

THE LEAGUE'S 'DOGMATISM' AND THE 'CREATIVE MARXISM' OF SUSAN Y.

A Letter to League Comrades

Dear Comrades:

At the time of her expulsion from the League, Susan Y. began circulating the letter printed above. It will (who can doubt it?) be used as yet another basis for attacking the League and presenting a picture of us which is, to say the least - strange. Susan Y really does a job on us, talking about the 'subjectivism' that is 'the very foundation that the League was built on' (p29), about our 'small group mentality' which 'will not lead to the consolidation of a proletarian center particularly when there are so many basic errors in the political line!' It really sounds pretty frightening.

Lenin says in One Step Forward, Two Steps Back that when the revolutionary wing of an organization rebels against the reactionary wing, it is an excellent thing; but when the reactionary wing rebels against the revolutionary, it's a bad business. In line with this we should ask, Is Susan S's 'rebellion' an excellent thing, or a bad business?

It's both. It's a bad business because Susan Y does in fact represent the reactionary 'wing' in the present dispute. But it's also an excellent thing because in her letter she expresses - just as in her activities in the League she expressed - the views of an entire trend which, at the present time, is developing not outside but in the very ranks of the proletarian communist movement; and by expressing these views, gives us a good opportunity to expose them.

The trend I'm talking about is what Lenin calls 'aristocratic anarchism', which essentially is opportunism in matters of principle, and opportunism in matters of organization, and opportunism in matters of tactics, the three linked inseparably together in a knot of petty-bourgeois justification of self. In Susan Y's letter opportunism in principle is manifested mainly in her treatment of the question of Stalin and the Cultural Revolution in China. Opportunism in tactics is manifested mainly in her treatment of the question of united front work and the question of the split in the YCL (which boils down to her advocating unprincipled unity). Opportunism in organization is manifested, first, by her separation of the questions of politics and organization (see her 'rebuttal' of the charges against her); second, and more basic, by her attack, under cover of talk about 'slavishness' and 'blindly following orders' (p21 etc), on the concept that in a proletarian communist organization all comrades, on all levels, are responsible for accepting and pushing the line, following orders (whether they 'fully understand them' or not) coming from higher bodies, and maintaining discipline. Susan Y's letter proves the correctness of Lenin's thesis, 'Opportunism in program is naturally connected with opportunism in tactics and opportunism in organization.' (One Step Forward, Two Steps Back, Section Q) I would like to deal mainly with the first and the third in this letter.

Before explaining the inevitable connection (which Susan Y denies) between principles ('program') and organization, and attempting to point out its roots, I want to deal briefly with the correct aspects

of Susan Y's criticisms, and show that they do not constitute a base for splitting. There correct aspects relate to the questions of united front vs. communist work, and of ideological rectification, which she discusses on pp20-22 of her letter. She says about the first:

Very early in my practice with the League I initiated a discussion in my collective around why there was almost total emphasis placed on united front work while communist work was either neglected or seemingly avoided. (p20)

Comrades, all of us, on the higher and lower levels, are aware of errors made along these lines in the past. Many of us, in fact, have raised quite similar criticisms which have been acted on, as Susan Y herself admits. We have raised these criticisms freely in both lower and higher bodies without fear of 'isolation campaigns' etc being directed against us. The basic question is not one of past errors, but of what we have done to correct them. Susan Y is very fond of quoting, so I will copy her and quote Lenin:

The attitude of a political party toward its own mistakes is one of the most important and surest criteria of the seriousness of the party, and of how it fulfills, in practice, its obligation toward its class and toward the masses of working people.

Were our errors ones of basic line? No. We go for our guidance to Stalin, Dimitroff and the Comintern. Our errors were ones of applying what we knew, of grasping concretely the meaning of united front work in a period when there is no party to lead the class, when many of us suffer from such ideological weaknesses as anti-communism, fear of the masses, and 'mechanicalness'. Experience teaches, however, and we are in the midst of rectification of our communist work and united front work, and have every confidence in our ability to push ahead on the basis of the League line as expressed in such articles as 'Build a Class Party, Build a Mass Struggle' (People's Tribune, vol 1, #6) and so on. The same is true of bad leaflets, which I daresay we have all written at one time or another. (I do not mean the ones around the Chicano Moratorium, which were not bad.) Do we use them as an excuse for getting a bad case of the 'petty bourgeois blues', as Engels says, for attacking the line of the League? or do we use them as a basis for real criticism? Merely stating the question in this way gives us the answer. Susan's approach reminds me of the 'Marxists' like Plekhanov who attacked the Bolshevik Party and the entire Russian masses for not winning in 1905-07, and subsequently deserted to the bourgeoisie. But when October 1917, came around, who was on top and who on the bottom, the working class and the Bolsheviks, or these 'Marxists'?

