

Chicago Workers' Voice

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- *Summing up the Staley Struggle
- *Debate on the National Question
- *Class Analysis: more debate on the "middle strata"
- * Rosa Luxemburg, Semi-Anarchism -- and Trotsky, Part III

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Editorial Guide to Issue #10 of *Chicago Workers' Voice Theoretical Journal*

by Jake

This issue of *Chicago Workers' Voice Theoretical Journal* devotes a large amount of coverage to an important debate on the national question. This debate started as email exchanges between NC of *Los Angeles Workers' Voice* and Joseph Green of *Communist Voice* but it was also carried on the Marxism list (marxism@jefferson.village.virginia.edu). The debate expanded with our own Sarah joining in, criticizing both NC and Joseph, and several more participants joined the fray from cyberspace including ultra anti-nationalist "left communists" and ultra-nationalist Maoists. Revisionist distortions of the scientific Marxist view of the national question have plagued revolutionary movements, causing untold damage. The great importance of this subject, the need for clarity and correctness, compels us to devote a large part of this issue to it. We urge all our readers to participate in this debate.

The Staley workers' struggle was one of the most important battles waged by workers in recent years. Jack Hill, active in support work and organizing efforts during the entire two year-long battle, presents his summation of that struggle.

We are also continuing the debate on the class analysis

of the "middle strata," printing the second half of Pete Tabolt's article along with Jake's criticism of it and a rebuttal letter from Tabolt.

Anita reports on important news from Mexico: militant May Day Actions, the EZLN, teachers fighting cops, the settling of the Ruta 100 bus drivers strike and more!

Barb presents the third installment of "Rosa Luxemburg, Semi-Anarchism — and Trotsky." It covers Luxemburg's attempt to "improve" on Marx and her view of the Bolshevik revolution. She loved the fact of it but hated the reality.

The review of the film *Land and Freedom*, a moving piece about the Spanish Civil War, is accompanied by an old article from the *Workers' Advocate*. The analysis of the Spanish Republic and the anti-fascist struggle by the Marxist-Leninist Party, our former organization, still holds up fairly well. This article is also important because it marked a stage in the development of the MLP's critique of Stalin and the Comintern.

Finally, Sarah provides a review of *Dismantling former Yugoslavia, Recolonizing Bosnia*, Parts 1-3, a book by Michel Chossudovsky. ◇

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issues led the MLP to rethink these former stands and it embarked on a much deeper study of Soviet and communist politics. The articles on the Spanish Civil War are significant examples of the developing views of the MLP at that time. They were part of the work which led comrades in the MLP to rethink their previous stands of support for Stalin and to look deeper into the problems in

the international communist movement.

The problems and issues which faced revolutionaries in the Spanish Civil War throw light on issues which have faced a number of revolutionary movements from El Salvador to Nicaragua to South Africa. We hope that the discussion which is taking place over the role of various trends in the Spanish Civil War will provoke thought on current issues as well.

We are reprinting this article in the hopes of provoking such discussion.

News from Mexico

Report by Anita, May 27, 1996

The situation in Mexico continues to show outbreaks of mass struggle, internal political crises in the ruling party, the PRI, and increasing repression and military threats against the mass organizations throughout Mexico and against the EZLN in Chiapas in particular.

Indeed, so much is going on, it is difficult to summarize. The following is a summary of important developments this month (May 1996). The factual information comes from *La Jornada*, *El Machete*, and various news sources. Opinions, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

EZLN

On May 1, 1996, a federal court sentenced two men who have been held in prison for more than one year, Javier Elorriaga Berdegue and Sebastian Entzin, to 13 and 6 years respectively. The ruling declared the men, accused of being members of the EZLN, guilty of terrorism, rebellion and conspiracy. Interestingly enough, the only "witness" against the two men, supposedly an ex-commandante of the EZLN Morales Garibay, did not appear in court to give testimony and is rumored to be under the protection of the Mexican and U.S. governments somewhere in California. Protests broke out almost immediately in Mexico, while human rights organizations and solidarity organizations from around the world bombarded the Mexican government with letters of protest. The EZLN, which has consistently denied that the men belong to the organization, angrily denounced the sentences and noted that, in effect, the judicial branch of the government has declared the EZLN to be a terrorist organization. The fact that the government team participating in the peace dialogue in Chiapas and other top government officials have stated that the EZLN is not a terrorist organization seems to be one more sign that the political crises inside the ruling party continues to deepen. While there is no doubt that the PRI is united in its desire to destroy the EZLN, differences in how to do that and how to deal with the rest of the domestic political and economic crises are deep. Zedillo and the dominant section of the PRI appear to hope to use dialogue and negotiations to wear down the struggle in Chiapas, and to that end they have declared that the EZLN is not a terrorist. The EZLN, for its part, has taken the tact of dialogue with the government to maintain a political space for organizing at a national level, apparently hoping to at least postpone, if not avoid, the ultimate military conflict in Chiapas. The

EZLN declared some time ago that it was organizing a national political organization, El Frente Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional. It is not clear at this time how successful this organizing is, nor what precisely the Frente will look like. One problem seems to be that Frente organizing outside of Chiapas has been placed in the hands of the more reformist CND and PRD leadership who may not be acting with great enthusiasm.

Meanwhile, according to reports in the Mexican press (*La Jornada*, May 20, - 27, 1996) and other information sources, the Mexican army has moved around 150 troops from its special forces (Grupo Especial Ledin) into close proximity to a EZLN stronghold. The military and government claim that these troops are only a part of the "campaign against narcotic traffic" and not aimed militarily at the EZLN. However, they set up four camps just one kilometer from the town of Oventic, better known as the Aguascalientes II of the EZLN. The troops later left Oventic, but continue to operate in the area.

The EZLN declared a state of red alert and denounced the military actions. There have been confrontations between peasant organizations and troops as groups of campesinos have blocked the highways trying to impede tank and troop movements.

A communique from Subcommandante Marcos, reprinted in the May 27 issue of *La Jornada* newspaper in Mexico City, summarizes recent events. This communique is part of a public exchange between the EZLN and members of the Mexican Legislature who belong to the Comision de Concordia y Pacificacion (Cocopa) which is the government legislative commission participating in the peace dialogue in Chiapas.

"I want to point out three facts: 1. Mr. Javier Elorriaga and Sebastian Entzin, accused of belonging to the EZLN, continue to be imprisoned, condemned as terrorists. Despite all government declarations (to the contrary), at least one of powers of the Union (the Judicial, in this case) has declared that the EZLN is a terrorist organization. 2. The military mobilization in the Selva, Altos and Northern region of Chiapas has increased in the last several days and has become particularly severe in the last 24 hours. I can personally corroborate this fact. 3. Conditions to advance the peace process do not exist. The situation of ungovernability in the state (of Chiapas) is obvious, the *White Guards* (a pro-government right wing paramilitary group...translator) is acting with complete impunity; an example is the paramilitary group called *Los Chinchulines*, whose actions have caused deaths and the exodus of

indigenous families who fear aggression from that group.”

Mass Movements

Teachers from around the country fight the police:

Militant, dissident teachers are once again in the middle of a mass fight over cutbacks in education. There have been major demonstrations, work stoppages and takeovers by dissident teachers in at least six states. On May 23, 1996, in Mexico City, a demonstration of more than 700 teachers and other groups of supporters confronted police forces who tried to stop the march from making its way to the presidential residence, Los Pinos. About 60 persons were injured in the fight and groups of teachers remained in the streets all night. The demonstration took place as the government is in negotiations with the official teachers' union.

May Day 1996

For the second year in a row, the CTM (the official government trade union center) declined to organize a public May Day march to the governmental palace in the Zocalo of Mexico City. This really does signal the depths of the crises of the government organizations in the workers' sector, as up until last year, the CTM had held May Day marches yearly since the PRI's founding. The CTM held a reception at its national headquarters, attended by top government officials and top trade union officials. Meanwhile, once again, the independent social organizations belonging to CNOSI (including forces such as SUTAU-RUTA 100 bus drivers' union, Frente Francisco Villa, CLETA) and other independent and left-wing organizations and unions (FAT, COR) held a massive march of at least 250,000 persons. A new development this year was the breaking of ranks within the CTM heralded by the fact that the Electrical Workers' Union (SME), the National Union of Social Security Workers (SNTSS), the Telephone Workers' Unions, all of whom are CTM unions, had contingents marching on May 1st. *La Jornada* reported on the march as one single march; however, other participants and eyewitnesses noted that the CTM unions marched somewhat separately from the more left-wing organizations. It was also reported that when the electrical workers' union first announced that it would march on May 1st, it was threatened with suspension from the CTM. CTM officials then had to publicly withdraw the threat, in the face of growing outrage from within its own rank and file.

These developments present a challenge to the left-wing independent organizations, who last year also organized a massive event. The weakening of the stranglehold of the CTM and PRI over some of its own unions shows

the growing discontent of the working class with the ruling party and the deteriorating conditions of life for the Mexican toilers. This increases the field of action for the revolutionary and independent organizations. At the same time, the movement of the more reformist wing of the CTM into the mass movement, along with the presence and influence of the PRD in the growing mass movements, means that the left wing has to really contend for the leadership of the movement and fight to build its own trend even deeper in the heart of the working class and poor communities.

SUTAU-RUTA 100

The bus drivers' union, SUTAU-RUTA 100, settled its year long struggle with the Mexican government and the government of Mexico City. While it was not able to reverse the privatization of the urban transportation company, the union did win control of three of the new bus companies created by the break-up of the original public urban transport company. It won the release from prison of its leadership from the Movimiento Proletario Independiente (MPI), and it triumphed over government attempts to crush its independent and militant organization. Perhaps most important, the struggle of SUTAU-RUTA 100 can be seen as a victory for the tactic of taking the trade union struggle to the streets and to the rest of the working class without making concessions of principle to the official trade union line or to the government. SUTAU-RUTA 100 and the MPI did participate in negotiations with the government: they accepted assistance from the PRD and other reformist forces, but they never changed their own positions with regard to denouncing the electoral farce in Mexico, supporting the EZLN in Chiapas, and supporting the other independent mass organizations. Furthermore, the orientation of their entire fight was to rely on the mass action of their own membership in mobilizing in the streets and in looking for solidarity from rank and file workers and activists. This had the effect of invigorating the workers' movement in general in Mexico and deepening the crises of the CTM and other PRI organizations. The cancellation of May Day marches by the CTM in 1995 and 1996 can be directly linked to this mass motion among the workers, which was led by the struggle of SUTAU. There is still a necessity to sum up and evaluate the tactics and actions taken by MPI and SUTAU-RUTA 100 in more detail. It will also be important to see in what direction these organizations go now that the immediate struggle is over. At present they seem to be in a period of recuperation, reorganizing in the three bus companies, reorganizing financially and redefining what role they will play in the overall struggle in Mexico. ◇

Book Review:

Dismantling former Yugoslavia, Recolonizing Bosnia, Parts 1-3 by Michel Chossudovsky

Review by Sarah, CWV

Dismantling former Yugoslavia, Recolonizing Bosnia, Parts 1-3 by Michel Chossudovsky, originally published in *Covert Action Quarterly*, posted to internet mailing list, Anti-Fascist Action

Discussion continues in the left over the tragedy of the former Yugoslavia. What are its causes? What does it mean for the revolutionary struggle?

Michel Chossudovsky has published a four-part article in *Cover Action Quarterly* and posted it on the Anti-Fascist Action internet list detailing what he sees as some of the economic and social causes of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. This is a review of that article.

The writer blames the economic restructuring policies implemented by the IMF and World Bank in Yugoslavia and what he call a "scramble for territory" by the major imperialist powers as the cause of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. In the causes of the "scramble for territory" he lays particular emphasis on the possible presence of coal and oil deposits in the region. He analyzes that the former Yugoslavia has been recolonized. He thinks there should be "a united resistance of Yugoslavs of all ethnic origins against the recolonization of their homeland." The author is sympathetic to many of the policies of the old Titoite regime.

The author's analysis seems to fit in with some of the current analysis discussed in the left - that is, to lay the blame for the tragedy solely or mainly on the interests of the major imperialist powers and seeing the various nationalist groups in the former Yugoslavia as mainly the creatures of one or another imperialist power. I think this analysis is one-sided and doesn't give us a good picture of the interrelationship of the politics of the internal capitalist forces, what classes and groupings supported these policies, how ethnic cleansing was organized, etc.

Nevertheless, the author gives much good information on how the policies of the IMF, the World Bank and various capitalist powers influenced this tragedy. And indeed the economic policies of restructuring, privatizing, downsizing and strong economic medicine are promoting social, political and economic dislocation in many countries. It is thus important to understand the consequences of these policies and to consider how to develop a fight against them.

What follows is a brief review of some of the information contained in these articles. The complete articles can

be obtained from the author by E-mail: chosso@travel-net.com.

The author cites documents from which he concludes that the Reagan administration of the 1980's "targeted the Yugoslav economy."

He discusses a series of economic reforms accompanied by debt restructuring agreements which led industrial growth in Yugoslavia to drop to "2.8 percent in the 1980-87 period, plunging to zero in 1987-88 and to -10.6 percent in 1990." He goes on to discuss the result of an economic package that was launched by an IMF Stand-by agreement and a World Bank Structural Adjustment Loan in 1990. He further adds that "by 1990, the annual rate of growth of the GDP had collapsed to -7.5 percent." He notes the dismantling of the previous systems of running Yugoslavia's industrial enterprises and the dismantling of the banking system under these "reforms."

He cites the widespread industrial unemployment brought about by the bankruptcies and restructurings under these policies. By late 1990 600,000 out of an industrial workforce of 2.7 million were unemployed and another 1.3 million worked in enterprises that the World Bank classified as loss-making. Further "some 20 percent of the industrial labour force were not paid during the early months of 1990."

"Real earnings were in a free fall, social programmes had collapsed, with the bankruptcies of industrial enterprises, and unemployment had become rampant, creating within the population an atmosphere of social despair and hopelessness."

