

# Chicago Workers' Voice

## The Theoretical Supplement



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## Introducing the Theoretical Supplement

The *Chicago Workers' Voice* is publishing a theoretical supplement. The CWV is produced by comrades who were all members or supporters of the former MLP.

Despite the dissolution of the MLP, the CWV group feels that the MLP attempted to develop the mass movements in a revolutionary direction. The MLP provided valuable lessons and guidance to activists trying to build a revolutionary political movement. The MLP worked to restore revolutionary Marxism. It developed a serious ideological, theoretical and tactical critique of revisionism, social-democracy and trotskysm.

### We regret the dissolution of the MLP

The final issue of *The Workers' Advocate* reports that the MLP dissolved due to an internal crisis brought on by a loss of forces and the difficult conditions and by a lack of ideological cohesion. In our view, the loss of forces and the low level of the mass movements were very serious problems facing the Party and may have, by themselves, meant that the Party could not be maintained. Yet, if it were not for the ideological disunity some form of national organisation and work would have been maintained. Thus it is our view that the ideological disunity played the key role in the complete dissolution of the party.

What were the ideological and theoretical disputes tearing apart the MLP? Among these the *Chicago Workers' Voice* thinks there are 1) the assessment of imperialism, 2) analysis of the program of the capitalists and what the program of the working class should be in the post Cold War world, 3) assessment of the role of the working class as a base for revolutionary

politics, 4) assessment of Leninism, 5) assessment of Soviet history, and 6) analysis of the role of a small revolutionary party or group in the present situation.

A large part of the political and theoretical issues which came up inside the Party has scarcely been submitted to critical discussion in former Party circles, much less by those outside direct former Party circles. We think that the disputes in the former Party reflect objective problems facing the revolutionary movement. For one thing, as the MLP tried to deepen its critique of revisionism and the roots of revisionism, the study provoked many serious questions on the tactics and theory of the Bolshevik Party even while Lenin was alive. As well, world politics is in much flux since the break-up of the former Soviet Union and the East European bloc. This is posing many questions regarding the program of world capitalism and how should the proletariat respond. Further, there are many issues on how revolutionaries should organize in the present period when revolutionary movements are nonexistent or in disarray. It was precisely disputes on these and related questions which tore the MLP apart.

It is the opinion of the CWV that these issues are not only of significance to activists who were members or supporters of the MLP. We consider these issues to be of general importance to the movement. It is also our opinion that if another group planning to build an anti-revisionist communist party should get going a year from now, 5 or 10 years from now or many years from now, it will face many if not all the same problems ideologically which faced us. Therefore, we consider it our duty to have these problems out in the open. This is

why the CWV is producing a journal.

While the editors have their own views, they will undertake to print the different views that existed in and around the former MLP on the issues already mentioned and other important questions. For this the journal will draw on analytical and theoretical documents written before the dissolution of the Party that are either unpublished or only internally circulated. It will also publish articles, theoretical studies, comments or letters sent in by our readers. The standpoint and conclusions among various authors will vary. Only where so indicated will a contribution reflect the views of the CWV.

The CWV hopes that this journal will help the activists who want to maintain and develop the Marxist-Leninist trend to sort out their stands on various questions. We are in a period

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# On the debate over imperialism

by Joseph Green, Detroit

The Marxist-Leninist Party has disbanded without leaving much of a picture of the disagreements within the party, and this has inevitably meant that there is also no clear picture of the latest theoretical research of the party either. Right up to the party's dissolution, the majority of Central Committee members denied the existence or importance of serious political differences, and said the issue was only difficult objective conditions. This has denied party circles and other activists the benefit of much of the work of the MLP in its latter period.

A glimpse of what was on the party's mind can be found in the discussion at the Fourth Congress, held in November 1992 to deal with the ongoing Party crisis. One session, the discussion on comrade Manny's report, "On the revolutionary struggle in the dependent countries," has now been transcribed. (As it turned out, this discussion was also a debate on comrade Jim's article on imperialism and the less developed countries in Information Bulletin #77, October 18, 1992.) At the time of the Congress, it was expected that Manny's report was just the first description of ongoing work, that this work would go much further, and that the issues involved

would be discussed in far more detail in the future. Everyone would have a chance later to make additional points or raise additional objections. Partially for this reason, the transcription of the discussion wasn't then prepared. As well, there was less concern about the nature of various ideas, because they were believed to be only preliminary thoughts.

But after the fourth congress, research on these questions basically ended. So the discussion at this congress, and certain related reports, turn out to be one of the few places where the ideas about imperialism and Leninism, reached by some CC members and other comrades, can be seen.

The transcript may be hard to get a handle on at first. Partly this is because the speakers at the congress are continuing various debates that began before the congress, and they generally don't explain how these previous debates proceeded. I am one of the comrades guilty in that regard. But I hope that the following remarks on some of the subjects dealt with by the transcript will help the reader, whether one that agrees with my standpoint or is infuriated by it. In either case, I hope he or she will be able to see more quickly the significance of the various contributions to the discussion, and have a better idea of what is under discussion, although the points that the reader cheers or jeers will differ radically according to his or her standpoint.

## Does imperialism exist?

In IB #77, comrade Jim, San Francisco Bay Area (SFBA) put forward that we should update the theory of imperialism. In his view, political domination by the great powers ended with the collapse of colonialism or any "ism" that sounds like colonialism. As I point out in my article of November 15, 1993 in the pre-Fifth Congress discussion (labeled Detroit #10 in the numbering system then in use), the basic question raised by the collapse of the colonial system was whether imperi-

alism still existed. I won't repeat those arguments here, other than to point out that so long as quite a few colonies existed, even the bourgeoisie of the big powers talked—to say nothing of bragged—about imperialism, while today they deny being imperialist.

The collapse of most of the colonial system, the collapse of most revisionist-style capitalist regimes, the post-World War II economic expansion, the changes in the relationships of domination and subordination between countries, the collapse of most of the revolutionary movement of the past, and the ongoing changes in class relations mean that the world today looks radically different from the past. What is the present form of the world order? A study of this would be valuable for considering the situation facing the proletariat around the world, the tactics revolutionaries should use in the work to rebuild class-conscious proletarian movements, and for agitation in the communist press.

Such a study would not start from the point of view that imperialism existed, but from examining the actual world. I believe that imperialism does exist; and that such a study would give a vivid picture of its present features. But theoretical work should be done without preconceptions. If I believed that "imperialism" was simply a time-honored lie or a mindless dogma that should be maintained for its practical use as a slur word, I would be afraid of such unprejudiced investigation. Instead I welcome it. If it should lead to such an unexpected result as denying imperialism, it would be best to know this as soon as possible. But so far, the work that has been done by others, my pondering of this work over the past year or two, and the evolution of world politics reinforces my belief that today there is an imperialist world order.

Thus the problem with the views put forward by comrades Jim (SFBA), Manny (New York) and Michael (Detroit) isn't that they questioned, in essence, whether imperialism was a

## Introduction, continued

when a number of basic questions are up for debate and discussion. To assist in sorting out our stands, we feel that all views should be heard in this journal.

The journal will attempt, as far as possible, to reflect the views and work of our readers. It will not a priori rule out contributions from any former Party activists or from anyone who wants to discuss the issues involved. It will attempt to provide a channel to our readers to discuss the issues raised in the former MLP and by the revolutionary movement.

useful concept in today's world. Instead the issue is that they didn't carry out sufficient investigation; they took a casual attitude to revolutionary theory; they downplayed some essential features of the world situation; and they wished to impose the resulting half-baked ideas on the party without even a clear discussion of what was at stake. They introduced a terminology that confused everything; they talked of questioning neo-colonialism when imperialism was at stake; and they replaced investigation by saying that things weren't like what they were in 1916. This made it hard to even figure out, let alone discuss, the points they were getting at. And, I think, it helped close their eyes to some things that needed more thought.

When I wrote Detroit #10 last November, the transcript of the Fourth Congress discussion hadn't yet been prepared. But now it's here, and it verifies that it is imperialism itself that is under discussion. For instance, previously I had said that comrade Jim didn't himself directly question imperialism, although imperialism was the issue at stake in what he wrote. But the transcript puts a somewhat different light on Jim's views.

Jim replies at one point in the discussion to a series of questions raised by comrade Jake (Chicago). The first of these questions was whether imperialism was the highest stage of capitalism or whether there was something beyond imperialism. The way the discussion went, it wasn't particularly up to Jim to answer this, but he was enthusiastic to do so. He replied that "the important thing is that we live under capitalism". He said it goes through various waves of developments, but he didn't personally give much weight to that it reached a cer-

tain stage of imperialism in a certain year, and that we were still in it.

In short, Jim doesn't particularly see a point to the analysis that this is or isn't imperialism. So he is willing to issue a loud denunciation of imperialism, and say "imperialism remains imperialism", as he did at the end of his article in IB #77, but for him he is simply denouncing capitalism. His eloquence shows that he has real talent as an agitator, but it covers over the theoretical issues at stake.

In general, comrades Jim, Manny and Michael advocated a series of views which were similar in certain respects. This resulted in a tendency to downplay the significance of domination and subordination between countries; to present things in terms of "interdependence"; to suggest that the collapse of colonialism was the change from political to economic means of exploitation; and, at its most extreme, to present the present world system as basically just a relatively open, free market in which monopoly, political domination, wars, and so forth were just imperfections.

#### **The political side of the world order**

These theories were presented as the recognition of the present world reality. Yet they led these comrades to close their eyes to the significance of such features of world development as, for example, the attempt to build a world political system, based on agreement of the major powers and including a widespread system of international organizations. The agreements and organizations have assumed a role since World War II that far exceeds anything they had previously. They range from the debt crisis and intervention in the economic policies of various countries, to the terms of

world trade, to arms control, and economic and military sanctions against countries, etc.

One of the main challenges raised by comrade Jim in discussion previous to the Fourth Congress and in IB #77 was to find a political side to the present international order. In fact, not only is there the political action of individual great powers, but there is a world political order. Yet he's not interested. Nor was comrade Manny. This was not because he was taken by surprise at the Fourth Congress by the discussion of the world political system. I had written to comrade Manny on this issue on Nov. 2, 1992, while he was preparing his report to the Fourth Congress, so he had time to think about it.

But to look at this political system closely goes against the views being developed by comrades Manny, Jim and Michael about the nature of the current world. It shows that domination and subordination of nations is still a major feature of world politics.

Manny's report mentions the role of this political system, but says it "only verges on the political", and only goes "beyond the economic in the pure and simple sense of this term." And then he forgets about it.

Jim says, in essence, that these agencies aren't the same as old-style colonialism, and they aren't the same as the political system of 1916. Jim says he wants to look at the new features of the world, but can close his eyes to any feature he doesn't want to see by saying it isn't the same as in 1916. He says that "the characteristic feature of 1916...was the political order that existed" and defines that political order as "a world territorial colonial division." He can brush aside the significance of any other politics if it's not the relationship between a colony and the ruling metropolis.

At one point in the discussion Jim suggests that his formulation "may not be" that there used to be politics and now there's economics, but that the politics that exists today is different. Taken seriously, this would contradict his assertion in IB #77 that the political system of imperialism doesn't exist. But instead, all he concludes is that the politics isn't the same as 1916, and so it can be disregarded.

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### Are market relations something new?

In place of examining the actual politics of today, a series of one-sided, half-baked theories have been set forward. They are over-simplified to the point of uselessness. For example, comrade Manny put forward in his report that relations of economic dependency differ from old-style colonial relations in, among other things, that "they entail the appropriation of surplus value by market rather than largely non-market means." The impression is created that political dependency exists only in colonies; and meanwhile profit is made mainly by looting the colony, while the market relations basically begin after independence.

The idea that the mother country only loots the colony, and that's that, is absurd. Puerto Rico is a colony of the United States, but aren't the main relations market relations? Or doesn't this example count because it refers to a present-day colony (although it's not clear why the alleged basic essence of the concept "colony" would change over the years)? Examples could be given from the past too. Even Manny himself, in the discussion at the congress, noted that "the economic aspect of things...is built up through the period of colonialism".

In fact, the development of bourgeois relations and market forces is, in general, one of the fundamental features of what went on in the colonies. If there was a pre-capitalist system in the colony, it was undermined. Colonialism itself differs from country to country, and it goes through different phases. With independence, there are further fundamental changes. But it is also a fundamental error to make the differences between different phases of capitalist development into a Chinese Wall by characterizing it as the difference between politics and economics.

Comrade Manny himself is quite knowledgeable and quite aware of this; he wrote a major, valuable article on Puerto Rico for IB #72; and he could probably rattle off ten times more examples than I could. But looking at the world as a whole, he sums it up in one-sided generalizations. And these generalizations fit in with the mood that imperialism, as any sort of

political concept, has been outmoded by the collapse of colonialism. They put an absolute wall between economic and political dependency. And they distract attention from investigating the current features of the world, such as the present world political order, which Manny downplays. Instead Manny relied on such generalizations as colonialism=looting by political means, modern dependency=market relations.

Manny did point, in his remarks at the Fourth Congress, to some examples of modern-day compulsion of subordinate countries. He says that "you can find particular examples today of things which are at best borderline. For instance military hardware purchases more or less requiring certain countries to purchase U.S. airplanes and so forth. There's more than just a market aspect to it." But this is probably a relatively minor example of dependency.

Loans, for example, are a much more important part of the chain of modern imperialism, as they were of imperialism in the past. But now, as then, the loans weren't necessarily forced on countries. The regimes in dependent countries generally asked or even begged for the loans. But this doesn't fit with the rigid division between political and economic that is being set up, between looting and market forces.

As well, in the period since World War II a large number of issues concerning the terms of world trade, the working of the world monetary system, tariffs and trade allowances, the limits of protectionism, what part of the domestic economy can be preserved for local ownership and what part must be thrown open to any buyer, who will exploit sea bed resources, whether biogenetically-engineered life can be patented, are being decided through international arrangements dominated by the big powers.

Moreover, even in the case of Manny's example of the military purchase, the more important issue may be: why are these countries arming to the teeth, and whether it is related to the present-day social and political order.

An investigation of the actual threads of domination and subordi-

nation must therefore have a broader vision than simply economic or political, voluntary transaction or compulsory. If not, it is half-hearted and hobbled from the start.

Meanwhile the ground rules for world market relations are not simply set by a relatively free market, but are molded by the economically powerful and by agreements forged through the political world order of imperialism. As far as the international agreements go, like all such political decisions they can be undermined by subsequent economic development, or the negotiators may well be wrong about the consequences of their decisions, or the decisions may be challenged in practice. But that's always the way with politics. It doesn't change the fact that what happened after the cold war wasn't simply the development of a world market — that is a venerable institution which has existed for a long time — but was a further step in the attempt to build a single world political and social order.

### Cartoonish pictures of colonialism and dependency

The pattern that colony=political looting and independence=market forces wasn't the only caricature of historical analysis put forward. There is also the idea that the struggle in a colony must automatically be a national liberation struggle. This was put forward in order to deny the importance of relations of dependency between countries today. If it doesn't make sense to talk of a national liberation struggle or at least a struggle for self-determination, then supposedly one can just forget about the political side of dependency.

Previously the Party debate on the world situation had dwelt on the evaluation of the agitation in the Workers' Advocate. In my opinion, quite erroneous criticism was made by comrade Rene (Chicago) that Workers' Advocate was covering up for U.S. imperialism, and I also disagreed with the criticism by various Chicago comrades concerning the coverage of the internal class struggle in various dependent countries, the denunciation of the local bourgeoisie, the presentation of current relations

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In reply to the Chicago comrades —

# More on imperialism and the less developed countries

from comrade Jim, San Francisco Bay area

Last year, comrades from Chicago launched a polemic. This provoked an extensive and exhaustive discussion throughout party circles. The IB has carried a series of articles contributed by some six comrades in Chicago; and seven or so comrades in other areas have given thorough and detailed replies. In my view, this discussion has gone as far as it is going to go. The issues raised by the Chicago comrades have been answered, and answered again. Enough is enough, at least for the time being. On certain points, such as on the Mexican economy, it may be useful to return for further debate, but more research is needed before this discussion will move forward.

Moreover, there is a more general theoretical issue that still needs addressing. This has to do with the theory of imperialism and the less developed countries. So far, the written polemic has skirted around this question, approaching it from a number of directions, and it seems that this is something that needs to be taken on directly. The question is one of the agenda points of the upcoming congress, not for the purpose of adopting theoretical positions, but hopefully to pose and provoke thinking about this critical issue of analysis of the contemporary world. This letter is just an attempt to pose a few of the issues in light of the present debate.

But first, before we get to that, I want to make a comment on the process of discussion.

## Process of Discussion

The present debate was launched with Rene's "Polemic against the dangerous trend who attempts to cover the deeds and nature of today's US imperialism." This was a polemic against "a blatant attempt to COVER UP FOR U.S. IMPERIALISM, to MAKE A DISTORTED ANALYSIS OF THE

CURRENT OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS IN THE USA AND ITS COLONIES." (capitals in the original).

This was followed by contributions from Anita, Oleg, Colleen, Julie and Jake. Most of these comrades, to one degree or another, attempted to distance themselves from some of the most obviously erroneous or exaggerated statements in Rene's polemic. They also raised a number of other issues, from the movement against the Persian Gulf War, to Haiti and South Africa, to the nature of our theoretical work. Indeed, there appears to be a broad range of opinions among these Chicago comrades. At the same time, it seems that there is one common denominator, one issue that hangs them together so that they can make proposals in the name of "concerns that are being raised by comrades in Chicago," and this is an attempt to defend or, in one way or another, give some positive credibility to Rene's original polemic.

For a full year now, these Chicago comrades have been on a fishing expedition to discover something of value in Rene's polemic. It started out by saying that maybe Rene is wrong to say that there is an attempt to cover for U.S. imperialism in the pages of the WA, but there is a "softening" or "weakening" of the criticism of U.S. imperialism. When pages upon pages of documentation are produced to show that this is not the case, another attempt is made. Now the problem isn't lack of denunciation of imperialism, but lack of a call to overthrow it. When it is pointed out that there was no such lack, there is the complaint that this call was in one article but not the other. On, and on it has gone in circular fashion.

Take Julie's letter of May 12. Here she says that the weakness was in a lack of "a theoretical explanation of our tactics," and "a sharp statement that we stand for the defeat of U.S.

imperialism and for us this means building a revolutionary movement." Well, if we made such a sharp statement, it would have been strange. Standing for defeat and standing for a revolutionary movement are two different things. The "defeat" idea precisely addresses one's attitude towards victory or defeat of the warring sides in a given war. The confusion expressed in Julie's formulation is precisely why the Persian Gulf war did not leave much opportunity to raise the defeat idea in a "sharp statement."

But this is getting away from the point I want to make. The point is, Julie's criticisms about theoretical explanation and building a revolutionary movement may seem far, far removed from the original polemics launched by Rene, Anita, Colleen and Oleg last summer. Yet, where does she go with it? To a defense of the original round of polemics.

"Maybe this means," Julie concludes, "that there is more than 'moralist anti-imperialist phrasemongering' behind the issues being raised by some comrades in Chicago." No, Julie, I can't agree. Maybe you have some concerns about what needs to be accomplished in WA in terms of theoretical articles, etc. Maybe there could be a fruitful discussion of such problems, which a number of comrades throughout the party have also been discussing. But we will get nowhere in this discussion if it is made into a defense of the moralistic phrasemongering pursued by Rene and several other Chicago comrades over the past year.

Or take Oleg's letter of July 12. In my opinion, this letter is simply pettifoggling confusion. This is what one is reduced to when committed to excavating for bits and pieces of validity, no matter how far-fetched and illogical, in Rene's original polemic. While of necessity distancing himself from what he concedes as indefensible, Oleg

does his best to come to Rene's rescue. He even places himself in the position of interpreting what Rene might have meant ("I think that Rene did not say exactly what he meant in this sentence"). The spirit of Oleg's letter, and, for that matter, much of what has been written by the Chicago comrades over the last year, is well summed up in the following paragraph:

"I feel," Oleg concludes, "that the party has benefited from the sharp objections that Comrade Rene has raised to the articles in WA on the Persian Gulf War and the Free Trade Agreement regardless of the fact his views are not always well formulated or precisely expressed. I, for one, have been challenged to look at these articles more carefully. In the course of this I have concluded that I do indeed think there are some things wrong."

This is one assessment: despite "the obvious misstatements and exaggerations in Rene's letter" (again citing Oleg's letter of July 12), it has forced comrades to think about critical issues and has thus played a positive role.

This may seem plausible. It is often the case that a polemic, even a poorly crafted one, can help to stir thought and produce positive results.

But what about this particular polemic? In my view, the problem with Rene's polemic was not in the quality of presentation. Many of us have our problems with misstatements and exaggerations. No, the problem with Rene's polemic was that it was wrong. It was surely confused and exaggerated; however, it also had an unmistakable ideological thrust. And this was not in the direction of a greater ideological clarity, or a deeper, more thoughtful conception. On the contrary, it was a thrust away from dealing with the concrete issues coming up in the world, away from a Marxist standpoint, and towards moralistic phrasemongering. The polemic was raised as a protest against alleged opportunist changes being introduced into the WA. This charge has been patiently, and, in my view, successfully refuted.

Moreover, Rene's polemic introduced a new position on the question of imperialism and the less developed countries that represents a step back,

a retreat, from a Marxist-Leninist analysis. This is what Oleg, Anita, Julie and others slur over when they seek to give credibility to the polemic launched last summer (or protest criticisms of "moralist anti-imperialist phrasemongering"). And this slurring, this glossing over of the ideological thrust of this polemic, has made the process of deriving any clarity or enlightenment from this debate exceptionally difficult and painful.

But extract the ideological issues we must. One of the outstanding issues is the nature of the relation between U.S. imperialism and the less developed countries. A good starting point is Rene's polemic, because in my view, it exemplifies the moralistic platitudes that for too long have curbed critical Marxist-Leninist thinking on this question.

#### "U.S. Imperialism and its Colonies"

In the course of the two pages of his original short polemic, Rene refers to the "colonies" (e.g. "U.S. imperialism and its colonies") no less than five times, including the only passage in capital letters. This should not be readily dismissed as an accident, as a mere overstatement, because it reflects a certain analysis, or at least a certain prejudice. Indeed, how else can one explain the entire letter? It is aimed at defending the analysis of a complete, global, economic and political domination by U.S. imperialism.

What are these colonies, according to Rene? His letter is not specific, but he paints some broad parameters. He refers to "Mexico... and the rest of U.S. colonies throughout the world." And this "throughout the world" he poses quite literally. For example, when he appeals for the U.S. working class to reject the bribes of U.S. imperialism that are based on "the position the U.S. has in the world today," he refers to "millions of people from Mexico to Africa, to the Middle East, Asia, Europe, etc." Elsewhere he describes as being under the U.S. wing "England, France, now Saudi Arabia, Egypt, China (!), etc. etc. etc. and everybody else in Desert Storm."

In other words, just about the whole world is under the U.S. thumb, and are therefore candidates for the category of "U.S. colony." (Here a

qualification might be added. While Rene doesn't hesitate to throw in France, England and Europe in general as being within the realm of the U.S. empire, it seems that this particularity should be dealt with in a separate discussion of the balance of world powers. Therefore, this letter focuses on the question of the less developed countries.)

It should be stressed that Rene's thesis does not hinge on the phrase "colonies." By the logic of his document, he may not object to the use of the phrase "neo-colonies," or something along that line to indicate the political and economic control and domination of U.S. imperialism over the globe.

No matter what one calls it, it is a wrong conception. Colonialism, neo-colonialism or some other colonialism as a world system just doesn't correspond to the politics of the planet as of 1992. However, if this conception is wrong, it leads to other issues regarding the theory of imperialism.