Furthermore, when Susan Y (whose original criticisms have 'deepened') attempts more, attempts to render her criticisms 'more profound', she falls into unutterable confusion. She says, 'Such (UNITED FRONT) work has its place in a communist organization but generally must come after considerable inroads have been made among the most advanced.' (p20) To separate the two kinds of work is to deny both. How, comrades, do we activate the advanced elements (make 'inroads') had develop their capacity to 'raise the level of the intermediate and win over the backward'

(Mao, 'Concerning Methods of Leadership') except by working and getting them to work in trade union and rank and file caucuses (soviets, so to speak, in embryo), in community united front groups, etc? Of course we and they must work as communists in these organizations, and of course our prime task in this period is to build a party. But to separate the building of a party and the building of mass organizations led by communists - to separate them and to call their unity 'in effect the "two-stage" theory of revolution, is to take a hopelessly 'left', confused anarchist line. It reminds me of Trotsky's 1920 line on trade unions - his advocacy of 'cracking down' on them, making them departments of the state, not as 'schools for communism'. Susan Y would have us 'administratively' order the building of a party by decree, reach up in the sky and grab it. But this is only proper, because for the petty-bourgeois anarchist any mass work and struggle is bound to smack of 'Right opportunism'. To separate the question of 'making considerable inroads among the most advanced' from the question of how such inroads are to be made - what is this but phrase-mongering? even though it may be called by its advocate 'new depth'?

The second correct point she raises concerns the question of ideology:

Approximately three or four weeks, prior to the announcement of an ideological rectification campaign to be initiated, I had waged a struggle in my collective around the question of ideological weakness that I felt was the basis for allowing the uneven development of cadre in the League to go unchecked. (p21)

Subsequently (as she herself says) the League did initiate a program of rectification, around the question not only of 'uneven development' of cadre, but also of our attitude toward the class, anti'communism, criticism and self'criticism etc. On the basis not only of Mao's Thought specifically, but also of Lenin's and Stalin's ideological work, we have begun a (you might say) lifelong ideological struggle. Mechanicalness (the 'pep pill' business Susan Y alludes to on p22) is being combatted on all levels.

And how was this ideological rectification program begun? According to the principle 'from the masses, to the masses'. The Center took the unformed, instinctive, un-worked-out ideas of the League masses (including Susan Y), worked them out and systematized them, and brought them back to us in a comprehensive, intelligible form, to be tested and enriched in practice. The whole struggle in the League around ideology, in fact, has been an example of the very best the League has to offer in terms of program and the working of democratic centralism. But I guess it wasn't good enough for Susan Y, whose criticisms again have 'deepened'.

Let her new 'depth' speak for itself, and you'll see why she isn't satisfied. The League, you see, 'makes the error of not fully grasping the essence of the Cultural Revolution of China.' The League doesn't understand, you see, that 'Marxism-Leninism has been brought to an entirely new level with Mao Tsetung Thought.' The League, in short, does not have the same understanding as 'creative' Susan Y, who in her 'short' (fortunately) 'analysis' (?) of 'the historical development of Marxism' (p22) treats Marxism as a sort of tapeworm which begins with a head (Marx)

and subsequently adds on separate and independent segments to itself. First you have Marxism, then you have Marxism-Leninism (separated by a hyphen), finally you have Marxism-Leninism-Maoist Thought. Simple, isn't it? Not a word about how everything Lenin said, all of his 'developments of Marxism to a higher stage', were developments of things contained in Marx and Engels, often, of course, in embryo, but there nonetheless. And not a word about how everything Mao has said and done is, similarly, contained in full or in embryo in the work of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. If you treat matters in this way, if you treat Marxism as a science and not a tapeworm, you can't get away with what Susan Y tries: namely, to split Mao, the Cultural Revolution etc off, to reify them, so to speak, that is, to make them things in themselves, separate from Marxism (the League) and especially, that's right - Stalin.

Susan Y 'deepens' her criticisms of ideological weaknesses in the League by passing directly from them to 'the fundamental reasons' for them. These boil down to the League's line on and defense of Stalin.

STALIN

Susan Y instinctively grasps the importance of the Stalin question, spending more than a page on it. It is in her and the League's line on Stalin that all her 'fundamental differences' (they indeed are) with the League manifest themselves, both theoretical (the nature of the experience of the USSR, the Cultural Revolution, etc) and practical (the 'slavishness' and 'sectarianism' of the League, its 'dogmatism' etc). Why do I say, comrades, that these differences 'manifest themselves' in the question of Stalin, that they do not, for example, 'originate' in it? In other words, why is the difference on Stalin a symptom instead of the cause of Susan Y's split?

Because we, as materialists, must see the material world as coming first, before ideas. We must understand that the fundamental question is not that of Susan Y vs. Stalin (just as it never was that of Trotsky or Bukharin vs. Stalin), but of bourgeois ideology vs. Marxism. Trotsky, and later on Liu Shao-ch'i did not attack Stalin for some abstract, theoretical reason. They (like Khrushchov) attacked him in order to lay the basis in the Party and among the people for doubts about the dictatorship of the proletariat, about socialism, and about the people themselves in the USSR and China. They attacked him in order to justify their anti-Marxist counter-revolutionary attempts to destroy socialism.