He links these economic reforms to several factors he sees as leading to the break up of the former Yugoslavia and the civil war.

He sees one result of these economic reforms as the weakening of "the institutions of the federal State creating political divisions between Belgrade and the governments of the Republics and Autonomous Provinces. "

Second, he sees the economic conditions as creating conditions where, in the multi-party elections of 1990, "separatist coalitions ousted the Communists in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Slovenia."

Further, he says that in those economic conditions, the "republican oligarchies" opted for war.

He analyzes that the former Yugoslavia, especially Bosnia-Herzegovina, have been recolonized. To back this up, he cites several facts. The High Representative,

Carl Bildt, a former Swedish Prime Minister, has “full executive powers in all civilian matters.” There is an international civilian police force under the direction of the U.N. “The Parliamentary Assembly set up under the ‘Constitution’ finalized under the Dayton Accords, largely acts as a ‘rubber stamp’..of a ‘parallel government’ headed by the High Representative and staffed by expatriate advisors.” The Dayton agreements stipulate that the Governor of the Central Bank of Bosnia and Herzegovina be appointed by the IMF and shall not be a citizen of Bosnia-Herzegovina or neighboring states. He explains that many other aspects of the economy in Bosnia-Herzegovina are under the control of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development,

He sums up by saying: “A sombre and dangerous precedent has been set in the history of international relations: Western creditors have embedded their interests in a Constitution hastily written on their behalf, executive positions within the Bosnian State system are to be held by non-citizens who are appointees of Western financial institutions. No constitutional assembly, no consultations with citizens’ organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, no ‘constitutional amendments’ ...”

The author puts a lot of emphasis on a “scramble for territory” by various major capitalist powers. He notes in particular the backing of the secession of Croatia and Slovenia by Germany. And he emphasizes the possible oil and coal deposits in territories now under the control of the US military division. The information given by the author on the disintegration of the Yugoslav economy under the economic restructuring dictated by the IMF and World Bank is useful. Undoubtedly the economic disinte-

gration of Yugoslavia was one of the factors which provided the conditions for the growth of the political forces which promoted ethnic fighting.

Another factor promoting the ethnic fighting was that various major imperialist powers backed different groups of capitalists in the former Yugoslavia. The German ruling class, favoring their own interests, backed the secession of Croatia and Slovenia. The British and Russian ruling classes mostly backed the Serbian nationalist forces.

However, the tragedy of Yugoslavia is not only caused by the interests of the big imperialist powers, although they are certainly a big factor creating the conditions for it.

The author states that the tragedy in Yugoslavia is not “the inevitable result of deep-seated ethnic and religious tensions rooted in history.” He further notes that demonstrations in 1990 against the austerity programs crossed all ethnic lines. He doesn’t discuss how this unity was nullified and how the various nationalist groupings organized the national divisions and the ethnic warfare that was to follow, nor how this was linked up with the economic and political interests of the different forces.

Many progressive forces are concerned that there are several areas in the world where similar tragedies of ethnic warfare are taking place or threaten to take place. Working people all over the world are horrified at the atrocities that have occurred in Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia. We seek to understand where these horrors have sprung from and how to put a stop to it. Chossudovsky has provided some dramatic information of an important factor causing this horror. I do, however, think that his analysis, while useful, is somewhat one-sided. ◇

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Mark to Daborn, continued from page 31

nations is the bourgeois nationalism of a stronger bourgeoisie that wants unity in the form of a crushing and lording over the other nations. And it is this particular form of bourgeois nationalism that has escalated national antagonisms to the point of genocidal war. The bourgeoisie of the nations which separated off use bourgeois nationalism to line up the masses behind their class aims. But denying the right to self-determination is hardly building unity of the workers. It means providing an

ideological excuse for the Serbian and Croatian dismemberment of Bosnia. It is the imperialist realism of carving up Bosnia among the stronger bourgeoisies.

If the separation of the republics hurt class unity, unity through military occupation and mass slaughter have turned class unity to rubble. And if anyone thinks that class unity will be restored without the recognition of national rights, including the rights of nations to self-determination, they are living in a dream world. ◇

Lessons of the Staley Struggle

by Jack Hill, *Chicago Workers' Voice*

As one of the active members of the Chicago Staley Workers' Solidarity Committee, I would like to try to draw a few conclusions from this struggle. The Staley workers showed remarkable strength and heroism in the face of the powerful forces arrayed against them. I think they accomplished a lot in terms of building consciousness across the country of the possibility and necessity of workers resisting.

The Staley struggle was organized following the more militant and activist politics represented by Ray Rogers and Jerry Tucker. The struggle went farther than most of the trade union struggles that are under the thumb of the mainstream union bureaucrats. However, this struggle also shows that this politics has serious flaws. In my article on the history of the Staley struggle, I go more into some of the main ways this strategy and tactics developed at Staley.

Achievements

Many of the Staley workers hoped that their struggle would contribute to the revitalization of the "labor movement" in the U.S. They wanted to build a practice of workers supporting each others' struggles. They also wanted to encourage other workers to stand up to the employers' concessions demands. They were against the capitulationist attitude of the mainstream leadership of the AFL-CIO.

The Staley workers definitely shook up the labor movement. Despite being ignored and shunned by the "respectable" mainstream trade union leadership, they got the word out all across the country and even internationally. Gradually, their pressure forced a few cracks in the boycott of their struggle by the bigshot hacks. Even Lane Kirkland was forced to make a token appearance in Decatur. Pressure from the Staley workers was certainly a part of the force which pushed Kirkland out and led to the election of Sweeney as head of the AFL-CIO. Unfortunately, in spite of the hopes of some of the Staley workers, Sweeney was of no more use to the struggling workers than Kirkland had been.

To some extent the mainstream AFL-CIO hacks have been exposed as obstacles in our struggle. This certainly should be listed as an accomplishment of this struggle.

A big plus from this struggle is that the workers' movement has gained committed activists from the ranks of the Staley workers. Two and a half years of traveling

the country organizing support for their struggle has converted a number of the rank and file workers into experienced and dedicated worker activists.

Why Did They Lose?

It was a big disappointment to all of us who had put so much time and energy into the Staley struggle when the majority of the workers decided to give up the struggle as lost. The question on everybody's mind has been— was some particular mistake made in strategy or tactics, or was it just that the multinational corporation was too big and rich and strong?

Certainly weighing heavily against the chances of the Staley workers were the huge resources and strength of this monopoly capitalist corporation. Tate and Lyle has plants all over the world producing sugar and sweeteners from cane sugar, beet sugar, as well as corn. These monopolists were prepared to lose a lot of money on the Decatur plant to break the strength of the union and impose their terms on the workers. Particularly difficult for the workers was the ability of Tate and Lyle to get favorable coverage day after day in the mass media in the Decatur area. Then of course all the organs of government were at the disposal of Tate and Lyle. This went to the extent of Decatur city government forcing the workers to take down the picket shelters they had built. The hard-nosed response of PepsiCo to the yearlong campaign to force them to cut off Staley as a supplier also hurt the workers' morale.

Given the strength of the capitalist side no one can say for sure that even the strongest, best planned and militant strategy would have won. However, if the full potential strength of the unionized workers in Illinois and the nearby midwestern states could have been concentrated on Staley in Decatur, one would think that this should be enough to force Tate and Lyle to back down. One of the biggest reasons this never happened was the outright betrayal of the Staley workers by the international leadership of their union and by the leadership of the AFL-CIO. The Staley workers were shunned by the bureaucrats running the AFL-CIO. They were afraid of the independence and militancy of the Staley workers. The biggest strength workers have is their numbers, but the AFL-CIO leadership was not willing to mobilize numbers for the Staley workers, and no other force has enough influence to organize truly huge numbers of workers.

The Staley local responded to the backstabbing from the official leadership of the AFL-CIO by avoiding getting

into an open fight with them. The leadership of the local and particularly the local president, Dave Watts, insisted on and fought for limiting tactics to what would not irrevocably alienate the bigshots of the "labor movement". Everybody knew that the Decatur Staley local was being stifled by the hacks, but there was reluctance to get into a sharp and direct fight with them.

The Staley workers were very resourceful in their ability to maneuver around this hostility and back-stabbing by linking with many local unions and with all sorts of political activists. Several big rallies were held in Decatur with several thousand workers each time. The Staley worker activists also raised very substantial sums of money from individual locals, from all sorts of fund raisers, from the fund raisers of the Chicago SWSC and other committees. This material and moral support enabled them to hang on for as long as they did. This mobilization, however, was only a fraction of the potential power of the workers' movement.

After the fight was lost, the last issue of the "War Zone Report" bitterly denounced the leadership of the UPIU and the AFL-CIO. I think that the bitterness of the Staley worker activists against these fatcat bureaucrats is quite just. I just think that they should not have held their tongues on this for so long. I also think that the struggle suffered because, at least partly, to avoid alienating these bureaucrats, the Staley local leadership limited their tactics.

What Could Have Been Done Differently?

First off it needs to be said straight up that different tactics would not automatically have had any better results as far as the Staley struggle is concerned. The basic limitations of the situation—the strength of Tate and Lyle and the relative weakness of the workers' movement can't be changed that easily. With the greatest tactics in the world, the Staley workers could very well have come out the same.

On the other hand, the Staley workers were not predetermined automatically to lose. It is also possible that the struggle could have gotten so hot that Tate and Lyle would have had to back down. Or the Staley workers might have still lost but in a way which would have helped made the issues even clearer to rank and file workers struggling to build their movement.

That said, there are two areas particularly in which I would have liked to have seen different tactics by the Staley workers. One is on the need to develop the fight right at the plant gates, at the point of production. The other is on the need to make a clearer break with the soldout

bureaucrats who are stifling the real workers' movement in this country.

I feel efforts should have been made to organize mass picketing at the plant gates to keep out the scabs and stop the movement of scab product. As long as production continued at the Decatur plant, Tate and Lyle had a big advantage over the workers they had locked out. To effectively challenge this situation, a substantial number of Staley workers would have had to make up their minds that they didn't care what the legalities of the situation were, the scabs had to be stopped. Make no doubt about it, such tactics would have brought the workers into confrontation with the police. The 760 Staley workers by themselves could not have hoped to really keep the plant shut down for long. But I believe that if the Staley workers had taken up such tactics, a substantial number of other workers could have been organized to participate along side them.

Some Staley workers did want to make some kind of a stand at the plant gates. Some activists estimated that maybe 100 or even more Staley workers would have been willing to demonstrate at the plant gates and risk arrest. However, the leadership of the local, especially Dave Watts, didn't want to do this, and no one else in the local organized a sharp fight in favor of such tactics. Dave Watts still maintains that the bulk of the local membership was not willing to do this, that almost no one was ready to risk losing his/her rights to severance and pension benefits, and that the international would not have lifted a finger to help those who were arrested, even in a peaceful act of civil disobedience. The end result was that few of the Staley workers were ready to step across the line of legality. Some members of the Chicago SWSC spent a lot of time in Decatur talking with Staley worker activists and this is also their assessment of the Staley workers' general state of mind.

However, I should point out that Staley workers were prominent among those on the front line confronting the police on June 25, 1994, alongside Cat workers and activists from Chicago and elsewhere. Especially in the period right after the police attack on the demonstration that day, the potential was there to mobilize large concentrations at the plant gates. Failure to grasp this chance was probably one of the big factors which started the Staley struggle down the road to defeat.

The strategy of corporate campaign is mixed up in the issue of whether and how to wage a fight at the plant gates. Ray Rogers pushed a line that workers don't need to strike or fight at the plant gates, that an energetic enough corporate campaign can force a company to give in. Maybe so, in some cases, but that certainly is not true in

general and it definitely was not true for Staley. I think a more correct view is that corporate campaigns can be used as supplementary tactics in connection with mass struggle at the point of production. These campaigns can be a way of mobilizing supporters in other cities and applying additional pressure on the target corporation. They are practical ways that workers can get involved in supporting a struggle hundreds or thousands of miles away, besides just sending money and expressions of support.

The early campaigns that Ray Rogers organized against State Farm Insurance and Domino sugar never seemed to go anywhere. However, after Ray Rogers was out of the picture, the Staley workers did hit on a pretty good strategy of targeting beverage companies which purchased Staley product. Beer and soft drink companies are particularly concerned with their public images. They have huge advertizing budgets, and they fight hard for percentage points of market share. The victory in getting Miller to drop Staley gave the workers some hope and was a genuine blow to Staley's bottom line. Although Pepsi played hard ass, they may have been just at the point of cracking. They were clearly worried about their public image after a year of attacks even by the relatively small resources the Staley supporters could mobilize. If the AFL-CIO had really applied serious resources to making Pepsi a shunned product in union households all across the U.S., Pepsi probably would have caved in.

My conclusions on the role of corporate campaigns in the Staley struggle are:

- 1) The struggle suffered from the view that boycott campaigns were an effective substitute for struggle at the plant gates.
- 2) Nevertheless, mobilizing supporters to participate in the boycott campaigns, especially the Miller and Pepsi campaigns, helped in building a concrete workers' solidarity movement.
- 3) For a boycott campaign to be effective, the target has to be very carefully picked both for vulnerability and for logical connection to the issue at hand. Furthermore, in this type of campaign the issue of tactics also comes up. It is not effective to just pass out flyers without combining this with mass demonstrations and other innovative tactics which can attract wider public attention. It should be noted that neither Dave Watts nor any other local Staley leaders ever objected to the mass demonstrations and civil disobedience type actions which the Chicago SWSC carried out in the Miller and Pepsi campaigns. The UPIU international leaders certainly did object, but they had no jurisdiction over us.

Would the Staley struggle have suffered if the Staley local had openly denounced the state and national leadership of the AFL-CIO and the international leadership of

their own union, the UPIU (United Paperworkers International Union) for undermining their struggle and turning a cold shoulder to them? Everybody close to the struggle knew this was happening. But the leaders of the Staley local didn't make a public issue of this. The hope was always there that with just the right combination of pressure the national AFL-CIO could be made to provide some serious resources to help the Staley workers.