#### On Lenin's Thesis of the "Division of the World Among the Great Powers"

In his analysis of imperialism, Lenin attached much importance to what he called the territorial and colonial division of the world among the great powers. He described it as a fundamental feature of modern imperialism. In the classic *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, an entire chapter was devoted to this, and the completion of the "territorial division of the world among the biggest capitalist powers" was stressed as one of five of imperialism's "basic features." (See page 106, Chinese edition.)

At the time, when he was formulating his definition of imperialism, Lenin warned the reader not to forget "the conditional and relative value of all definitions in general, which can never embrace all the concatenations of a phenomenon in its complete development." (pages 105-6, Chinese edition.)

Given this warning, how has this question evolved over the last three quarters of a century? It has evolved quite far. Development has led to a point that the particular tenet of Lenin's

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# On the revolutionary struggle in the dependent countries

presented at the 4th Congress by comrade Manny, New York

An outstanding feature of the decades following the Second World War was the wave of revolutionary struggle in the colonies, semi-colonies and other dependent countries. Marxist-Leninists attached great significance to this phenomenon and regarded it as a defining characteristic of the era.

This wave has now receded, leaving questions in its wake. What significance ought be attached to that wave's receding? What are the future prospects for that entire front of struggle? What are the conditions under which the next wave of revolutionary struggle in these countries will emerge? What does this say about the character of those struggles? What does this imply about the tasks of the Marxist-Leninists, about the program of a new international communist movement?

The aim of this document is to explore what these questions entail in the hopes of establishing a beginning for discussion and study on these matters. This is neither a research report nor is it an attempt at a definitive answer on these points; the systematic investigation wanted to properly advance such answers lies ahead of us.

This is not, however, to say that we were born yesterday. The experience of years of practical, theoretical and journalistic work forms the basis on which these questions arise and on which we can hope to establish an approach to answering them. It is because of, and not despite, the fact that our experience has carried us to the present juncture that we now face the need for further work to deepen and systematize our knowledge.

That there are important questions on this front deserving discussion can be fairly said to be the view of the Central Committee. But this cannot be said of the particulars in this document regarding both what those questions are and what the

answers to them might be; the views herein are not being put forward on behalf of the CC, but rather at its behest, with the hope of finding a starting point for discussion.

## An illustration of the problem

I begin with an illustration.

About a decade ago, a leading member of the PCT of the Dominican Republic published a book on the character of the Dominican revolution. Implicit in the argumentation in this work, and explicit in the defense of it presented in party-to-party discussion, was the notion that democratic — especially, national — struggle is palpable and concrete, whereas proletarian revolution is an abstraction. Hence, for example, all immediate demands, including working class demands regarding wages and the working day, were regarded as democratic demands by virtue of their palpability. Extending this approach to another level, the Dominican revolution, by virtue of being palpable, was ipso facto democratic and anti-imperialist.

Without committing ourselves to a definite view on the character of the Dominican revolution, we nonetheless emphatically disagreed with this approach. It is certainly the case that proletarian revolutions do not take place in the abstract; they break out over concrete questions, sometimes democratic ones. But it does not follow from this that the proletarian revolution necessarily becomes a democratic one, only that it has broken out on a concrete question which happens to be a democratic one. But for PCT, and for a large part of the world movement, national and democratic had become more or less synonymous with concrete and palpable. This reflected a slant which proved to be integral to how PCT viewed the world: everything was seen through the prism of a national perspective.

This slant affected PCT's approach

to the question of the Dominican revolution in at least two ways. The first was to color PCT's analysis of the objective situation, leading it, for example, to deny the extent of capitalist development in that country. The second was found in the conclusions PCT drew from that analysis about the character of the revolution. These two points are closely related but they are not one and the same. The explicit logic in their book can be roughly boiled down to a single syllogism:

Major proposition: in countries gripped by dependency and underdevelopment the revolution is anti-imperialist, democratic in character.

Minor proposition: the Dominican Republic is such a country.

Conclusion: therefore, in the Dominican Republic the revolution is anti-imperialist and democratic in character.

I would argue that both these propositions, indeed, the entire syllogism, speaks of the tint of PCT's national prism.

Yet a further aspect of PCT's approach warrants mention. We were eventually to learn that in the Dominican movement the proposition of the character of the revolution — "socialist" or "democratic" — could not simply be taken at face value. It was not only a comment on the imputed character of the revolution but a sign signifying one or another brand of reformist politics. In this system of signifiers, "socialist" represented trade unionism, "democratic" another brand of reformism. When PCT was strongly oriented toward trade unionism it brandished the banner of "socialism"; when it turned toward building "patriotic fronts" the banner changed accordingly.

In their specific forms, these problems are tied to opportunist schools

of thinking we have long opposed. But, when examined in more general form, further questions arise.

The syllogism above, even when stripped of the contraposition of anti-imperialist struggle to socialist revolution, or when qualified with the assurance that anti-imperialist struggle does not signify kowtowing to the national bourgeoisie, remains a problem. The logic is still flawed by the mechanical nature of the syllogism, and by the presumption that revolutions in dependent countries are ipso facto "anti-imperialist". In this case, drawing a clear line of demarcation with the national prism of PCT poses further questions. This problem will be a recurring theme of this presentation.

And while the system of signifiers described above may be particular to a given trend or to the movement in a particular country, the role of such signifiers in political discourse is not. Not infrequently, this is a deleterious role, one in which symbolic expressions become substitutes for materialist analysis. The role of such signifiers in political discourse in the communist movement will be a second theme of this presentation.

### What is imperialism?

In the communist movement, the term "imperialism" has come to have several related but distinct meanings. It is used to refer to the policies of subjugation of one nation by another ("imperialist aggression"). It is used to refer to the nations or countries that subjugate others ("U.S. imperialism"). It is used as well to refer to finance capital — the merger of monopoly industrial and banking capital — and more generally, to the era of capitalism in which finance capital predominates (e.g., imperialism as the eve of social revolution).

The term can be used to denote one meaning at one time and another meaning another time. At still other times it seems to be used to refer to, not one meaning or another, but rather their conjunction. Thus, a term like "imperialist war of aggression" can be particularly satisfying for one who is familiar with these multiple meanings because it can connote:

— that the war is a predatory

war;

— that the war is being waged by the U.S., which we know to be an imperialist power;

— that the war stems from the domination of the society by finance capital and represents the interests of finance capital;

— and that such wars typify the present, i.e., imperialist, era.

Whether the term can convey such a richness of meaning to someone who is not an initiate in this system of meaning is, of course, another matter.

While there can be strength to such richness, there is also an issue of precision of meaning. For example, were we suddenly deprived of the use of the term "imperialist", we could approximate the meaning of "imperialist war of aggression" by saying that a war is a predatory war waged by the U.S. in the interests of finance capital and that such wars are inherent in the capitalist order. But this is not always the case; some attempts to break down the connotations into their constituent parts dissolve in confusion, suggesting that the play is not on richness of meaning but rather on ambiguity. A specific example of this problem arises with the notion of the struggle against imperialist domination in the dependent countries today, a point that will be explored shortly.

A further observation is warranted. The use of the term "imperialism" to connote a range of meanings tends to serve as linguistic confirmation of the notion of imperialism as leviathan, as the ultimate nemesis of everything progressive. Such a notion, however, is a romantic and not a scientific one. Imperialism, when taken in the sense of predatory wars or national oppression, is something we more or less categorically oppose. But imperialism, when taken in the sense of a stage of capitalist development, is an historically progressive phenomenon in contrast to what went before. This is true beyond the narrow sense of sequence, that is, that one followed the other and must therefore be progressive. It is true in the sense that finance capital better prepares the material prerequisites for socialism

than does pre-monopoly capitalism. Furthermore, finance capital has far more ability to spread itself on a world scale, uprooting and destroying previous modes of production. This is a painful process, but it is also an historically progressive one.

This does not in the least mean that we ought to mute our opposition to predatory wars, look kindly upon the subjugation of nations, or otherwise accommodate ourselves to the reactionary politics that finance capital gives rise to. It does, however, suggest that opposition to the leviathan is not the beginning and end of a Marxist critique of what is progressive; for that, something more is wanted.

A negative example of this can be found in Stalin's oft-cited remark on the "objectively progressive" character of the activities of the Emir of Afghanistan. In this remark (and in the use made of it in the movement subsequently) the "progressive" character of the Emir's activities are determined solely by the fact that they are directed against British imperialism. This approach is distinctly different from that taken by Lenin and the early CI, as shown for example, in the materials cited on Morocco in WAS some time back. In those materials, an approach is demonstrated that also gives weight to the social context.

But if the social context is to be taken into account, then a critical approach to imperialism and anti-imperialist struggle is warranted. For example, in considering the export of capital, account must be taken, not only of the aspects of looting pure and simple, but also of the aspects that promote social development. By the same token, movements in opposition to foreign investment would have to be examined in their concrete social context, and neither blanketly embraced as inherently progressive nor blanketly condemned as economic romanticism.

### Analysis by analogy

Another term that threatens to define its own meaning is "neo-colonialism". This, too, warrants some consideration, as the concept of neo-colonialism figures centrally in any

*Continued on Page 39*



# 4th Congress Discussion on report on the revolutionary movement in the dependent countries -- Nov. 1992

The following discussion was transcribed from tapes by one comrade, and checked back with the tapes by another comrade. Sometimes words, phrases or whole sentences were inaudible, and they have been replaced by dots... When the words were unclear, they are placed in brackets<>. Some hemming and hawing and superfluous words have been omitted. When it wasn't clear who was talking, the speaker has simply been identified as "floor".

In previous congresses and conferences, discussion was held in an informal fashion. At this congress, a set of formal rules of discussion, outlined in IB#78, were followed. They prevent the chair from taking part in discussion. They also mean that, after questions of clarification, no one can speak a second time until everyone who wishes to has spoken once; no one can speak a third time until the second round of discussion is finished, etc.

There was a good deal of procedural discussion at the beginning of this discussion and some during the discussion, most of which has been omitted from the following transcript.

In the following discussion, the chair was comrade Matt, New York; and the reporter on the issue was comrade Manny, New York.

Comrade Manny's report was later circulated inside the party in *Information Bulletin* #80 (Feb. 10, 1993).

**Reporter (Manny, New York):**

The report on this agenda point consists of the document that was circulated yesterday. I'm not going to take an hour and a half of the Congress' time to read that document out loud. This document was completed only at the last minute. It bears a stamp

of a hasty writing which makes it somewhat more difficult to read and for this I apologize. It also contains some ideas and some angles of approach which may be difficult because they're unfamiliar. And that much was intentional. Rather than try to review or summarize the document, I think the best way to develop the discussion would be to waive a reading of the report and go straight to questions of clarification to get things going.

**Karl, Detroit:**

Question of clarification on page 7. I think I understand the point that's being raised here, but perhaps it's a factual refreshing of history on this a little bit. The last paragraph before the subhead, "How do we characterize the revolutionary struggle in the dependent countries" just a few lines before describes relations of economic dependency in the old type of colonialism versus what exists at the present time. So it says "they are fundamentally economic rather than political relations; they entail" — and this is the section I'm not quite sure I understand — "they entail the appropriation of surplus value by market rather than largely non-market means".

The illustration which flashed to my mind, which may be wrong, is what's being referred to here for instance the old-style colonialism? The old Spanish conquistadors come to the Western hemisphere, they conquer the native people and just steal the gold. This is not a market; they just straight up take it back to Spain. Is what's being talked about now is that it's more complicated, that you just don't straight up go in there and steal the gold but you actually get it through the market system. Is that factual as described?

**Manny, NY:**

Yes it is. In the earliest stages of old-style colonialism, and what you describe for the Spanish not only goes

for the Spanish but goes for all the colonial powers. It begins with this just straightforward looting. Like if you take the British in India. There's a certain point where they have looted the country so badly, they have to think of other things to do too. But throughout the entire history of the British rule in India, there's all kinds of taxation and special levies, all kinds of requirements on the colony to make certain purchases from the mother country, so on and so forth, which are simply straightforwardly imposed by force.

If you look at India today, does finance capital, U.S., British, other finance capital, extract surplus value from India? Certainly it does. But there's a difference in how it works, a difference in its basis from what it was in the period of colonialism. This is not to say that there was no, I mean, the economic aspect of things, the market aspect of things, built up through the period of colonialism. It's not an absolute differentiation. And moreover you can find particular examples today of things which are at best borderline. For instance military hardware purchases more or less requiring certain countries to purchase U.S. airplanes and so forth. There's more than just a market aspect to it. But if you look at the relations as a whole, if you look at on the whole what's the basis on which surplus value is being appropriated from the dependent countries and being transferred to the rich countries, it is predominantly through the market. In the sense not just of the commodities market but also the capital market.

**Julie, Chicago:**

Also what?

**Manny, NY:**

Also the capital market. Market, meaning not just commodities market but also the capital market.

**Oleg, Chicago:**

I don't want you to spend a real long time on it, but I'm not familiar with this Monthly Review dependency theory that you mention in there. You actually did mention a couple things about that.

**Manny, NY:**

During the 1960's and 70's, a school of thought became prominent internationally, had a lot of influence among social-democrats, among national reformists, and of course it had some influence in the revolutionary movement since people go back and forth among the different trends. It came into particular prominence with the work in the 1960's of Andre Gunder Frank on the question of Chile and then got extended to all of Latin America and then also to the newly independent countries of Asia and Africa. And this was a school of economists who held that the basic characteristic of the relationship of these countries with the U.S. and with the imperialist metropoli in general was the retardation of economic development due to conditions of dependency. And at the height of things, this school tended strongly to deny that any economic and social development took place in this part of the world. Now their thinking was not simply the thinking of revolutionary elements. They were social-democrats and national reformers. And they had a strong tendency to try to find some path for these countries for independent national development. Sometimes this was associated with a revolution which would open up the space for it and sometimes not. But the main focus was on the idea that somehow a way must be found for economic independence and this is the only way you are going to get developed.

The influence of this school peaked in the late 1970's and it began to erode in part because there were various facts it could not explain such as the economic development which had been taking place in a series of countries throughout that period of time. And it suggests in fact that their reading of what imperialism does in the world was one-sided; that there are both the aspects, as our Second Congress resolution points out, both the

aspects of retarded development and also the promotion of development, the destruction of old modes of production, the introduction of new ones. It's actually a much more complex phenomena then in the way in which they described it.

I mention this school here primarily because they are probably the best know exponents of this idea of trying to marry the questions of national domination and the domination of finance capital by saying that the issue is the domination of foreign finance capital. And that's what you have to fight against or get away from.

**Floor:**

Comrade, on page 8, the paragraph up one from the bottom, "In theoretical terms, the abolition of national oppression is a democratic task compatible with capitalism." Then it goes on "A country can be politically independent but capitalist; and it can be politically independent even while economically dependent." (He requests examples of this)

**Manny, NY:**

Examples of it would be about two-thirds of the countries in the world. The fact of the matter of it is that for most of the world today there is a situation where countries have home rule, the state is based upon the domestic classes and domestic class relations in that country. And there's a degree of political independence. At the same time economically there is dependency; there is dependency upon foreign sources of capital to be able to carry out any investment; in connection with that, there is very often large-scale external debt. Because of the external debt any country committed to carrying that level of external debt has to be orienting itself to the external market. You're dependent upon selling of goods abroad in order to be able to realize the foreign exchange to maintain your payments on the debt and so forth. So they're economically dependent.

On the theoretical front, this was an issue which was raised by Lenin in argument with, what was Radek called? (Floor: imperialist economists), what Lenin called "imperialist economism." The argument of a series of

left theoreticians such as Luxembourg and Radek was that with the degree of the international economic integration that had been realized by the beginning of the 20th century, the then just-developing countries in eastern Europe for example, let alone those in western Europe, had no real possibilities for independence. The capitalism there was already highly integrated with western European capitalism. So this idea of national independence was outmoded. Lenin pointed out this was wrong theoretically. That just because for instance a Poland was economically dependent upon Britain and France, did not mean that it could not be politically independent. And he argued in fact that the extent of capitalist development could actually create more pressure and not less on the front of the national question. One particular example he gave of this was the example of Norway which in the early part of the century had declared itself independent of Sweden even while maintaining very strong economic ties. This discussion, by the way, was not regarding Asia and Africa. All the parties to that discussion, there were differences on the question of the colonies in Asia and Africa, but the fight on the question of whether the right to self-determination was a meaningful slogan was on the question of eastern Europe.

If we look at the world today, we have a large part of the world gripped in that situation. And you have countries which are politically independent yet economically dependent. Moreover, especially for the smaller or weaker countries, their possibilities or prospects for what they can actually do are limited by circumstance. Like being independent does not mean the governors of the state can wake up one morning and say "ah, we are going to go out and do this" without taking account of the fact that they are hemmed in on every side by what the world market conditions are, from being surrounded by bigger and stronger neighbors, by all these other things which make life miserable for most countries most of the time. And you get arguments, well this is not genuine independence because — so on and so forth. But then you're talking some ideal genuine independence

and not a reasonable materialist standard.

By this standard certainly, if we take for instance the case of Latin America, most of the Latin American republics have been independent since the 1820s or 30s. And in the larger and stronger countries, this has actually counted for something. So in the smaller and weaker ones, their possibilities have been very narrowly subscribed. And they have been the most susceptible, most exposed, to bullying. But for the bigger and stronger countries there is a whole history of national independence and this counts for something. At the same time there is also economic dependence, and the economic development of the past half century has not reduced that dependence even at the same time that it has brought a higher level of the development of the productive forces, an increase in the size of the proletariat, industry, and a big concentration of capital in the hands of the bourgeoisie of that country; the country as a whole is now very often more indebted, more dependent upon the external market and so forth. This is the case, for example, with Brazil, which is the largest and strongest country in Latin America. I would argue that it is also the case with Mexico which is the second largest. And to a certain extent this is also true of a number of countries in Asia.

**George, SFBA:**

And the question I had to raise is you mention there is increasing dependence, economic dependence, and I'm trying to get clear in my mind how you differentiate between the normal course of what's happening in the world today because there's the increasing interdependence of all the economies. So I'm trying to think of what examples do you have that would differentiate that from — for instance you talk of increasing debt, the U.S. is also increasingly a debtor nation. So in what ways are you specifically talking about an increasing dependency on the part of these smaller, the less developed countries?

**Manny, NY:**

These two things are very much bound up with one another. The only distinction I'm suggesting is that at least in the short and the intermediate term it plays out differently for a strong country than for a weak country. I would not say that dependency is an aberration, something different from the course of capitalist development. In the case of the history of the U.S. for instance, the U.S. was economically dependent on Britain for a very long time. Now that was a feature of the historical development of the U.S. Under socialism countries could presumably be economically interdependent and you have relations of equality and so on and so forth. Under capitalism, that doesn't happen. The strong eat the weak. In general, it is interdependence, but the way, the actual form interdependence takes is some countries tend to get crushed down by it. Does that answer?

**Floor:**

On the second question, in contrasting the Soviet Union to Germany "among other things, the one was chronically capital-poor, the other decidedly not so." So which is which.

**Manny, NY:**

World War I Germany was not capital poor. It just wanted to bust out looking for places they could put their money into. The Soviet Union on other hand had a chronic shortage, chronic scarcity of everything, but in particular of development capital.

**Dave, NY:**

While I agree with the basic point that we shouldn't look to impose Lenin's world on our own, I also don't think things are so black and white. For example, in the pre-World War I period,

**Matt, NY:**

Is this a point of clarification?

**Dave, NY:**

No, this is discussion.

**Matt, NY:**

We're still doing points of clarification. There seems to be some confusion as to how we are proceeding. Let me just ask comrades to have just a little bit of patience. We are trying to establish a new procedure, I am trying to figure it out as much as all of you are. But right now we're still in the process of getting questions of clarification and they'll be opportunity for discussion is a short while. So any further points of clarification to the reporter?

**Bill, Detroit:**

I have a general question on this section on socialism on page 9... The section poses some of the problems of how socialism has been dressed up in nationalistic content. And then it also points out some of the problems and questions that are raised on how to reassess problems of socialism in the dependent countries. What I'm not clear on, maybe this is just a question, is there some indication here of whether socialism can be achieved in one country, in a single country? Dependent or advanced capitalist?

**Manny, NY:**

Well, I'm questioning it without definitively saying not. But I don't feel I can give a definitive view on it, but it seems to me there are serious questions which has just not been.... The idea came into the movement, and getting to look at things from decades of hindsight you can see serious problems with it which were never answered.

**Bill, Detroit:**

So back to this question that's being raised.... We sort of all along held this banner ourselves... I would just like to see the point...

**H, Buffalo:**

More on this same topic...of socialism... on page 10... "it is becoming increasingly difficult to speak in terms of a rise in the workers' movement in purely national terms."

**Manny, NY:**

It's a point which came into our minds from discussion with the Portuguese comrades on the effects of

European integration. We wanted to know what is the workers movement in Europe going to look like in the future. Can you have a workers movement in Portugal. I mean the old way is each country has a CGT [a central trade union federation—ed.], each country has a trade union federation, and the strikes and the movement takes place in that country. We wanted to know what's going to become of that if economic integration in Europe goes through to a very high level. Basically they said that they had the same question.

It takes time for the phenomenon to develop, and I can't predict how far it goes. But if it goes far enough it's very hard to have a successful workers' movement — separate workers movements in Portugal and Germany. I think there's going to have to be a strong trans-European basis to it. The old way of thinking about how you organize the movement, trade union or other forms, then comes into question. I'm not saying it's going to collapse and disappear absolutely: habits in that direction can continue for generations if capitalism continues for generations. But that was the issue we had in mind, we asked the Portuguese comrades and the same question was very much on their mind. How much of a question it becomes, depends in part on how far the economic integration really goes and what form it takes.

**Floor:**

In my mind your describing...like one country, one currency, one economic policy and so on and so forth. So I can see that, but is there any place in the world where you can say that the workers movement is not in its national form altogether, that it doesn't have its national existence? You see what I'm saying?

**Manny, NY:**

Yes, I see what you're saying.

**Floor:**

Maybe this is discussion...

**Manny, NY (aside):**

Should I respond or wait till discussion?

**Matt, NY:**

Well, I think you can respond if you were thinking more beyond Europe in terms of this point.

**Manny, NY:**

North America — in another generation if the Free Trade Agreement goes through.

At this point in the transcripts there is some discussion of procedure

Finally, there were no more points of clarification, and general discussion followed. There is also a break in the transcript here due to changing tapes.)

**Oleg, Chicago:...**

<...>In fact there are issues of national imperialisms. That's quite significant. The rivalry between various imperialist powers can be a factor economically and politically in the world. I also think that there's a very serious issue that needs actual investigation, more so than has been done in the <past>, is the question of spheres of influence. My impression is that there are definitely spheres of influence: that the U.S. has a greater dominance in Latin America, in many countries in Latin America than other imperialist countries. Japan has a part of the world where it has a predominate influence. It certainly does not operate the same way as it did when there was colonialism. That's quite obvious. There are few countries where there's an exclusive right for only one imperialist power to go there. But myself I don't think that means that this issue of spheres of influence has disappeared. I seriously <suggest need for> objective analysis and investigation.

Another issue that is fairly theoretical was this question of economic domination and its relationship to the question of political domination. The idea I get from this report is that the main thing that takes place in the world today with regard to the issue of <...Latin America> is that there's economic domination from imperialism in general <...whereas> particular imperialist powers and that there's not much political consequence to this. But I think that in fact there is

definite — the politics is <...obvious> in fact imperialism at the present time sets definite limits <to> independence of these various countries. Iraq crossed the line and you see what happened to them. Just to take an extreme example. Certainly political domination, the character of it has changed dramatically from the time there was outright colonialism. But I don't think the issue of political domination has completely disappeared either. It's also an issue that can be objectively investigated.