Just as the bourgeoisie has always attacked communism and Stalin (like Marx, Engels, Lenin and Mao) to justify preparation for war, aggression, dirty deals, and so on; and just as various deviators within the communist movement have attacked Stalin to justify their own petty-bourgeois anarchism, spinelessness, lack of principles and lack of confidence in the proletariat - similarly, Susan Y and her ilk attack Stalin in order to justify their organizational opportunism, rebellion against centralism, and, finally, their rebellion against the Line, Marxism-Leninism. In a moment I will sum up this dialectic between 'the thesis', petty-bourgeois anarchism: 'the antithesis', which is theoretical confusion about Stalin; and how these lead to 'the syn-

thesis, a whole system of views which emerges out of their interaction and which in turn reacts on the 'base' (we must not be 'mechanical'), petty-bourgeois ideology, and strengthens it by giving it theoretical justification. But before doing so, I would like to spend a little time clearing the air of Susan Y's phrasemongering about 'Stalin's errors', the League's 'basic errors' etc. What follows is what Susan intends to discuss among the workers:

1. In their study of this era (THE BUILDING OF SOCIALISM IN THE USSR) the Chinese discovered that the main internal weakness was due to overemphasis placed on the development of the economic base while not recognizing in theory that classes and class struggle continue under the dictatorship of the proletariat and under socialism for a long historical period. While the entire country of Russia was preoccupied with socialist construction, the superstructure was not transformed and not transformed correctly (BOTH?), enabling opportunism to consolidate itself and eventually take over. (p13)
2. ...The League continues to make the same error that Stalin did; that is, the error of the productive forces. Stalin led the Soviet Union in socialist production, at its time to a degree unprecedented in history, but he failed to sufficiently grasp the need to recognize the reaction of the superstructure on the economic base. (p24)

First of all, who were 'the Chinese' who 'discovered that the main internal weakness', etc? It was the revisionists, as late as 1967. (I refer comrades to the latter sections of the Chinese pamphlet called 'Circular - A Great Historic Document'. This is where Susan Y and her ilk get most of their stuff about 'Stalin's errors'. I will return to it later. For the moment let it suffice to say that especially the last section of the pamphlet, called 'Reference Material for "A Great Historic Document"', is a dishonest piece of 'Left' phrasemongering. The authors, for example, afraid to attack Stalin once and for all, differentiate between the error-ridden 'early Stalin' and the 'late Stalin' of Economic Problems of the USSR, where he supposedly 'corrected' himself. This is an excellent example of bourgeois history-writing, generally done in artists' biographies: 'The early Beethoven did this, the middle Beethoven went beyond and did so and so, the late Beethoven transcended both the early and middle,' etc etc ad nauseum. How does this sort of treatment relate to science? In no way. The authors of this section of the pamphlet delicately refrain from quoting earlier works of Stalin on the topic of class struggle, thus creating an artificial 'break' in his work. Finally, I would add that even the present position of the Chinese on Stalin, expressed in Leninism or Social-Imperialism, is shaky and self-contradictory, manifesting the continuing struggle in their party over the question: With regard to the restoration of capitalism in the USSR they say, on the one hand, 'But history has its twists and turns. Just as Bernstein-Kautsky revisionism emerged after the death of Engels, so did Khrushchov-Brezhnev revisionism after the death of Stalin.' But then they say, a little later, 'Being the first state of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Soviet Union lacked experience in consolidating this dictatorship and preventing the restoration of capitalism.' (Peking Review, 1970, #17, pp6-7) But comrades, was

it because of Engels's 'inexperience' that revisionism took hold in the German Party, or because of material conditions primarily, the 'twists and turns' - the peaceful expansion of imperialism and the renegacy of Bernstein and Kautsky, etc? The formulation 'inexperience' sounds reasonable but is in fact abstract and needing of plenty of supporting evidence, none of which is given.)

Second of all, are Stalin and the League in fact guilty of this error 'of the productive forces'? Instead of quoting from Economic Problems of the USSR, where Stalin with crystal clarity demolishes Comrade Yaroshenko's errors on precisely this point, I will give an example or two from Stalin's earlier work on the question of 'the superstructure reacting on the base'. Here is one from The History of the CPSU (B), Short Course:

An important place in Comrade Stalin's report (to the Seventeenth Party Congress, 1934) was given to the question of ideological-political leadership. He warned the Party that although its enemies, the opportunists and national deviators of all shades and complexions, had been defeated, remnants of their ideology still lingered in the minds of some Party members and often asserted themselves. The survivals of capitalism in economic life and particularly in the minds of men (NOTE THIS) provided a favorable soil for the revival of the ideology of the defeated anti-Leninist groups. The development of people's mentality (THE SUPERSTRUCTURE) does not keep pace with their economic position. As a consequence, survivals of bourgeois ideas still remained in men's minds and would continue to do so (FOR "A LONG HISTORICAL PERIOD, PERHAPS?") even though capitalism had been abolished in economic life. (p321)

Compare this passage with Mao's statement in his Speech at the CCP's National Conference on Propaganda Work:

In our country bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology, anti-Marxist ideology, will continue to exist for a long time. Basically, the socialist system has been established in our country. **We have won the basic victory** in transforming the ownership of the means of production, but we have not yet won complete victory on the political and ideological fronts. In the ideological field, the question of who will win in the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie has not been really settled yet. We still have to wage a protracted struggle against bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology. (Red Book, p19)