Late in the struggle, Dan Lane was allowed to speak to the national AFL-CIO convention while on his hunger strike. This was after the delegation of Decatur rank and file had harassed the Bal Harbour winter AFL-CIO meeting and Sweeney was trying to win the President's post by appearing more struggle oriented than Donahue. Then, to get Dan to give up his hunger strike, Sweeney even personally promised him that the national AFL-CIO would provide about 40 organizers including 12 full time ones to push the Pepsi campaign. All along the carrot of the full resources of the national AFL-CIO always seemed to be hanging out there just out of reach. "Just behave yourselves and we'll give you all this stuff." This was the implied and sometimes stated message from the bureaucrats to the Staley workers. The threat was that if they didn't "behave" they could be drummed out of the official "labor movement" as splitters and maybe even suffer a concerted campaign against their struggle.

Although the Staley workers never got anything but pats on the back and pocket change from the state or national AFL-CIO, they did get quite a lot of donations from scattered union locals around the country. If things had gotten really tense with the national AFL-CIO, one could easily expect that a lot of pressure would be applied to these locals to cut off Staley. The fact that there is no big independent movement which could replace such potential resources placed the Staley local in a bind.

However, the fate of the Staley workers confirms again that the official so-called "labor movement" led by the soldout bureaucrats of the AFL-CIO is a positive hindrance to the workers' struggle. We have to go about building a new fighting workers' movement in this country independent of all these traitors. We are not going to get anywhere trying to force these committed enemies of the workers' struggle to do right. We do need to wage the fight inside the existing structures of the "labor movement", but this present structure is totally unfit for serious struggle. The Staley workers' struggle has taught this lesson to some activists and workers. But I would have preferred clearer and earlier statements on what is wrong with the "official" leadership of the trade unions in this country. Especially I don't think it was a good idea to put on the speaking platform at rallies labor bigshots who weren't doing anything for the Staley workers.

Honor the Sacrifices of the Staley Workers

Conclusions

The Staley struggle represents the best that the tactics of the more activist, liberal, or left wing sections of the trade union movement can achieve at this time. This one local of 760 members mobilized support all across the country, shook up the national leadership of the AFL-CIO, and gave an education in class struggle to countless workers. The problems with this strategy are that it avoids confronting continued production in the plant with scab labor and avoids directly exposing and confronting the AFL-CIO leadership and the international union leadership who are hamstringing the struggle. I think you have to do these things for the sake of the immediate struggle and for the sake of building a national workers' movement which can really start to change things in this country.

The Staley workers willing went forth to very unequal battle against a monster corporation knowing that basically it was the 760 of them against all that money and power. They stuck it out for two and a half years through huge financial, emotional, and physical hardships. They did get substantial help from groups of activists in Chicago, St. Louis, Madison, and other places. Many hard lessons have been learned about the nature of the "labor movement" in this country. Ties have been formed among worker activists which can help build a real workers' movement. Without the determination of the Staley rank and file to stand up for themselves and try to build their fight broadly and as well as they knew how, none of this could have happened. These workers have paid a heavy price for their boldness; they deserve the utmost respect.



For Your Reference:

History of the Staley Struggle

by Jack Hill, CWV

On Dec. 22, 1995, the locked-out Staley workers voted 286 to 226 to accept A.E. Staley/Tate & Lyle's union-busting contract. This confirmed the defeat of one of the more militant and widely publicized workers' struggles against concessions, a few days shy of two and a half years since the lock-out began.

In a separate article I put forward some of the conclusions that I think can be drawn from this struggle. Here I would like to go into some of this history for the benefit of those who are not familiar with it.

Context of the Staley Struggle

The Staley struggle was organized following overall the strategy and tactics put forward by such leaders as Ray Rogers and Jerry Tucker who were both directly involved. Their tactics and strategy are different from the ordinary tactics of the mainstream union bureaucrats. Both of them say that traditional strike tactics are not effective anymore, particularly because of the ease with which companies are able to defeat strikes by hiring scabs. Their tactics are loosely based on the nonviolent protest tactics of Martin Luther King, and mobilization and democratic involvement of the rank and file. Ray Rogers has developed all sorts of tactics to give bad publicity to the corporate officials and the officials of other corporations linked to the target. He advocates that this sort of "corporate campaign" can force a company to back off on

its attacks on workers. Tucker advocates and teaches tactics of putting pressure on a company from the inside rather than through a strike. Both mobilize workers to actively participate in planning and carrying out tactics. Neither advocates focussing the struggle on the plant gates. Both Rogers and Tucker are hated by the mainstream trade union bureaucracy; however, neither of them advocates a straight up open struggle against the soldout hacks who run the international unions and the AFL-CIO.

The Staley workers waged a hard-fought long struggle based mainly on these approaches. Their struggle provides a living lesson in how far these tactics can carry a struggle, but also a lesson in how these tactics box the struggle in and hamstring it. My article on the lessons of the Staley struggle goes into this in more depth.

Preparations for Struggle

The Staley plant makes corn products, particularly corn sweetener and corn starch. Since the early part of this century, the company has been owned by a local Decatur family. In 1988, the British-based multinational Tate and Lyle acquired Staley, which has several plants in the U.S. This company has big interests in all the varieties of sweeteners. In the four years between 1988 and 1992, Tate and Lyle made record profits, but they were not satisfied. By 1991 they were planning a major assault on the Staley workers' union. New management was brought in, in-

cluding the plant manager from the International Paper plant in Jay, Maine, where 1200 workers had been "permanently replaced" by scabs.

The Staley workers realized that they were under a big threat and they had better get ready for a fight. The union local leadership decided to carry out a big campaign of education of the rank and file. Labor studies professionals, for example, were brought in to educate not just the local leaders but all of the rank and file. A lot of attention was paid to trying to get nearly all the members involved. As the contract expiration date neared in the fall of 1992, the local members voted to increase their local dues to \$100 a month in order to be better prepared. The local union hired Ray Rogers to help them organize a "corporate campaign" to put pressure on the company by boycott campaigns against the corporate "partners-in-crime" of the Staley owners. They also hired Jerry Tucker to help them organize an "in-plant strategy" to resist the corporate attack.

The Staley management proposed a new contract which imposed a 12 hour swing shift schedule (overtime paid only as required by state law, after 40 hours of work in a given week), and nearly eliminated seniority rights, job security, and the grievance procedure. Furthermore, the company refused to take any measures to eliminate the serious safety and health hazards at the plant. One union member of the bargaining committee summed up the company proposal as "I'm the boss, you're the slave."

The union refused to agree to any such outrageous proposals, but didn't call a strike when the contract expired. The workers were well aware that the company was preparing to replace them with scabs. Instead, the union organized what could be called a "strike within the plant" (Tucker's tactics). Rallies were held inside the plant, t-shirt days were called, and workers "worked to rule." Workers refused to do anything unless their foreman told them what to do. If the foreman told them wrong, they followed orders anyway although safety procedures were followed to the letter. All of these ingenious tactics helped to hold down production. By March and April of 1993 the company admitted that production was down 30%. To hit at the militant workers the company fired between 12 and 16 workers on various pretexts, and suspended 50-60.

Morale stayed high among the Staley workers. On June 17, 1993, Staley workers walked out of the plant for a rally protesting the firing of a worker. When the workers tried to go back to work, the company delayed for a day before letting everyone back in.

Lockout

On June 26, 1993, the Staley local and the Decatur Caterpillar local organized a big rally in Decatur to build solidarity of workers around Illinois with the workers in these two companies. At that point Caterpillar workers were also trying to carry out in-plant resistance. A couple thousand workers formed a human chain between the Caterpillar plant and the Staley plant. The day after the solidarity rally, Tate and Lyle locked out the Staley workers. The months of in-plant struggle had brought the personal commitment and participation in struggle of the rank and file to an exceptionally high level. This unity, militancy, and activism of the ordinary union members which developed during the in-plant struggle is a fundamental reason for the strength of the Staley struggle in the next two and a half years.

From the beginning the "official" trade union leadership froze out any meaningful solidarity support for the Staley workers. A few kind words were said, but no resources were allocated to help the Staley workers. But the Staley workers themselves organized a massive campaign of solidarity. Within a month some political and union activists in Chicago organized a committee to support the Staley workers. The Chicago solidarity committee was quite active in raising money, in organizing rallies and demonstrations, and in bringing people to Decatur for the mass rallies. It played an important role in encouraging the Staley workers to hold on. In contrast to some other struggles, such as some of the Cat locals, the Staley local never seemed to object to leftists distributing socialist or communist literature at their events or to socialists and communists participating in the support committees.

The Staley workers organized what they called "Road Warriors," rank and file workers who were sent all over the country to speak to local unions, groups of political activists, and anyone they could get to listen. They took a message of the need for solidarity and the need for struggle. They organized material support in many ingenious ways. Ray Rogers promoted "corporate campaigns" against State Farm insurance (a corporate ally of Staley) and Domino sugar (owned by Tate and Lyle). More mass rallies and marches were held. At the same time the company kept the plant running, at a reduced capacity, with scabs.

The dominant position on strategy and tactics of the Staley local was led by the local president Dave Watts. His strategy included big attempts to mobilize support from workers and political activists around the country, to develop various boycott type projects, but not to develop

struggle at the plant gate. There was a different sentiment among some of the most active Staley workers and among some of the activists in the Chicago support committee and in other such committees that some type of mass confrontations at the plant gates should also be organized.

June 25, 1994, Demonstration

The most intense period of struggle developed around the time of the one year anniversary of the lockout. A plan was developed to have supporters of the Staley workers stage a sit-in at the plant entrance to try to push the struggle to a higher level. On June 4, 1994, 48 supporters of the Staley workers were arrested, including wives of Staley workers, the local president at the Decatur Cat plant and several other Cat workers, a Decatur priest, and numerous activists from various cities, many organized by the Chicago SWSC. Several hundred workers were rallied at the sides of the entrance and across the street.

Then three weeks later, on the one-year anniversary of the lockout, 5000 or more workers and activists converged on Decatur, IL, in the most massive display of solidarity up to that point for the Staley workers. The main slogan calling all these workers and activists from all over the Mid-West and the country to Decatur was, "Call in the troops. It's War!" The sight of thousands and thousands of workers marching down the street and over the bridge to the front of the Staley plant was awesome. The demonstration approached the main gate at the Staley plant with the intention of advancing as far into the plant as possible, but the march was stopped by a line of riot-equipped tactical police. Almost immediately the police created a provocation by spraying the march with pepper gas, shoving marchers and arresting one man. The marchers refused to be chased away. The front line regrouped and sat down. The marchers shouted slogans. Soon they stood up to face the police again. The police sprayed more pepper gas on the march.

At this point Ray Rogers, who had been hired by the Staley local to help them organize their "corporate campaign", appeared from behind police lines with a bullhorn exhorting the marchers (!!) to be nonviolent. (He kind of missed the point that it was the police who were being violent.) He carried on for a long time trying to dampen down any the spirit of militancy among the marchers. The local president Dave Watts also took the bullhorn to tell the marchers that they should end the demonstration. He declared the demonstration over and told all those who were thinking of staying that they were "on their own." Many of the marchers were reluctant to leave, but they decided that they had to call it quits for the

day.

Thus the two approaches come up in the concrete. One side wanted to "cross the line" and wanted to continue blocking the gate as long as possible. The other side wanted to end the confrontation as quickly as possible for fear of what the police or the company or the mass media might do.

Right after this confrontation, there was a sharp fight inside the Staley local over attitude towards the police. The question was whether to continue to inform the police ahead of time of the plans for demonstrations. Dave Watts insisted that they had to keep on doing this, but he was outvoted this time. The violent actions of the police provoked outrage among workers and activists across Illinois and the Midwest. This outrage could have been used to mobilize further mass confrontations at the Staley plant gates. However, Dave Watts and some of the other local leaders were against this. The workers who might have tried to organize this were so upset and angry at being undercut by Ray Rogers and Dave Watts that they didn't want to do it.

This was definitely a turning point in the struggle. The pictures and video of this confrontation were used to mobilize support for the Staley workers throughout the rest of this struggle. But there were no more mass confrontations with the police. In October of 1994 there was an even bigger march in Decatur mobilizing the Caterpillar workers who were back out on strike again and the Firestone workers who had gone on strike in the summer. People were prepared to sit-in in the street and get arrested, but the police had a slicker plan. They blocked off traffic on the main street linking all three plants and let us march up and down that street and sit in the intersection till we got tired and left.

Peaceful tactics

Sometime late in 1994 or early in 1995, Ray Rogers was fired from working with the Staley local. But this was a concession to the international leadership of UPIU, not a move to step up militant action at the plant gate. Ray Rogers is *persona non grata* with the trade union bureaucracy because he worked on the Hormel strike in the mid 1980s. Firing Ray Rogers was part of the price the Staley local had to pay to get a promise of help from the UPIU international. (Precious little good this "help" did them.) The bureaucrats don't like Jerry Tucker either, but he was just barred from the negotiations. Jerry Tucker continued to consult with the Staley workers and the local leadership; he had long before quit taking any money from them.

The Chicago SWSC organized a Christmas caravan

to Decatur in 1994. Contributions were collected from local unions, from many individuals, from some churches, and a semi loaded with food and toys from Teamsters in Indiana. The success of this caravan picked up peoples' spirits for a while.

In Jan. of 1995 the Staley workers participated in building the memorial march and meeting for Martin Luther King. It was a useful action, but nothing fundamental changed in the situation. On Feb. 20, 1995, a caravan of 70 Staley, Firestone and Caterpillar workers travelled to the winter meeting of the AFL-CIO leadership in Bal Harbour, Fla. They pigeon-holed every trade union leader they could grab and brought it to his immediate attention that the workers in Decatur needed some action out of the AFL-CIO. From all accounts the hacks were badly embarrassed. They had to promise to do something for the workers in the "War Zone." A few months later Kirkland made a token media appearance in Decatur and gave them a few pennies. It seems clear that the pressure from the Staley workers publicly demanding that the AFL-CIO do something to help was an important factor leading to Kirkland being forced out and Sweeney getting elected later.