Another issue that is raised in this report — I'm not sure of the sentence, or the arguing, but I'm not sure I agree with it either so I'll raise it — is the question of "is imperialism historically progressive" which is a different way of phrasing the issue than what I'm used to anyway. I think a lot more clarification is to be made on this. If you can say that, it seems to me that it has to be in a very narrow sense. That Lenin has a whole discussion in "Imperialism" just on how imperialism means decay, stagnation and parasitism. And...points out... under capitalism, monopoly does lead to stagnation. It's also temporary usually. But in any case that's another issue to explore more fully. And I'm not sure that I can completely agree with the way its presented in the report.

**George, Boston:**

On the matter of spheres of influence I think it doesn't exist in the old way, for instance India's been brought up. The rule of the British in India does have a political effect on the people and the country, so mobilizing against British rule would have a democratic aspect to it. Whereas more it seems now the questions of influence — it's an economic influence — so is the question of domination. But it's a question among the bourgeoisie of different countries, or different companies. So in that case it's a question of economic weight, is less and less an issue that translates to a democratic question. For instance in India.

**Ray, Seattle:**

I'd like to speak to a couple of points. The first issue I'd like to address is whether imperialism can be

regarded in any sense as historically progressive. (Request to repeat from floor) The first question is whether imperialism can be regarded in any respect as historically progressive. And I would think that that would be an ABC of Marxism insofar as one realizes that for socialism to come into being, it rests on the development of the economic productive forces in the society that proceeded it — under capitalism. And certainly, since Lenin penned his description of certain features of stagnation, decay and parasitism in 1916, one can see that in that period of time my guess is that human productivity, the development of productivity of labor, has increased since Lenin's time probably on the order of the amount of increase that occurred from the time of Moses to Lenin. The joke is that you can refer to a certain M-L period...

But anyway, socialism rests on the development of the productive forces that occurred previous to it under capitalism. Without a very high level in the development of human productivity, labor productivity, socialism is not imaginable. Lenin himself said, we don't know what it is, we don't know what the material basis for socialism is, all we can do is give it a shot and then we will find out. What I would say is that the incredibly exciting developments in science and technology that have gone on in the last say 70 years since Lenin was around—and it's going on at an ever-increasing pace right in front of our very eyes today—is of tremendous significance for answering the question of, well, what is the industrial, material prerequisites for socialism. And to me it's an ABC of Marxism to realize that these developments have been occurring within an imperialist context, for imperialist reasons, every positive phenomenon that develops under imperialism also has an equal or greater negative aspect attached to it. It's not a question of saying, oh wow, imperialism's so fantastic it developed the computer chip....they use the computer chips for? They're putting them in Peacekeeper missiles and so on and so forth. Nevertheless, it is essential, technological achievement of this kind is essential for being able to finally answer the question of

what is the material basis for bringing about a complete socialist society in the terminology we started to use in the last couple of years.

That's the first point. In relation to this other point that's raised, I believe by Anita, that there's an apparent contradiction between the text of the report that was passed around. That she agreed with the report in so far as it talks about capitalist development, the world proletariat, the growth of the domestic national bourgeoisie in different countries and how these are posing the issue of a struggle for socialist revolution more sharply in what was formerly regarded as countries that were at a different stage.—I'm just making up these characterizations of what Anita said what the report said. It's roughly in the ballpark.—But the apparent contradiction is: OK, the revolution has a socialist character, but, of course, socialism is not possible. Or seemingly socialism looks like...impossible when you say Argentina unto itself. Or perhaps to be a little more obvious, Nicaragua unto itself. So what is this apparent contradiction? Well, if one were to go to the people of Nicaragua or even Argentina for that matter, and say, obviously you've got a capitalist country here, capitalist relations in agriculture even, the revolution's for socialism. And they say, "well, you know we're a pretty dependent country." And you say "no sweat, haven't you read your J.V.?" It's a tenet of scientific Marxist communism and socialism that socialism in one country is an axiom of our beliefs. It's possible in any country. It's right there in the writings of J.V. Stalin. Furthermore, J.V. proved it by quoting from Lenin, not once but repeatedly, in fact ad nauseam, in fact mainly just two quotes. And mainly they weren't even on the subject. The quotes were from a 1915 article on the United States of Europe and a 1923 article "On Cooperation."

But anyway if you try to go to these people in these countries and say "yeah, the revolution's for socialism and you can do it alone," it's liable to go over like a lead balloon because the experience of the last 70 years has shown that there could very well be some problems with the conception

that poor and small countries, poor and large countries, or even perhaps large and not so poor countries can affect a transition to socialism unto themselves in a situation of relative economic autarky. And why is this? Well, I think it's very much tied into the question of what are the economic prerequisites for affecting a transition toward socialism that doesn't get derailed. What are the economic prerequisites to prevent a new ruling class from coming into being? What does the working class need to have at its disposal to actually become a ruling class and prevent this state-capitalist phenomenon from taking over. This involves a whole series of issues, not the least of which is how can the working population of a country not be forced into spending most of their time in drudgery. How can the working population be free from this so that it can have more of an all-sided development and actually become administrators of their own destiny? Administrators of the economy, of the government and take things into their own hands? How is this to become something other than rhetoric? That the working class will rule, no sweat. How is that actually to be brought into being? It rests on certain definite economic prerequisites.

So when one looks around the world today, looks at the economic dependency of virtually all countries to a certain extent, when you talk about inter-dependency, but economic dependency in the sense of being countries with something less than all-sided economies, than it's very difficult to imagine a country such as certainly Nicaragua, small and poor, or even a country like Argentina which is not so small and not so poor, it's very difficult to imagine them, in a situation of isolation, being able to get very far — isolation, most likely attack — to get very far toward the economic conditions necessary for complete socialism.

It's another question entirely to look at the issue from the point of view, well, if one were to have an isolated revolution in X, Y or Z country, what can be imagined in terms of transitional steps, a holding out process pending assistance from other revolutions. And then that gets into

the whole question of concrete analysis of each country. It may involve such issues of, well, in terms of the revolution in this country is socialist but we shouldn't try anything until we're sure that there's something going on that's going to be of assistance to us. And we should actively tell the working population that the time is not here for us. Don't do anything rash. It may certainly involve more of an international perspective on the prospects for success of a country in any national territory. Well, simply a more international view of things. But it may involve a concrete chance of regional alliances of the workers or a regional strategy of the working people of several geographically outlined countries. So I don't think the contradiction is so much completely contradictory, you know, the character of the revolution becoming more of a socialist character but socialism unto that country alone, certainly complete socialism is not feasible. The way the contradiction has to be addressed is something along the lines I just talked about.

#### Floor:

Just a couple of comments...One such question that arose in my mind...capitalism...sort of presented that...even though it's a basic tenet of Marxism that Marx characterized capitalism by uneven development and...in that sense that capitalism even in its primitive stages is characterized by uneven and anarchic development, why should at its highest stage that be any different? I don't think it is.

So to say that... positive developments of world imperialism are mixed in with the negative, that too is apparent in capitalism. I think in fact it was characterized in the report seemed to say contradictory things about imperialism. Well, I think we better hope that it should because it's the contradictory character of imperialism which is the basis for revolutionary change, the basis for change, period. If you have a...world system of imperialism which is all progressive, why change? If you have a...of world imperialism which is all negative, it'll cease to exist. I think the point that's trying to be made in the report is to kind of identify what specifically are the contra-

dictory tendencies in imperialism at this point in time, as a foundation on which to base our analysis of what we do when we're discussing the question of the relations between the dominant imperialist countries and the dependent capitalist countries.

And as far as the point that was discussed on political versus economic domination, how in the past colonialism tended to be a little bit more kind of an overt political domination of the dependent countries of the world, the dominant way to extract the kind of economic advantage <over> each country to the colonial power, and today it's a little bit more of an economic domination. I kind of see it as to a certain extent a merger between the two where sort of market economic forces are the means by which political domination is exercised. In other words, a lot of domination by the imperialist countries is exercised through the International Monetary Fund. By imposing certain economic strictures on certain countries as the basis for approving loans for development is the way in which the dominant imperialist powers exercise their <political influence in these countries>. That's kind of the way I see it.

And overall, overall on the report, when you read it over to a certain extent, maybe they're a little bit one-sided or a little bit one-sided in emphasizing sort of like the changing aspects of imperialism. And perhaps to a certain extent negates, or at least does not develop so much the the more historical aspects which are still around...post-World War II those things were around...look at it as beginning a discussion of what ways the imperialist system is changing and developing, the new aspects we have to take note of when we look at the situation and decide what to do.

#### Jake, Chicago:

I have a series of questions.

One, is imperialism the highest stage of capitalism or is there something beyond imperialism?

Second, was the Marxist-Leninist Party influenced by dependency theories? Is there reflections of this in the Party's earlier literature, perhaps in The Workers' Advocate reporting of the debt crisis? There has been discus-

sion of dependency theories, mention of theories that might have been similar to it or contained in Jim's letter, the IB, <Interjection from the floor> I forget what number it is. 77. As well as in Manny's report.

Thirdly, are there anti-imperialist tasks anywhere in the revolutionary movement in the dependent countries? This isn't mentioned in Manny's report; it is mentioned in Jim's letter. (Request from the audience) Are there anti-imperialist tasks for the revolutions in the dependent countries? Can we speak to them? Should we speak about them? Even in a socialist revolution there may be anti-imperialist tasks.

And the last question is on ownership of capital. Is it ever an issue, the ownership of capital. Can foreign ownership of capital have some bearing on the class struggle, or is it something that doesn't have bearing on the class struggle.

#### Julie, Chicago:

On the question of spheres of influence, while I think it's definitely true today there's very few countries that you could say this country is totally economically dominated by this other country, there's definitely the IMF, there's interpenetration of capital. It does seem to me, based on the reading that I've done, that there are certain rough spheres of influence, that the U.S. has more investments in certain countries, Japan has more in other countries, and that this does seem to influence both world politics and politics in particular countries. In the sense that the possibility of developing trade wars is, I think, based on spheres of influence of particular powers, or even in the case of a much smaller case, the question of, for instance, the civil war in Liberia. My understanding, that besides the various ethnic and clan contradictions there and so forth, that Nigeria, for one, wants certain domination in that part of Africa and is financing and giving arms to one side and France wants a means of transportation for its mining interests in Guinea and is financing and giving arms to the other side. Which to me is a certain question of spheres of influence of these powers that affects the politics in that country

quite severely actually. So that's one point I had on it.

The other point I was going to raise was on the question of economic domination, I guess it was raised by Oleg, and political domination. I certainly don't think we can talk about political domination in the sense of the colonial era. I think that undoubtedly most, the majority of countries in the world are politically independent and I don't foresee, unless there's a big change in world politics, that you going to have a whole series of struggles that are of the character for political independence. It does seem to me however that the question of various powers having political influence in certain countries, that's true, although we have to look case-by-case <...> how we would want to agitate on it or view it. Such as, for instance, with the Free Trade Agreement, for instance, Mexico has changed its constitution. I would hesitate to characterize this as the U.S. is down there threatening them to change their constitution. It's not the way it's taking place. I also think we would not develop some agitation that says uphold the old constitution against U.S. imperialist interference. I think that would be ridiculous from a proletarian standpoint. There may be some political forces there agitating that way. On the other hand, I could see a struggle coming up on the question of the border crossing, a demand for the same treatment as the Canadians in crossing the border. And that we would, in connection to this Free Trade Agreement, we would want to support such a fight.

In regard to this I was thinking of the question say of Korea. If you had a fight for reunification of Korea, I can imagine that 20 years ago we would say such a fight was against U.S. imperialism or whatever and support it in that fashion. I can conceive that the U.S. and Japan might be opposed to such a unification from their own interests in the region but that we would agitate that this is some anti-imperialist struggle, I don't think so. I think we would try to show what effect it would have on the proletariat of those countries and try to show that concretely, but I think we would see this more as an inter-capitalist fight,

in that sense of whether you support or oppose it.

But anyway I still think there is a possibility, I realize it's raised in the report, but that certain democratic struggles in various countries could have a major influence in world politics.

#### Joseph, Detroit:

I realize that we all have been having discussion...but I want to make a few points on the world situation.

It seems to me this discussion that we've been having for some time on this has depended for a great deal on the issue of what is the dependency of one country to another, or subordination of one country to another, or domination of one country over another. And it seems to me various different ideas came up on what that means. And there's some ideas that came up which I disagree with, which thought that because one country is more subordinate than the other somehow it was wrong to agitate against the local bourgeoisie, or to agitate too strong against the local bourgeoisie, or to point out how the local bourgeoisie was bringing disaster on its people.

But I think it's also wrong to make the same identification of what subordination means from the other way around. If this country is not a puppet country, does not have a puppet government, that means it is not a dependent country or not a subordinate country. If this country has a government based on its own ruling class or its own exploiting classes does not necessarily mean it is not a subordinate country, it is not subordinated by another country. If this country's government does not run to the White House, run to the local U.S. embassy and find out what to do before it does something, before it even stages a coup, this means that it doesn't have any relation of subordination to the U.S. automatically.

I don't think that's right either. I agree with the statement made in an earlier IB that it would be good to raise this discussion away from haggling with words or what does a word in and of itself mean. But I think to do that you have to examine what historically, and what in reality in the

present, subordination of one country to another means, and what it has meant historically. I think in doing that you don't just state that all subordination means colonialism, or colonialism and semi-colonialism are the same thing, and neo-colonialism the same thing, and domination is the same thing. They're not the same thing; they're extremely different. The whole art of politics resides in that difference. Once you get rid of that difference you can forget about politics.

For example, analysis was made back in 1916 of what was the situation existing in 1916. And so someone says in the main the world is characterized by political domination of the oppressed countries whereas now it's economic domination. I just don't believe that type of characterization is correct. In the world at that time, a very complex situation existed in terms of subordination of countries.

One-third of the world was in fact colonially enslaved to the imperialist countries, which is a dramatic figure, almost about a third of the population of the world in the colonies.

Another third of the world was in the imperialist metropolis countries. Or slightly less. Close to a third of the world was in the imperialist metropolis. Actually in those countries I believe there were also certain national questions inside them of a somewhat different nature than that of the colonies.

Another third of the world was in a different type of subordinate relation to imperialism. An entire third of the world, close to a third. One-sixth of the world was what Lenin calls "semi-colonies". I'm not real sure what a semi-colony is but according to Lenin's characterization (Interjection from the floor.) What I meant to say is sixth, of which a majority of people of the semi-colonies were in one single country, China. Another sixth of the world was in Lenin's "other" category which includes Latin America, perhaps certain parts of Europe and so on.

If you look at this third of the world, it does not have the various features which I believe are being portrayed of it. Like China did not belong to a single imperialist master. The comrade earlier today made this

point. A series of European countries were preying on China, <...and Japan and the U.S.> Argentina has come up for discussion in an "other" category. According to Lenin it has relations with at least two separate large financial powers, England and Germany. These countries, I believe in general, certainly did not have puppet governments. I do not believe the government of China, or the government of Turkey, listed as another semi-colony, were puppet governments. These were governments based on their own domestic ruling classes, on their own domestic exploiting classes. These are governments which are not trained imperialist agents. These are governments where the politics is extremely different from that of the colonies. And these are countries which, I think, you would have a hard time characterizing their struggle as the struggle for self-determination. These are countries which would be regional powers at least in the case of Turkey, which at that time was the Ottoman Empire and had its own regional ambitions in the area including just as much, if not more, than present-day Turkey. And it had just got through waging a series of wars in that area for its regional ambitions. Losing wars, which is why the Ottoman Empire doesn't exist any more, but wars nevertheless for those ambitions. I think the picture in a third of the world at that time, which is not in the colonies, but to this or that extent had some dependent relationships, is very complex. And if one wants to study this period, one actually has to see what this was.

For example, Argentina is listed by a bourgeois spokesman quoted by Lenin as "almost a commercial colony". I don't have the faintest idea what that means. And I think if one wants to get a feeling of what dependency existed in Latin America at that time we have to actually look at the history of Argentina and see what actually is going on in Argentina at that time, and not rely on phrases like "almost a commercial colony." Is what's being referred to simply that the Argentine government took out loans, and as a result of these loans it was forced to give up privileges to England and Germany? Is that the only

thing it refers to? Or are other things being referred to? As far as I know, I'm not sure, no one in the world at that time gave the line that Argentina had a struggle for self-determination against anybody. Even in the Ottoman Empire, I believe, the main struggle for self-determination was the subject nations of Turkey with respect to Turkey.

So I'm raising this to say a complex picture exists, a third of the world... That cardboard characterizations about puppet governments, imperialist agents and all this, which may have become fashionable at certain times in the world movement later, just don't have anything to do with the real picture of what existed at the time. It doesn't even have very much to do with certain outright colonies.

Today, you have discussion on Puerto Rico. The Puerto Rican government has certain home rule; it's based on the Puerto Rican bourgeoisie; it's not trained imperialist agents of the master ruling class in the U.S. I think certain colonies in 1916, a few of them at least, have a similar situation. It wasn't the case that in all colonies, the trade was completely with the mother country. This also wasn't necessarily true. But it's certainly not true of a broader section of the world.

And I raise this point not to say, oh, therefore, today the world is exactly the same as it was in 1916. It obviously is not. But I think if one is going to raise 1916, one should study the various complex relations that existed and it might give one some idea of what to look for or not look for, what's of significance for the later world. I think looking for countries that are completely under the domination of one country in the sense of complete trade, import and export and so forth, with one country, is not a particularly important characteristic. I don't think even the characteristic of being dominated by one country was a big feature of the territorial division of the world outside the colonies.

Just to raise one further point on that. If this really was the main feature of the world, if this really was the main feature of imperialism, I don't understand why Lenin, who answered

five million objections, even very... objections raised by bourgeois spokesman, never thought to answer the question: how could China be listed under this division when China is dominated by several different imperialist countries? Why didn't he even think to mention why is Argentina related to two different countries without a word of embarrassment? I don't think he thought in that same type term that is being presented in this.

In any case, since 1916 there's been certain changes. One of the changes we've discussed extensively is the collapse of the colonial empire so there's no longer a third of the world in colonies, only a very small fraction of the world is.

Another change which is discussed in some of the reports is the high level of economic development in various places in the world.

There's a third change which I also think is of importance, which to my mind is somewhat forced out of your mind by the whole mindset that there used to be political domination or political imperialism, now it's economic. And that is there's the development of a system of world agencies which deal with various questions in terms of trade and peacekeeping troops. Which the IMF is one that was mentioned as part of Manny's report. Of course there's the UN, G-7 conferences, and a whole series of these types of agencies. These are governmental agencies, in that sense political agencies, that deal with world politics. There's certain precedents to the major countries getting together and having these type agencies in the past. But I believe what exists now, since World War II, is far more extensive and far greater than anything that existed in the past. If you took someone from 1916 and brought them to the present, I think that not only would they note the tremendous difference in the collapse of the colonies, they'd be astonished at these agencies. If you had predicted in 1916 these agencies, I think you would have been accused and convicted of being an advocate of ultra-imperialism.

(There is a gap here due to a change of tapes.)

<...> economics and politics of the



entire world. No, these agencies are not the untrammelled rule of U.S. imperialism: they're based on consensus of the world bourgeoisie, particularly of the top world imperialist powers. Nor are they all powerful. There's <...> limits to what they can do. They are <...> limited to what they can agree on. And even if they can agree on something, it doesn't necessarily mean it's going to be the way things are. But they do do certain things. And they do, for example, have not just the world market...you have terms to this world market—for how trade will take place—which are set by these agencies or by a certain consensus among the world bourgeoisie including these agencies.

So I believe there is a political system as well as an economic system that exists. Or a governmental system anyway as well as an economic system.

I also think that another change is the national question is still around, but it's around in a very distinct way. You have the world breaking up into a large number of countries. I do not remember whether it is mentioned or not in one of the reports. It probably is, including predictions of 300 countries soon of relatively moderate size. And the break up isn't between the colony and the imperialist metropolis but the various subordinate countries themselves breaking up or various European countries breaking up and so forth. I'm not quite sure of why this takes place. But it's such a broad phenomena; its not just in the former revisionist countries; it's so general around the world; one tends to believe there must be some general force or economic force or other force that is somehow behind it.

I'm not sure of what to make of it. But if one is going to be discussing international proletarian cooperation, there is the issue you can't just have *that cooperation come out of nowhere*, it's usually based on strong cooperation or very, very close relations between movements. Usually it's based on certain objective things that take place in the world. One of the issues of the national question is...

Finally I think the question of what the condition of the world really is today. The world is not divided the

way it was in 1916; it's not divided the way it was 23 years ago. If you want to talk about the world, if you really...you can't then just talk about the third world. Some countries get completely smashed who are really on the bottom: in Africa for example, much of the African countries. There are some countries which may reach European standards or are at European standards, such as the "mini-dragons" in Asia. And there are some countries that seem to be stagnating and have been for some time. So eventually you're going to have to redivide the world...and get an accurate... It will no longer make any sense to give an example of a "mini-dragon" to illustrate something going on in Africa. Or to give such examples. You will have to get a picture of the actual way relations exist in the world and what types of...exist, and how it differs from country to country.

On these changes...what is the global system of world capitalism, I don't think you can say there is no political system, but what you can say is the system is more of a bourgeois-democratic system rather than what it was in the past. In some agencies people vote by dollars; in some agencies like the UN General Assembly you vote by the country. But in general there's more conferences, more bourgeois-democratic features to this rule, either voting by dollars or voting by country, I think it qualifies as that. In such a system, subordination to my mind still exists. Bourgeois democracy in our country is dictatorship of the rich over the poor. I don't see why it isn't that on a world scale either. But the features of how that rule takes place are very complex.

In our country, you have a hard time even tracing how the monopoly capitalist groups influence political trends. We took ten years on that. It's not that you can say that this position is bad for the plan of Rockefeller and this position is bad for the plan of Morgan in that way. Bourgeois democracy has a complexity in how the bourgeoisie exercises its influence. But its influence is there, and it's even more clearly a class influence because of it. Because of the complexity.

I think in the world situation that exists, and the task of class analysis is

sketching it out. It is not the type of political system where you can say "oh, if this is the world political system oppressing us, let's have a struggle for self-determination against the UN or the G-7", which I think would be absurd concepts.

But I don't think that one should conclude directly from things like subordination <of one country> what the character of the revolution is for various things. First, get a picture of what exists in the world. Then figure out what follows politically or otherwise from it.

In this regard, I just want to go into certain examples of how the world debt situation exists. <Comrade Michael gives a fascinating> picture of the current world debt situation. And this picture brings to mind many features relevant to the current world, from the role of oil money, and who controls it, to the role of the local bourgeoisie in draining its own country. But to a certain extent, I don't understand in many respects the conclusions drawn from it. Because to have a situation where one country subordinates another or uses a debt situation to its advantage doesn't at all necessarily mean that the whole debt situation was originally a big plot, doesn't necessarily mean that the debt was originally forced on unwilling governments in that way, doesn't necessarily mean any of such cardboard characterizations. The fact that the current world debt situation doesn't go in accord with that cardboard characterizations doesn't answer the question of the subordination. The question is, if there is such a system of subordination, whatever the economic features that take place, the stronger country will utilize it to their advantage. Even in the world of 1916, ... World War I, ... loans were also taken out by local governments who demanded these loans as a result of which the ones who gave them extracted conditions from them. I think that the picture of how a system of exploitation takes place will be complex. Will be complex because, will be complex precisely because a bourgeois-democratic world.

So I just wanted to say this is important. We have to study the actual facts of subordination and actu-

ally make distinctions between a whole series of different countries on this before various conclusions can be drawn as to what it means politically and otherwise. And I think it's a mistake to start out with believing that certain of these conclusions follow and therefore we have to believe it's dependent or not. I realize this conclusion will not satisfy anyone if you want to agitate in a certain way on subordination and I am certainly not saying to do that. If you want a guarantee that no one will ever glorify the local bourgeoisie as the victim rather than the oppressor of his own people, this conclusion doesn't help you. But I think to get a scientific picture of the world, this is really what you have to do.