How do these two statements differ? They don't. Both make a clear distinction between the economic sphere (and economic classes) and the political and ideological sphere (and political and ideological classes). Stalin speaks of the 'abolishment of capitalism in economic life', which in 1934 approached conclusion. Mao talks about the 'basic victory in transforming the ownership of the means of production', that is, about the economic victory of socialism. But - in contrast to the almost-completed abolishment of class antagonisms in production, both talk about class ideology in men's minds which remains after the material base for them has been abolished, because (as Stalin says here as well as in Dialectical and Historical Materialism, etc) the productive forces invariably outstrip the productive relations, the superstructure does not develop as fast as the base. The existence

of political classes - that is, groups of people, including the overthrown remnants of the exploiting classes, the 'new' bourgeoisie such as the Trotskyites, Bukharinites, Soviet revisionists, etc, who hope and attempt to restore capitalism - the existence of these anti-socialist groups inevitably means that the class struggle continues under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Stalin recognizes this very clearly in Mastering Bolshevism, written in 1937:

We must destroy and cast aside the rotten theory that with every advance we make the class struggle (WHICH HE "DIDN'T RECOGNIZE" IN THEORY!!) would die down more and more, and that in proportion as we achieve success the class enemy would become more and more tractable. This is not only a rotten theory but a dangerous one, for it lulls our people, leads them into a trap, and makes it possible for the class enemy to rally for the struggle against the Soviet Government. On the contrary, the further we advance, the greater will be the fury of the remnants of the broken exploiting classes, the sooner will they resort to sharper forms of struggle, the more will they seek to harm the Soviet state and the more will they clutch at the most desperate means of struggle, as the last resort of doomed people. (New Century Publications, 1946, pp21-2)

...The old slogan of the mastery of technique (IE, IN PRODUCTION) must now be supplemented by the new slogan of the mastery of Bolshevism, the political (NOTE THIS) training of cadres and the liquidation of our political carelessness. (p19)

This from the man 'guilty of the error' of the productive forces!!!??

If Susan Y herself alone were the author of this 'thesis' on Stalin's 'errors', we could accuse her of simple ignorance of and illiteracy in Marxism. But people far more experienced than she make this same charge. Are they simply ignorant of these passages and dozens like them? Have they 'forgotten' that the Soviet constitution of 1936 distinguishes between the working class and peasantry as two different - classes? What's behind this strange 'amnesia'?

I think, comrades, that the theoretical essence (I'll discuss the ideological essence in a little while) of their position is a 'Left' deviation which, under cover of revolutionary phrases, is a basis for attacking the masses and socialism.

'LEFT' OPPORTUNISM

Recall to mind a major turning point during the Cultural Revolution in China, Mao's publication of the big-character poster, 'Bombard the Headquarters'. Its main object was to turn the attention of the revolutionary masses to the main object of attack, 'the bourgeois headquarters headed by the renegade, hidden traitor and scab Liu Shao-ch'i', 'the handful of renegades, enemy agents and absolutely unrepentant persons in power taking the capitalist road within the Party.' (Lin Biao, Opening Statement, Address to Ninth Party Congress) Why was it necessary to direct the attack in this way, comrades? Let me quote just two statements out of virtually thousands which explain why. The first is from the Circular itself (which is not the same as

- is completely different from - the 'reference material' etc which follow it in the 1967 edition.)

8) For their own ulterior purposes, the authors of the Report (PUT OUT BY THE REVISIONIST 'GROUP OF FIVE') demand a 'rectification campaign' against the staunch Left in a deliberate effort to create confusion, blur class alignments and divert people from the target of struggle.

Then, from an article called 'Epic Changes in Two Years' in China Fictorial, 1968 #9:

Chairman Mao pointed out: 'The great proletarian cultural revolution is in essence a great political revolution under the conditions of socialism made by the proletariat against the bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes; it is a continuation of the prolonged struggle waged by the Chinese Communist Party and the masses of revolutionary people under its leadership against the Kuomintang reactionaries, a continuation of the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.'

The handful of deposed capitalist roaders were not reconciled to their defeat. To protect themselves, they created dissension among the masses, pitting one group against another. They made common cause with the bad elements who had wormed their way into the revolutionary mass organizations, to oppose and attack the proletarian headquarters.

At this crucial juncture personnel of the Chinese PLA helping the Left arrived. Bearing in mind Chairman Mao's great teaching, 'Never Forget Class Struggle', they went deep among the broad masses to publicize repeatedly Chairman Mao's latest instructions. ... Mass organizations that had been at loggerheads with each other soon entered into revolutionary great alliances. The spearhead of struggle was directed against China's Khrushchov and the handful of capitalist roaders, renegades, special agents and counter-revolutionaries in the printing press. (THE ARTICLE IS ABOUT A PRINTING-FACTORY)

It was necessary to re-direct the attack directly at the real enemy - 'the bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes' - because this same enemy was trying everything possible to direct attention away from itself and onto the people. How? In large part by abstracting the whole notion of revisionism, 'the bourgeoisie' and the cultural revolution itself - by 'blurring class alignments and creating confusion'. These fascist dog revisionists set the masses against each other by accusing them - accusing this student group, that mass organization, this teacher, that PLA unit - of being the revisionists, of having revisionist ideas. 'The discussion in the press,' say the authors of the Report (Circular, p4), 'should not be confined to political questions, but should go fully into the various academic and theoretical questions involved.' In other words, if we keep it strictly theoretical and away from the realm of power, we can accuse anyone we want - for example, the real Left - of having revisionist ideas, and so forth, for doesn't everybody have bad tendencies, hasn't everybody made mistakes at one time or another? This is the line of

of the Chinese revisionists, and also of Susan Y, who raises the idea of classes and class struggle under socialism to an empty abstraction, talking of how the 'victorious revolution' comes about by us understanding that we must destroy 'the enemy who attacks from within, revisionism.' (p24) Is revisionism a 'who'? No, it's a system of ideas used by people. Saying that the enemy is 'revisionism' is like saying that under capitalism the enemy is 'bourgeois ideology', not the bourgeoisie. It's putting ideas first. The result of doing so is the blurring and distorting of actual class distinctions existing under socialism, and directing attention away from the main enemy (who, of course, uses ideas to his advantage), 'the remnant of the broken exploiting classes', and onto the people, for they too ('the development of people's mentality does not keep pace with their economic position') have revisionist ideas.