For the second anniversary of the lockout, June 25, 1995, the Staley workers, the Caterpillar workers and the Firestone workers organized a huge rally in the Decatur Civic Center. There was a march past the plant but no confrontation. Every possible politician and trade union official was invited. The Democratic Congressman from Detroit, Bonior, spoke, as did both candidates for AFL-CIO President, Sweeney and Donahue. Jesse Jackson spoke last, after 2 plus hours of speeches.

On July 10, 1995, the Staley workers voted again on the concessions contract that Staley was offering. Nearly all of the 600 workers still eligible to vote did vote (among the original 762 locked-out workers voting many retired or moved away to find work after the June 27, 1993 lockout), and they voted it down by a 56% to 44% margin.

After the June 25, 1994, confrontation at the Staley gate, the main continuing mass tactic was boycott campaigns. In the summer and fall of 1994 a successful campaign forced Miller Beer to stop buying scab product from Staley. The strength of this campaign came particularly from Staley workers going to Milwaukee and appealing directly to the Miller workers. In 1995 the campaign was to force Pepsi to also drop Staley as a supplier. Pepsi publicly presented a very hard line resisting this campaign.

Within the Pepsi boycott campaign there was tension regarding tactics. The international leadership of the UPIU (Paperworkers) instructed activists to limit themselves to legal leafleting with no picket signs and no mass

demonstrations. (They said they were worried about being charged with organizing a "secondary boycott.") However, activists such as members of the Chicago solidarity committee felt that more militant tactics were necessary to step up the pressure on Pepsi and Staley. Thus on Aug. 27, 1995, the Chicago SWSC held a civil disobedience action at Navy Pier in Chicago. This demonstration got the attention of thousands of people directly as they entered Navy Pier, and it also broke through (for one day) the media blackout of news about the Staley struggle. In October the Chicago SWSC had another big demonstration against Pepsi at Navy Pier, which included activists chaining themselves to the entrance. This also got good publicity for one day.

In Decatur public actions were stepped up on Labor Day and after. For a month Staley workers and activists chained themselves to the fence in front of the Staley headquarters to dramatize the intolerable demands Staley was making on its workers. On Sept. 1, 1995, Dan Lane, a locked-out Staley worker and one of the most dedicated and militant of the Staley workers activists, began an indefinite hunger strike to pressure Pepsi and the AFL-CIO. He persisted for 65 days, taking in only liquids. On day 56 of his fast he was allowed to speak to the AFL-CIO convention. After returning to Decatur his condition worsened rapidly. New AFL-CIO President Sweeney was forced into making a public commitment to assign substantial resources to the Pepsi campaign. He said that Joe Uehlein, an executive assistant, would coordinate this campaign and that 40 AFL-CIO staffers who work on this with 12 of them full time. This persuaded Dan to give up his fast.

The End

Over the next month, nothing happened from this promise. With no progress in the Pepsi campaign and nothing visible from the AFL-CIO, more of the Staley workers started to lose hope. The fact that in early December the Cat workers had been forced to go back under very harsh conditions certainly weighed heavy on the Staley workers also. On Dec. 12 elections were held for officers of the Decatur local. Jim Shinall, a Staley worker who had always favored giving in to Tate and Lyle, won the local President post with 249 votes to 201 for Dave Watts. Shinall had the support of the newspapers and television in Decatur. He promised to settle the contract quickly.

And indeed two weeks later the Staley workers were voting on almost the same old contract they had rejected six months earlier: subcontracting out most jobs, with only around 220 or so union jobs left in the plant;

dangerous health and safety conditions; 12 hour rotating shifts (though now, a change from July, back to the original demand for rotation every 30 days); no amnesty for fired workers including well-known road warriors Dan Lane and Mike Griffin; union workers with decades of experience to be “retrained” on the job by the scabs, and subject to immediate firing should they speak their mind to the scabs; and so on.

The UPIU Local 7837 Bargaining Committee rejected the company’s offer. The Paperworkers International in Nashville, “led” by Wayne Glenn, ordered the Local to take the garbage contract to the membership for a vote. Some of the Staley activists report that sources inside Pepsi had ordered Staley to resolve this situation or the Pepsi contract with Staley would not be renewed after the new year.

Told by the International that this was the best they could hope for, and, exhausted and struggling to make ends meet, a majority voted to accept. Basically, about 100 workers who had voted against the contract in July didn’t vote in December. The number voting for the contract did not change significantly.

In the midst of this, the Chicago and the St. Louis solidarity committees organized a Christmas caravan which brought much more food, toys and cash to Decatur than the previous year. Ironically, the Chicago caravan came to Decatur a day after the vote to give up.

None of the militant activists have returned to the plant. They would have risked being fired, as has happened to so many Caterpillar UAW militants.

A final issue of the “War Zone” was published bitterly denouncing the UPIU leadership and the AFL-CIO leadership for “snatching defeat from the jaws of victory.” On January 12, 1996, a number of the Staley workers went to the headquarters of the UPIU in Nashville, Tenn. to picket the bureaucrats who had undercut their struggle. Later that month the new local President Shinall ended the local meeting and called on police to kick the militants out of the union hall.

The fight goes on in various forms. The Chicago SWSC had a conference in May to discuss lessons of this struggle. A Staley worker is organizing a conference in Decatur. Struggle continues inside the UPIU.

As I point out in my article on the lessons of the Staley struggle, the Staley workers deserve our profound respect and gratitude for determined heroism. 760 workers took on a huge multinational, went all across the country spreading the message of solidarity and resistance. They made huge sacrifices for the cause of the workers’ movement. We need to learn from their experience of the betrayal of the AFL-CIO leadership, of the successes and failures of the strategies of corporate campaigns and in-plant strategy. Let the fighting spirit of the Staley workers inspire us to push forward the struggle, learning from our successes and our failures. ◇

Maoist, Continued from page 27

by subordinating the immediate interests of the proletariat to its long term interests can the proletarian rally the intermediate classes to its side. This is what does not get through to Kornilov’s numbskull. He is a hell of a back seat driver, as well as a most perspicacious “revolutionary politician” of hindsight ability and wisdom! But the ABC of marxism, is not for him, the poor dear!

Moreover, even from the practical aspect of a proletarian revolution, class interests must be deferred. Otherwise, how can the proletariat unite with the peasantry to overthrow the autocracy, if you do not subordinate the proletariat’s immediate interests in the class struggle in order to carry out a program to satisfy the peasant demands first, the democratic demands first, which are in no way socialist demands or VITAL class demands of the proletariat proper?

In their articles in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, Marx and Engels exposed the counter-revolutionary postures of the German bourgeoisie during the bourgeois revolution in that country. They denounced that the bourgeoisie had

“concluded a defensive and offensive alliance with the reactionary forces, because it was afraid of the people”. However, Marx and Engels called on THE MASS OF THE PEOPLE to carry on with the revolution and to broaden its scope and reach deeper.

Marx and Engels told the German workers that “THE PRESENT movement is only the prologue to ANOTHER MOVEMENT a thousand times more serious, in which the issue will concern THEIR OWN, THE WORKERS’ most vital interests”. Those words from Marx and Engels should be clear to demonstrate how remote from Marxism is Kornilov Project’s workerism.

Marx and Engels call upon the workers to carry on with the bourgeois democratic revolution, TO DEEPEN AND BROADEN IT, knowing very well that in the concrete conditions in Germany, there was no immediate vital interest of the workers involved. Only because it is in their long term class interests should the workers make efforts in order to deepen and broaden the scope of the bourgeois revolution! ◇

Debate on the National Question

The Debate on the Marxist Stand on Nationalism and National Liberation an overview by Sarah, CWV

The last CWVTJ was in press when a debate broke out between N.C. of the LAWV and Joseph of the CVO. The debate is over the issue of support for national liberation struggles and the right of nations to self-determination. It involves a number of general issues of Marxism such as the connection of democratic struggles to the socialist revolution. The debate is over a number of important issues to the revolutionary movement and is thus of importance to our readers. Another reason to inform our readers of this debate is that N.C. has been a frequent contributor to the CWVTJ. We do not support his views. He seems to be opting for simplistic solutions to complicated problems and to be letting his dislike of Joseph get in the way of coherent thought.

N.C. denounces any and all of the national liberation movements of the twentieth century. This is a seriously wrong stand. The present world situation is difficult. The war in the former Yugoslavia, the ethnic slaughters in Rwanda, the danger that the former Soviet Union may break up with orgies of extreme nationalism has any revolutionary extremely worried. But it seems that N.C., rather than take a hard look at the world, has gone for simplistic solutions in denouncing all national liberation struggles.

These simplistic solutions, if taken to their logical conclusion, are, in essence, quite reactionary. N.C. was himself a participant in the struggles against the U.S. war of aggression in Vietnam and was a supporter of the national liberation struggles of that period. He apparently doesn't see the difference between the national liberation struggles in Southeast Asia and the wars against colonialism in Africa and the present ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia. Thus, he ends up in essence saying that the proletariat should be indifferent to whether the bourgeoisie of their own countries oppresses other nations. N.C. lives in an oppressor nation. N.C. is a vigorous participant in the struggle against anti-immigrant hysteria and racism. But, he's ending up in positions of saying that only some fights against national oppression are okay and not others.

N.C.'s views are similar to those of J.S. Daborn and Mauro, both connected with the trend which calls itself "left communist," who have also participated in this debate.

As well, a debate recently took place on the Marxism

list on the Internet regarding what stand Communists and the proletariat should have taken in certain national struggles. Some of the Maoist supporters of the Communist Party of Peru (also called Sendero Luminoso) have expressed a view which is the extreme opposite of N.C.'s and the "left communists." N.C. says that there can't be a fight for national self-determination. "Adolfo," a very outspoken Communist Party of Peru supporter, says that the proletariat must subordinate its interests to the national interest in that fight. One position tends to support the bourgeoisie of the oppressor nation. The other the bourgeoisie in the oppressed nations. Both would leave the proletariat impotent.

Let's look at some of what N.C. has to say. We are printing two letters from N.C. which he labels as summaries (see pp. 18-23).

N.C. states that Marx and Engels did not support any general right to self-determination of nations. "They gauged their support based on the best interests of the workers." According to N.C., in the twentieth century capitalism has traversed "from a progressive into definitely a reactionary force." According to N.C. national liberation is "no longer a progressive force as it once had been in the days of M/E (Marx and Engels). Where in the world today are there feudal and absolutist regimes to be undermined and capitalist social relations to be introduced.?"

N.C. goes on to say that no "liberated" nation today is really independent of international capital and imperialism. He says that no national liberation movement can fight the domination of one imperialism without "relying on others." Thus, those who died fighting in the national liberation movements of the 20th century were merely being "slaughtered in the interests of the rival imperialist groups disguised by the national lib bourgeoisies' fig leafs.."

Let's look at what is wrong with these arguments.

1. Marx and Engels held that the proletariat of an oppressor nation could not be free while that nation oppresses others. The case of Ireland is frequently cited as an example of this basic stand of Marx and Engels. They held that there could be no other stand for the socialist proletariat of England than to stand for the freedom of Ireland. They held that should there be a socialist revolution in England or in any other of the European powers that

the victorious proletariat must free the colonies.

One of the reasons they fought so sharply for this is that they saw the extreme bad effects that chauvinism in the working class had on its struggle. They saw this chauvinism as closely linked with the domination of the ruling nations over the ruled.

I think we can see numerous examples today of the bad effects of chauvinism and the limitation of the working class struggle brought out by the continued oppression by the big and strong imperialist countries over the weaker countries. I think we can also see and remember the beneficial effect that the national liberation war in Vietnam and the struggle to support it had on a series of struggles in this country. N.C. is seriously wrong when he fails to see the importance of this.

It is true that national independence for the oppressed countries has not automatically meant the end of chauvinism in the oppressor countries. Most of the former colonial countries are independent today. However, we all know that chauvinism continues to exist in the big imperialist powers - largely linked to their continued dominant positions.

Further, to argue against the national liberation struggles puts one in the position (whether one thinks it does or not) of supporting the domination of "your" country over others. Marx and Engels also argued strongly on this point.

Engels stated "If members of a conquering nation called upon the nation they had conquered and continued to hold down to forget their specific nationality and position, to 'sink national differences' and so forth, that was not internationalism, it was nothing else but preaching to them submission to the yoke, and attempting to justify and perpetuate the domination of the conqueror under the cloak of internationalism."

2. Marx, Engels, and Lenin did look at specific struggles and decide whether to throw their support behind a particular struggle based on what they judged that struggle meant for the overall interests of the working class.

The stands of these socialist leaders on the independence of Poland are indicative of this. Marx and Engels supported the struggle for Polish independence in the context of the struggle against tsarism. They saw tsarism as the major brake against European "democracy" and the development of capitalism.

Lenin, in discussing the movement for Polish independence in his day, saw the correctness of the Polish social democrats in attacking "the extreme nationalism of the Polish petty-bourgeoisie and point out that the national question was of secondary importance to Polish workers"

p.434

But Lenin did not deny the importance of upholding the right of nations to self-determination.

3. Neither Marx, Engels nor Lenin never held that national independence would end the domination by capital.

Lenin thought that the proletarian revolution in the West, combined with the national liberation struggles in Asia and Africa, would spell the doom of imperialism. His predictions of a fairly rapid transition to socialist revolution did not come true. Proletarian revolutions did not take place in Europe. Imperialism was quite able to adapt to the present situation where the colonial system is gone and most states are politically independent.

Perhaps N.C. is confusing predictions that the socialist revolution was imminent in the late 1910s, early 1920s with principle. Thus, because these predictions did not come true, he throws out the right of self-determination of nations altogether.