**Jim, SFBA:**

I basically wanted to answer some questions that have been posed. I have a whole other series of points. I just wanted to answer some brief piece of what was posed. In my opinion Lenin's entire theory on the colonial question was that it represented the complete territorial colonial division of the world. That was Lenin's theory in 1916. In my view you cannot take the example that there are some international agencies such as the IMF and other agencies and extrapolate that there's some correspondence between these two things. I don't think there is such a correspondence. In my opinion that's relatively straightforward.

I don't know why no one's arguing with Lenin about China, I mean what about China? It's not divided. But this is the way I see it. Lenin's straightforward said there's a complete territorial division of the world. His view was that the system of colonies, colonial system, was the most favorable system for the export of, for the development of, for finance capital in that it gave them a monopoly over the market. That's Lenin's view. It's not questionable that that's Lenin's view. His work on Imperialism says very straightforwardly...And in my opinion there's a drastic change between 1916 and 1992 in that regard.

And just a couple things about the question of semi-colonialism. In my view, the question of semi-colonialism isn't quite the mystery that you

might think. I mean China was considered a semi-colony for two reasons. One is a series of colonial powers were given extra-territorial prerogatives, imperialist powers were given extra-territorial prerogatives over the Chinese government on tax policy and a series of other things. It's not a question of it's a puppet government or this or that, but the Chinese government entered into binding treaties that dictated its domestic policy with a number of...England, Japan and a couple of other countries.

The other thing is there were whole chunks of China, big chunks of China, that were given to the different imperialist powers as colonial concessions, or economic concessions. And they were, and inside that concession it was either a Japanese concession or a British concession or a French concession, it was their territory. Now there's some examples of where two colonial powers would have concessions jointly. That existed. Thailand, Siam, was a protectorate of, had both France and England having joint territorial prerogatives over Thailand. And according to Lenin's view — was such status that existed in for example Iran, where there were similar prerogatives or China or I think Thailand would be another one — in Lenin's view, what he says was this is a transitional step toward complete colonialism, complete colonial domination, which corresponds to finance capital. That's Lenin's argument.

Now in my opinion there is no such example of that type of partition or granting a concession or a political treaty that exists in the world today, except the Panama Canal zone and very small places. There's no such politically corresponding division of property, in my opinion. In that regard, Lenin's theory on the colonial and territorial division of the world, I do not see how that fits in... — In that sense I think there is a dramatic change. My formulation may not be that was political back then and now we have economic. But my formulation would be the politics that existed then no longer exists today. It's a different politics. In terms of political and territorial division of the world. There is no such thing. There is no such thing. I do believe that in some 90 or 95% of

the world did exist under such a condition in 1916.

Now you could say, well, sure, other countries did successfully get under the British monopoly and trade with India. That's true. But the major issue in world politics was the struggle to prevent that. That's the major political issue of that epoch of history. That epoch no longer exists in political terms. And I think that's a major and dramatic change. I do think it means a major tenet of Lenin's view of how imperialism works is no longer applicable; you can no longer speak in those terms. I don't believe you can say, oh, since there's the IMF, since there's GATT, since there's the G-7, we can still speak of a world territorial division. I don't think such a thing exists in the terms that Lenin spoke of it. In the terms of a political monopoly providing the conditions for an economic monopoly...power of finance capital. It doesn't exist.

Now it was originally said, well, there were features of, for example, many powers vying in Latin America that existed <eighty> years ago, and it still exists today. I agree with that. I think there were a lot of features of capitalism that existed 100 years ago, 200 years ago, that still exist and they interweave and they're layered one on top of the other. There's the whole discussion earlier before lunch about the question of national capitalist interest and international world capital. In my opinion those things both exist; they obviously both exist. Right now there's a trade war that you could read right from the newspapers of 150 years ago. The Europeans, the French are upset about American soybeans and so forth and so on. OK. This stuff is clearly the vying of different national powers. And I think it's important that the discussion isn't done on the level, well, that since there's still a struggle over soybeans, thus there isn't international capital, or world capitalism, or vice-versa. In my opinion all these things do exist, they do lie against each other.

The analysis being developed is what are the dominant trends, what are the main characteristic features and how do they present themselves. In my opinion, the characteristic feature of 1916 in terms of what was the

political order that existed. I think Lenin was right, there was a world territorial colonial division. There were exceptions to that. There were breaches in it, there were holes in it. It wasn't complete. And in fact I think he was wrong as far as his immediate predictions as far as where things were going. But as far as his characterization of what existed was right. But in my view there were gaps in Lenin's views. It wasn't the complete system; it was the main features.

And I think if we're going to speak as to what exists in 1992 we have to do the same thing. You could develop that there's an exception or a partial or a piece to all of this. I don't think you can make much headway unless we can deal with that phenomenon. You are dealing with a lot of different phenomena layered on top of each other, lying, sitting next to each other.

**Fred, Seattle:**

I'm not sure if I can key in exactly with this issue...In 1916, in the old situation there was a certain relation of the economic and political spheres in domination and subordination of different countries to others. And now we've got a different situation, a new situation, different, there are some different features in the role of the economic and political spheres.

And what I think this speech or this article is putting forward is that — I mean we have been operating in somewhat of a haze, combining the economic and political spheres under the term imperialism without really understanding too much of what was actually going on and in particular what are the changes over this time. And I think its saying we need to sort of disentangle this haze or this jumble, look at each of these spheres and how they've changed, see the roles they're playing. It seems that one of the points this speech makes is that the market is playing a heavier role relative to the political spheres now in the fate of countries in the higher and lower order. That seems to be true. It's a somewhat general statement but I think there's evidence that shows that. It also puts forward that there's different forms; the economic sphere has different forms. There is a much greater specific world capitalist form like IMF

etc. which is anyway... So its puts forward some notions of these changes.

Now, it seems like Joseph's raising a question here, well, I'm not sure, he seems to be raising one question is: well, do we conclude from this, if in fact these changes have taken place, therefore now it's the socialist task, now it's the class issues to the fore, not the national in all the dependent countries. I'm not really clear about answering this question. I think it looks that there's something in that direction perhaps with these changes but it seems very general to me and I don't have any idea right now.

But the other point that I want to make is: part of fleshing out the understanding of the changes in the different spheres and the changes in the nature of domination, there's immediately, it also raises the question of what are the features and dynamics of the economic realm itself. And this is something that's not really touched on, I don't think, in the article. And I think that's something else. That's a whole complex realm in itself. If the market relations are coming more to the fore in determining the fate of different nations, what's really going on? What are the features? What's causing this region to rise up or the productivity of this industry to come up or the steel industry to develop? Etc. I think this is a complex realm in itself and we eventually have to learn about that as well. One, we won't be able to flesh out the changes in the political and economic spheres internationally. And secondly, to analyze this is the state of the art of economic development; it's how capital is operating in its different methods and features. And we'll have to learn that and understand that to come up with a socialist alternative for different regions of what we would do differently...

**Julie, Chicago:**

On the question that Jim raises about the issue about the territorial and colonial division of the world. My reading of Imperialism on this: I think the question of the colonial division of the world was one issue that was raised in regard to this, but there were other questions such as the fight for domination of markets, and

so Lenin raises for instance, I believe, that the two GE's (General Electric's.. ed.), GE of Germany and GE of the U.S., are striving to dominate the electrical market of the world at that time. You have the whole issue of cartels and the agreement of cartels.

So that seems to me that's one feature of what also what's being talked about when you're talking about territorial domination, territorial division of the world. And I think that clearly exists today. And I think that one of the reasons why the U.S. went to war in the Persian Gulf was in regard to domination of oil markets. My understanding is one of the things the U.S. is trying to buy up in the former Soviet Union is oil fields, is interest in the oil. France is trying to buy up nuclear power, or get influence in the nuclear power there. This wasn't touched on, but I think this is a part of the question of you're talking about; a fight over spheres of influence and for markets is also a fight over particular markets, various powers, various companies for that matter, but various powers trying to get an edge on particular markets, I guess you could say. And that's also involved in the question of how is the world divided, between what powers and what companies is the world divided. It seems to me it also plays an influence in world politics and has to be looked at, if you can look at that question.

**Robert, NY:**

I think that the question of the division of the world into the two spheres, two empires, so to speak, the way it took place in 1916. I think today, with the level of economic integration with the global markets and so forth, that would be impossible. At least unless there's war. In other words you have this integration has proceeded to such a point that a division of the global market into regional markets would be a huge setback for world capitalism, would mean a shrinkage of markets for everybody, for all the bourgeoisies. So that even though they are constantly jockeying for position in terms of preparing for, developing technologies for military purposes and so forth, developing economic links with different coun-

tries — these links, and special relationships of sorts, they don't take the form of exclusive relationships because until a war breaks out they all have a stake in keeping things the way they are. And I think that it is a real change from the division of the world into different spheres in that sense to the new so-called one world market because it is based on economic development.

**Michael, Detroit:**

So we have several points. We've covered a lot of territory here and I'm not sure we are all covering one question when it's under one topic...which is a problem already for our... Anyway I want to break a few things down...a few specific issues...is to address them.

One is, the point is made the discussion has raised questions about the concept of neo-colonialism...it's just a babble of words. I don't agree. I think words have a meaning; words have a legacy; words are powerful things. The conception of neo-colonialism is very directly linked to a very strong legacy in the left as we have noted and the concepts of revolution and so forth in the third world and about the third world. Namely it's the idea of national liberation struggle as the way to fight. Various different nuances may have been put on it by Maoists and Fidelistas and so forth, but essentially the idea of neo-colonialism was put forward by various forces in the 50's. Was put forward to say that the national liberation struggle continues, the fight for genuine independence continues, the issue now is economic independence or whatever. This is based on — our authority for this is an extrapolation of Lenin's 1916 description of the world. So I'd like to say...to raise issues about the question of neo-colonialism because words mean certain things, words have a legacy. And this question of neo-colonialism and the way the struggle is put, you know, national angle, a national approach, this struggle in the third world is still very much a contemporary issue, it is being put forward, and it continues to have a very stubborn legacy. And this is one of the things we do want to address in order to rescue the socialist mission of the

working class from its dilution into petty-bourgeois nationalism. It's a task we've been doing for a decade. And sometimes it does get involved in fighting over words and not so much words but connected to whole concepts.

That's one thing I wanted to raise. The second thing is the question it was raised that the issue is that we've had a lot of discussion on dependency and domination here today. Economic dependency, political dependency and so forth. So yes, we do face an issue of analyzing dependency relations in the world today. And until we can finish concluding this analysis there are limits to how much you can say.

Why do we want to address this question of dependency? What's the importance of it. To me it comes up in several different ways. In one sense you can say it's not all that important, you know, the question of precisely figuring out how the relations of dependency work in the world. Economic dependency, and on which basis certain political dependency is bound to exist in one form or another, has always existed in world capitalism...and will continue to exist. What's its importance to us? Why do you want to address this question? And I think that there's at least several reasons you would want to address this question. And I don't agree that we can't make any tentative conclusions, working hypotheses or whatever, until we complete the description of exactly how dependency relationships work.

There are certain things we can answer. So one issue is, for instance, what does dependency mean in terms of its impact on development. On the prospects of development in less developed countries, cause that's the subject we're talking about.

**Tr, Detroit:**

Can you repeat that? What does dependency mean—

**Michael, Detroit:**

In terms of its impact on development. There are ideas, there have been ideas, there continue to be ideas that dependency is the most important determinate on what goes on in the

less developed countries. That it's...the principal cause of underdevelopment. (There seems to be an interjection here from someone else, apparently about an IB, and the U.S. domination of Latin America.) So there is an issue of bringing out what relationship the question of imperialism has on development in the third world. I think there have been very simplistic ideas. If you have imperialist domination therefore it means a concrete step back, i.e. free yourself from imperialist domination...would be to break open the fetters that prevent you from progress. Well, we had Albania...very concrete examples concrete examples, that doesn't take you very far.

But in any case, there's that realm of questions, what actual relationship does it have. And I believe it has a certain relation but it is bound up with a whole series of structural issues between given countries. Why is East Asia developing? Why is Latin America not developing in the last decade? It's not the issue of imperialist domination, you know, the whole country's a part of the imperialist world. It's not the issue of low wages, both areas have low wages. It's not an issue of how much capitalism... There's a whole series of issues — imperialism is just one aspect of the question. And it's always been that. So we can't then say — so that is the key to the different realm of investigation and discussion. Cause that ultimately <it does involve what> economic prospects for a lot of these countries are.

Another issue of dependency that interests us is how it impinges on the revolutionary movement today. What slogans we give. How we put forward agitation on issues in the less developed countries today and for the revolutionary orientation. Which is probably our principal concern at this point. There's been a lot of concern about that. And there again there's a series of issues, and I don't think you can say you can draw no conclusions on this until you are finished with this complete picture of the world.

One thing we can say: colonialism,...imperialism's relationship of oppression of the less developed countries in the colonial world, meant the struggle for self-determination was very much a major or the

major question on the agenda for the colonially oppressed, for the colonies. The national question was very much at the center of things. With the collapse of colonialism, that has gone. Political domination in that form meant national liberation was the issue. And that by-and-large has waned. What is remaining with us now is largely dependency relations of an economic character. Even if you say they have a political dimension, how do you, is the struggle against that type of dependency within the sphere of a political struggle over self-determination and national liberation, or are we talking about just another name for the anti-capitalist struggle. For the struggle for socialism. And I believe that the answer that's given in the report is accurate. Without negating that there may be various ways the national question may rebound again on us. <This is not an issue...> whether or not the national question exists in the world. Sure the national question exists in the world — in many other ways. A lot of countries are fighting for national freedom, but that's not we really here are discussing in this conference. So that's to me another area to look at the question of dependency.

Then there's another realm we're trying to figure out is, how does the world today differ from 1916. And a specific assessment of the world Lenin lived in, of Lenin's epoch, and our epoch, and the differences between them, the differences of substance or nuance in Lenin's particular analysis and so forth. And on that I just want to make a couple of points. Lenin wrote that book to describe why the workers of various countries were slaughtering one another. That's why he wrote that book. And to explain why this slaughter was taking place and why the mainstream of the workers and socialist movements were taking part in this.... So in doing this various issues were raised, some of which describe the world, some of which are key concepts, the question of, the fact, that imperialism or capitalism in the finance capital era reaches a point where it collides with one another — in its national form. And then reaches the stage of world slaughter. The discussion of how it impacted on the...and

all those things, the various particulars in there, some of them are overstated, some of them are understated. There's a whole series of issues. As far as its relationship to what it was doing in the third world, in the colonies, in the dependent countries, Lenin really didn't go into it that much. That wasn't really the point to Lenin pointing out export of capital to certain places, colonial division had taken place. And so forth.

There were certain things he pointed out. Lenin, in that book, does give the impression the world is moving toward greater monopoly domination. More colonies. Even the semi-colonies are going to be turned into colonies. A certain feature of the direction the world was going was really given.... It would be historical idealism to say that somebody in 1916 couldn't have looked at the world and said some things may very well be a possibility.

But the world didn't turn out that way. The world turned out a different way. It turned out that the era of decolonization was more in tune with the requirements of capitalism and finance capital in its expansive stage.

So anyway, on that issue, a point on cartels, spheres of influence and so forth. I don't think you can say that cartels Lenin described in that book is the same phenomena you see today. In fact, the types of cartels that are being described are phenomenon that also passed. Where different monopolies would make direct agreements to divide up markets among themselves. <Some were organized, some may remain.> But right now we are in a period of inter-capitalist competition between the monopolies of the world, within each country and on an international scale. It would be hard to find too many instances of this type of direct agreement. I wouldn't say that you can't find none. In that period of time, into the inter-war period, you did have this phenomenon. One of the reasons the capitalists decided after World War II to go through the international institutions of cooperation and have a world market and so forth, was precisely because they came to a recognition that the old system of the spheres, of these type colonial spheres and boundaries and barriers that had

existed, were barriers to finance capital and signaled a very heavy weight on them. They didn't want that kind of world.

What are we passing through? I don't know. We can see certain signs of what we're passing through; we can't overstate what we are passing through. You know — on the trade blocs, spheres of investment, the fact that such and such a country puts in this or that much investment in this or that country does not make these countries or these regions into exclusive spheres of the type that existed at a previous time. They don't. The capitalists are very nervous even as they are proceeding with their trade blocs; they are very nervous that this means a <collapse,> contraction of the market. And this would mean, you know, a general loss, despite certain professors who say you should go ahead and have a trade war — we can sustain a 10% loss in U.S. GNP because Japan will be destroyed. And in fact Japan is one of those countries that does not want a trade — its biggest market is the U.S. A trade war will kill it. Well, not kill it; it will damage it in a heavy way. So there are different imperialist centers of economic power. Japan is putting the more investment in east Asia, the most dynamic area of the world, so the U.S. decides to start competing. Japan knows it's competing with the U.S. at that point. Eastern Europe, the Germans have sway. So these could become building blocs for future...of some kind. But there's a limit to how much we can go with that...on the basis of existing things. Right now they still want to preserve this relatively open free market... with all the conditions of unevenness, domination, monopoly and other kinds of imperfections that the market actually has. It's not a pure picture.

**Oleg, Chicago:**

(There is a change of tapes here.) <...> what I'd like to point out is we are talking about social science here. We are also talking about applied social science and the different applications to what we conclude about the world. I would like to see developed out of this type of discussion a series of several major issues and some idea of how we can go about trying to look into

these questions to settle them. Some of the practical applications may come up again, I think, when we discuss Workers' Advocate.

**Jim, SFBA:**

Before lunch comrade Jake gave a list of four questions that he wanted answered. And it was just done so succinctly it just was like really tempting to try and answer it. He's not going to get the answers he wants, and it's not going to be complete or satisfactory, but I'm going to make a stab at these four things. The first question was is there another stage beyond imperialism. I think it was something to that effect. (Request from the audience for Jim to stand up to be better heard. And Manny says: Is imperialism the highest stage of capitalism?)

Is imperialism the highest stage of capitalism? Well, to me, the important thing is that we live under capitalism. And it's gone through a series of waves of development — stages of development or steps of development. I personally don't put a great weight on well, in 1916 it hit a certain stage and we're still in that stage. I'm not quite sure what that would mean.

The way I see it is there's a certain direction it's been taking toward concentration, towards higher technical levels, towards a series of directions that have been predicted about where it's headed. Which it continues to go in that direction. Marx, Engels, Lenin made various predictions what directions it would take. And in the main the outlines of that, it's been continuing to go along those lines.

By the way the question was asked, the answer I would like to give is that I think it would be a mistake to take Lenin's writing of 1916 and say: oh, all the basic things that Lenin said, oh, how do they apply, how are they going on today. Like I agree with the point that was raised about cartels. I think the type of cartels that were being listed was quite a specific phenomenon that he was dealing with. And something you can't just say, well, now, there's also international monopolies. I don't think you can talk about it in that way.

The main thing I would say is that

in my opinion is that there's been 70 years of very dynamic development of the world, and the task for us is to see how does capitalism look today. And for me, Lenin's work of 1916 is a pretty good reference point, as a tool, how he explained a major issue of how world politics were working in 1916. What was his analysis behind world politics; it's a relatively good source for that. And in certain fundamental features, I think, are clear still exist. But you cannot take it word for word without study. How is capitalism actually operating today?

Another example that I agree with. A lot of the phenomenon you see today, In Lenin's day, would be ultra-imperialist cooperation that no one would have believed possible. It would have been untenable. And as far as whether there's another stage after this one, I don't look at the world that way. I hope that capitalism gets overthrown and conditions are being paved for socialism.

On the second question, was WA influenced by the dependency theory, my opinion is it wasn't influenced by the Monthly Review people if that's the specific question. I think that WA was influenced by what was general concepts that existed in the world revolutionary movement. And it depends what epoch of WA you're looking at. But there was an analysis adopted by the bulk of the, especially the anti-revisionist forces that came up in revolt against Khrushchovism in the 1960s and 1970s. One of the keys of that polemic against Khrushchovism was the Khrushchovites denied that neo-colonialism replaced colonialism and the need for a national liberation struggle against that. That was a key element of the anti-revisionist polemic.

Now, I don't think our press reflected some of the more absurd features of that and we had our own views on these questions. But I think there is an influence of that in our press. And especially after the founding of the party and our analysis became more and more solid, that analysis comes under assault and you have different views. But as far as history, that is where historical influence is in my view.

On the third question. Are there anti-imperialist tasks anywhere? My

opinion is there are, and my opinion is exactly how they are defined and exactly what form they take and how you agitate on them is one of the things that we have to accomplish. I agree there's a series of relationships of — imperialism and capitalism mean subordination, means domination, means the domination of the rich countries over the poor countries. The gap between the rich and the poor is growing. My opinion, this includes a series of forms of tutelage and oppression that have to be dealt with. Exactly how to agitate on them and how to address those questions is something where I sort of — it's an area which I find daunting as far as how to sort it out. Which I think is one of the tasks the party has.

On that I think that the fourth question is related. Can the ownership of capital have an impact? Yeah, it has an impact. These things have an impact. And to me we're dealing with, someone said three hundred countries are on the horizon. Well, in my view there's a whole series of these countries which you cannot throw in one heap. China doesn't belong in the same discussion as Grenada. We're dealing with very different countries and problems these countries face. You cannot put Thailand with Panama — it's a very different phenomenon. And for example, there's some countries which are so closely enmeshed and so closely connected to the U.S. economy that I think that it poses a whole series of questions about what path the revolutions will take. Among other things, is there really much prospects for revolutions outside of a general change in North America? You know, when we're taking various Caribbean countries for example.

But we're starting to approach the socialism in one country question. I don't want to go into that because I think it's a good idea to keep it separate.

**Jake, Chicago:**

As far as the fourth question, does ownership of capital matter, I think a lot of times it doesn't. Particularly in this country I don't think it matters whether you work for a Japanese firm or an American firm. The example

was given of the Russian revolution and how much foreign capital. A great deal of foreign capital was invested in Russia, and the example given is the Bolsheviks didn't agitate on this against the foreign devils or whatever on the question of anti-imperialism.

But in some other countries this may apply. For one thing, Russia at that time, although it had a lot of foreign capital, was an imperialist power in its own right and was a sizable military power. And I'm not sure what the specifics were, I'm sure the Russians had to make serious concessions on that. But in other countries, it's not the same thing. The foreigners owning factories in that country can be quite a different thing than foreigners owning factories in Russia.

For example, in Mexico a whole series of concessions are made on these maquiladoras plants. And the situation gets very complicated. My view is that Mexico at this point, the issue is socialist revolution, not a democratic national liberation struggle against U.S. imperialism or anything like that. It's a very straightforward class question. But there are going to be issues that come up in the class struggle of foreign domination. Particularly with the American plants. One of the issues that comes up for us in my thinking is there are Americans who own factories in Mexico. I mean the bosses who own factories and enslave us here also own factories and enslave the Mexican workers there. And to me this is a concrete question of international solidarity. And it's not so much a matter of directing the Mexican revolution, but is a matter of trying to take advantage of the hatred against our own oppressors here and making the connection with what they are doing there is to build international solidarity and to focus the hatred against them.

One of the problems I have with Manny's report is, it talks about the revolutionary struggle in dependent countries, it doesn't speak to this specific question. I don't think that's some kind of sin that Manny's committed; I know he wrote this at the last minute. But to me it's something that has to be taken into account. To give an example, South Africa. In South Africa I think events are being played

out mainly by the class struggle in that country, by the classes in South Africa. It's not the question of an imperialist puppet regime. But nonetheless, our government is a player in that struggle. And the fact is that the masses in this country hate the apartheid regime in South Africa. And we can take advantage of that and should do so. And there's also a matter of internationalist duty. But to me there's an important issue in focusing the hatred of our workers not only against — using the hatred that the workers here have for the apartheid regime to also bring it back towards the government in the United States and towards the bourgeoisie.

**Joe, Boston:**

I'd like to ask comrade Jake a question. What does foreign ownership of capital in Mexico mean to the Mexican workers? What demands should they raise about Ford? General Motors, the maquiladoras? What demands should we raise? I'm trying to get where you're coming from.

