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Statement on Line of March's Conference on Racism and National Oppression

The Conference Committee of the Conference on Racism and National Oppression to be held in the Bay Area on Memorial day Weekend has repeatedly spoken of the importance of building a "trend-wide conference, and of bringing together "the broad forces of our trend."

The Theoretical Review was invited to participate in this conference. But we must ask, what kind of participation was requested? We were not invited to participate in the drawing up and issuing of the original call for the conference. We were not invited to participate in the conference committee, in preparing the documents to be discussed at the conference, nor in the invitation of participants. We were not asked to participate in any stage of the preparation and planning of the conference. Instead we were informed of the intent to hold a conference and then months later we are being asked to participate at the last stage of this process in one capacity only: we have received an invitation to attend the conference itself, a supposedly "trend-wide conference", prepared from start to finish under the direction of only one perspective in the "trend": that of Line of March. We must further ask how we were supposed to prepare to attend the conference when we have not yet (May 11th) seen the working papers to be discussed there.

If this kind of conference sounds familiar, it should. In 1979 the OC-IC attempted the same thing, to organize its own National Minority Marxist-Leninist Conference and attempted to make it appear that it was an independent, broadly-based affair. Line of March, like the OC-IC before it, is attempting to take advantage of the legitimate desire of communists across the country to take up the struggle against racism, theoretically and politically, by advancing its own line at the expense of building a genuine, broad based national discussion, involving, from the very beginning, all anti-revisionist, anti-dogmatist points of view on the vital issue of racism and national oppression. Line of March's near total

domination of this conference and its resultant limited political base demonstrates the continuing grip which sectarianism has over the communist movement, and the continuing viability of groups who place their own narrow interests over the interests of the movement as a whole. Rather than seeking a well prepared presentation of the various points of view within the anti-revisionist, anti-dogmatist forces on the question of racism, Line of March has opted to formally present for conference discussion one perspective only: that of its own Conference Committee, before an audience it has chosen, at a conference it has orchestrated from the beginning.

Moreover, the style of work and struggle we have recently seen exhibited by Line of March with regard to the Theoretical Review position on Poland ("The Sound and Fury of Paul Costello"), the recent struggle in the Bay Area MLEP, and other events indicate to us that the preparation of this conference is not an isolated instance. It would seem that Line of March is not working toward principled left unity but rather is seeking nothing less than the capitulation and subordination of all other forces to its narrow, dogmatic and hastily conceived agenda.

It is our position that joint work and principled unity and struggle cannot be built on this sectarian foundation. The OC-IC learned this the hard way. Obviously, Line of March will have to do so as well. If Line of March wants to have a conference on racism, that is, of course, its right. But the Theoretical Review cannot and will not lend legitimacy to the claim that this is a "trend-wide" conference by participating in it under these conditions. We look forward to joining with comrades around the country in taking up the struggle against racism and national oppression in a comradely and principled fashion so that genuine clarity and a higher level of unity on this central question can be forged.

Editorial Board,
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