4. National independence clears the field for a more direct assault on capital. It does not necessarily mean that the working class is immediately, upon independence, in a better position to organize or that its conditions are better. No general democratic issue can guarantee this. But national independence does bring out that the ending of capitalist exploitation is the issue. Neil cites the current circumstances of extreme exploitation in India, Pakistan and other former colonies. It is certainly true that the proletariat in those countries suffers under the yoke of capitalist exploitation. However, it is also true that the politics of those countries revolve around domestic political and economic issues and not national independence. This shows that in the overall historical sense, national independence for the former colonies has cleared the field for a more direct assault on capital.

Let's look at a similar question, the legal equality of women or the entry of women into the workplace. In the Soviet Union, with the legal emancipation of women, the freedom of divorce and other measures, the economic position of many women deteriorated. Many women, especially peasant women, found themselves out of their families with no means of support. In the present period the right-wing argues that the position of women is worse now that the majority is in the workforce. And, indeed, there are many studies as to how tired and stressed out many women are with their frequently dual careers as family caregiver and worker. Does this mean we should oppose the legal emancipation of women or that women should not have jobs? After all, neither of these conditions ends capitalist exploitation. I don't think N.C. would argue that position. Yet, it's very similar to what he argues about national

independence.

5. The right of self determination of nations does not mean holding that every oppressed nation should separate. Nor does it mean supporting every struggle for national independence, nor every nationalist movement. It does mean supporting the right of each nation to decide.

6. N.C. thinks the national liberation movements of the twentieth century were and are merely pawns of one imperialist power or another. It is probably true that one of the factors leading to the victory of the national liberation struggles in Southeast Asia and in Africa in the 60s and 70s was the U.S.-Soviet rivalry. But this is a far cry from seeing these movements as mere pawns of Soviet policy. These were popular struggles; that is the major factor why they were successful. N.C.'s stand here reminds me a lot of various stands of Chinese three worldism.

7. In an attempt to bolster his argument N.C. cites several examples of where he feels the Comintern had seriously wrong stands in the 1920s such as towards the Chinese revolution. He says that "Lenin bent over too much in seeing national self-determination as a right." He holds that Roy was correct.

However, his statements about this have nothing to do with whether one holds that the right of self-determination is right or wrong. Roy, whom he cites, was not against the right of nations to self-determination. (see discussion by E.H. Carr p. 254-257)

I think the advice of the Comintern to the Chinese communists in the 1920's was wrong. It appears to me that several policies of the CPSU in the 1920s were already headed in the direction that would later be solidified in the 7th Congress of the Comintern and that would also be followed as three worldism. I think it would be useful to take a closer look at that period.

Joseph and Mark have written a number of letters in reply.

In this debate Joseph and Mark have discussed a number of important questions including their views on the relationship of the struggle for national self-determination to the socialist revolution and the general theoretical question of how the proletariat should participate in that and other democratic struggles. Joseph has given some useful summations of Marx and Engels views towards various struggles for national independence especially in Poland, Ireland and India. He has given some summations of Lenin's views.

Why is this debate important?

Since the post World War II era the world has changed dramatically. The colonial system is gone. This debate

involves how to assess that and what it means for the proletarian revolutionary struggle. Do we view the break up of the colonial system as no consequence to the proletariat, as N.C. seems to be saying?

While the colonial system is gone, there are issues and struggles involving the self determination of nations. There is East Timor, the U.S. territories of Puerto Rico, Guam and the Virgin Islands. There is the Palestinian struggle.

Further, the demise of the Soviet Union may mean that extreme nationalists may come to power in the various nations previously in the Soviet Union. It is possible that various African countries may break up into smaller tribally based nations. Many people are concerned that we are going to see more ethnic fighting and ethnic cleansing a la Yugoslavia. How should the proletariat view these issues?

The right to self determination is one principle which must be upheld in this situation. Nations can not be held inside larger entities by force. Furthermore, the denial of the right to self-determination plays into the hands of the most reactionary nationalists. For instance, the years of denial to the Palestinians of their right to self-determination and the racist suppression of them is one of the factors leading to the development of the reactionary nationalists of the Hamas.

To uphold the right to self-determination does not mean that the proletariat has to argue for any particular secession or separation. One has to judge the specifics of a particular situation.

On this matter I would like to comment about what Joseph has said regarding the former Yugoslavia. On this, I don't know his entire view as he has not written much on it. And, unlike Joseph, I don't think people's views can be summed up by pulling out one sentence or paragraph. However, what he has said so far is superficial.

On the former Yugoslavia, Joseph states, "a closer look at Yugoslavia shows that it is the denial of the right to self-determination which has turned the national problems into an inferno. .. To avoid the bloodletting and setting of worker against worker as has happened in Bosnia, the workers must fight the bourgeoisie in order to ensure recognition of the right to self-determination. The more successful they are in this, the more they will calm national hatreds and preserve their unity across national lines."

Upholding the right to self-determination is only a part of the issues the proletariat has to fight over. The Croatian bourgeoisie, when it was agitating for secession, agitated on lines such as these: Why should the Croatians pay taxes to support the more "backward," "boorish," Orthodox

Christian Serbians. Marches were held holding the flag of the Ustashe, a pro-Nazi Croatian outfit which was responsible for the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Serbians. Yes, the use of force to maintain Croatia in the union exacerbated all the ethnic tensions. Yet, it would seem to me that any revolutionary organization worth its salt in Croatia would have agitated against the separation. One big reason is because of the racist basis for calling for this separation. I'm surprised that Joseph seems to be reducing the problems in the former Yugoslavia solely to upholding the right of nations to secede.

In this issue we are printing several documents from this debate including the editorial of the Mar. 15, 1996 issue of the *CV* which sums up its views on the debate, and two letters from N.C. which he labeled as summaries of his views (one was also printed in the *CV*.) These letters show to what confusion N.C. has gone.

Other documents include J.S. Daborn's reply to the *CV* editorial, giving a fairly coherent explanation of the "left communist" viewpoint. The "left communists" say

roughly that under no circumstances should the proletariat support any national struggle. The extreme opposite view is presented by the Maoist "Adolfo." He says that the proletariat must subordinate its interests to the national struggle, so we are printing an excerpt of his comments. We are also printing Mark's (CVO) reply to Daborn.

This issue of the correct stand for the proletariat in relation to all the various forms of national struggle is by no means a simple one. A pat formula will not do. I don't think Marx or Engels or Lenin gave pat answers to the questions of national struggle that they faced. We can learn a lot from studying how they approached these issues. We have to look deeply into the issues of national struggle that come up today. We have to notice that the national struggles or alleged "national struggles" which are coming up in the '90s are not carbon copies of the struggles which came to the fore in the '60s or the '20s.

We invite our readers to express their views on these issues. ◇

Reply to Detroit 105: Twilight of CVO's neo-Maoism -- Part 1 by NC, *Los Angeles Workers Voice*

Dear Joseph,

We have exposed your religio-dogmatic bible thumper approach to marxism on the issue of so-called national liberation. It turns out that you have been quite eclectic (and cleverly dishonest) about what you choose to quote as well. It is CVO that hides some key points of M-E-Ls views on the nat-lib struggles.

On Marx and Engels first.

Marx or Engels (M-E) did not develop their views on nat-libs out of mere subjectivism but in response to the social and historical situations they found themselves in. Unlike the Joseph/CVO revisionist method/views, Marx and Engels held that there was no such thing as a natural "right" for every nation to exist within its own state. Engels stated in 1866, "There is no nation in Europe where there are not different nationalities under the same government". They actually opposed the breakup of central Europe into small national states (like the Yugoslavian debacle today). M-E held that it was absurd to think that every nationality, no matter how small, had a right to separate existence. M-E did support what they called "the old old democratic and working class tenet as to the right of the great European nations to separate and independent

existence" This was consistent with their support for Poland's independence from the Russian Empire. They supported the democratic and anti-feudal struggle toward a unified Italy to weaken the Austro-Hungarian empire. They sometimes supported independence and then sometimes federal union of Ireland with Britain. But the \$64,000 question is WHY? It was the specific reason that for them certain ways of capitalist development were preferable for the longer term historical interests of the working class. Marx stated specifically that that the best condition for proletarian revolution would develop in a democratic state where the old feudal ruling class was overthrown by the democratic revolution with the workers fighting along with the THEN "revolutionary" bourgeoisie. So capitalism could develop without feudal restrictions & develop faster a techno-economic society for the higher form of society—socialism. They also thought the workers might then be better able to develop their own independent class movement. M-E did not support national unification where the democratic revolution was stifled and feudal and aristocratical political elements held sway. So M-E were also quite critical about the national unification of both Italy and later Germany. M-E just accepted this as fait accompli. Considering the imminent German unification Marx said "we have to accept the fact, without approving of it, and to use, as far as we can, the greater

facilities now bound at any rate to become available for the national organization and unification of the German proletariat". (Letter to Engels—July 1866)

Specific reasons for support of Ireland were quite different. They did NOT emphasize the progressive nature of the democratic revolution but the need to dissolve the hatred of Irish and British workers toward each other. As Irish workers were commonly sent to Britain to break strikes and for cheap labor. They were not state builders here but wanted Irish and British workers to face each other as equals and eventually to unify the class struggles.

M-E were not nearly as hot for nat-libbing in Britain's colonies as Joseph is. They instead wanted a breakup of the old pre-capitalist economic and social structures so capitalism could grow—and along with it, its gravedigger, the working class. Marx did NOT support every act of British imperialism, and made incisive/scathing attacks on its brutality and barbarism in practice. Marx did think that the capitalist expansion around the world, was historically progressive in his time and had a revolutionary role to play. Unlike Joseph's moralistic whining, (esp. in the end of Det 105), Marx saw the expansion of capitalism primarily as a historical and not a moral question!

Concerning India, in 1853 article written by Engels and signed by Marx stated "England, it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindustan, was actuated only by the vilest interest, and was stupid in her manner of enforcing them. But that is not the question. the question is, can mankind fulfill its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia? If not, whatever may have been the crimes of England, she was the unconscious tool of history bringing about that revolution. ("The East India company-Its History and Results" in *Surveys from Exile* Pg 307) Marx did state later that India would become independent but he did not speculate about how this could happen.

Lenin, it is true, unlike M-E did support a "right" to self-determination of all nations. -but he qualified that this "right" need not always be exercised. He compared it to the 'right' of divorce" which couples have but only a minority of people actually use. On the eve of WW1, studying imperialism. Lenin saw anti-colonial movements as essentially the same sorts of conflicts as European bourgeois democratic movements. after 1900, the imperialist ruling classes of Europe had shown their reactionary colors and Lenin thought the the European proletariat could ally itself with the 'young democracy of asia". We know that Lenin argued his case during the Russian Revolution in the 3rd International that the proletariat should support anti-colonial struggles reasoning that they would further weaken the Counter-revolutionary European imperialist powers

and help pave the way for workers revolutions in Europe.

But what about this modern age? Joseph's CVO Evangelistic Billy Sunday style bible thumping will not cut it. It is a real mockery of marxism. There has been changes in the historical situation since the days of M-E. Joseph, today the capitalist mode of production dominates 99% of the world. Joseph, this means that capitalism's progressive role of laying the material foundations for socialist society are over!! This has been true since around WW1 and confirmed in practice by this massive imperialist carnage. Joseph, the workers no longer have any interest in developing capitalism and wage slavery as you advise, they need to be able to organize to destroy it. The workers have no interest in "uniting ' to fight alongside the capitalists for "independent nations" as Joseph enthuses over—even now!! Joseph the revisionist, does not see even now, the 2 distinct phases in capitalism's history. Revolutionary marxists have been drawing these conclusions for 70 years and Joseph and the CVO are not the vanguard—but have been in effect, distanced! Taking up sniffing around somewhere in the rear.

Lenin did see clearer than most the real implications of WW1. When he returned to Russia in 1917, he fought to persuade the majority of his bolsheviks that the impending revolution was not bourgeois democratic against Tsarism but really the 1st step of a European proletarian revolution. The Russian revolution of October, 1917 showed in practice that all states did NOT have to go thru CVO/Joseph mechanistic stages of the national, bourgeois democratic before going over to communist revolution. Joseph is going politically backwards fast here. Readings from the MLP study list of Lenin years back showed Lenin saw the possibility of combining the bourgeois and socialist tasks thru the communistic revolution.

However, he did not see the national question this way. He backed Polish nationalists out of the need to specifically fight great Russian chauvinism. But Lenin might have erred. Real economic independence for Poland was not to come and she could only remain economically dependent on more powerful imperialists. Luxemburg showed that the imperialist period meant that due to rivalries of huge imperialist plunderers, that meaningful national liberation did not just apply to Poland but all "petty nations". Luxemburg also showed also that once the independent proletarian Party had been formed, as it had in Poland with her SKDPiL, that the argument that the workers should instead support bourgeois parties in its formative stages was totally outmoded and backward thinking.

Lenin in fact did accept many of Luxemburg's arguments on this—but only for Poland, in his "Right of

Nations To Self-Determination” (1914). But the CVO Church of Joseph hides this and much more.

There were huge debates in the bolshevik party over this issue from 1913-20. Key were those of Lenin Vs. Bukharin/Piatikov. Joseph hides the fact that temporarily in 1918-9 Lenin’s resolution on “self determination” was out voted at one Bolshevik Party Congress in favor of the Bukharin/Piatikov clearer class stand. This denied national self determination in favor of the self determination of the working class. In 1919, The Bukharin-Piatikov resolution was overturned in favor of Lenin’s and became a key tent of the Russian bolshevik stand.

CVO -Joseph covers-up the fact that Lenin, sometimes himself used similar argumants of Bukharin, Piatikov and Luxembourg but he never actually accepted the thrust of them.