**Jake, Chicago:**

I'm not sure. And I will admit I'm not sure. My concern, my reason for asking this is it seems to me it might be dismissed. And at this point I think there is something there, some issue... On the maquiladoras there's a matter of unequal treaties and unequal relationships; there's a matter of certain privileges given to the Americans who invest there and the fact that the

Mexican government, for example, is more hot to suppress a strike by Mexican workers against an American plant than they are against a strike, apparently, in some instances they are more vicious and quicker to attack a strike against a Ford plant than they may be against another Mexican capitalist. Because for the Mexican government there may be much more at stake — having made an agreement to insure labor peace and so forth. To me that's a special issue that comes into it.

As far as agitating on it, I don't think it matters whether it's owned by a Mexican or an American — as far as the economic demands of the workers, as far as the class issues at

stake there.

**Joe, Boston:**

That was the point that Michael was making.

**Jake, Chicago:**

On what? I wasn't referring to...

**Joseph, Detroit:**

<...>I want to speak on the question. I think these issues on demands are not just from the point of view of trying to identify or figure out what demands to give in this or that situation. You have to have investigation of it. And investigation doesn't start from the point of view of what the...say, what the Monthly Review says, what do various people say. It has to start from the facts...about it.

Comrade Michael says we can't just cease all work until we can have investigation. But what does the actual situation matter? When we were talking about individual countries, what agitation you carry out on Korea, what agitation you carry out on various issues, we didn't have disagreements on that. But then the issue was raised, how do we characterize the world system. We go back in Jim's discussion of the influence, that it was a terrible mistake to say that, and so forth. It really wasn't something we were doing very much about neo-colonialism. I don't think we talk about it at all, a long time. The issue was raised, what is the world system?

The only way to answer that question is then to actually carry out investigation in regards to it. There's no other way. And I don't think any of these analogies with the past can be done in that way. In my point of view, if you're going to carry out that investigation you're going to have to deal seriously with such issues as what is the system of the governmental organizations. Comrade Jim replies to me, oh, I can't maintain Lenin's territorial theory of division of the world with this. Who was trying to do that? I listed this is a new feature of world politics. A feature which in its development is unprecedented from what existed before. I said there were certain things that existed before which in some sense are similar. <But...> a great extent to what exists now, this is

a new feature of world politics. And one of the new features similar to that of the collapse of colonialism.

In practice, when comrade Jim makes practical assessment of the world, he apparently agrees with that: he agrees that you do have this thing that looks like ultra-imperialism and so forth. But when it comes to general discussion, he refers back to 1916. "Oh, you're defending the complete territorial division of the world thesis." How was I defending the complete territorial division of the world thesis by pointing out that a new feature in the world was the role of these organizations? And furthermore, this is a governmental feature. It's not a feature simply of world market in the sense of various people trade together. One of the particular features about the world market today is that there are more regulations about how that trade takes place, I think, than existed in the past. I have not done the extensive economic investigation comrade Michael has, I might be wrong on this. But my impression is there are more conscious regulations, or attempts at conscious regulation, by these things than there ever was or could be in the past.

By saying there is conscious regulation, it does not mean I believe that <the power of the economic forces> are created because some government agency agrees upon it — or because the G-7 agree on it. But simply that various terms — they do try to make that a regulation. But when the idea we should not argue the facts of the case but from these analogies or anything that mentions colonialism immediately <...> the immediate response, well, you can't say that — that's the territorial division. It has nothing to do with territorial division, first of all.

Secondly, when these comrades made concrete analysis of the world, and they make an extreme amount of very good concrete analysis which is extremely interesting, they themselves refer back to various complexities of the 1916 and previous world. For example, on the question of the analysis of capital in Russia, and what was the attitude of the Russian Bolsheviks to the question of foreign investment in Russia, here's an analysis back to

the complexity of class forces that existed in the world. And further other examples of that can be given.

But when you raise the question, what is the world system, what is the world system as it is today and how should it be characterized,...once you answer this question on some basis other than generalities, one has to answer with respect to this investigation. There are also very particular things about what was actually was their analysis back in 1916 which I'm somewhat hesitant to go into but I find is actually relevant to this subject. In general I thought comrade Michael gave a better description of this than comrade Jim. The complete division of the world being referred to — the fact that capital had nowhere to expand — except to places other capital expanded — so there were clashes — this I believe is what is being referred to. I believe in general that what was going on,...was that everyone was talking about the fact colonies existed and that clashes were taking place. And the issue was what lay behind this. And the general answer which Lenin was giving in Imperialism was "monopoly." His theory relates back to the issue of monopoly and its development. And in this question of monopoly, he relates that to the question of the development of the productive forces in the world and relates it back to the question that comrade Ray was raising. It can be used as an argument in favor of the proximity of socialism.

If that is true, it is an essential feature of the argument about what the world system is. To me, the argument is you have to deal with these basic facts. You have to be able to distinguish things, colonies, semi-colonies and what not, what different types of dependence. And you can't answer things by simple statements such as, did some country consult ahead of time before it would be able to act. That's an important issue in itself and it's an interesting issue. But it's not the whole question of subordination. You can't answer with very simple and pat examples. You have to have a more thorough examination of the facts of the matter—only that way can you establish a common language and view for these questions.

**Jake, Chicago:**

R isn't here. But I just wanted to point out that he formulated things pretty similar to the way Joseph did. In particular he criticized Jim's argument on Lenin's... (something from someone else)... R who participates in a study group with us in Chicago would agree with Joseph. He's formulated things very similarly. He thought, as I did, that Jim's letter was pretty interesting. I think there's a number of important things in it. But he strongly disagreed with his interpretation of Lenin's book *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*".

A particular thing was on this question of territorial division of the world. And he formulated it almost exactly word for word the way Joseph said. That the issue then in his mind was the issue in territorial division was that the world was full and you can't expand capital except by stepping on other capitalists' toes and it leads to war. Also on this question that Julie raised earlier also on the question of markets. I tend to agree with that. And I also tend to agree with what Joseph said. I don't want to put that in the fore in the argument; I think we have to analyze the world of today. So I don't think even the interpretation of Lenin's book of 1916 is the decisive thing.

**David, Chicago:**

Well, there's a lot of general statements have been made about the political and economic shape of the world. And although some strong statements have been made, the last one by Joseph being one of the strongest statements so far being that we better fucking find out what it is. I think basically what it boils down to is a good bit of hard work needs to be done.

And we can talk <until the cows come home...> Yes, I would strongly agree with that.

I also think with all the discussion and debate I don't think anybody here thinks that we can yet answer a significant question either in general or in detail about the shape of world politics or capital. If anybody does, I'd like to hear it in a statement because Manny's report said: here is a



framework. Syllogisms, analogies from the past, won't work. These are certain economic facts that say why. A fairly strong argument. At the same time he wasn't, in my estimation, trying to present a comprehensive economic or political viewpoint or some theory on how world capitalism is now working. In fact, I think that in the very beginning it said that work is yet to be done, which I think putting it at the beginning you may have lost the point by the time it got to the end. But I think that is the point.

**Pete, Detroit:**

I want to talk about the 60s. Because the report, the comments it makes about neo-colonialism makes it sound like neo-colonialism is just a word, a linguistic error of some sort. And some of the comments Michael made also made it sound that this was just something made up. But in my opinion, it was an actual phenomenon that came up in the post-war era. The United States, well it's like the Maoists used to say, the United States stepped into the shoes of the old colonialists. But they had somewhat different regimes. But I don't think you can deny that the regimes that were set up in South Korea, South Vietnam, the Philippines and places like this were neo-colonies. That's exactly what they were, they were puppet regimes. They weren't exactly the colonies of the 19th century because they had domestic basis at the head of these regimes. And they had some different new styles of government. But I don't think you can say they were independent bourgeois states. They were economically closely tied to the imperialist metropolis, dependent on them, also politically dependent on them, militarily, financially they were backed by the imperialist metropolis.

I think we're making a mistake just to skip from 1916 to 1992 like *nothing ever happened* in between. There were gigantic struggles in that period against these neo-colonial regimes, obviously in Vietnam, Algeria, Cuba.

So another thing I wanted to mention about those neo-colonial regimes, it sort of touched on the subject of spheres of influence. Because one of the big features of that period is

that there was a sharp division of the world between spheres of influence. When you talk about spheres of influence, look at the DMZ in Korea or the DMZ in Vietnam. The Berlin Wall. And of course the report as was mentioned doesn't even discuss the Soviet Union or that camp that existed in that period.

The fact is the world was sharply divided into spheres of influence. It's not exactly the same as it was in 1916. It's not that it was divided into two capitalist powers, but it was divided into two different styles of capitalism, if you want to put it that way. The state capitalist camp versus the Western capitalist camp. Now all this has disappeared in the last two years. I'm not arguing that that situation still exists; it doesn't. The neo-colonial regimes have changed. Vietnam, the regime collapsed due to the war. South Korea, the Philippines, and various places, they actually had a development so that today those regimes have some domestic social base which allows them to grow and develop.

But the overall point I want to make is that maybe, if we have a better sense of where we came from, a better understanding of where we are today. The report I think is good that it kind of looks over, does an analysis, looks at certain phenomenon that exist today and sort of wonders about how you can define these things. But we also need history. We need history of where these things came from.

**Rene, Chicago:**

I have a lot of questions on the document. But the main one I think is on the question itself of imperialism. It seems that a conclusion can be reached that since there are so many problems with the definition or with the transposition of time of the analysis, then such phenomenon doesn't exist. And I think that what bothers me the most is that even if, I'm not pressing accusations <...> but when I try and force myself to see how we utilize this to do the agitation for the day-to-day work. And I'm very concerned about a situation which the workers do care about what the hell is going on and why are they here and not home. And it's very useful to have as a guidance as before the party had

this formula that said, "let's put imperialism in the center". Let's put the imperialism at the center. Now it's been changed a little bit as, "let's put class struggle in the center". I don't know what that means. It means that the other one was wrong and this is a new one, this is a better one? The old one was, what is the relationship of the two? And I cannot see that we can substitute one for the other one because for linguistic progress.

But coming back to the formula that for so many years worked for me was that you put imperialism in the center means that we have to explain to the workers, if the worker we are talking to is a worker that wants to listen or set up a framework here because I'm not talking in generalities, I'm talking a particularity, a worker that wants to talk about concrete issues. So when we put the imperialism in the center, we bring them the idea of imperialism. Why? Because we want to deepen it. Because with that we want to try to explain to them scientifically and give them the tools to proceed with scientific analysis, scientifically... And that was the idea of putting imperialism at the center. Because it did explain, not by mechanical transpositions or anything else, but it did explain that we were trying to analyze the situation scientifically and that there were reasons why the world was moving in the direction that it did. That there were reasons why the United States would not hesitate to invade Grenada. It is not because they like to invade countries we explain. There are economic reasons behind. And that seemed to illuminate when we talked to these workers.

So I think that the worst concern I have with this document is that again it takes at least three conceptions of what imperialism might mean to some people and evades, depending on the level of the worker, one of the things that imperialism means, a war operation. Vietnam for example, if that was the case, if we were talking in that era. But the document then separates the three and throws away the three and that's my concern.

**Floor:**

Could you say that again? The

document separates the three?

**Rene, Chicago:**

Separates the three definitions, or what the document calls definitions of imperialism. Meaning imperialism is — I'm reading page three — "what is imperialism?" — and it says that in the communist movement it had related but distinct meanings: imperialist aggression, subjugation, and the merger of monopoly industrial and banking capital. But another important thing that we used to add right there, and I am proceeding again to remember, we raise the issue of putting imperialism in the center so that it gives an opportunity to deepen the discussion, deepen the analysis. And this is very concrete discussion. This is not a discussion about what would we do in the Philippines today or tomorrow or next year, or something that could be of interest, but it's not something that cannot be grasped in this particular discussion that I am enacting here.

But one thing that always also illuminated the discussion was that we considered imperialism to be the highest stage of capitalism, not in the sense that there may not be tomorrow a rearrangement of forces and go from a multi-polar world into something different or what have you. But that there was nothing progressive anymore in imperialism. That it had lived capitalism to the maximum and from then on it was reaction all along the line. That was (a new relation?) that we were not fighting for reformism or to reform this or that government locally or national, but we were trying to replace them with something different because we didn't think that imperialism could be replaced with nothing better than that. But today I hear that comrade Jim admits, expresses, says that he hopes that that's the last stage but there might this anymore. And let's fight to get rid of it. And all of those points seem to make a lot of sense when you are in these discussions I'm talking about. I have a lot of problems to have this discussion in the same sense with the same worker with the same thinking together with the notes I am writing on some of the other comments like comrade Jim's. It's very hard.

**Floor:**

<...> a number of reasons why I like this report. It's cause for me it's describing situations of...an attempt to deal with what we're heading towards as far as the context of the revolutionary struggle in the dependent countries. This is not a resolution. This is not the final answer as to what imperialism is... This is dealing with very, very real history in terms of how the revolutionary movement, previous revolutionary waves have effected us. And actually provides a section called "revolutionary orientation" and how we should maintain, how you think our Leninist...to the problems. And to hopefully have development of a report to...the questions on the issue of socialism or what is imperialism and so on. The world is going through profound changes. And it ends on the last page which (something about Joseph's and others' comments)...about the requirements of a concrete analysis of the world today in connection with that...Marxist-Leninist theory... So I think I don't agree with the characterization you are making...and my characterization though is very incomplete...

**Robert, NY:**

Comrade Rene raises the question of putting imperialism in the center, something like this? I'm not sure what he refers to but I think that he's referring...(change of tapes)...we use to raise the issue of putting the question of imperialism to the fore. Now the first thing is, we're referring, to begin with I think, this was specifically to what we broadly called the anti-imperialist movement. The movement of solidarity with the struggle in other countries against U.S. aggression and so forth. But what we meant by that actually was putting the class questions to the fore. In other words, that the issue was the social system. That the politics of the government sprung from the politics of finance capital, of imperialism. So it's not that there is no change there. That now we're putting the class questions to the fore and before we said imperialism to the fore.

The other thing is you mentioned about there being nothing progressive in imperialism or whatever. This

was sort of raised before about the — that there was supposedly some contradiction with on the one hand Lenin says that imperialism means stagnation and decay and on the other hand there's talk of all this dynamic development or whatever. And I don't see a contradiction. I think imperialism does mean stagnation and decay, has meant the world slowing down to a crawl periodically. But that's exactly why the export of capital becomes necessary for the imperialist bourgeoisie. And that's the basis of this dynamic development throughout the world. Comrade I think Michael mentioned the development of Russia in the 1890s. A lot of this development was on the basis of French capital. And France was totally stagnating in the 1890s. In other words the French bourgeoisie had to do something with its capital — it exported it. And that's the impetus toward world integration, towards all these developments we're talking today is the result of stagnation of this stage of capitalism.

**Slim, Detroit:**

Yeah, it seems to me some things that got confused in terms of the party's tactics: the question of putting opposition to imperialism to the fore was a very specific tactic in the movement against U.S. imperialist aggression and war, against militarization in this country. It had a very specific point to it. The question of putting opposition to imperialism was specifically not a question of giving the line of revolutionary overthrow of our own government, which was our basic line, the fundamental line that...

The question of putting imperialism in the center was a method of approach to the masses, in fact short of the question of proletarian revolution. It was appropriate because that was a popular sentiment that could be appealed to. And if comrades will remember, in the Second Congress documents that go into this question in some detail, point out that of course, in the final analysis you have to have proletarian anti-imperialism, something that's actually based among the working class...in fact looks toward a little bit more than...imperialism.

So anyway, this question of putting imperialism in the center is a very

specific tactic of our party aimed at a very specific movements for very particular reasons. And it was never the line for everything that we did. It was never the line for all movements and...is confused on that.

Beyond that, the only point I can understand of what Rene's raising is that at a time when the party's reassessing its analysis and trying to further deepen and develop our analysis of the relationship of imperialism to dependent countries, of what the character of the revolution is in different countries and so forth. At a time when we are looking into that analysis to figure it out, it makes one uneasy. Well yes, that's the case — it makes one uneasy, it makes agitation in a series of spheres more difficult. It makes agitation on any particular question, you have to analyze that particular question and develop it directly, but you don't have the same kind of general guidelines which.... That's true. But that's the situation you have to face. And that can't be leaped over by just having some phrase or slogan.

We have to actually do the work in advancing this analysis. And it's going to be not an easy period. But I don't see any way around that. I mean it's unfortunate, but I think that's what we have to do. Anything else to me is just to — well, we'll stick to certain phrases because they make us comfortable; I think would be the greatest mistake possible.

In fact, what we have to do is advance the analysis. And nothing short of doing the serious work is going to solve that. That's the only point I want to raise.

**Nick, New York:**

If you look at a major change that's happened since Lenin wrote *Imperialism has been development of the national liberation struggles in the 40s and 50s, the establishment of national bourgeoisies after that.* When we were coming up in the 60s it was easy enough to just support national liberation struggles, oppose U.S. imperialism in Vietnam and all over the world and have general slogans like that. But once the national liberation struggles ebbed and the national bourgeoisies consolidated themselves, <as we

became a little more developed>... We're beginning to get at the class analysis of what the national bourgeoisies, what they're doing. And so we're getting a sharper attack on the national bourgeoisies as well. I think if you look at Mexico, for example, it's not just a question of opposing U.S. imperialism but being very concrete in analyzing and opposing the government of Mexico. I mean it's not enough for you to say "down with U.S. imperialism", "oppose U.S. imperialism". You have to be very concrete.

**Joe, Boston:**

I don't really understand the whole idea of counterposing the issue of putting the class struggle in the center and putting imperialism in the center. The basic idea of Marxism is the class struggle is the center. And sometimes the issue of bringing the issue of fighting imperialism to the fore is a popular way of raising that at a certain level of the movement, a certain level of the masses. It leads people in that direction. If Rene sees there's some contradiction between these things, perhaps he hasn't understood our previous tactic.

The other thing I'd like to say with regards to Manny's report is that while I find certain problems with overgeneralization and the way certain things are phrased and also the fact that it sort of deals with what has been developing since World War II and leaves us off at this point where we're making a transition to something else. It leaves certain things up in the air. That's a limitation of the report.

What's a strong point of this report, is it very, very strongly puts the issue of analyzing issues in the world from the class prism rather than the national prism, and analyzing things from the point of view of the national prism has been a big problem in the international movement for several decades. And it's something we have been fighting on for some time. And we haven't just been fighting on this question just since the beginning of the 80s. Our first fight as ACWM(ML), one of our first fights, was with RCP over whether the strategy for revolution in the U.S. was united front against

fascism or united front against imperialism. Now it's kind of a weird way to pose things, but the idea of united front against fascism raised the whole idea that there is a class struggle in the U.S. and that's the way forward, whereas RCP's idea was that revolution isn't possible in the U.S. so all we can do is be a liberation support group.

So I mean this has been something that has been a character of our party for some time even though we were unclear about various things considering the milieu we came up in.

**Matt, NY:**

My sense of things is that things have gone in the discussion pretty much as far as they're going to go, and according to my understanding of the procedures is that I can ask for a motion to close the discussion and offer the presenter an opportunity for some concluding remarks if he so chooses.

(There is some discussion on procedure. Then there was a short break to allow comrades to consider what's left to do in this discussion. After the break, it was decided to open the discussion for points on the question of socialism in one country. We intend to print the transcripts of this discussion in a later issue of the CWV Theoretical Supplement.)

## Letter from Joseph, continued

of domination and subordination in the world, etc. But IB #77 had signaled a change to the more general question of, in essence, imperialism itself. In various discussions or documents, some comrades suggested or were worried that recognition of dependency, or dwelling too much on imperialism, or making a "fetish" of it, meant downplaying the internal class struggle, supporting the local regimes or local bourgeoisie, advocating a national liberation struggle, or waging a fight against foreign investment in favor of local big capital. I think this was in some ways the same error as shown in the criticism of the Workers' Advocate from various Chicago comrades, but from the other side: it reduced the concept of imperialism to a stereotype and ignored that the emphasis on class analysis is at the heart of the Leninist theory of imperialism.

In any case, Jim's article in IB #77 was particularly rich in caricatures of the world situation. The dependent world of 1916, which was awash in different types of subordination of countries, was pictured as just colonies, or countries which had only one other trading partner, or countries with no regional ambitions, etc.

The point of such a comic book depiction of the world was to contrast it to today. Since today there are regimes based on local ruling classes, allegedly a political system of imperialism no longer exists.

An example of the mischief this approach causes can be seen in the May Day speech in Boston last year. It referred to the overthrown regimes of the Shah in Iran and Somoza in Nicaragua as regimes that had stood only because of the support of Western imperialism, while saying that today most regimes are regimes of the national bourgeoisie. This characterization was probably written hastily and thoughtlessly, but it is a retreat from how our Party was considering this issue. It seems to have come about because of the influence of the cardboard characterizations about imperialism and colonialism in the past. (I discussed this further in Detroit #10.)

### Is imperialism progressive?

Until the Fourth Congress, the MLP had considered imperialism reactionary, a phase of dying capitalism. But comrade Manny's speech questioned this: "imperialism," he said, "when taken in the sense of a stage of capitalist development, is an historically progressive phenomenon in contrast to what went before." He went on to say that "finance capital better prepares the material prerequisites for socialism than does pre-monopoly capitalism. Furthermore, finance capital has far more ability to spread itself on a world scale, uprooting and destroying previous modes of production. This is a painful process, but it is also an historically progressive one." And comrade Ray (Seattle) added that it was just the ABCs of Marxism to hold that imperialism is in some respect historically progressive.

Comrade Manny added that "this does not in the least mean that we ought to mute our opposition to predatory wars, look kindly upon the subjugation of nations, or otherwise accommodate ourselves to the reactionary politics that finance capital gives rise to." This makes it seem that he wants to distinguish between the spread of finance capital, which he identifies with economic development, and the politics of finance capital. Nevertheless, his formulation is that imperialism is progressive "as a stage of capitalist development", which is a broader formulation than just referring to the development of production.

Now Manny's statement about the imperialist stage being progressive might seem surprising. In general Comrade Manny and others seemed to be set on debunking the value of the concept of imperialism after the fall of colonialism. Yet here he says it not only exists but is historically progressive.

But perhaps this is not so much of a contradiction after all. If it is regarded that imperialism as a political concept is basically over after the fall of most colonial regimes, then what would be left is just the economy. And

should this line of reasoning reach the point of regarding that imperialism is just the world market, and that war, politics, monopoly etc. are just imperfections in this expanding market, then these two points of view might well mesh.

In fact, I think that the talk of progressive imperialism confuses that fact that further economic development is generally progressive, with the question of the overall social and political order.

So let's look at this question more closely. First, is the view that imperialism is progressive a change from past theory or just the ABCs? And then let's look at what the imperialist order looks like today, to get an idea if past theory should be changed.

I've only had a chance to start examining some references on how communists of the past approached the question of whether capitalism was progressive. But it appears that they regarded it as progressive in several ways:

- Generally speaking, it is progressive in comparison to pre-capitalist economic systems. (Naturally, in cases where capitalism is implanted by killing off the entire previous population, it would hardly be progressive for the past population in any sense of the word.) It develops the class relations that lead to struggle against capitalism and exploitation, and also the level of productive ability necessary to have a system free from exploitation.
- The development of large-scale production is progressive as compared to petty production for the same reasons.
- At a certain historical stage in certain countries, there may be bourgeois movements that are progressive. For example, there were revolutionary bourgeois movements against, say, feudalism or against national oppression, movements that brought masses of people into political and social life, etc. This does not mean that in any any struggle against feudalism or national oppression the bourgeoisie is progressive, but refers only to its role in certain movements at a certain point in history.