The proletariat in the course of class struggle is learning to see the identity of 'Left' phrasemongering and Right content. The criticism of Stalin is a good example of how one changes into the other. Before the Cultural Revolution began (in pamphlets like 'On the Question of Stalin', 1963, which chummily talks of how both 'Mao Tsetung and Liu Shao'ch'i' avoided Stalin's errors etc), the revisionists attacked Stalin from the Right (using of course Mao's phrases), saying that he 'confused two types of contradictions which are different in nature, contradictions between ourselves and the enemy and contradictions among the people,' talking of his 'error of enlarging the scope of the suppression of counter-revolutionaries,' (!!), and so on. In other words, according to these apologizers for fascism (to whom, no doubt, the defeat of Nazi Germany by the USSR would appear as 'the error of enlarging the war against fascism from simple defense to "suppressive" offense'), Stalin understood only too well the existence of 'classes and class struggle' (suppression of counter-revolution, both types of contradictions etc) under socialism. Thoroughly discredited by the upsurge of the repudiation of revisionism during the Cultural Revolution, these revisionists did an abrupt 'about face', still attacking Stalin (and still using Mao's phrases), but now from the 'Left', saying not that he mistook different types of contradictions, but that he didn't even understand that contradictions exist ('classes and class struggle') under socialism!!

The change from Right attack to 'Left' attack, I think, corresponded to the change in the revisionists' position from one of strength (working 'peacefully' within the Party and state to restore capitalism) to one of instability (being isolated and forced to fight a rear-guard 'divide and conquer' guerrilla war).

Was the content in each case different, comrades? No, it was precisely the same - an attack on the masses, on their leaders, and on the dictatorship of the proletariat.

For further study of Stalin's position on classes and class struggle under socialism, and the necessity for political and ideological preparation and struggle by the working class and Party, I refer comrades back to Mastering Bolshevism, 'Inherent Contradictions of Party Development', 'Some Questions Concerning the History of Bolshevism', the Constitution of 1936, etc. For material on his so-called

'error of the productive forces', Dialectical and Historical Materialism, where he discusses not once but twice, at the beginning and end of the book, the tremendous role of ideas, 'the superstructure', with regard to the material base, should be gone over. To accuse Stalin or the League of being guilty of the error of the productive forces is to prove yourself a total illiterate in Marxism. What is Stalin's sin in the eyes of these anarchist intellectual illiterates? It's that he doesn't see ideas as being primary all the time (as they do), it's that there was no Cultural Revolution (such as they define it) in Russia. Mao Tsetung, you see, being superman, wished the Cultural Revolution to happen, made it materialize out of thin air. Dumb Stalin, ridden with theoretical 'errors', wasn't godlike to generate spontaneously this Cultural Revolution in a totally different historical situation. Since for Susan & etc ideas are principal in history, Stalin could have made a cultural revolution happen if he'd been smart enough; but he wasn't, and he didn't. This is the 'content' of her exposition of Stalin's 'errors', the ones she will 'discuss' among the workers. I wish her luck.

THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

To punish Susan's for her phrasemongering, I have saved the best for last on this question of the League's 'theoretical errors'. I refer to the way she sets up in opposition to each other these two statements:

Most important: they (THE CHINESE) have made a century of technological and industrial progress in two decades. (Draft Proposal for Merger of MLWA and CCL, Feb 1970)

This wide dissemination of Mao Tsetung Thought in a big country with a population of 700 million people is the most significant achievement of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. (Lin Biao, Address to Ninth Party Congress, p. 14 of the letter)

Are these two statements in contradiction, comrades? Let's refer for an answer to an arch Stalinist - Lenin - quoting another arch Stalinist - Marx:

In Capital, Karl Marx ridicules the pompous and grandiose bourgeois-democratic great charter of liberty and the rights of man, ridicules all this phrase-mongering about liberty, equality and fraternity in general (SUCH AS WE MIGHT RIDICULE PHRASEMONGERING ABOUT THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION IN GENERAL, WHICH DOES NOT CONSIDER WHAT IT WAS FOR), which dazzles the petty bourgeois and philistines of all countries.... Marx contrasts these pompous declarations of rights to the plain, modest, practical, simple manner in which the question is presented by the proletariat - the legislative enactment of a shorter working day is a typical example of such treatment. The aptness and profundity of Marx's observation become the clearer and more obvious to us the more the content of the proletarian revolution unfolds. The 'formulas' of genuine communism differ from the pompous, intricate and solemn phraseology of the Kautskys, the Mensheviks (ETC) ...in that they reduce everything to the conditions of labor.
(A Great Beginning)

Poor Marx! Poor Lenin! What metaphysics! Reducing communism to the conditions of labor. If he doesn't watch out, Lenin might even start talking about how the main achievement of the Chinese people has been to make 'a century of technological and industrial progress in two decades'! Guilty, guilty, guilty of 'the error of the productive forces'!