Lenin himself stated in “The Working class and The National Question” (1913), that, “Today the bourgeoisie fears the workers and is seeking an alliance.... with the reactionaries, and is betraying democracy, advocating oppression and unequal rights among nations and corrupting the workers with nationalist slogans. In our time the PROLETARIAT ALONE (emph added-NC) upholds the real freedom of nations and the unity of workers of all nations. For diferent nations to live together in peace and freedom or to separate and form different states (if that is more convenient for them, a full democracy, upheld by the working class, is essential.)

Yes, this term “self determination’ for the workers IS confusing in implying that the workers in upholding internationalist interests can at the same time secure liberation for the nation, which is made up of classes , including the powerful bourgeoisie.

But it was WW1 itself that proved the bourgeois class can only play a reactionary role in the imperialist epoch. Lenin stated the Qualitative change that had ocurred per the world developement of capitalist social relations and imperialism in “Socialism & War” 1915. “From the liberator of nations, which it was in the struggle against feudalism, capitalism in its imperialist stage has turned into the greatest oppressor of nations. formaerly progressive, capitalism has become reactionary.

But when it came to the 3rd Int’l Policy toward national -lib struggles, Lenin reverted back to the perspective of the bourgeois democratic revolution. He had polemical fights royale over this from such leading CI figures as M.N. Roy and Sultan Zade. Joseph/CVO would slander them as “apologists for colonialism” too, by parity of HIS reasoning? After feverish polemical battles, Lenin was able to outmanuver the Roy and Zade draft in the famous “Thesis on the national Question” at the 2nd Cong. of the

CI. Roy’s draft, etc, supported by a significant minority section of the CI, had stated the CI should give no support to THE DOCTRINE OF NATIONALISM (emph. added-NC) and that The CI should not support bourgeois national struggles in the colonies since THE MASS MOVEMENT IS GROWING UP INDEPENDENTLY OF THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT (emph added-NC). Lenin would not accept this. The resulting compromise confused the specific colonial questions to the national question as a whole. The term “bourgeois democratic movement” was abandoned in favor of “national revolutionary movement” but this did not prevent Lenin from seeing colonial revolts as essentially bourgeois liberation movements which should be supported —only when they are genuinely revolutionary. (Rpt. of Commission on nat’l. and colonial Questions to the 2nd cong. of the CI 7/26/20) In this report Lenin also says that “with the aid of the proletariat in the advanced countries, backward countries can go over to the Soviet system and through certain stages of developement, to communism, without having to go through the capitalist stage. So this is confusing, is it not. We must look at the actual situation of the class struggles in Europe to clarify. Lenin was trying to save the Revolutionary wave in Europe—as a temporary tactic possibly, he wanted a link up with colonial revolts to weaken the imperialist powers and increase the revolutioary crisis in Europe. Also it is true Lenin tended to look at the colonial question in terms of oppressor and oppressing nations which he thought the solution was the same as inside of russia—national indepedece with Self-determination. But Lenin clearly erred on this as in the imperialist epoch, as this is an impossible goal for the weaker states and sows real terrible illusions and confusions among workers by linking national -libbing with proletarian internationalism and ending all national boundries.

Sure we must fight tooth and nail against racism and chauvinism within the worlds workers, but this cannot be done by cheerleading the bourgeois nationalists in weaker capitalist states. In this epoch, concepts of mainly oppressed and oppressing nations no longer accurately describes the relationships between the ex-colonies and the imperialist states. The world is now one divided between weak and strong capitalist powers. In this epoch, the workers and semi-proleatarians are skinned by the national bourgeois and the imperialist states. Hence in this period we should direct the class combat against capitalism in all its forms, national bourgeois, foreign parasites and the rest. CVO/Josephs ensconsing itself in and capitulating to bourgeois nationalism and capitalism today is a real no-brainer that puts more egg on their faces each day. Nay,, worse, it confuses workers and weakens the class

fightbacks.

Summary

Marx was dealing with a different historical epoch when national self determination was progressive as it could lead to the revolutionary destruction of backward feudal relations and helped free the chain so the modern productive forces could advance via capitalism. Sure, capitalism developed, but Marx thought that in the Bourgeois democratic republic, the class struggles could develop quicker and clearer. but Marx/Engels never any where, unlike the CVO bible thumpers, never recognized any natural "right of national self-determination". They gauged their support based on the best interests of the workers. Lenin and Luxemburg lived to see the beginnings of the modern epoch, they saw capitalism traverse from a progressive into definitively a reactionary force. Really this meant the change from national capitalist revolutions to international proletarian revolutions in the worlds class struggles. Clearly we can see now via the specific cases (I will give more examples in Part2 of this reply tomorrow) where the proletariat gets bloodbath after bloodbath from following an erring path, one which CVO/

josephs semi-maoist approach only continues today— yesterday a tragedy, but today a farse and and a tragedy for workers! Lenin, in his day had to deal with the vexed problem of fighting the Great Russian chauvinism, but he bent over too much is seeing national self determiantion as a right. Todays struggles need to rise quickly to the terrain of unity with workers fighting in other lands as a tactic and strategy. National borders today are clearly a weapon almost always of bourgeois reaction. Non proletarian masses should be integrated into the vanguard workers battles on a territorial basis—eschewing national border divisions. Maybe we won't be able to stop some secessionist nationally oppressed groups. But we don't have to hail it either. We should call for these workers on the peripheries to align themselves with the battering rams of the workers mass struggles in all countries which is the force that can eventually united - pound down the fortresses of capitalism —on a world scale. We need class consciousness, not the CVO style of bourgeois nationalism wrapped up in a "socialist" guise. If you want to really fight imperialism , you have to build up the forces of the international workers of all nations to fight against exploitation and reaction, recognizing capitalist labor skimmers come in all nationalites too. ◇

Re: Detroit 108 -- more Josephite CVO Maoite Menshevism by NC, LAWV

Dear Joseph,

Your distortions and slanders concerning my critique of communist support for nat-libbs are proof of your political banruptcy. Your chic CVO joseph "Thought" a la your historical careerist "Mao-hoxha thought" is a perversion of the method of socialist science. You say you are "anti-revisionist" concerning Marxism. But ANY scientific doctrine would have to be revised at various times to consistently bring it up to date and maintain its relevance!

So a dialectian /marxist would apply the scientific method to these problems based on a proletarian revolutionary point of view. Marx , Engels and Lenin and others did this in their theory and practice from time to time based on new experience and changes in the class struggle and societal development. If you were consistent with your absurd talmudic approach , you would also end up denouncing all other marxists as "revisionists" too. Joseph, you not only wish to cover your state-cap ass, your methodology turns Marxism into a secular religion.

You know damn well I stand with both Lenin and

Luxemburg in opposing all forms of national oppression. I don't think there is some intrinsic "right" to self determination however. Inside this oppressor nation, i accept the fundamental and absolute duty to oppose imperialist invasions, colonialism , genocide, etc.

You are a dirty rotten scoundrel to throw up your smear that I am a "socialist colonialist". You of course do this to throw up a political smokescreen to cover up your real neo-maoite views that sugarcoat the capitalist regimes that replaced the old coloniialist ones.

Unlike Lenin and Luxemburg, we at least have the benfit of hindsight in evaluating the decades long experience of de-colonialization and the harmful illusions it has created. You argue from a real absurd premise. You say in your Det#105, that my position ".....denies the people the right to make their own decisions on the national question" And if I deny "the people" the "right" to make their own decisions on the national question, I become, in your words a "socialist coloialist".

But Mr. neo-maoist , What is the "people" and what is it composed of? Marx ,Engels, Luxemburg and Lenin, whatever their differences were witheringly contemptuous

-and rightly so- of your types of bourgeois mystifications precisely because such abstractions obscured differing and opposing class interests, and helped undermine the workers class struggles..

What is the "right" to national self-determination. Luxembourg, M. Roy, S. Zade, Piatikov and Bukharin, etc. argued precisely against any such universal "right" and quite correctly so. In "The national question: Selected Writings of Rosa Luxemburg" published by that well known "socialist colonialist" publishing house "Monthly Review", the editors observe in the introduction "In a class society, to speak of self determination for the "people" would ordinarily mean self determination for the ruling class; the workers would be left in a subordinate position as before." (pg #15)

You falsely accuse me of saying Marx and Engels had no "principles" re: Nat-lib because they denied the universal applicability of nat-libs and if my interpretation is correct it is tantamount to saying they "cynically manipulated" people (your interpretation).

First of all, you are completely wrong. Marx and Engels had a universal principle. They both correctly placed the interests of the international socialist revolution ABOVE the interests of any one country. and it is only through this lens that their withdrawal or extension of support of nat-lib was based, in the concrete specifics of the concrete struggles at a given time and place and subject to continual re-evaluation in this light.

Furthermore, in her "National Question and Autonomy", Luxemburg argued "A right of nations which is valid for all countries and all times is nothing more than a metaphysical cliché of the type of the "rights of man" and "rights of the citizen". Dialectic materialism which the basis for scientific socialism, has broken once and for all with this type of "eternal" formula. for the historical dialectic has shown that there are no 'eternal' truths and that there are no "rights.....In the words of Engels, "What is good in the here and now, is evil somewhere else and vice-versa" or, what is right and reasonable under some circumstances, becomes nonsense and absurdity under others. historical materialism has taught us that the real content of these "eternal" truths, rights and formulae is determined only by the MATERIAL social conditions of the environment in a given historical epoch. On this basis, scientific socialism has revised the entire store of democratic clichés and ideological metaphysics inherited from the bourgeoisie. Present day social democracy has long since stopped regarding such phrases as "democracy", "national freedom", "equality" and other such beautiful things as eternal truths and laws transcending particular nations and times. On the contrary Marxism regards and

treats them only as expressions of certain definite historical conditions, as categories which, in terms of their material content and therefore political value, are subject to constant change—which is the only eternal truth."

Joseph, this contrasts to your CVO religious interpretations. will you dare to charge Engels with "cynical manipulations" and promoting that "the end justifies the means"?

Joseph, here is Marx from the "Neue Rheinische Zeitung", "There is no country in Europe which does not have in one corner, one or more of these ruins of nations, the remains of an ancient people displaced and conquered by a nation which later becomes a standard bearer of historical development. These remains of nationalities, mercilessly trampled on by history — as Hegel says— these national left-overs will all become and will remain until their final extermination or denationalization fanatic partisans of the counter-revolution, since their entire existence is in general a protest against the great historical revolution."

Of course Joseph/CVO, with his paleo-marxism, would call this "socialist colonialism" too, no doubt!

Luxembourg was confronted with a particular situation in Poland (which was not necessarily typical, as Lenin pointed out). The Poles in Austria already enjoyed de-facto autonomy and considerable "democratic" rights and the Polish workers had little to gain and possibly much to lose from being put into a reconstituted Poland dominated by its bourgeoisie and landowners" (Introduction to "The National Question", Pg 20).

Again, an example where both Lenin and Luxemburg agreed that in certain circumstances, so-called "nat-lib" could actually mean a step backwards for a people. Are Lenin and Luxemburg "socialist colonialists" too, Mr. Pol Pot embellisher?

In the case of Finland in 1918. The facts show the newly recognized bourgeois government of Finland asked to have the Red Army units then stationed in Finland withdrawn. Lenin did not do this. The intention had been to stage an uprising of the Finnish Communists in soviets who would then be aided by the Red Army setting up a new government sympathetic to a re-union with the new Russia. But an expedition of Germans and whites under the Gen. von der Goltz arrived in Finland in time to upset the plan." (Intro. To "The National Question". Pg 32).

Is Joseph going to call Lenin a "cynical manipulator" for writing one thing and then doing another—thereby violating Joseph's sacred "right" of national self determination? If Joseph's lies held water would he not call this "socialist colonialism" too?

Finally a quote from a far seeing fighter against

modern imperialism, Amilcar Cabral of Guinea-Bissau. "I would even go so far as to ask whether, given the advance of socialism in the world, the national liberation movement is not an imperialist initiative. Is the judicial institution which serves as a reference for the right of all peoples who are trying to liberate themselves a product of the peoples who are trying to liberate themselves? Was it created by the socialist countries who are our historical associates? It is signed by the imperialist countries who have recognized the right of all peoples to national independence, so I ask myself whether we may not be considering as an initiative of our people what is in fact an initiative of our enemy? Even Portugal, which is using napalm bombs against our people in Guinea, signed the declaration of the rights of all peoples to independence.... The objective of the imperialist was to prevent the enlargement of the socialist camp, to liberate the reactionary forces in our countries which is being stifled by colonial-

ism and to enable these forces to ally themselves with the international bourgeoisie. The fundamental objective was to create a bourgeoisie where one did not exist, in order specifically to strengthen the imperialist and capitalist camp." (From "Analysis of the Social Structure" of the Revolution in Guinea, Pg 58).

Here is a quite perceptive insight by one of the leaders of the anti-colonialist movements of the 60s-early 70s as to the true nature of the nat-lib and how it could be manipulated to actually serve imperialism. Of course communists would substitute "state capitalist bloc" i.e. a rival imperialism, for "socialism".

Joseph/CVO avoids the Marxist scientific critical method. He wants to run his "Gong Show" where he is the host, judge and jury all at once and all the contestants from Marx to Cabral, have been eliminated with the clang of Joseph's made in Beijing nat-libber gong for advocating "socialist colonialism" or "cynical manipulation." <>

Marxism and the right of nations to self-determination

by Joseph Green

(lead article in *Communist Voice*, vol. 2, #2, March 15, 1996)

One of the issues debated in this issue of *Communist Voice* is the right to self-determination of nations. It wasn't so long ago that most activists eagerly supported the national liberation movement in Africa and Asia and elsewhere. Today however most of the old colonial empires have fallen, and the main national movements seem to be fanatics massacring each other in Bosnia and the Balkans. Does this mean that the right to self-determination is obsolete?