Things change as capitalism matures in each country. It was held that the bourgeoisie loses any progressive character, although the replacement of pre-capitalist forms of exploitation by capitalism, and the growth of the productive forces, were still regarded as progressive phenomenon. This distinction remained at the time of imperialism. Imperialism itself was regarded as reactionary as a stage of capitalism. It was held to be the basis for a gravitation towards wars, political reaction, etc. But this didn't indicate a change to the attitude to the replacement of pre-capitalist economy by capitalism, or to economic development.

There was debate on this in the working-class movement. A number of reformists regarded colonial policy as progressive, for example, on the grounds that it brought capitalism and development to the colonies.

Thus it was not the ABC's to say imperialism was progressive. The attitude to imperialism as a social and political order, as a stage of capitalist development, was distinguished from the issue of economic development or the further spread of capitalist relations.

It would be easy to produce a number of quotations about imperialism being reactionary. Instead, the following extract from Lenin's writing deals perhaps with certain of the complexities involved. It is from a letter of January 3, 1911 to Maxim Gorky:

"As regards quixotism in the international policy of Social-Democracy, I think, you are wrong. It is the revisionists who have long been asserting that colonial policy is progressive, that it implants capitalism and that therefore it is senseless to 'accuse it of greed and cruelty', for 'without these qualities' capitalism is 'hamstrung'.

"It would be quixotism and whining if Social-Democrats were to tell the workers that there could be salvation somewhere apart from the development of capitalism, not through the development of capitalism. But we do not say this. We say: capital devours you, will devour the Persians, will devour everyone and go on devouring until you overthrow it. That

is the truth. And we do not forget to add: except through the growth of capitalism there is no guarantee of victory over it.

"Marxists do not defend a single reactionary measure, such as banning trusts, restricting trade, etc. But to each his own. Let Khomyakov and Co. build railways across Persia, let them send Lyakhovs [blood-stained military men], but the job of the Marxists is to expose them to the workers. If it devours, say the Marxists, if it strangles, fight back.

"Resistance to colonial policy and international plunder by means of organizing the proletariat, by means of defending freedom for the proletarian struggle, does not retard the development of capitalism but accelerates it, forcing it to resort to more civilized, technically higher methods of capitalism. There is capitalism and capitalism. There is Black-Hundred-Octoberist [reactionary, pogromist] capitalism and Narodnik ('realistic, democratic', full of 'activity') capitalism. The more we expose capitalism before the workers for its 'greed and cruelty', the more difficult is it for capitalism of the first order to persist, the more surely is it bound to pass into capitalism of the second order. And this just suits us, this just suits the proletariat."

.....

"The Germans have an exemplary journal of the opportunists: Sozialistische Monatshefte. There gentlemen like Schippel and Bernstein have long been attacking the international policy of the revolutionary Social-Democrats by raising an outcry that this policy resembles the 'lamentations of compassionate' people. That, brother, is a trick of opportunist swindlers....

"The international proletariat is pressing capitalism in two ways: by converting Octoberist capitalism into democratic capitalism and, because it drives Octoberist capitalism away from itself by transplanting this capitalism to the savages. This, however, enlarges the basis of capitalism and brings its death nearer. There is practically no Octoberist capitalism left in Western Europe; practically all capitalism is democratic. Octoberist capitalism has gone from Britain and France to Russia and Asia. The Russian revolution

[1905] and the revolutions in Asia = the struggle for ousting Octoberist capitalism and replacing it by democratic capitalism. And democratic capitalism = the last of its kind. It has no next stage to go on to. The next stage is its death." (Collected Works, Vol. 34, pp. 438-9)

I think this indicates that supporting the development of the productive forces does not require regarding imperialism as progressive. Bourgeois relations may develop under colonialism, and they may spread in a dependent country bullied by the great powers, but it was not the job of the proletariat to support reactionary ways of developing capitalism. Generally speaking, by fighting imperialist policy, the proletariat actually develops the conditions for a more democratic form of capitalist development, and for a faster development of the productive forces, to say nothing of an alliance between the oppressed around the world.

#### Imperialism today

Of course, whether imperialism is reactionary today, depends on what it is regarded as. Should there be a separation between the attitude towards technology, science, and even capitalist development around the world, and towards the imperialist social and political order? Does it make any sense now to talk of this order as reactionary while supporting economic progress?

I believe it does.

#### How the world changed

It is said that imperialism has given such a vast development of the productive forces. Comrade Manny lays stress on this in defining imperialism as a progressive stage of capitalism. But examine the history of imperialism. World development increased spectacularly after the Second World War, which was also a period when the main part of the colonial system fell. The achievement of independence in most countries did not bring socialism, nor in some cases did it even bring anything but backward or even reactionary regimes, but it brought fundamental changes. As some comrades are fond of lecturing, formal independence means something. Well,

here it is in practice. The defeat of fascism in World War II and decolonization are very much behind the particular way the world economy looks and the accelerated spread of bourgeois relations throughout the world. The wave of anti-fascist and anti-colonial struggle opened the door for capitalist development.

It was not a matter that imperialism just summed up its difficulties in the first part of the century and decided that dropping colonial barriers would be good for growth: it was dealing with a world conflagration. (As well, it was dealing with a situation where the largest imperialist power was interested in using the opportunity to break down other countries' spheres of influence.)

The entrance of an multitude of new countries and new bourgeoisies onto the scene makes capitalism look a bit like it was in an earlier period. At the same time, they entered into a world dominated by the imperialist powers, and this has definite consequences for these countries, their politics, and their economic organization. The local bourgeoisie ends up linked up with world capital, or part of world capital. And, looking at these countries as a whole, their political systems are tied in with the trends in the overall world order.

### Features of the world order

Meanwhile the present world order still maintains tremendous tendencies towards reaction. Let's examine a few.

For example, is war a mere imperfection in the marketplace world order? Is the main thing that a world war hasn't taken place since World War II? Or should it be seen that this has this been a bloody period, full of wars of almost every conceivable type, and these conflicts continue to this day. As well, the post-World War II period was the scene of a clash between two world imperialist blocs that threatened the world with nuclear catastrophe for decades.

Today, despite the end of the Cold War, the military budgets of the major imperialist powers remain high. Arming is still taking place around the world. East Asia, for example, is a boom area of world capitalism—and

also one of the major players on the world arms market.

It is also a significant feature of the present period that military expenditures have been essential for the growth of the American economy and others. War has been not just a political feature of the present order, but a major economic factor.

The huge world arms market and the continual warfare refute the idea of a peaceful, united "ultra-imperialism". This is a time of relatively peaceful and friendly relations among most imperialist powers, and yet the militarism continues. I have attempted to dramatize the existence of the world political order by pointing out that it would look like "ultra-imperialism" to a person from earlier in this century, but of course it's not ultra-imperialism. Kautsky's theory of "ultra-imperialism" gave a wrong assessment of what agreement among the imperialists would mean. He thought, for example, that the heavy armaments budgets were against the interests of imperialism, and so they would decide to cut them. That's not what happened.

Politically, this has also been a trying era. The backward and anti-democratic nature of so many regimes in newly independent countries is related, in part, to their arising as part of a world bourgeoisie in the present world order. Meanwhile one whole imperialist bloc, the pro-Soviet bloc, was based until its collapse on a political model of tyranny. The other Western bloc also fostered some of the most notorious dictatorial regimes. And today, in the middle of its victory celebrations, there is a disturbing rise in racism and other reactionary currents in the U.S. and Europe.

Environmentally, the devastation being wrought on the world is so bad that it puts a major question mark on the economic progress taking place.

Overall, I don't see how the social and political order of imperialism looks like anything but a reactionary stage of capitalism. The scientific and technological advances are sensational; the growth of productive capacity is tremendous; but the world order is leading to disaster. If the economic basis for socialism is being constructed in the midst of imperialism, the social

and political order underlines the need for socialist revolution.

### Leninism

Another part of the discussion of imperialism was Leninism, a subject brought up by Jim in IB #77 and then in his letter of October 20, 1993 (labeled SFBA #1). Comrade Jim criticized Maoist, Cuban and other views of neo-colonialism in IB #77, and juxtaposed this to the fact that the colonial system had basically collapsed since Lenin wrote *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. He explained later that he felt he had shown that various errors flowed from "trying to make present world analysis fit into the framework of all the theses in Lenin's *Imperialism*." (SFBA #1) And in fact IB #77 opened a phase of blaming the book *Imperialism* for any errors on the international situation made by some comrades in Chicago, or by Maoists, Fidelists, or whatever. Manny's report too sounded this theme.

This revealed a curious attitude to theory. Leninism was viewed not according to what it contained, but according to the views of others, including revisionists. Moreover, Lenin's views on imperialism and the world situation was reduced to a single pamphlet, written to be legal under conditions of wartime tsarist censorship in 1916 (see the Preface to *Imperialism*). Hence this pamphlet could not describe Lenin's views of the revolutionary motion in the dependent countries, or even of the developments in 1914-16 itself. It mostly used descriptions of events in the last two decades or so prior to the outbreak of World War I in 1914. And likely as not, what was cited from *Imperialism* was simply a phrase or a sentence.

This meant that theory was in effect being viewed as a series of cookbook recipes and predictions, which could be reduced to a few phrases, and could be judged through the writings and theses of anyone who ever laid eyes on *Imperialism*, or at least lived after 1916. This was a farce, and it resulted in a lot of astonishing assertions about what Leninism said about various subjects.

Before any serious study of revolutionary theory is possible, this

method of looking at theory has to be discarded. Here I will simply go into a number of things raised at the Congress, which may be attributed by some to *Imperialism*, and show that it has little to do with Lenin's views at all.

### Dependency theory

Dependency theory was presented as being, essentially, that foreign finance capital prevents any development in the dependent countries.

On this subject, Lenin states in *Imperialism*, "The export of capital influences and greatly accelerates the development of capitalism in those countries to which it is exported." (Near the beginning of Ch. IV, "Export of Capital") However, this is not a prediction of how much imperialism will export capital to an individual country, or of the amount of development in any particular country at any particular time. Lenin also stresses "The uneven and spasmodic development of individual enterprises, individual branches of industry and individual countries is inevitable under the capitalist system."

### Stagnation

At the Fourth Congress, comrade Ray (Seattle) contrasted the economic development during this century with Lenin's "description of certain features of stagnation, decay and parasitism in 1916". Yet Lenin was quite aware of the increased pace of economic development. In discussing the tendency to decay, he wrote that: "It would be a mistake to believe that this tendency to decay precludes the rapid growth of capitalism. It does not. In the epoch of imperialism, certain branches of industry, certain strata of the bourgeoisie and certain countries betray, to a greater or lesser degree, now one and now another of these tendencies. On the whole, capitalism is growing far more rapidly than before; but this growth is not only becoming more and more uneven in general, its unevenness also manifests itself, in particular, in the decay of the countries which are richest in capital (Britain)." (Near the start of Ch. X "The place of imperialism in history".)

This view of overall growth combined with decay seems peculiarly

appropriate in the light of how the U.S. looks today.

### All the semi-colonies will become colonies

Michael asserted at the Fourth Congress discussion that Imperialism gives the impression that "the world is moving toward greater monopoly domination. More colonies. Even the semi-colonies are going to be turned into colonies." And Jim argues that way in IB #77, basing himself on a fragment of a sentence in which Lenin argues that, in preparing a chart on the division of the world, one should take account of the semi-colonies (Persia, China, and Turkey) as well as the colonies, as the "the first of these countries is already almost completely a colony, the second and third are becoming such." However in this paragraph Lenin was comparing the world of 1876 to that of 1914; he said he was discussing "the changes which have occurred during the last decades in this respect". (Ch. VI, Collected Works, p. 257)

What was likely to happen in the subsequent period? Anyone who read any of Lenin's articles on the ongoing process in the dependent world would have seen Lenin describe another prospect than complete colonization. Take the article of May 1913 entitled "The awakening of Asia". He writes that: "Following the 1905 movement in Russia, the democratic revolution spread to the whole of Asia—to Turkey, Persia, China. Ferment is growing in British India.

"A significant development is the spread of the revolutionary democratic movement to the Dutch East Indies, to Java and the other Dutch colonies, with a population of some forty million."

Or take the famous article of May 1913 "Backward Europe and Advanced Asia", where Lenin writes that "Everywhere in Asia a mighty democratic movement is growing, spreading and gaining in strength. The bourgeoisie there is as yet siding with the people against reaction. Hundreds of millions of people are awakening to life, light and freedom. What delight in the hearts of all class-conscious workers, who know that the path to collec-

tivism lies through democracy!"

Naturally, Lenin couldn't write about this in *Imperialism* — remember, the pamphlet was written to be legal under wartime censorship. He could only hint at it, saying "...We must not, however, lose sight of the forces which counteract imperialism in general, and opportunism in particular, and which, naturally, the social-liberal Hobson is unable to perceive." (From the middle of chapter VIII, Collected Works, vol. 21, p.281)

Meanwhile, with respect to monopoly in general, he wrote: "...Certainly, monopoly under capitalism can never completely, and for a very long period of time, eliminate competition in the world market (and this, by the by, is one of the reasons why the theory of ultra-imperialism is so absurd)." (In the second paragraph of chapter VIII)

### Puppet regimes and trained imperialist agents

Jim talks in IB #77 talks about a time when it was an exaggeration, but partially true, to talk about puppet regimes and trained agents, etc. But if one examines Lenin's analysis of the dependent countries, one will see a constant emphasis on the different internal classes and their relationships. His views don't give rise to three worldism, but put forward the alternative view of class analysis.

In general, the entire cartoonish picture of dependency in 1916 has nothing to do with Lenin's views. Jim, for example, uses Argentina as the example of country dependent on a single country Britain. But in fact Lenin discusses Argentina's relations to both Germany and Britain.

### Theory

These examples show that some comrades had lost much interest in actually considering Lenin's views. It seems to me that the very changes in the world situation since Lenin's time required a more serious approach. One had to look into his reasoning and the ways of dealing with the world, and see what questions they raised with respect to the present situation, rather than just extracting a few phrases or repeating that the colonies had been liberated.

At the Fourth Congress discussion on imperialism a number of important issues were raised. But, as I noted at the outset, there was little development of theoretical work on them afterwards. I think the nature of this discussion suggests some of the

reasons why. Simplified and one-sided conclusions presented themselves as a picture of world development although the investigation was barely started. The theoretical problems of today might inspire a new look at the communist theory of imperialism —

but some comrades reduced this theory to phrases torn out of context. A narrow theoretical view helped block the vision of the developing world situation.<>

Submitted Jan. 21 1994

## Letter from Jim, Continued

analysis about territorial and colonial division has, in the main, been superseded.

Of course, much remains the same. The world is still sharply divided between poor and rich countries. The countries rich in capital plunder the countries poor in capital, through debts, through multi-national corporations, through unequal trade, etc. There are varying degrees of economic and financial dependence, and, along with it, varying degrees of diplomatic and military dependence. And this dependency delineates certain lines of world "spheres of influence" among the imperialist powers.

One of the tasks of our theoretical work is to have a better understanding of these relationships; of the mechanisms of this division between rich and poor; and of how to orient the class struggle in light of these cycles of plunder and dependency.

But to gain this understanding, we cannot simply repeat and rehash formulas that have little to do with the present. Seventy five years ago, there was a territorial and colonial division of the world. Does that fit the reality of today? I don't think it does. Moreover, attempts to do so by placing various prefixes before the world colonial, or by juggling with redefinitions, takes us further away from a scientific analysis.

### Colonialism and Semi-Colonialism in 1916

*Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, was written in 1916, in the midst of the First World War. Colonialism was the guiding star of capitalist policy. The war was a world slaughter to see who would get what colonies. Indeed, in the years immediately prior to the war, the imperialist powers had been grabbing up the last

of the "unclaimed" areas of Africa and Asia.

In *Imperialism*, Lenin gave figures to illustrate his concept of the "complete" partition of the world.

In 1914, there were 523.4 million colonial subjects of 6 great colonial powers. There were another 45.3 million subjects of other powers (Belgium, Holland, etc.).

Then there were another 361.2 million in what he referred to as the semi-colonies of Persia, China, and Turkey. The category semi-colony meant partially a colony, by way of foreign concessions, protectorate status, or other "extraterritorial" privileges. And, in Lenin's view the semi-colonial position was something of a transitional form on the way to complete colonization ("(S)emicolonial countries, in which category we place Persia, China and Turkey: the first of these countries is already almost completely a colony, the second and third are becoming such." (Ibid., page 94) Other countries, such as Thailand (the French and the English shared "extraterritorial" power in what was then called Siam), as well as a number of Caribbean and Central American countries (Haiti, Cuba, Nicaragua, Panama, Dominican Republic) which were held as protectorates of U.S. imperialism, might also be included in the category of semi-colony; but the above list of three were all that Lenin mentioned.

Taken together, the system of colonial powers and their colonies and semi-colonies constituted 1,367.1 million out of a total world population of 1,657 million. Presumably the 289.9 million "other countries" included most of Latin America, non-colonial European countries, etc.

This is the world he described with the concept "complete territo-

rial division". This was roughly how the world looked until World War II, with various jockeying among the colonial powers, but with Britain remaining something of a colonial superpower with some 75% of the world's colonial subjects.

### Colonialism Collapses In the Post-World War II Period

With the upheaval of World War II, the world colonial and semi-colonial system began its collapse. Asia was swept by an anti-colonial tidal wave in the 40's and early 50's. Then it was Africa's turn, from the late 50's to the triumph of the liberation movement in the Portuguese colonies in the early 70's.

What was the significance of this change? That is what we need to come to grips with; because up to this point, theoretical analysis of this change has been hemmed in by a one-sided and non-Marxist-Leninist framework. And this one-sided framework was set up within the communist and revolutionary movements during the 1950's and early 1960's.

The Russian and other revisionists seized on the collapse of the colonial system to preach that imperialism had changed its spots, that it was no longer so predatory, and would now succumb to the revisionist policy of reformism and conciliation. Those with revolutionary spirit rejected this. There were the Chinese and the Albanians and the anti-revisionists, as well as the Castroist movements and similar trends, all of which had points in common on this question. Their analysis was that the old colonial powers had, in the main, been replaced by U.S. imperialism, which was now the world neo-colonial overlord. The national liberation movement had to forge ahead against this new style colonialism as it had the old.



## The CP of China's 1963 Polemic Against the CP of the Soviet Union

In October of 1963, the Peoples Daily of the CP of China produced an editorial called "Apologists of Neo-Colonialism". This was part of their "Polemic on the General Line of the International Communist Movement." I am going to quote it at length because it seems that it is relevant to how this question has been discussed since that time:

"Victories of great historic significance have already been won by the national liberation movement in Asia, Africa and Latin America. This no one can deny. But can anyone assert that the task of combatting imperialism and colonialism and their agents has been completed by the people of Asia, Africa and Latin America?

"Our answer is, no. This fighting task is far from completed.

"However, the leaders of the CPSU frequently spread the view that colonialism has disappeared or is disappearing from the present-day world. They emphasize that 'there are fifty million people on earth still groaning under colonial rule,' that the remnants of colonialism are to be found only in such places as Portuguese Angola and Mozambique in Africa, and that the abolition of colonial rule has already entered the 'final phase.'

"What are the facts?

"Consider, first, the situation in Asia and Africa. There a whole group of countries have declared their independence. But many of these countries have not completely shaken off imperialist and colonial control and enslavement and remain objects of imperialist plunder and aggression as well as arenas of contention between the old and new colonialists. In some, the old colonialists have changed into neo-colonialists and retain their colonial rule through their trained agents. In others, the wolf has left by the front door, but the tiger has entered through the back door, the old colonialism being replaced by the new, more powerful and dangerous U.S. colonialism. The peoples of Asia and Africa are seriously menaced by the tentacles of neo-colonialism, represented by U.S. imperialism.

"Next, listen to the voice of the people of Latin America.

"The Second Havana Declaration says, 'Latin America today is under a more ferocious imperialism, more powerful and ruthless than the Spanish colonial empire.'

"The facts are clear. After World War II the imperialists have certainly not given up colonialism, but have merely adopted a new form, neo-colonialism. An important characteristic of such neo-colonialism is that the imperialists have been forced to change their old style of direct colonial rule in some areas and to adopt a new style of colonial rule and exploitation by relying on the agents they have selected and trained. The imperialists headed by the United States enslave or control the colonial countries and countries which have already declared their independence by organizing military blocs, setting up military bases, establishing 'federations' or 'communities,' and fostering puppet regimes. By means of economic 'aid' or other forms, they retain these countries as markets for their goods, sources of raw material and outlets for their export of capital, plunder the riches and such the blood of the people of these countries...

"The United States is most energetic and cunning in promoting neo-colonialism. With this weapon, the U.S. imperialists are trying hard to grab the colonies and spheres of influence of other imperialists and to establish world domination.

"This neo-colonialism is a more pernicious and sinister form of colonialism.

"We would like to ask the leaders of the CPSU, under such circumstances how can it be said that the abolition of colonial rule has already entered the 'final phase'?"

### "Apologists of Neo-Colonialism" Polemic in Retrospect

This document represented an analysis shared by many of the revolutionary movements in the world during those years. There is much validity to it: With the collapse of the colonial order; with the devastation of the older imperialist powers; and with the Cold War taking shape, U.S. imperialism was aggressively trying

to rig up a world empire, gain positions in the former colonial and semi-colonial world, and consolidate its position in Latin America.

In a number of former colonies, U.S. imperialism entered through the back door, frequently trying to make use of the colonial levers left behind. In Indochina, the U.S. supported the French colonialists up to the end, and then continued the war against the liberation movement. Moreover, in non-colonial countries — from Greece, to Iran, to Guatemala — the U.S. imperialists unleashed heavy-handed tactics to crush democratic movements, reducing a series of these countries to virtual American protectorates.

Thus, by the 1960's, in a number of countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America (and southern Europe might also be included here), there were military dictatorships, brutal monarchies, and other hated tyrannies, which were brought to power, or held onto power, with the backing of the CIA, the Pentagon and the U.S. corporations. It is this reality that gave power to the Chinese polemic against the Soviet revisionists.

It was in these conditions that this analysis of a neo-colonial world system was accepted by much of the world revolutionary movement. Different trends had different variations of similar themes. There were also a number of modifications; for example, with the growth of a Soviet sphere of influence, the Soviet Union was often portrayed as having its own neo-colonial empire.

But the problems with this analysis are glaring when we glance back over the last 30 years of development. Look at the Chinese polemic and it is easy to see the exaggeration and one-sidedness.

"Apologists of Neo-Colonialism" overstated the puppet or lackey nature of the regimes. It tended to ignore that these regimes were generally rooted in the politics and class struggle of the country. Moreover, it failed to give any reasonable explanation of the many countries that did not fit into this neo-colonial pattern at all. This is important as it partially explains the opening that this analysis gave to theories of non-alignment, tri-continentalism, and third worldism.

And, in general, there was a lack of vision as to the direction of the politics of these countries with the expansion of capitalism in this part of the world.

### What Does Neo-Colonialism Mean?

The collapse of colonialism and semi-colonialism meant a major change in world politics. It meant that hundreds of millions of people were no longer subjected to the political domination of foreign imperial powers. In the main, the epoch of the national liberation struggle for the right to self-determination had come to a conclusion.

With their non-socialist, non-class perspective, the CP of China, the CP of Cuba, and many others, failed to come to terms with this. Instead, they seized on the thesis of neo-colonialism to perpetuate the concept of a world-wide national liberation movement. Thus, neo-colonialism was given the political meaning of a continuation of foreign political domination.

Neo-colonialism could be used to infer many things. Any act of big power chauvinism or bullying could come under this heading. Unequal trade that pushes down prices of commodities of the poor countries, or debt structures which siphon wealth from the poor to the rich, or exploitation through the multinationals could also be called "neo-colonial," in a certain sense of the word.

However, it is above all a political concept. In its "Apologists of Neo-Colonialism," the CP of China attempted to identify this new-style colonialism as the political continuation of the old type of colonialism. What this boiled down to was that neo-colonialism meant imperialist political domination through "puppet regimes" and through "selected and trained agents."