If this dogmatic, mechanical approach of Lenin's (insisting in the next paragraph on dealing with 'plain, everyday work, concern for the need of grain and the need of coal!') isn't enough, he says in another article called 'Four Thousand Rubles a Year and a Six-Hour day',

This is the battlecry of the class-conscious American workers. They say: We have only one political question before us (POLITICAL, NOT ECONOMIC), and this is the question of the workers' earnings and their working day.

What is socialism for, comrades? What is the dictatorship of the proletariat for? They are for getting rid of everything (private property and everything that goes with it, including bourgeois ideas), that stand in the way of workers' having a decent life. The conditions of labor, that's all there is to it. Isn't this horribly everyday? 'Earnings', the 'working day' - these are what socialism and communism are all about. Isn't this hopelessly - common? It is, for the bourgeois intellectual who wants to sit and contemplate Marxism-Leninism in the abstract, a Platonic idea that exists eternal, perfect and gem-like - in the sky.

What was the Cultural Revolution for, comrades? For the same thing as any revolution, state power. Pick up any recent copy of China Reconstructs or Peking Review. Read about the people's 'tales of former bitterness'; about how in factory after factory, farm after farm, the Liu Shao-ch'i gang attempted to sabotage socialist construction, turn it around, and drag back China into slavery. Read these things and you'll see what Mao and Stalin mean in talking about 'the fury of the remnants of the broken exploiting classes' and their lackeys, the revisionists inside and outside the Party, and how this fury must be matched and overcome by the fury of the masses led by the proletariat and its Party. The Cultural Revolution, the spreading of Mao's Thought among 700 million people,

1. smashed the people who wanted to drag China back that hundred years it had accomplished in two decades;
2. gave the masses a weapon for defending themselves in the future against similar attempts; and
3. prepared, or began to prepare, the masses to achieve the next hundred years' progress in one decade, perhaps, instead of two.

More state power. This was the content of the Cultural Revolution. 'Grasp revolution, promote production.' Is grasping revolution some sort of intellectual parlor game existing apart from promoting production, some 'thing in itself' which we grasp for its own sake? Susan Sontag answers 'yes' by absurdly setting in opposition the League's and Lin Biao's statements. You grasp proletarian revolution in order to bring the relations of production better into correspondence with the productive forces, and to safeguard these new relations, economically, politically and ideologically. The Cultural Revolution was 'simply'

a tactic (not some thing in itself) in the drive of the masses and their Leaders to win the battle of 'the workers' earnings and their working day'.

The League understands this, Lin Piao understands it. But the bourgeois intellectual, caught in his subjective idealist 'superstructure-mongering', will never understand it, and is doomed not to take part in the 'simple, plain, ordinary' business of revolution. He will continue to quote Lin Piao against the League line, and thus manifest his aristocratic - hysteria and confusion.

MAO TSETUNG'S PLACE IN HISTORY

Mao Tsetung is the greatest living Marxist-Leninist. Applying the science of Marxism in a living way and by doing so developing and enriching it, he has proved an infallible guide for the Chinese people and the people of the world. Profoundly understanding, like Lenin and Stalin before him, the nature of revisionism, he has safeguarded the treasure of Marxism, safeguarded the proletariat - and the magnificent child of these, the dictatorship of the proletariat - from the swine who would deny and destroy it. Understanding the importance of his Party, he has continually worked to strengthen and enrich it, to expose and purge the revisionists and other lackeys of the bourgeoisie in the working class movement. He has carried on the work of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin in a brilliant way, and in doing so has added his name to theirs as one of the very greatest scientists of the class struggle.

Is there a contradiction between the teachings of Mao and those of Stalin? Here is what he says in 'Reform our Study':

...In studying Marxism-Leninism, we should use the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Short Course) as the principal material. It is the best synthesis and summing up of the world communist movement in the past hundred years, a model in the integration of theory and practice, and so far the only comprehensive model in the whole world. When we see how Lenin and Stalin integrated the universal truth of Marxism with the concrete practice of the Soviet revolution and thereby developed Marxism, we shall know how we should work in China.

If Susan Y ever edits an edition of Mao's works, no doubt she will include a footnote to this passage saying something like, 'Of course Mao does not refer here to the numerous 'errors of Stalin' which permeate the book: 'the error of productive forces', his lack of understanding that classes and class struggle continue to exist under socialism for a long historical period, etc.' Perhaps she will explain this interesting omission by saying that Mao was being a bit 'slavish' here, or that he fell into the error of 'dogmatism' or 'subjectivism' - that he thoughtlessly, in this one place, 'copies Stalin's weaknesses as well as his strengths'. Whatever she says, however, is bound to be an interesting - revision. I sincerely hope that Susan Y does discuss these errors 'among the workers', if she knows any, so that they'll have an opportunity to put her 'ideas' where they belong.