Some people think so. They have become "socialist"-colonialists who regret their support in the past for liberation movements. They hold that Marx and Lenin's support of the right to self-determination is outdated. They think that the national question is just a harmful diversion. The only struggle they will support is the straight struggle, direct to the future with no account taken of the twists and turns through which any real revolutionary movement develops. They don't see that a rebellious working class—confident in itself and eager to take on the heavy load of socialist revolution—can only come into existence and steel itself through taking part in struggles of all types, whether for women's rights, or in defense of the environment, or against national oppression, and so on. The pure and narrow revolution that turns aside in disdain from so many "diversions" is a revolution that will never take place.

The new (and old) socialist-colonialists point to Bosnia, which is bogged down in national hatreds. But a closer

look at Yugoslavia shows that it is the denial of the right to self-determination which has turned the national problem into an inferno. When the old state-capitalist regime associated with the Tito began to fall apart, most of the republics that composed Yugoslavia wanted, for better or worse, to separate. The Serbian state-capitalist ruling class denied the right to self-determination, and threatened force against all the neighboring republics. Slovenia, which suffered only minor Serbian military interference, separated, and is now calm. But when Bosnia separated, the Serbian and Croatian bourgeoisies moved rapidly to divide it up. And Kosovo, an Albanian-nationality region of Serbia, which is not allowed any national rights, may well be the next flash point, even if the Bosnian crisis recedes.

To avoid the bloodletting and setting of worker against worker as has happened in Bosnia, the workers must fight the bourgeoisie in order to ensure recognition of the right to self-determination. The more successful they are in this, the more they will calm national hatreds and preserve their unity across national lines. They must fight:

- * for the recognition of the right of a nation, if its people so desire, to secede; and

- * against the discrimination and oppression of the national or ethnic minorities within a country.

Defense of the right to self-determination is not the sum total of the proletariat's stand on the national question. The proletariat also stands for building organiza-

tions—trade unions, its political party and other mass organization, schools, etc.—that embrace workers of all nationalities that live in the same country. It stands for building links between workers across national boundaries and building up a truly international workers' movement and a truly international class struggle. It works for a future socialist society in which national differences gradually disappear. Its ideology is proletarian internationalism. But without a struggle for the right to self-determination and against oppression, unity between the workers of different countries threatens to become a Sunday school phrase which convinces no one. People show that they have overcome national prejudices not when they are indifferent to national oppression and forcible annexations, but when they fight against all national oppression.

Today there are still nations fighting for their right to exist—such as the people of East Timor fighting Indonesian annexationism, or the Palestinians, who are penned up in a Bantustan-style separate area. The denunciation of all “separatism” would mean supporting the annexationism and colonialism of Indonesia, of Israel, and of the stronger bourgeoisies in the world. There are other places where whether a nation separates from another country or joins with it may or may not be advisable, but is not of overriding importance. But here too, denial of the right to self-determination means supporting—not the fraternal unity of the workers of different lands—but the annexationist desires of the strongest bourgeoisie. There are many other situations with respect to the national question. And of course the ruling bourgeoisie everywhere tries to justify its oppression of the masses through national phrases. But in all cases, it is necessary for the workers to recognize which cases involve national oppression, and to advocate that it is a basic democratic right that the people who live in a definite territory comprising a nation be allowed to decide for themselves which country that territory is part of or whether the territory is independent. This is the only way the proletariat can demonstrate that it is not national borders, but freedom, and the fight against the bourgeoisie, that is uppermost in its mind. In this way, the workers pave the way for the merger of nations by insisting that this merger must be voluntary.

Stalinism perverted Marxism-Leninism on this question as on all others. Stalin, and later the whole trend of Soviet revisionism, negated the right to self-determination in practice, despite their hypocritical claims to support Marxism. During the period of Brezhnev's rule, the theory of “limited sovereignty” was his justification of Russian annexationism. The intervention in Afghanistan by both the Soviet Union and the U.S.; the bloody wars by the revisionist “Dergue”, the one-time rulers of Ethiopia,

against the Eritreans, Tigrayans and others; and other examples showed that negating the right to self-determination means bloodshed and fomenting divisions among the working people.

But it is no better when it is the “left communists” who negate the right to self-determination. These phrasemongers are to the “left” of Marxism, but what does this turn out to be? The “left communists” think that they are the most consistent opponents of Stalinism—why, they even are skeptical of political parties for fear of seeing a Stalinist party. Yet the various theories put forward—sometimes by “left communists”, sometimes by left Trotskyists—that negate the right to self-determination end up providing a “socialist” cover for annexationism. Some say that the right to self-determination only applied in the 19th century. Others say that there will be no right to self-determination under socialism, because national differences will be immediately abolished. But in fact, national differences will only die out gradually. In all cases, these theories end up providing a glorified “left” cover to the revisionist socialist-colonialism.

Part of the debate centers on the assessment of the collapse of the old colonial empires in Africa, Asia, etc. The “left communists” think that since this did not lead to socialist countries but the growth of capitalism, therefore it was a nationalist blunder. All they can see is that the now-independent countries are capitalist, and that the ruling class—like as not—is oppressing the local national minorities or harassing the neighboring countries. They apparently think that if the workers and toilers had consented to be ruled by foreign overlords who regarded them as half-human, they would have been fit to rise in strikes for better conditions, protests against persecution of the minorities, and socialist revolution against the entire bourgeoisie. They don't see that by blaming all the tragedies of Africa on the national liberation movement, on “separatism”, they are in fact duplicating the neo-conservative mood of the present. They are prettifying world imperialism, no matter how much they shout about “imperialism”. If the colonial peoples were ever to be anything but beasts of burden for the more industrialized countries, they had to overthrow the political rule of imperialists countries which regarded them as uncivilized. The proletariat and the downtrodden were the basic force, and they fought for their social rights and improvements in their conditions, and for the best outcome of the national struggle. The small size of the proletariat; the ideological confusion in the world revolutionary movement; the military and economic pressure of imperialism and revisionism; etc. meant that the struggle only went so far; the democratic revolutions in Europe in the 19th century had

also seen zigzags, bitter defeats and long periods of stagnation. Nevertheless, for the proletariat, participation in the overthrow of the colonial empires would be one of a series of dress rehearsals for future revolutionary activity, and help provide evidence to the workers of what can be expected from other classes. And as result of independence, the struggle against the local bourgeoisie as well as world capitalism came more to the fore. The countries in the industrializing world have, in a general sense, the same path to socialism as those of the industrialized world: through the growth of a proletariat, and its steeling in the struggle against all the crimes and pains of capitalism. There are no short-cuts. And if the "left communists" and Trotskyists and anarchists think that this requires too much patience, too much perseverance, too many sacrifices, too many different struggles, and want quick victory, then they are showing once again that they do not have the ability to lead the proletariat to victory.

Typical of "left communism" and Trotskyism is a contemptuous attitude to theory. They convert Marxism into a cardboard caricature. They don't understand the need to study the situation facing the proletariat carefully, but substitute absurd general rules. Some say that Marx's inspiring call "the workers have no country" means that the workers should be indifferent to national oppression, rather than fighting against it. Some say that the national question, trade unions, partial demands etc. became reactionary in the 20th century. Some even are upset at the term "people", saying that to recognize the rights of the people is contradictory to basing oneself on the working class. And most agree with the reformists that the struggle against national oppression means supporting the local

bourgeoisie.

Indeed, what nonsense hasn't been said to deny the importance of opposing national oppression? Some claim that supporting one struggle for independence should logically mean supporting them all, as if supporting one political movement logically meant supporting them all, left, right or center. Some say that the principle that any one democratic right (including the right to self-determination) is subordinate to the interests of the overall revolutionary movement, as the part is subordinate to the whole, means that one needn't really be too concerned about these rights. They think that a revolutionary movement should support or reject these rights solely on the basis of whether it helps them to seize power, and don't see that such cynical manipulation would result in a movement being justly hated by the masses. All these simplified dogmas have nothing to do with Marxism; and they are a cover for the renunciation of any serious theoretical work.

Marx, Engels and Lenin all stood for the right to self-determination—not just under capitalism, but even under socialism. The critique of Stalinism and Trotskyism and left phrasemongering can draw inspiration from Marxist views on the national question. The Marxist theoretical standpoint, combined with the study of the new conditions of world imperialism, provides the firm basis for building up an anti-revisionist communism. It is this that will provide guidance for the rebirth of a militant proletarian movement—a movement that not only knows what the future society will be like, but that is capable of fighting against all the injustices of the present society. ◇

A Hasty Response from an Internationalist

by J.S. Daborn

Communist Workers' Organisation, British affiliate of the IBRP, email j.s.daborn@sheffield.ac.uk

We have not intervened directly in this debate before because it seemed to us that NC was actually answering clearly and increasingly coherently to the ramblings of Joseph Green. However in this latest atrocity story which contains more sophistry than the average output of a Jesuitical College he continually refers to the "communist Left" usually tarring them with the brush of anyone else he wants to drag into the debate. It is quite obvious that a renegade Maoist cannot know much about the communist left. This reply also demonstrates he does not know much about Marxism.

When he says "most activists eagerly supported national movements" he means those who supported ideologies which represented the left wing of capitalism. The inter-

nationalist communist left which was the first and most consistent opponent of the decline of the Comintern towards Stalinism and social democracy in the 1920s (and ever since) has never supported national struggles in this century. We have also never stated that Marx and Lenin's views were simply outdated because for both of them the view of the national question was HISTORICALLY CONDITIONED. Lenin's Imperialism demonstrated that capitalism had moved into a new epoch (which Lenin did not live to see the full implications of). This epoch (of the parasitism and decay of capitalism, the era of imperialism) changed the tactical and strategic demands of the proletarian revolution. It was no longer *enough to recognise* that certain national struggles could actually lead to the expan-

sion of capitalism - no such struggles existed. Every struggle now became part of global imperialist competition for control of the planet. There is no such thing as an independent national struggle in this epoch. Every national bourgeoisie is the tool of its imperialist backer and no struggle can 'succeed' without such backing. The whole history of the last 90 years shows this. This means that the proletarian position on the national question has got to become a CLASS ISSUE and not a NATIONAL ISSUE. It is why the bourgeoisie have (on the ideological level) always used the national question against the unity of the working class and its struggle in this century. JG by refusing to recognise that nations are divided into classes does not even begin from the ABC of Marxism on this one. Instead he throws in another red herring. Anyone not arguing with him on the national question is arguing that there is only a 'straight struggle direct to classless society'. We wish we could! No, there are enough problems on the road to the establishment of socialism which we have to deal. But today the first of these are all the left capitalist who refuse to recognise the nature of capitalism today. Basically we are on a 'narrow path' as Lenin stated in *What is to be Done?* and on both sides we are surrounded by the swamp of bourgeois ideology which includes nationalism and support for the national struggle and occasionally monsters arise from the marsh in the shape of JG to try to drag the working class off its own class terrain.

How does he do this. First he turns a bourgeois offensive on the working class into something which is the fault of the working class! The situation in ex-Yugoslavia is his chosen example. Here the state capitalist Tito regime was disintegrating under the accumulation crisis of capital. In response to unemployment and draconian inflation the working class began to fight on its own terrain against the bourgeoisie. There were literally millions of strike days lost at the end of the 1980s and start of the 1990s (see *Internationalist Communist Review*, *Workers Voice* and *Revolutionary Perspectives*, (organs of the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party) on this). The response of the Yugoslav bourgeoisie - nationalism. Disintegration of Yugoslavia into its constituent nationalities. Nationalities which had to be virtually re-invented overnight. We know now that the Croatian bourgeoisie could not even find one policeman to carry out its first attacks on Serbs but government ministers themselves launched the first rocket attacks. When leftists call on us to support the Bosnians (because they are less exclusive) which Bosnia do we support? They don't say but the only one is that of Izetbegovic and the Bosnian ruling class. We could go on but the important point the national issue isn't some neutral ground over which the workers can manoeuvre

against the bourgeoisie it is the bourgeoisie's chosen ideological weapon against the working class in this epoch. When JG talks about analysing "the new conditions of world imperialism" that is precisely what he should do instead of rehashing the tired old "anti-revisionist" nonsense from his past.

In fact when he calls for the building of mass movements, trades unions and the like JG is living in the last century. Then it was the illusion of all socialists that capitalism would happily allow us to build up mass organs under its sway without attempting to recuperate them for capital. In 1914 we got our answer when these mass organs went over to mobilising the masses for imperialist war. Our organisational imperatives have to be different. Our target has to be to destroy the capitalist state internationally before we can proceed to building socialism. Our priority is the building of the one organisation which is the essence of the anti-capitalist programme of the proletariat and that is the international party. Whilst the mass assault of the future working class will destroy capital it cannot do this without the leadership of that party but that mass assault will not come from mass organs of long duration (such as unions) since these will constantly become part of the capitalist framework). It is odd that JG should argue that the internationalist communist left deny the need for the party but then that is part of his generally slanderous method of throwing out any argument in any direction. Nowhere is this more obvious than in his penultimate paragraph where he gives us a series of fables. He tells us "some say" and "some say" and again "some say" but who are these people. To be specific would however render JG's arguments susceptible to analysis and one thing a dying ideology cannot tolerate is such criticism. Criticism is something JG ought to be frightened of given the paucity of his knowledge of Marxism. His account of the decolonisation issue after WW2 is so wrong that we cannot leave it aside. He states that left communists say that the national struggle was a waste of time because it did not lead to socialism in Africa. Does he read anything? Lenin argued in *Imperialism* that decolonisation would lead not to socialism in Africa but to a crisis in the metropolitan countries and thus to a proletarian revolution there. What however happened was that imperialism itself was happy enough to decolonise once it realised that it was cheaper and more efficient to get the African bourgeoisie to police local exploitation. Obviously (and we had better say this before JG gets another red herring) the imperialists did not think of this overnight but actually were prompted by national struggles in places like Algeria etc. But why were these struggles so difficult to suppress? We suggest you need look no further than the aid the USSR

and USA furthered to them in order to advance their own interests.