To sustain this thesis, in 1963 it was not hard to point to regimes deeply dependent on the Pentagon, the CIA, and the U.S. corporations: there were the South Vietnamese, South Korean or Filipino regimes in Asia; the Shah of Iran in the Middle East; the Congo's post-Lumumba regimes in Africa; and there was Somoza and numerous other tyrannies in Latin America.

U.S. imperialism's post World War

II strategy placed a great emphasis on grooming and propping up regimes that would do its military, diplomatic, or economic bidding. It placed special confidence in military generals, monarchs or other tyrants who sent their offspring to West Point and showed loyalty to U.S. interests.

One problem with the Chinese and other literature was the tendency to exaggerate the puppet or agent nature of such regimes, skipping over something as fundamental as the internal class struggle. Beyond that, the superficiality of the "Apologists of Neo-Colonialism" thesis can be seen from another angle as well. It seems that the so-called neo-colonial regimes were something of a passing phenomenon. Their heyday was the 50's and 60's. Since we have witnessed U.S. imperialism's Viet Nam debacle, and the fall of various U.S.-backed dictatorships and tyrannies, or their evolution, to the point that it is even hard to recognize the outlines of the picture painted in "Apologists of Neo-Colonialism."

U.S. imperialism emerged from the Second World War with ambitious plans about the relationships it would realize with the newly emerging countries. It looked for an unequal and unquestioned alliance that would preserve much of the spirit of the old colonial (or semi-colonial) relations. But ambition is one thing and reality another.

One of the biggest blows to these plans for Pax Americana was the victory of the Chinese revolution. During the war against Japan, the U.S. pushed to abolish the formal "prerogatives" of the imperial powers in China, as U.S. imperialism had hopes that the alliance with Chiang Kai-shek's KMT would become a pillar of the post-war world that it was seeking to create. Through the KMT, the U.S. hoped to set up its own, less formal, system of "prerogatives" in China, which were now out of reach of the other imperial powers. But the CP of China and the mass revolution smashed the KMT and this alliance.

From the late 40's to present, there has been a multitude of means and shades of development that the former colonial world has gone through. The general outcome, however, is that

we are now entering a time when talk of puppet regimes and regimes of selected and trained agents sounds not only exaggerated but downright anachronistic. Even in the small countries of Latin America, the regimes are much more complex and varied than the old regimes of United Fruit and West Point that were so well documented in the left literature of the 60's and 70's. (Obviously, the pro-Soviet client state, tied to Comecon and Soviet loans, propped up by the Soviet military and East European secret police, is also a thing of the past, confirming the general point.)

In arguing along these lines, it must be noted that we are dealing with complicated social phenomena — with general patterns and trends. In the past, there was undoubtedly exaggeration in the revolutionary literature (including, in some cases, ours) of the puppet nature of various regimes. Similarly, it would be a mistake today to exaggerate the degree to which these features have been shed, or to exclude the possibility of reversals towards the old ways. However, with that warning, I believe that the only conclusion that can be drawn is that the last 30 years of development have proved the one-sidedness in the analysis of neo-colonialism as a political concept.

Colonialism and semi-colonialism has collapsed as a world system. Neo-colonialism, at least as defined over the past 30 or 40 years, has been proved a one-sided and superficial analysis. So where does that leave us in terms of analysis of the modern relationship between imperialism and the less developed countries? In particular, where does that leave Lenin's analysis of the colonial and territorial division of the world?

### A Brief Survey

Lenin came to his conclusions based on a survey of the world's population, land area, etc. Today, it would not be so easy to make such a survey, with the emergence of new nations, vast populations, and complex relations. And it is beyond the scope of this paper to examine the position of all the 170 plus countries in the world. Instead, we could take Lenin's groupings from Imperialism,

look at the principal countries within these groupings, and from this get a certain picture of how the world has changed over the last 75 years.

(Note: all the facts cited below come from Rand McNally's World Almanac 1990. Some of it is getting old, and there are other problems; but its advantage is that most of the statistics come from the UN and are relatively solid, and it is all easily accessible.)

First, here is a list of 1990 population figures for the largest countries that emerged out of the old colonial world:

India	pop. 832 million
Indonesia	pop. 178 million
Bangladesh	pop. 115 million
Nigeria	pop. 113 million
Pakistan	pop. 113 million
Vietnam	pop. 65 million
Philippines	pop. 61 million
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subtotal	pop. 1,477 million

(Note: of course, there are still a number of colonial territories — Puerto Rico, the Panama Canal and others in the Caribbean; Guam, Samoa, Tahiti, and others in the Pacific; and probably Northern Ireland, Palestine, etc., could also be added to this list. But the population of all colonial territories taken together can be counted in the tens of millions. While this is not insignificant for those tens of millions, it does not add up to a world system, and colonialism has been reduced to a relatively minor feature of contemporary world politics.)

Second, here is a list of 1990 population figures for the countries that Lenin described as semi-colonies:

China	pop. 1,120 million
Turkey	pop. 56 million
Iran	pop. 52 million
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subtotal	pop. 1,228 million

Third, here is a list of 1990 population figures from the largest countries of Latin America, which presumably fell under Lenin's "other" category.

Brazil	pop. 150 million
Mexico	pop. 89 million
Argentina	pop. 33 million
Colombia	pop. 32 million
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subtotal	pop. 304 million

It may be argued that this list of 14 countries is not representative, that by excluding the countries with small populations the picture is skewed one way or another. For example, the conditions of political dependency may be more pronounced in the small countries like El Salvador or Grenada than in the larger countries. However, there are other small countries, like say Singapore or Libya, where such conditions are not so pronounced. So it is not so obvious what difference it would make to include the small countries.

In any case, these 14 countries listed include 3,009 million people, that is some 74.5% of the 4,040 million people of the total "less developed countries." Since we are trying to grapple with world systems and world tendencies, this three quarters of the less developed countries is at least a good start.

#### Former Semi-Colonies Emerge As Capitalist Powers

Let us begin with the three countries Lenin described as semi-colonies of the big powers. It should be repeated here that I am following this somewhat arbitrary breakdown for the sake of simplicity. At the same time, I think it brings out the extent of the changes and the complexity of the phenomenon we are trying to grapple with.

The principal semi-colony of Lenin's day was China. Since that time China has gone through revolutions and counterrevolutions. By the late 1970's, at least since the Chinese invasion of Vietnam, we have been denouncing China as a social-imperialist power. Was that just a nasty name? Or did it mean something real? By comparison to other imperialisms, China is poor. Japanese, German, U.S., South Korean and other companies seek low wages and high profits in the enterprise zones in southern China. Diplomatically, China often tilts towards the U.S. and Japan. But the

regime is no one's puppet. It's a capitalist power with its own aims and interests. Labeling China as an imperialist power did not stir debate among us at the time. After all, China was throwing its weight around in world geopolitics. It had invaded its weak neighbor. It had a huge army and at least the beginnings of a ballistic nuclear arsenal.

While much smaller than China, Iran also has emerged as something of a regional capitalist power. Like China, Iran slipped its formal semi-colonial status with World War II. Put in power with the CIA-backed coup of 1953, the Shah headed a regime that was a model of subservience and puppetry. Nevertheless, underneath what one might have called the neo-colonial monarchy, domestic capitalism and the modern class struggle was growing. It burst out in a revolution that ended badly for the workers. But there is no doubt that Iran today stands as an independent capitalist regime, a regime that is vying with the other regional powers for influence in the former Soviet republics, Afghanistan, and the Arab countries.

Turkey is different. Unlike either China or Iran, it is formally linked to U.S. imperialism through a military treaty (NATO), and the U.S. has a military presence there. But does this military link define Turkey's relationship to imperialism? No, it does not. Turkey straddles the straits between Europe and Asia. It wants full privileges in the European club of capitalist states, and it looks at NATO membership in that light. It also has its own ambitions in the Middle East and Central Asia (the former Soviet republics, etc.) Thus, the U.S. may park its bombers there, but economically Turkey looks towards Germany and Europe, while it uses its relatively strong economic and military positions to compete with Iran and others for regional influence.

In his *Imperialism*, Lenin pointed out that "the semicolonial countries provide a typical example of the 'middle stage'" of partly independent countries being reduced to complete colonialism. Today, these same countries are in the "middle stage" of emergence as regional capitalist, or even imperialist, powers.

## The Former Colonies: Territories of What Power?

Among the former colonies, there are wide gulfs between poorer and wealthier, stronger and weaker countries. But even among the poorest or weakest, it is hard to speak of a political pattern that fits the concept of territorial division.

Let us begin with India. Its development has been along a painful evolutionary path, and it is still gripped in deep poverty and backwardness. But it would be quite a stretch to try to define the crisis gripping India as one of foreign political oppression. Twenty years ago, the pro-Chinese groups were trying to make this stretch; India was described as a neo-colony of the Soviet Union. Today, the Soviet Union has disintegrated, and with it any remaining mythology of India being a neo-colony should also have been put to rest. India is a capitalist power in its own right. Because in many respects it is weaker than, say, China, it may not be so appropriate to speak of an Indian imperialism (although many of its neighbors in South Asia, in Sri Lanka, Kashmir, etc., may think it is quite appropriate).

Then there is Indonesia. No doubt, the CIA assisted the rise to power of Suharto in the 1960's, and the U.S. applauded his slaughter of the communists. But whatever Suharto's role in 1965, it would be wrong to describe him as a U.S. puppet in 1992. Financed by oil exports, and benefiting from the East Asian economic boom, the Suharto regime has carved out its own position. Like India and others, Indonesia has made the most out of playing off the different imperialists (U.S., Japan, China, the former USSR, etc.) against each other to escape the monopoly of any one power. Attempting to revive the so-called non-aligned movement, Suharto is making loud overtures to Fidel Castro (which is not exactly what the agents of U.S. policy are doing these days). The invasion of East Timor is just one example of Indonesia's bully tactics towards its weaker neighbors.

In Pakistan, the Pentagon and the CIA have maintained a close working relationship with the military men who hold the reins of power. But it seems that this is more a coincidence of in-

terests towards Pakistan's neighbors, especially Afghanistan over the last decade, than an expression of Pakistani subservience to U.S. interests. For example, Pakistan's nuclear weapons program is a pretty good tip that this is a capitalist power pursuing its own aims.

Then there is Nigeria. Much of Africa is going through a tragic period. With economic and social disintegration, France and other previous colonial powers seem to be playing a greater role than they were even several years back. Some of this intervention, in Chad and elsewhere, might well be called neo-colonialist. Nigeria has also faced an economic depression with the fall of oil prices, and there is deep poverty there. However, unlike much of sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria, with its 113 million people, and with its oil and other resources, has been able to build up something of a complex economy. While a poor capitalist power, it is such a power in the region. Then there are some of the poorest and most desperate countries of the old colonial Asia: Bangladesh, Vietnam, and the Philippines.

Bangladesh is one of the most unfortunate countries on earth, yet all the speculations at its birth about being gobbled up by Indian expansionism or other powers simply have not come true.

Vietnam, with its extreme poverty, was dragged deep into Comecon and the Soviet Union's neo-colonial structures. The USSR has collapsed, and Vietnam is on its own.

The Philippines may have been a classic country for the neo-colonial model. Independence after World War II left a great deal of U.S. imperialism's colonial structures, with a huge U.S. military presence. The military and police system, diplomacy and finance, even the education system, continued to be bound up closely with the former colonial overlord. But the end of the Marcos dictatorship corresponded with, among other things, changes in the U.S.-Philippines relationship. For example, the U.S. economic monopoly has been breached. In terms of foreign investments in the country, the U.S. now shares second place along with Japan, behind Taiwan. Presently, negotiations are un-

der way with Taiwanese investors to transform the vast U.S. naval base at Subic Bay into a commercial and trade center. In other words, the withdrawal from Subic Bay not only reflects big changes across East Asia, but also changes in the relationship between the Philippines and its former colonial master.

In short, the concept of territorial division comes closer to the reality of the Philippines, than to Bangladesh, or Vietnam, or most of the former colonial world. But, that only underscores the outstanding issue that when one speaks of territorial division, one must ask "territory of what power"? And, even in the Philippines, there is no longer an easy answer.

## What Did Lenin Say About Argentina?

Finally, there are the Latin American countries which presumably fell within Lenin's "other" category. In this regard, it might be helpful to quote from Imperialism what Lenin had to say about Argentina. Besides the semi-colonies, Lenin pointed to Argentina as an example of another "transitional form of state dependence":

"South America, and especially Argentina," writes Schulze-Gaevernitz in his work on British imperialism, "is so dependent financially on London that it ought to be described as almost a British commercial colony." ... Schilder estimates the amount of British capital invested in Argentina at 8,750,000,000 francs. It is not difficult to imagine what strong connections British finance capital (and its faithful 'friend,' diplomacy) thereby acquires with the Argentine bourgeoisie, with the circles that control the whole of that country's economic and political life." (pages 101-2, Chinese edition)

This passage is a useful point of reference. Of course, after World War II, British capital was mainly eclipsed in Latin America by American capital. In the particular case of Argentina, British imperialism has maintained a certain hold (among other things, there is a large British community there) and U.S. imperialism may never have achieved the type monopoly it did elsewhere on the continent. Nonetheless, much of Latin America became "almost an American com-

mercial colony." However, since then, there have been a number of changes.

If we are to speak of Latin America, first and foremost we must speak of Brazil with its 150 million people. Probably even in Lenin's time, Brazil was a more complicated case study than was Argentina. By the 70's and 80's, Brazil emerged as the largest industrial and agricultural force in Latin America. While relying more on its domestic market than the export-driven South Korean economy, Brazil has had a similar leap into industrialization. Its economy has become multi-branched and complex. Despite a huge debt burden, it would be hard to describe such an economy as a commercial colony of anyone.

In the 60's and 70's, Mexico, Colombia and a series of other Latin American countries made quick steps (excruciatingly painful steps) towards industrialization. Their economies, too, have become multi-tiered and complex, also at the expense of a heavy debt burden. In regards to Colombia, for example, with its considerable economic ties to Europe and other countries, there is clearly not a U.S. economic monopoly, or room to speak of a U.S. commercial colony.

The question of the foreign debt is especially acute in Latin America. It was precisely because Latin America was generally more capitalistically developed than most of Asia and Africa, that international finance capital was able to saddle it with hundreds of billions of loans. The largest share (plurality) of these loans are held by U.S. banks. No doubt, this translates into a degree of political clout. (For example, we saw how the U.S. and the coalition of imperialist powers used its debt leverage on the debtor countries during the Persian Gulf War.)

This debt relationship seems to be one of the outstanding features of the present division between the rich and poor countries. Nonetheless, this does not add up to territorial division in the sense Lenin discussed it. In Lenin's analysis, "(t)he principal feature of the latest stage of capitalism is the domination of monopolist combines of the big capitalists." (page 98.) Colonialism, political monopoly, was the only means of assuring economic monopoly. "Colonial possession

alone," Lenin argued, "gives the monopolies complete guarantee against all contingencies in the struggle with competitors." (page 98.)

In the case of the large countries of Latin America, we are talking about independent states where no foreign imperialist power can claim a monopoly in either loan capital, direct investment, or trade. Only Mexico is a little different.

Mexico, for instance, is the only country of the 14 countries listed, where the preponderance of trade is with the U.S. In fact, none of the other countries, except maybe the Philippines, has the U.S. listed as the leading source of both exports and imports. One can only read so much into the almanac's export and import figures. But the diversity of markets is striking in all these countries, except for Mexico. This is one indication — and a study of the Mexican economy would be needed to nail this down — that Mexico, because of its geography (oil pipeline, long common border, etc.), might be considered some type of "almost commercial colony" of the U.S. However, because of the historical trajectory of the Mexican bourgeoisie, because of its size and strength, it seems one would have to be careful about drawing a parallel with Lenin's reference to Argentina.

Compared to the rest the larger countries of Latin America, Mexico's economy is more closely integrated with the U.S. economy. But what does that tell us about Mexican politics and economics? Returning to Rene's polemic where we started, does this mean that Mexico is a colony or neo-colony? Or is it an independent capitalist state that suffers the misfortune of a deep debt burden and unequal trade with U.S. capitalism? Or is there some other characterization that best describes the situation?

#### **Neo-Colonialism and the Second Congress Resolution of the MLP**

This brief survey is admittedly incomplete, yet it should establish the essential point: there is nothing static about the former colonial and semi-colonial world. Much has changed since Lenin's time. The colonial slaves of his day, or countries he saw as descending into colonial slavery, have

emerged into a patchwork of independent capitalist regimes, stronger and weaker, richer and poorer, more and less closely bound up with different imperialist powers. And, in general, even with regard to weaker countries, one does not find the political subordination that would correlate to the territorial division of the globe that Lenin spoke of.

At our Second Congress, we passed a resolution on the less developed countries. An attempt was made to register the major changes since the colonial era, and to lay rest to some of the dogmas carried by much of the revolutionary movement since the days of the CP of China's "Apologists of Neo-Colonialism."

For example, while the resolution spoke of neo-colonial forms of plunder through the debts, unequal trade, etc., it refrained from referring to neo-colonial countries. Instead it presented a more concrete discussion of "a broad range" of different types of countries, from "outright puppet regimes" to different types of "bourgeois nationalist governments," which are tied to varying degrees with foreign imperialism.

Almost a decade later, this resolution is in the need of an update. For example, it spoke of the "era of neo-colonialism"; however, the explanation of neo-colonialism was insufficient. It stated that "Under neo-colonialism, the imperialists... are developing new methods, and refining old methods, one after another, of economic and political domination to replace the former method of direct colonial rule." (underlining added.) The economic part, loans, etc., it explained. But it couldn't explain the political part. It couldn't explain it because neo-colonialism as a political concept is not readily explainable. But then, what does neo-colonialism mean minus political domination? I don't think it means much.

Although in need of an update, the Second Congress resolution was a step forward. To take another step, to come more fully in line with the contemporary world, means that Lenin's thesis on the territorial world division also needs an update.

### **What about the critique of Imperialism?**

Does this mean a repudiation of Lenin? Not at all. Lenin's analysis corresponded to the situation at the time of the First World War. He was a powerful Marxist theorist; but he was not a fortune teller. Facts are stubborn things. And the fact is, seventy five years later, certain features of capitalism have been greatly intensified, while others have diminished. We need to be able to analyze these changes in modern capitalism so that we can better organize the struggle against it. That is what Leninism is all about.

What is responsible for the changes? Has capitalism changed its predatory, imperialist nature? No, it has not. The whole bloody history, from the genocidal war in Vietnam to the desert massacre in the Persian Gulf, is proof of that.

Yet change there has been. The most important change is the spread of modern bourgeois development within the less developed countries. This has taken place through fierce and heroic mass revolutions in the face of imperialism. It has also taken place in the most painful evolutionary way, with crushing poverty, and often under brutal tyrannies. The common denominator of this process is that the state structures are today generally rooted in the modern classes of the society. It is one thing to speak of regimes of trained agents or puppet regimes when imperialism is able to seize upon an alliance with a relative handful of wealthy landlord/capitalist oligarchs and the military men that keep them in power. But it tends to be another thing when the regime is connected to a whole class and spread across the layers of a complex economy.

Another factor is the changes in the global balance of power. For the emerging bourgeoisie in a number of countries, the old U.S.-Soviet rivalry created room to maneuver and play the one global power off of the other. But for many other countries, it meant a tight grip in the military and other alliances of the superpowers. Now the grip of one superpower has been broken, and that of the other is slipping. What's more, the rise of Japan, Germany and other economic powers has breached the U.S. imperialist economic monopoly, creating more cracks and spaces to maneuver.

Meanwhile, the world is still sharply divided between a handful of very wealthy countries and a great majority of poor countries. Exploitation of the poor by the rich continues without letup, by way of investments and loans, the strength of multi-national corporations, unequal trade, and other means available to those rich in capital.

Meanwhile, U.S. imperialism is pouring hundreds of billions into maintaining its position as world policeman. In Panama, Grenada, Nicaragua, and El Salvador, it showed the extremes to which it will go to shore up its positions. The war on Iraq pointed to the barbarism that U.S. imperialism is capable of in the face of a challenge to its profits from a small regional power. And the present jockeying among the big powers for trading zones, market areas, and spheres of influence points to even more destructive clashes down the road.

Meanwhile, hundreds of millions of people have been reduced to the most wretched poverty and even starvation. The weight of modern capitalism is crushing them.

In short, imperialism remains

imperialism. The specific feature of the colonial or territorial global division has faded since Lenin's time. But the heart of his critique of the nature of monopoly capitalism is valid. What we need is a deeper analysis of how capitalism presents itself today, so to better unleash the struggle against it.

### **Moralist Phrasemongering Will Get Us Nowhere**

Major world changes are underway. No doubt, it is important to proceed cautiously, so as to not lose our bearings, and to not lose what is vital and essential in our historic analysis. But there is no excuse for dragging us backwards and raising exaggerated polemics against the efforts to analyze the rapidly changing world.

But that is just what a number of Chicago comrades have fallen into. Julie and others may protest criticisms of "moralist anti-imperialist phrasemongering". But that is exactly what Rene's polemic represents.

Objectively, his declarations about "U.S. imperialism and its colonies" obscure the tasks of the class struggle. Objectively, they are appeals to drag the class struggle backwards towards tasks of national bourgeois development which have, to a large extent, on a global scale, already been realized.

If we are going to make analysis of the world around us, if we are going to speak for the advanced class, we need more analysis and more thought and less phrasemongering. If any good is to come out of the polemic launched by the Chicago comrades, maybe it will be that we become more convinced of that need.

Oct. 3, 1992

From I.B. #77, Oct. 18, 1992

## Letter from Manny, continued

discussion of the struggle in the dependent countries today.

The term "neo-colonialism" tends to imply an analogy between the situation and struggle today and those of the colonial era; this is the reason the term was coined. In the hands of Maoism, this term was used to invoke the specific notion that independence did not introduce a fundamental change in the situation and the character of the struggle in the former colonies. In place of an analysis of the similarities and differences and what they imply, the movement received an answer born of sleigh-of-words.

In the Second Congress resolution an attempt is made to assign a concrete historically concrete meaning to this term and use it in describing the contemporary world. The result, however, is not entirely successful; there is an ambiguity in the thinking.

The resolution states:

With the collapse of the old colonial empires, the imperialist powers turned to neo-colonialism, or new-style colonialism, a policy of subjugating weaker nations which are formally independent. Neo-colonialism continues that super-exploitation of the toiling masses in the oppressed countries that was a hallmark of colonialism. Today, through neo-colonial means, imperialist plunder continues on a vast international scale. (p. 72)

It goes on to point out:

"Neo-colonialism rests upon an alliance of imperialism with the local exploiters who have come to power. Compared with colonialism, it entails a bigger role for the national bourgeoisie in exploiting the local workers and peasants."

It concludes:

"Hence, generally speaking, the replacement of colonialism by neo-colonialism signifies a higher level of capitalist development in the newly independent countries than before and a more developed class struggle between the national bourgeoisie on the one hand and the workers and peasants on the other."

The resolution's analysis of neo-colonialism brings a number of strengths to bear. It recognizes that in most countries, the existing regimes have an internal social basis; this is a far cry from the Maoist concept of regimes imposed from without. It further recognizes the connection of this to the capitalist development that has taken place in the post-war era. And in trying to come to terms with what characterizes the relationship between the rich and poor countries today, the resolution focuses on the economic front.

These strengths reflect an attempt to grapple with the concrete features of the post-war era. The terminology, however, and certain other passages supporting it, are in tension with this attempt. In the absence of any explicit barriers, the historical connotations attached to the term tend to become an unwritten subtext of the resolution. Moreover, there are other passages that come close to such a reading. Thus, we get a tension between two different aspects of the resolution: one whose thrust is to emphasize the concrete features of the present-day situation; another looking back to an analogy with old-style colonialism.