DOGMATISM AND METAPHYSICS

Before summing up, I would like to deal briefly with two points Susan Y raises. The first point is the YCL episode (pp 25-28 of her letter). Her treatment of the split is a perfect example of the petty-bourgeois's denial of materialism. Susan Y has a perfect right, of course, to defend the YCL splitters, who have the same 'line' on Stalin as she does. But the way she does it - by invoking such ghosts and monsters as 'an admittedly low theoretical level' in the left at the present time - by invoking agnosticism and demanding that the League do the same - is truly splendid. She 'forgets' materialism, the fact that there is a right and wrong in every issue, and starts talking as if questions of theory and tactics (including the Stalin question etc) haven't been settled yet. Where has the transformation to agnosticism from Marxism taken place, in the real world or in Susan Y's own head? Her pleading for 'unity, struggle unity' with opportunists is the perfect out for the anarchist who refuses to deal seriously with questions of theory and revolutionary discipline. Unable to concretize my criticisms of the League line (see list of charges), unable to put up with democratic centralism (also list of charges), all I have to say is, Go to hell. Who knows if you're right or not? I'll settle for 'an admittedly low theoretical level' for the time being, thank you.

The second point is Susan's hysterical outburst at comrade Nelson's remark that it's a good thing that comrades have such spirit that they 'carry out tasks without fully understanding them.' In Susan Y's mind this becomes 'encouraging nothing more than pure and simple slavishness'. (p2) Isn't this somewhat - 'subjective'?

Only - only a petty bourgeois intellectual would dare object to comrade Nelson's formulation, because only a petty-bourgeois intellectual could conceive of an organization (his fondest dream) where everybody either was a full-blown Marxist at birth, understanding everything at once, or else sat down and 'understood' the order by thinking about it before he carried it out. For what is the only other possibility? It's that the comrades receiving orders discuss them as much as possible with other comrades at various levels, understanding them as much as possible. And this in fact is the practice the League follows. But this is not good enough for Susan Y, for she is an idealist. She sees ideas coming not from social practice ('carrying them out' in light of the League line), but from somewhere else, the sky perhaps. For what she wants - complete understanding before carrying the order out, is 'practicing' it - is philistine utopianism. It means, in fact, advocating doing nothing.

Her objection boils down to the line that Mao justly condemns, 'Let the lower bodies discuss all problems first (FULLY UNDERSTAND THEM), and then let the higher bodies decide.' It means 'taoism' in organization, it means throwing centralism out the window under the guise of 'combating slavishness'. Does the person coming into the League 'fully understand' the line? No, he accepts it, in 99 cases out of a hundred. He gains understanding in the course of testing it in practice. This is how it happens in the real world. The petty bourgeois intellectual, however, denies this, insisting that ideas ('full understanding') come first.

'The Party tie,' says Lenin in One Step Forward, 'must be founded on formal, "bureaucratically" worded Rules (bureaucratic from the standpoint of the undisciplined intellectual), strict adherence (WITH OR WITHOUT "FULL UNDERSTANDING") to which can alone safeguard us from the wilfulness and caprices (DISGUISED UNDER THE SLOGAN "FIGHT DOGMATISM") characteristic of the circles, from the circle wrangling that goes by the name of the free "process" (THE "ADMITTEDLY LOW THEORETICAL LEVEL") of the ideological struggle.' The League has a line and formal rules of democratic centralism. Comrade Nelson is right to applaud the sort of spirit which is manifested by people who carry out orders 'without fully understanding them', because in a real, communist organization these people possess also the other half of this lack of understanding, that is, the eagerness to grasp, to 'fully understand' in the act of testing the order and line in real struggle. This is what proletarian ideology is.

Susan Y is constantly referring to casual remarks of comrades made (according to her), private discussions etc, none of it relating to the League's line. The point we must consider is, Admitting that all of us in the League have backward traits, what does the League do about such unavoidable differences in the levels of various comrades? In a growing organization, as comrade Nelson said at the Merger Conference, growth means a lowering of the level of the whole. But does the League tail behind people's backwardness, or does it systematically set about to correct the errors comrades make, to raise the level of all comrades by study, by practical work, by internal struggle and by criticism and self criticism? Susan Y, in a hurt tone of voice, talking of 'isolation campaigns' etc being directed against comrades who struggle, of course denies that the League is interested in correcting real errors (not garbage like her thesis on 'Stalin's errors' after the saturation point is reached) and raising the level of the whole. But I think we know different, comrades.

LIKE OATS, PETTY BOURGEOIS DEVIATIONS GROW ACCORDING TO HEGEL

It is an old trick of opportunists to 'fulminate' against 'the demand for "implicit obedience"; says Lenin in One Step Forward. Summing up we should ask, what is it that ties all of Susan Y's various 'theses' and accusations together? It is the 'dialectic' between petty bourgeois ideology and opportunist theory I spoke of before. Lenin says in the same book,

'...The factory, which seems only a bogey to some, represents that highest form of capitalist cooperation which has united and disciplined the proletariat, taught it to organize, and placed it at the head of all the other sections of the toiling and exploited population. And Marxism, the ideology of the proletariat trained by capitalism, has been and is teaching unstable intellectuals to distinguish between the factory as a means of exploitation (discipline based on fear of starvation) and the factory as a means of organization (discipline based on collective work united by the conditions of a technically highly developed form of production). The discipline and organization which come so hard to the bourgeois intellectual are very easily acquired by the proletariat just because of this factory 'schooling'.

