among the dozens of chants and banners that came bobbing into the picnic-like atmosphere of Fairmount Park. Instead of pointing the finger of blame at the capitalists and their system, the overall effect of this mixed bag was to provide ammunition for the capitalists' claims that anyone who protests against them must be a bunch of chronic malcontents and weirdos.

For the most part, groups and individuals saw the events as an opportunity to push whatever issues they were concerned about. This was the way the rally organizers planned it to be, because they themselves were there to push their particular demands, with no concern for how to develop a united movement of the masses in their millions against the capitalists. This is why they were so willing to have banners for sexual

nature or else try to claim that somehow the demonstration wasn't really revolutionary after all. They have to lie about every single aspect of the demonstration to make that point.

But no matter what they might want, the real world is shaped by class struggle. There is a working class, there is forward motion, and there is a political line and party that represent that forward motion. Things like the Philly demonstration show this unmistakably. If you stand against that forward motion, then, like the capitalists do every day, you have to lie and distort what's really going on. You have to fly in the face of the reality, because the reality is that the working class and its struggle represent the future.

The desperation the OL displayed in printing this shabby tissue of distortions and outright lies reflects the problems they face in trying to buck the tide of history. To aid them as they scurry to catch hold of a piece of the class struggle to ride to glory before it evades their grasp forever, the leaders of the OL have proclaimed that soon they will set up their own warped version of a "communist" party to sabotage the struggle of the working class from within and to pit against the proletariat's Revolutionary Communist Party.

The service the OL currently performs for the ruling class is pretty small time, but as we point out in the *Programme of the RCP*, "These various agents of imperialism, in and of themselves, amount to nothing more than cockroaches which the working class could squash under its feet. But these types do pose a greater potential danger—they can act as the 'shock troops' for the development of a phoney 'socialist' or 'progressive' movement that would aim at diverting the working class from the revolutionary path and setting it up to be smashed by the bourgeoisie." (p. 94)

Perhaps the October League will never achieve even this limited significance, but it is important to understand what they represent because their antics provide an example of how the bourgeoisie will always try to kill the working class movement with sugar coated bullets, even while it tries and fails with real bullets. ■

degeneracy fly side by side with their own.

The political thrust of the event was to let the capitalists off the hook. Even the most "serious" demands called on the system to reform itself—as if the colonial oppression of Puerto Rico and the rest of what the imperialists do could be eliminated without getting the rich off our backs, since their very existence and rule depends on such things. This is the political meaning of the main slogan "For a Bicentennial Without Colonies."

Even as an attempt to build a reformist movement, the event had little success, because its smorgasboard approach brought no basis for any further organization or struggle. About all that was accomplished was that the rally's main groups got their names and their "causes" in the papers.

Loyal Opposition

The basic weakness of the demonstration became clear in the sharp contrast between how the authorities accepted it as a "loyal opposition" to the Bicentennial and the attacks they launched on the Rich Off Our Backs—July 4th Coalition from the beginning. While the city and federal courts did everything possible to prevent the Rich Off Our Backs march, the other was granted permits with little difficulty.

Both marches had a lot of cops around—along the Rich Off Our Backs route they lined the streets in riot formation, posted snipers on the rooftops and tailed the march with busloads of riot police to try to scare people away from the march. At the other rally in Fairmount Park, they rolled up police water trucks to make sure the crowd was comfortable, to prove their "reasonableness" to people willing to give the system a chance.

Afterwards, the July 4th Coalition's rally was cheerfully summed up in the ruling class media, like the *Chicago Tribune*, which reported, "The exuberant peaceful nature of the protest, however, appeared more as propaganda for America's free-enterprising, free-talking system, and in that sense was a tribute to the spirit of the Bicentennial." They had a different opinion of the spirit and aims of the Rich Off Our Backs demonstration, however. Noting the workers taking part, the discipline and determination and three major slogans aiming straight at the ruling class, the *Tribune* nervously concluded that it had been "a portent of the type of confrontations that may await Americans [meaning the ruling class] in the country's third century."

This is the essence of the difference between the two actions. One looked to the past and to itself, and while it brought out many who will surely take up the fight, this demonstration led people back, away from building what must be built. The other pointed to the source of our misery and towards the future. While the thousand and one abuses the capitalists heap on the people every day constantly breed anger and resistance, only the growing workers movement can bring together and focus these battles into a powerful storm of struggle that will one day get rid of this class of capitalist exploiters. ■

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