This notion of analysis by analogy has a history in the movement. The appeal of this approach lay in two propositions:

— that we can understand the present day world by dint of analogy with Lenin's depiction of the world of his day;

— and that this in turn confirms the strength of Lenin's analysis. Thus, for example, in one popular version, the U.S.- and Soviet-led bloc became analogous to the British and German "spheres of influence", U.S. relations with most of the less-developed countries became analogous to the British Empire, and so forth. But the Soviet Union of the post-war era was distinctly different from World War I Germany; among other things, the one was chronically capital-poor, the other decidedly not so. Nor is the postwar U.S. WWI Britain; the particulars of the U.S. as a world power lie, not in

colonial relations, but precisely in the absence of those relations. Analogy carries us not toward, but away from the concrete features that typify one era as opposed to another. The approach is fundamentally flawed. Analysis must be made by grappling with the facts, not by shadow-boxing with analogy.

### Features of the postwar situation

The achievement of such an analysis is beyond the scope of the present document. It seems nonetheless appropriate to consider here: what are the features of the post World War II world that such an analysis would have to take into account? Here I dwell upon the characteristics of the U.S.-led "Free World", which has recently engulfed more or less the entire world.

One such feature is the end of old-style colonial relations, relations based upon one country or nation holding another captive, as the predominant form of relations between the most advanced capitalist countries and most of the rest of the world. These relations have largely been swept away. Moreover, the relations that have supplanted them are not colonial-like, in the sense that, in their predominant form, they do not entail the palpable forms of national oppression associated with Britain's centuries-long rule in India, with the European encroachment in China in the century prior to the Second World War, with the U.S. domination of Cuba in the earlier part of this century, etc.

A corollary has been social development in much of the world. More or less hand-in-hand with home rule has come a higher level of capitalist development in the former colonies. This does not mean that the masses are living well; in fact, one of the first things it has meant is the mass depopulation of the countryside and rapid urbanization in the form of sprawling shantytowns and slums. Painful though this is, it is a part of capitalist development and has also generally been accompanied by the growth of an urban proletariat and the appearance or strengthening of capitalist elements in agriculture.

Along with the colonial relations have gone the colonial empires that were at the heart of the division of

the world among the great powers. Nor within the postwar "Free World" have the former divisions into de facto fiefdoms of the great powers continued to figure in a central way. While some remnants of this remain, what predominates is the integration of the "Free World" into a world capitalist economy which reveals any number of minor splits and fissures, but which on the whole reveals a greater degree of integration than existed in the past.

This has given rise to the emergence of a series of international institutions — the IMF, for example — that embody, codify and act out the relations that make up that system up. These institutions express the enhanced weight of the world capitalist system, and further enhance it by giving it an expression beyond the simple sum of individual national economies and national policies. The essential role of these institutions is economic, yet, like anything that becomes a classwide phenomenon, their role verges on the political. That is, when the IMF, exercising the raw power of international finance capital, demands that nation X devalue its currency, institute far-reaching austerity measures, and abolish protective tariffs, then we have a phenomenon that goes beyond the economic in the pure and simple sense of the term.

Closely connected to this is the internationalization of capital. The international capital markets provide a striking example of this. In the postwar period these markets have experienced explosive growth. Capital from every corner of the globe intermingles and pours out to every other corner of the globe. One feature in this period is that the bourgeoisie in a series of dependent countries have themselves become exporters of capital. Even as the IMF has imposed rigid austerity measures on these countries, the local bourgeoisie, turning increasingly into rentiers, have sent their capital skipping and jumping about the globe. While the big powers account for a disproportionate share, world capital is more than a polite fiction for the big powers alone.

Among the big powers the U.S. plays a special role. It is not only the

biggest and strongest; it is the de facto gendarme of the world capitalist system. When the U.S. engages in bullying and aggression — as, for example, in the Persian Gulf — it is not just trading on its own account; it is at the same time acting as the gendarme of that system, a role for which the U.S. awards itself special privileges above and beyond those permitted other powers.

The great majority of the former colonies and a series of other countries accounting for a large part of the world's population are bound up in relations of economic dependence. This dependence has tended to deepen rather than decline with the modest economic development that has been achieved in these countries. These relations of economic dependency differ in a number of basic ways from the old-style colonial relations: they are fundamentally economic rather than political relations; they entail the appropriation of surplus value by market rather than largely non-market means; they are frequently relations of dependency not solely or even mainly on the capital of a single great power, but on the world capitalist system at large.

#### **How do we characterize the revolutionary struggle in the dependent countries?**

The picture is of a complex situation. There exist at once national economies and a world economy which has begun to take on distinct form of its own. Old-style colonial bondage has been largely eradicated, yet even in its absence the prospects of many countries for development are constantly hemmed in by the facts of life under capitalism. The economic dependency that characterizes the external relations of the less-developed countries has in some measure been institutionalized, and to this extent may be more than economic dependency pure and simple. While the particulars vary widely from country to country, the unifying theme lies in the connection of economic dependency to domestic capitalist development and to world capitalism.

How can Marxist-Leninists approach such a situation?

The Second Congress tried to pose

the question in a way that cut against stereotypical thinking. Speaking of the revolution in the oppressed countries it held that:

The concrete situation facing the working masses in the oppressed countries varies widely. The character and specific features of the struggle against imperialist domination vary accordingly. In some countries, it is the socialist revolution which is the only way to fight imperialist domination. In others, the revolution is at a democratic stage which will later pass over to a second, socialist stage. Elsewhere there is a straightforward national liberation struggle, but even here the strength of the movement depends directly on how far it is intertwined with the revolutionary movement for the improvement of the conditions of the toilers, for example, with the agrarian revolution. (p. 72-3)

The resolution goes on to warn:

The democratic and socialist tasks of the revolution thus intertwine in a myriad of ways. No single formula describes the general stage nor the specific features of all these struggles, which follow from the concrete historical conditions in each country. (p. 73)

These formulations were directed against stereotypical thinking that negated the concrete social conditions in which revolutions take place, thinking that reduced the struggle in every dependent country to a new-democratic, or anti-imperialist, democratic revolution. This was an important stand to have taken at that time. Yet, even in so doing, the resolution held to a further generalization: the notion that in these countries the struggle is a struggle against imperialist domination. Since the resolution goes on to open the door to a wide range of possibilities, not least of all socialist revolution, taken in proper context the sin is a minor one.

It nonetheless reveals a certain ambiguity of thinking. Struggle against imperialist domination can have more than one meaning. It may signify struggle against domination by another country or nation, that is, struggle against national oppression. Or it may signify struggle against the domination of finance capital. These



two meanings are not one and the same.

In theoretical terms, the abolition of national oppression is a democratic task compatible with capitalism. A country can be politically independent but capitalist; it can be politically independent even while economically dependent. Abolition of the domination of finance capital, however, can only signify socialist revolution. In the first case, speaking of the struggle against imperialist domination suggests that the immediate struggle in most of the world continues to be one against national oppression. This is not warranted by the facts. But in the latter case the term loses any distinct meaning; it simply becomes another way of referring to socialist revolution.

In the movement at large, several notable attempts have been made to address this ambiguity. One has been to maintain that political independence under conditions of economic dependence cannot be genuine independence; thus the struggle for genuine independence continues. The logic here is no more ingenious than to insist that democracy in a class society cannot be genuine democracy; hence the democratic struggle continues.

Another is to marry the two aspects in the following way: the struggle against imperialist domination becomes the struggle against the domination of foreign capital. Expressed from the right, this notion is found among the advocates of dependency theory (notably, the Monthly Review school) and is linked to hopes for independent national capitalist development. Presumably it could also be expressed from the left by connecting it to the notion of socialism as the true liberator of the nation. But there are a number of problems with this. One is that the notion of struggle against the domination of foreign capital is a nationalist notion and not a Marxist one. Another related problem is the view of socialism this entails.

### The question of socialism

The posing of socialism in national terms has been commonplace in modern history, supported by the notion that socialism can be built in

a single country. From this standpoint socialism can be posed as the pinnacle of independence in several senses, including in the sense of realizing full and complete national self-sufficiency.

But whether socialism can properly be posed in such terms is another matter. Study of the experience of the October Revolution and the subsequent evolution of the notion of "socialism in one country" raises a series of questions in this regard.

Socialist construction presupposes a high degree of economic development and a sufficiently large labor force to sustain a broad range of economic activity. It is difficult to see how this can be achieved under conditions of isolation in a small or less-developed country. In point of fact, prior to the mid-1920s no responsible Marxist seems to have held it possible. In the case of Russia, for example, the possibilities for socialist construction were originally posed from the expectation that the Russian revolution would help trigger subsequent revolutions in Europe, in Germany in particular.

Moreover, a lengthy period in which proletarian states exist concurrently and in continual contradiction with bourgeois states poses the question of external pressure. This is not limited to the threat of invasion alone; the constant pressure of the world market is a real and palpable problem.

In this case, at least in a considerable number of smaller and more backward countries, the ability of the proletariat to retain state power and turn toward socialist construction would seem to require socialist revolutions in conjunction with those in other countries, preferably larger and more developed countries.

The pressure of the world market is likely to be a consideration in more advanced countries as well. Moreover, in the more advanced countries — take, for example, present-day Western Europe — it is becoming increasingly difficult to speak in terms of a rise in the workers' movement in purely national terms.

But in this case, to pose the question of socialism in a solely national

context would be a mistake. On the contrary, it would be important to train the proletariat in the spirit that the revolution is, in a very immediate and real sense, an international one, and that building socialism will mean, not autarky, but rather economic amalgamation.

### On revolutionary orientation

The Second Congress was correct when it stated, "No single formula describes the general stage nor the specific features of all these struggles, which follow from the concrete historical conditions in each country." I would add: in this case they ought not be blankly depicted as struggles against imperialist domination. But if the matter is left here, then it is left in ambiguity. What is needed is not a formula but a general orientation that can guide Marxist-Leninists in dealing with the particularities.

It seems to me that the essential elements of such an orientation lie in placing the class struggle in the center of things. This does not mean that democratic and national questions can be simply proclaimed *passé*. But they do need to be examined critically, with an eye to seeing what approach serves the development of the independent motion of the toilers and what cuts against it. Such an approach needs to be sharply differentiated from the notion of framing petty bourgeois nationalist appeals to the toilers and seeking to mobilize them against the bourgeoisie on the grounds that the latter is anti-national.

Let us take, for example, the question of agitation on such questions as the debt burden or the IMF austerity measures visited upon scores of dependent countries. These are questions of considerable relevance and likely fronts of agitation. These are also questions that tend to lie in the border region of the economic and political planes, being wholly neither the one or the other. The debt burden, for example, is formally an economic question; yet it weighs upon the nation as a nation and therefore can take on some of the characteristics of a national question. I have no doubt that the need arises in a series of countries for agitation on such

questions. But is it obligatory or even desirable for such agitation to be conducted from a national angle? I do not see how this can be held to be obligatory. And while I cannot prove that there will never be a case in which such an angle is desirable, I think it reasonable to presume that the approach ought to be weighed critically, with an eye toward what aids to sever the toilers from bourgeois influence, and that in 9 cases out of 10, especially in the more developed among the dependent countries, this would lead to rejecting a national angle of agitation in favor of another, class angle.

I believe that, poorly defined as this may be, this indicates an orientation infinitely closer to that of Marx and Lenin than the modern-day tendency to seek the national angle in everything. Seeking the origin of that approach leads us back to the Emir of Afghanistan, or at least, to one of his more ardent admirers.

In the late 1940s Stalin declared that the bourgeoisie had dropped the banners of national independence and democracy; now it fell to the proletariat to hold those banners aloft. This notion was not entirely new; the concept dates back to Seventh World Congress of CI or before and the statement is a concentrated summation of the opportunism of that period. Nonetheless, it defined an international platform for the post-war period, one that, not only the pro-Soviet revisionists, but also the Chinese and the Albanians would harken back to.

The statement is the purest demagoguery. Had the bourgeoisie dropped the banner of national independence? Stalin was speaking just at the time that the national movements in the colonial countries were exploding. In many of them, such as India, the bourgeoisie dominated that movement. Nor was this an accurate characterization of the situation in Europe.

The essential thrust of the statement was to legitimize national and democratic tactics for all times and places. No longer was it obligatory for Marxist-Leninists to critically evaluate national issues, slogans and movements; these were now regarded as belonging to the proletariat, and

in that sense proletarian phenomena. The corollary was that the proletariat now belonged to the nation. In each country the question facing the proletariat was to find national colors to drape itself in. A century earlier Marx and Engels had proclaimed that the workingmen have no country; now, the proletariat has been transformed into the champion of the nation.

Aspects of this orientation came under question during the anti-revisionist struggle. But the notion lived on that — at least in the dependent countries — national issues, slogans and movements were inherently progressive and that the essential issue for the proletariat was to be the most militant and consistent wing of that phenomenon.

Such an assumption wants challenging today. Features of the contemporary world such as the strengthening of the international character of the capitalist system and the extent of capitalist development in even the more backward countries suggest the preparation of material conditions for revolutionary developments in the future of a stronger international and class character than we have seen in our lifetime. But such features will not come to the fore all at once. Democratic and nationalist movements will continue to make their appearance and will continue to get tangled up with every imaginable sort of utopian scheming, nationalist sloganeering, etc. Every imaginable influence will come to bear to divert the toilers from the path of class struggle. Under these conditions, the prospects for these objective developments bearing revolutionary fruit hinge upon the emergence of a workers movement with a marked internationalist and socialist perspective. It seems to me that the starting point for this lies in the Marxist-Leninists adhering to an orientation that permits them to steer through these shoals without succumbing to the Sirens.

#### Conclusion

I have taken as a point of departure a malady that broadly afflicted the communist movement in the last generation or more. I have done so not to suggest that this malady di-

rectly grips the handful of forces that have survived the collapse of the old movement, but rather to pose a different relationship: drawing a clear line of demarcation with those influences requires clearing up a number of leftover theoretical ambiguities.

One feature of that malady that I have chosen to emphasize is the national and democratic prism; another is the tendency to defend that prism with signs and signifiers, rather than materialist reasoning. The influence of this malady is strikingly demonstrated in the retreat of a large section of the anti-revisionist movement from revolutionary positions, through petty bourgeois nationalism into out-and-out reformism and collapse.

Such examples speak of opportunist influence. But the influence of opportunism cannot be laid to opportunist conniving alone; there is also the matter of the objective conditions in which that opportunism was able to take root. For over a generation the surge of struggle in Asia, Africa and Latin America was a most basic fact of political life on a world scale. For Marxist-Leninists, this wave was not simply an important fact to be dealt with, it was the herald of hope for proletarian revolution. Yet the revolutions in this period were not predominantly proletarian revolutions; national, agrarian, and other democratic aspects tended to predominate. This notwithstanding, the Marxist-Leninists oriented themselves toward this wave of struggle and committed themselves to it heart and soul. I would contend that the objective conditions during this period provided fertile soil for a tendency to blur somewhat the distinction between class and national-democratic perspectives. I would argue that these conditions left some stamp on the thinking of revolutionary-minded elements, manifested not in the abandonment of revolutionary positions, but more subtly and more faintly, in how we tend to think and talk about the world.

Our party comes out of a section of the movement in the U.S. that saw the internationalist duty of the proletariat here as lying foremost, not in support for liberation struggles abroad, but rather in organizing for

the proletarian revolution here. This orientation obliged us to reject viewing the world through such a prism, and as we moved from more general politics to more defined politics, we came into increasing confrontation with the symptoms of this malady. Our opposition to three-worlds-ism, and moreover, our broadening this to opposition to the primeval third-worldism that preceded it, suggest the strength of our basic approach and further illustrate that much of our struggle over the years has been directed against the symptoms of this malady.

In this period of profound ideological crisis, laying the foundations for a new communist movement requires following through on this struggle. It is necessary to further work through the basic analysis of and orientation toward the world today. And it is necessary to pass from our longstanding opposition to viewing the world through a national prism to cleaning up some more subtle ideological ambiguities, the roots of which probably lie in the specific features of the past half-century of history. Such a cleaning up is necessary if we are to draw a line of demarcation with erroneous habits of thinking whose effects upon the birth of a new communist movement would likely prove disastrous; for example, the tendency to detach Lenin's analysis of imperi-

alism from its historical context and transform it into something mystical that knows neither time nor place. This fetishism feeds both the theoretical freeplay on the meaning of the concept, and the impulse to substitute analogy for materialist analysis.

Putting these latent influences to rest cannot be done in the abstract. It requires working out concrete analysis of the world today, and in connection with that carefully restudying the Marxist-Leninist theory on a number of points. This includes the theory of imperialism, but is not limited to it; other questions with bearing on revolutionary orientation may prove no less important.

A word of caution may be in order. If the only foreseeable outcome of this effort is the replacement of one mechanical syllogism with another, then it is not worth the effort. Today world capitalism as world capitalism, in a way starker and more direct than in the past, stands as the exploiter of toilers across the globe. This suggests that objective conditions are now being formed for a future storm of revolutionary struggle that will exceed anything that has gone before. But it is by dint of analysis that we reach these conclusions. The immediate appearance of the world is a myriad of often contradictory phenomena. Some of these reveal the role of world capitalism in a striking way, but with others

it is veiled in ambiguous form, and the connection to world capitalism that we imagine to be clear as day because it is clear in our eyes may in fact be far more obtuse. The one thing — the role of world capitalism — is the essence of the matter; the other — the ambiguous, complex and mingled forms this takes — is how the world appears. In a material world you cannot have the one without the other. To take the appearance alone lands us in fetishism — for example, the fetishization of dependency that marks the Monthly Review school. But to forget that essence exists only in material being and not apart from it, that is, to forget that world capitalism makes its appearance not in pure and unsullied form but more often as economic dependency, as IMF-dictated austerity, as the rapid destruction of old modes of production amidst the incapacity to rapidly evolve new ones, etc., would be to forget the complexity of real life and turn away from the fullness and richness of reality in preference for the simpler outlines of its shadow. This, too, would be mistaken.

The urgent task today is to lay the theoretical foundations for a new communist movement capable of measuring up to the tests that lie ahead: capable of resisting the influences of petty bourgeois democracy and nationalism; capable of promoting the independent motion and organization of the toilers; capable of training the class conscious workers in an internationalist and socialist spirit; capable of directing the class struggle under diverse conditions in different countries toward the common socialist goal.

From I.B. #80, Feb. 10, 1993

## Internal Documents, continued

IB No. 80, Feb. 10, 1993 3.00  
 Report on the dependent countries, Manny  
 Report on visit to Cuba, Jim

puter disc for a cost of \$15.00 (PC compatible only. Specify size and whether high or low density.)  
 DEBATE ON DISSOLVING THE MLP:  
 Sept. 21 to Nov. 21, 1993

IB Nos. 81 (June 15, 1993), 82 (Aug. 10, 1993) and 83 (Aug. 22, 1993) 2.50  
 On May Day and Seattle Study Group's new orientation, Fred  
 Reply to the proposal to reorganize work in Seattle, Joseph  
 Letter on issues of inner-party controversy, Phil (Seattle)

Additionally we are offering the discussion materials related to the proposal to dissolve the MLP. These were letters and reports distributed inside the Party via electronic mail. They were not published in the *Information Bulletin*.

Computer disk copies: \$9.00 (PC compatible only, specify size and whether high or low density)  
 Printed copies: \$10.00

These documents also available on com-

# INTERNAL DOCUMENTS OF THE MLP NOW AVAILABLE

This first issue of the **Workers' Voice Theoretical Journal** begins coverage of the debates that developed inside the MLP but were never publicized. Two of the articles in this issue (letters by Joseph and Jim) refer to documents from the internal debate that took place from Sept. 1991 to the 4th Congress of the MLP in Nov. 1992.

This internal discussion, which could only be glimpsed from our public press, generated a small mountain of documents. Most of this material was previously distributed to a number of supporters of the MLP through the Party's internal press, the *Information Bulletin*. Bulletins #62-80 contain letters from party members and supporters, internal reports and other documents and resolutions submitted to the 4th Congress. However many readers of the *Workers' Advocate* and *Chicago Workers' Voice* have never seen any of these documents. Bulletins 81-83 contain documents since the 4th Congress.

While we may publish some of these documents in this journal (especially if it is necessary for the current debate) we are offering this material now to interested readers.

## PRICES:

The entire set is available for \$35.00  
Specific issues or specified sets of the *Information Bulletins* can also be purchased.

IB No. 62, Sept. 20, 1991 \$5.00  
On the Party's symbol and name, Ray (Seattle) and Joseph (Detroit)  
On pluralism, etc., Fred (Seattle) and Joseph's reply  
On WA articles on the war and the Free Trade Agreement, Slim (Detroit) and Rene, Anita, Oleg (Chicago)  
More of the Free Trade Agreement, Ernesto (New York) and Slim

IB No. 63, Nov. 10, 1991 2.00  
On Party Symbol and name, Redwing (San Francisco)  
On WA and line on US Imperialism, Colleen (Chicago)  
On pluralism, Jim (SF)

IB No. 64, Dec. 15, 1991 2.50  
On the Free Trade agitation, Pete (Detroit)  
On WA agitation on the Gulf war: letter from George (SF)  
A reply to criticism of WA - Part I, Slim  
On Haiti coverage in WA, Oleg

IB No. 65, Jan. 20, 1992 5.00  
Criticism of WA agitation on the war, Julie (Chicago)  
Reply to criticisms of WA on the war, Part II, Slim  
On WA and the line on US imperialism, in response to Chicago, Jim  
Reply to criticism of WA by Chicago, Joe (Boston)  
Comments and questions about Dec. WA articles on South Africa and health care, Oleg  
On Puerto Rico, Ernesto  
Reply to Ernesto on Solidarity Day 1991, Nat (New York)

IB No. 66, Feb. 20, 1992 2.00  
On the hammer and sickle, Jean (SF)  
On party propaganda and agitation work among GI's, N. (Los Angeles)  
Reply to criticisms of WA on the war — part III, Slim

IB No. 67, Apr. 20, 1992 (one page) .50  
Announcement of preparations for the 4th Congress of MLP

IB No. 68, Jun. 7, 1992 2.00  
Letter from Julie  
Letter from Anita  
Letter from Jake

IB No. 69, July 10, 1992: Preparations for 4th Congress 2.00  
Proposal for the agenda, National Executive Committee  
draft theses on "The role and tasks of the MLP," Slim  
A discussion of the Workers' Advocate and the Supplement, Slim  
Proposal from the Chicago Branch Committee  
CC's reply to the proposal  
Reply from the Chicago Branch

IB No. 70, July 24, 1992 2.50  
Report for the 4th Congress, "The State of Global Economic and Political Power in the Aftermath of the Cold War" by Michael  
Letters on the inner-party discussion: A. Holt (Boston) and Oleg

IB No. 71, Aug. 20, 1992 4.00  
Report on the Work of the Central Committee, Manny (New York)  
Letters on the inner-party discussion:  
Mike (Boston)  
Left social-democracy, Julie

IB No. 72, Sept. 1, 1992 5.00  
Draft resolution on the party's work against the Gulf war, Slim  
On the charge of tailism, Mark (Detroit)  
Reply to criticisms of WA on the war - part iv, Slim  
On Puerto Rico, a Reply, Manny

IB No. 73, Sept. 15, 1992 2.00  
On changes to the general rules, Dave (New York)  
On the global situation, Dave and Reply from Michael  
On WA's international coverage, a reply, Michael

IB No. 74, Oct. 7, 1992 5.00  
Draft revision of the general rules, Joseph  
Notes on the proposed revision of the general rules, Joseph

IB No. 75, Oct. 8, 1992 1.50  
Letter from Julie  
What unites the MLP, Jake

IB No. 77, Oct. 18, 1992  
Report on the working class, Joe  
More on imperialism and the less developed countries, Jim

IB No. 78 Procedures for the 4th Congress

IB No. 79, Dec. 26, 1992 2.50  
On Ernesto's resignation

*Continued on Page 43*