Mortal fear of this school and utter failure to understand its importance as an organizing factor are characteristic of the ways of thinking which reflect the petty-bourgeois mode of life and which give rise to the species of anarchism that the German Social-Democrats call Edelanarchismus, that is, the anarchism of the 'noble' gentleman, or aristocratic anarchism, as I would call it. This aristocratic anarchism is particularly characteristic of the Russian nihilist. He thinks of the Party organization as a monstrous 'factory'; he regards the subordination of the part to the whole and of the minority to the majority as 'serfdom' (OR 'SLAVISENESS')...division of labor under the direction of the center (CARRYING OUT TASKS WITHOUT FULLY UNDERSTANDING THEM) evokes from him a tragical outcry against transforming people into 'cogs' and 'wheels' (BOWED IN 'BLIND SUBMISSION' TO THE CENTER)...mention of the organizational Rules of the Party (SEE LIST OF CHARGES BROUGHT AGAINST SUSAN X, ESPECIALLY THE FIRST FOUR) calls forth a contemptuous grimace and the disdainful remark (intended for the 'formalists') that one could very well dispense with Rules altogether (OR THAT ONE COULD SEPARATE "ORGANIZATIONAL ERRORS" FROM ERRORS "OF A POLITICAL NATURE").' (Section Q)

The petty bourgeois has a dual nature. Drawn to the proletariat as to the only class capable of freeing society (including the petty bourgeois), he is at the same time repelled by the 'factory atmosphere' of proletarian organization. This inevitable contradiction resolves itself in one of two ways. Either the petty bourgeois changes his own 'base', his own outlook, to correspond to the proletarian base of the communist organization he joins ('fights self, repudiates revisionism'), or else he tries to make the base of the organization correspond to his own by changing the former. That is, he develops his ideology into a superstructure, a system of views which he insists the organization adopt as its own. If it refuses to do so, the petty bourgeois justifies his split with the organization on the basis of this opportunist system of views, ie revisionism in one of its forms, Right or 'Left'. If the organization does not accept his line on Stalin, he quits it on the basis that the organization is both wrong in theory (on Stalin etc) and in practice ('dogmatic, subjectivist' etc).

Just as the bourgeoisie has developed a system of views (individualism, personal freedom, national chauvinism and so on) to justify its behavior, so the petty bourgeois, defending his unwillingness to 'fight self', has invented and continually re-invents (disguised as 'new and correct ideas' - pl[of the letter) revisionism, which is nothing but petty bourgeois opportunism raised to theory and justified on the basis of this new theory.

The petty-bourgeois anarchist turns his doubts and fears about the dictatorship of the proletariat, about Stalin, the national question etc, into a theory which comes to represent his feelings about the League (which defends Stalin, etc) as a whole. Stalin especially becomes a sort of fetish for this person, around which all his feelings of the 'petty bourgeois's aversion to discipline' congregate and feed on each other. 'Stalin's errors' become the straw that the petty-bourgeois grasps at in his vain attempt to justify his refusal to obey orders, follow discipline, make criticisms within the proper framework, remold himself into a 'cog' of 'wheel' of the revolutionary machine of

the working class. Finally, this absurd system of views about Stalin's 'errors' (doubts about the dictatorship of the proletariat disguised in flashing 'Left' academic dress) is used as an excuse, after he is expelled for breaking the line, to attack the League. If Stalin hadn't existed, you might say, it would have been necessary to invent him. And historically it was. Lenin and the Bolsheviki, and Marx and Engels, were attacked for the same things as Stalin is attacked for now.

The dialectic goes like this. Feelings of rebelliousness in the face of proletarian discipline, 'the base' of petty bourgeois ideology, are transformed into a 'line' on Stalin's errors, 'slavishness', 'dogmatism' etc, which constitutes 'the superstructure'. In turn, this 'theory' is used further to strengthen the base, to give it theoretical justification, just as bourgeois ideology is used by the bourgeoisie to support capitalism, and the 'anti-monopoly alliance' of the CPUSA is used by them to justify what they have always wanted to do, idolize John F Kennedy. Susan Y no doubt believes that the League's 'fundamental errors' on Stalin, etc, were the reasons she split. But the League knows that it was her refusal to push the line and to accept discipline that was the reason for her being expelled.

Isn't the dialectics of it beautiful? And it goes even further than this, because once the theoretical justification for opportunism is developed and applied, it stops, as Stalin says in Mastering Bolshevism, being simply a wrong tendency in the working class movement (an 'ignorance-knowledge' contradiction), and instead becomes a wrecking operation, a class contradiction. Quantity changes into quality. The negation (the vague doubts about Stalin and the dictatorship of the proletariat) is negated through interaction with ideology, it is changed into a brand new, anti-Marxist system. The base gives rise to the superstructure and in turn reacts onto it and changes it, at the same time changing itself. Oats do, as Lenin says, grow according to Hegel, and so do petty bourgeois deviations 'grow' according to Hegel. Susan Y should be impressed with such a 'dialectical interplay' of base and superstructure, one which Stalin, of course, probably wouldn't 'grasp'.

SPLITS

We shouldn't be upset, comrades, when splits such as this take place. They are an excellent thing from our point of view, the necessary expulsion by a healthy, growing organism of waste matter, which, if it remained, would certainly corrupt it. 'To be attacked by the enemy is a good thing, not a bad thing, because it means that we have drawn a clear line of demarcation between the enemy and ourselves.'

With communist greetings,

J A