Lets just finish off by disposing of some more of JG's detritus. He accuses we internationalists of being indifferent to national oppression. This is untrue. What we have to recognise is the fact that national oppression can only be solved by the proletariat. The bourgeoisie certainly have no interest in alleviating it. What we have to point out that every case of national oppression is actually against the proletariat. Take the example JG so kindly furnishes us with - the Palestinians. Which Palestinians are oppressed? The millionaire backers and leaders of the PLO with their mansions in New York, Beirut and Paris or the proletariat who live in the West Bank and Gaza? Which Palestinians have paid the heaviest for the policies of the PLO? The proletarians who worked in Kuwait before the Gulf War or the high command in Tunisia? Until JG recognises that all oppression is only aimed at the proletarian section of any nationality he will never be in any position to recognise that our "ideology is proletarian internationalism". Instead he will be mouthing slogans which only give sustenance to the national bourgeoisie in each imperialist conflict and help keep workers apart. If communists don't take up the class interests of the workers then they will be taken up by the reactionary ideologies of the likes of Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

JG is right in one thing. There are no short cuts to socialism. However to get onto the high road of proletarian revolution we must first turn around and escape from the cul-de-sac of the past. How bankrupt JG is can be seen that he confuses his own reactionary formulae for those of

MARx and Lenin. When he states that the founders of scientific socialism stood for the right to self-determination even under socialism we have arrived at the full realisation of his illiteracy. The Communist Manifesto states that national frontiers will be abolished (not reinforced with new ones!) and Marx stated elsewhere that "the proletariat are the negation of all nationality". He might be thinking of Lenin in 1917 accepting national self-determination in Finland etc but then in 1917-8 Russia was not socialist and in any case there was little that could be done there in the face of German imperialism. None of this is sufficient evidence for JG's amendment to the communist programme. And this is really the nub of the issue. The defeat of the Russian Revolution, the rise of Stalinism and then Maoism which did not even arise from a proletarian revolution have been identified as communism by the bourgeoisie for so long that many cannot sort out that which is proletarian from that which is not. All this baggage has to be rejected. There is a tendency which has stood out against the counter-revolution, drawing the revolutionary lessons from the defeat of the Russian Revolution. That is the internationalist communist left, mainly based on those comrades who founded the Communist party of Italy in 1921 and then fought against the degeneration of the Comintern, against Stalinism and Trotskyism. Up to now it has been swimming against the current but the collapse of Stalinism has opened up a new interest in its ideas. If the present generation of revolutionaries can bury the past it will be the basis of the future world party of the proletariat. Needless to say, the JG's of this world have no place in it. ◇

Re: What happened in Indonesia

by Adolfo Olaechea, April, 3 1996, hariate@easynet.co.uk

Below are some comments to the Marxism internet mailing list by Adolfo, a Maoist and a supporter of the Communist Party of Peru, sometimes called Sendero Luminoso. I excerpted these comments because they illustrate an extreme opposite viewpoint on national liberation struggles to the views of the "left communists." Jack Hill

Of course, when a Communist Party has to participate in a national liberation struggle (or bourgeois democratic revolution) it must perforce subordinate the immediate class struggle of the proletariat to the national interest (of an oppressed country).

That is the only way to actually preserve the class's long term interests, not only in the interest of the proletariat of the oppressed country concerned, but also of the

proletariat as an international class, in particular that of the proletariat of the oppressor country involved, whose imperialist bourgeoisie would result weakened the deeper and broader such a bourgeois democratic or national movement turns out to be.

If you do not have an independent nation, how can you have socialism? Socialism combined with subjection to imperialism? Socialism in a dependent country, subjected to supervision by the World Bank and the Trusts?

If the proletariat can not "subordinate" their immediate class interests to those who are more fundamental at the concrete moment of the revolutionary process, when judged from the standpoint of the long term interests of the class, how come the Anti-fascist struggle?

How come the defence of the Republic in Spain? Only
Continued on page 14, see **Maoist**

Reply to J.S. Daborn on the right of nations to self-determination

By Mark, Communist Voice Organization,
March 21, 1996

On March 22, J.S. Daborn responded via the Internet to an article by Joseph Green that appeared in *Communist Voice*, vol.2, no.2. The article by Green, entitled "Marxism and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination" exposed the "left" communist views that deny that the right to self-determination of nations and the national liberation struggle have any worthwhile role to play in the epoch of imperialism.

J.S. Daborn's response is a perfect example of how the anti-Marxist trend of "left" communism winds up in a "socialist-colonialist" policy. It confirms precisely the point raised by Joseph Green's article. JSD boasts that his "left" communist political trend was "the most consistent opponent" of "activists [who] eagerly supported national liberation movements." Daborn, the so-called "internationalist," not only takes a stand against all the revolutionary-democratic and anti-colonial struggles of the last hundred years or so. Daborn denounces the very idea of building a mass movement or having any mass organizations whatsoever (that is, unless they are so unstable that they quickly collapse!). For instance, JSD writes that "the building of mass movements, trade unions and the like...is living in the last century" and the idea of "mass organs of long duration (such as unions)" is based on "the illusion of all socialists [sometime in the past — Mark] that capitalism would happily allow us to build up mass organs under its sway without attempting to recuperate them for capital." And while denying the mass movements, Daborn swears that Green errs when he describes Daborn-type views as rejecting every struggle but the direct struggle for socialism!

JSD wants revolution all right. So long as it can take place in a never, never world where mass organizations are automatically immune from bourgeois influence, where the task of organizing the class struggle can take place without any possible setbacks, negative influences or "attempts to recuperate them for capital." JSD wants organization, provided it can take place in the pristine circumstances of his imagination, not in the real world. And since the world has not yet provided the oppressed with any examples of such idyllic conditions, JSD is upset over the very existence of mass movements, at least if they have any degree of organization to them. For Daborn, one day the ultimate movement will arise and all the capitalists will be swept away the world over. Until then, JSD holds

that organizing the masses is simply playing the enemy's game.

JSD is free to stand for running away from all the problems that any attempt to organize the workers entails (and not just the workers, but other oppressed masses including the vast poor peasantry that still exists in the world). But its really funny when JSD labels those criticizing such views as religious zealots. After all, it's JSD who pontificates against "movements" and "organizations" of the oppressed in the name of the Great Judgment Day when, suddenly, out of the blue, with no previous experience in battle, with no stable organizations, the proletariat will appear in pure form from the heavens, slay the beast of capital the world over and go instantly to classless society. Let's just hope the bourgeoisie offers no resistance, that no problems occur along the way and that classless and stateless society is achieved the day after the world uprising lest the twists and turns of struggle lead, as JSD swears they must, to corruption and defeat.

Daborn's ostrich-like view of imperialism

JSD's general cursing of movements applies first and foremost to the movements against national oppression. JSD begins his discourse on the subject by lecturing about how we all must take into account the features of capitalism in its imperialist stage. But it's JSD who's playing the ostrich here. JSD is so far removed from an examination of the actual situation under imperialism that he advances the proposition that "no such struggle existed" in the imperialist epoch which "lead to the expansion of capital." JSD, who is so concerned with the actual conditions in the historical era of imperialism, cannot even acknowledge the huge and ongoing growth of capitalism that has taken place all over the world in the last century.

And here's some other little details the significance of which JSD does not comprehend. Imperialism did not merely spread capitalist relations and exploitation. It also imposed direct political rule in the colonies, carried out extreme racist policies, deprived the native population of all rights, practiced semi-slave exploitation (presumably, JSD wouldn't countenance trade unions even in the colonies!), plundered the natural resources and the economy at will, etc. Such oppression has been in addition to the "normal" economic exploitation of the workers and makes this exploitation more severe. JSD considers the anti-

colonial fight against this sort of imperialist oppression some kind of detour from the real interests of the proletariat, however. He claims that the fight against national oppression is merely a game for the bourgeoisie, something the workers dare not soil their hands with. True, JSD later seems to contradict himself, stating that only the proletariat can fight national oppression. The resolution of this seeming contradiction for the "left" communists like JSD, is that his version of the proletarian struggle against national oppression is confined to the world socialist insurrection of the future while various struggles against oppression today they consider to be playing into the hands of the bourgeoisie.

What the stand of the PLO shows

JSD raises the example of the "millionaire backers and leaders of the PLO". But why is this supposed to discredit the idea of a Palestinian fight against national oppression or the idea of the right of nations to self-determination? JSD is only slapping himself in the face with this example. The PLO has sold out the Palestinian struggle for democratic rights. This is why the Israeli rulers and Clinton pat Arafat on the head. The PLO, the main political representative of the Palestinian bourgeoisie, has betrayed the masses on the question of national oppression. For JSD, however, since the PLO leaders live high on the hog, the Palestinian struggle against national oppression itself is discredited. Never mind that the masses rose up against the Israeli occupation despite the PLO leadership. For JSD, the uprising of the masses and the PLO capitulation are one and the same thing, the despised national liberation struggle. And by equating the fight against national oppression with the rich PLO leaders, JSD actually prettifies them.

Is there such a thing as national oppression?

JSD is also wrong when he asserts that "all oppression is only aimed at the proletarian section of any nationality." Indeed it obliterates the very concept of national oppression. If all oppression is directed only against a certain class, then what basis is there for talk of oppression on the basis of nationality, even for the proletarian section? Can one imagine a society where bigotry against workers of a certain race or nationality was widespread, but cases of racism against shopkeepers or students or professionals of that race or nationality were unknown? It's absurd. If a black worker is denied a job because the employer is a racist, does this mean the worker was mistreated because he was a worker?!

Certainly the toilers pay the heaviest price for racism and national oppression. But, in the first place the toilers includes not only the proletariat. National oppression hits the peasant masses very hard too, not just the proletariat. And in the second place, while the exploitative interests of the bourgeois sections of an oppressed nationality push it toward reconciliation with the dominant bourgeoisie, its absurd to deny that the bourgeois sections can't be denied their democratic rights. The black bourgeoisie of South Africa, for example, was denied political rights until recently. Nelson Mandela, whose ANC engineered a reformist solution to apartheid, spent several decades in the white racist jails. And Mandela is certainly the foremost political representative of the black bourgeoisie in South Africa. Or take the Palestinian bourgeoisie in the occupied territories. Even though the PLO leaders have grown fat and become the whiphand of the Israeli rulers, it is undeniable that Israeli oppression has imposed all sorts of restrictions on Palestinian businesses, stolen the water resources of Palestinian farmers, etc. The PLO deal with the Israelis did not even get many of the rights needed by significant sections of Palestinian business.

Meanwhile, Jim Crow segregation in the U.S. deprived blacks of all classes of their rights and most certainly was an impediment to the class interests of both the black proletariat and the black bourgeoisie. The overcoming of this American version of apartheid hardly marked the end of racism in the U.S. nor could it prevent capitalism from keeping large sections of the black population on the verge of ruin. But the elimination of some of the most degrading forms of racism was an important advance. The extension of democratic rights opened up certain job opportunities for the black workers, opened up some organizing opportunities, broke down many walls between black and white workers, and it led to a clearer class differentiation among blacks as the bourgeois section of the black community became more developed, reflected in such things as the rise of black mayors in major cities. This is an example of how overcoming racism against black people in general helped provide the conditions for a sharper class struggle.

Did imperialism equalize the conditions in all countries?

A serious examination of the actual conditions under imperialism in this century would also recognize that the advent of imperialism did not mean that all countries were at the same level of development, nor that the class relations were in all places similar. Consequently, the course of struggle that arose in response to the conditions

in each country would also vary. In the historical stage called imperialism, there have not only been highly-developed capitalist-imperialist powers. There have been countries where modern class differentiation was little developed, countries where capitalist relations were ensnared in semi-feudal forms, whole nations enslaved by colonialism, etc. And whether JSD likes it or not, this meant that the revolutionary movements in the 20th century would not all have socialism as their direct goal, but would go through a variety of stages before the struggle for socialism would come to the fore. For instance, the fact that hundreds of millions of peasants still lived under semi-feudal conditions this century, meant that the issue of an agrarian revolution that gave land to the peasants still represented progress in much of the world. JSD's "examination" of the world consists of chanting that imperialism has spread its influence around the world while ignoring the actual results of this process on the social systems in various countries at any given time during this century.

Daborn's socialism, colonial-style

Of course, when the workers actually come to power, JSD is not about to grant national rights, either. To justify this, JSD tries to make Marx and Lenin in JSD's own image. Why they did not recognize a "right to self-determination" under socialism JSD contends. And the Communist Manifesto talks about national frontiers being abolished. But neither Marx, nor Engels, nor Lenin, thought that the victorious proletariat could immediately abolish different nationalities and all national borders, or that nations enslaved by the former big power rulers should be denied the right to decide if they wish to be independent or not. See, for instance, Engels' stand that the British workers should allow the British colony of India its freedom, should they come to power. By denying the right to self-determination of nations under socialism, JSD legitimizes the national oppression carried out by the former rulers.

JSD, while portraying Lenin as an enemy of the right of nations to self-determination under socialism, admits that Lenin recognized the independence of Finland. But that doesn't count, protests JSD, because Lenin was allegedly really just handing over Finland to Germany! Not only is this a lie, but it's striking that while JSD thinks Lenin's policy on the national question was simply one of cynical maneuvering, he nonetheless voices no objection. For JSD, the fate of whole nations (proletariat included) can just be decided by whatever is convenient for the "Marxists" in the dominant country. JSD also argues against the right to self-determination of nations under

socialism on the grounds that Russian revolution was never socialist. For JSD, when the proletarian revolution comes to power, it means the immediate end of separate nations. And since Lenin did not immediately decree the end of the separate nations that had been annexed by the Czarist empire, JSD considers this a sign that the principles of a socialist society were not present. Here JSD betrays his confusion of the Czarist method of unity of nations with Marxist methods. JSD is denouncing Lenin's policy of voluntary unity, unity based on the recognition of the right to self-determination, with bludgeoning the oppressed nations into submission.

Is the liberation struggle an imperialist plot?

JSD grudgingly concedes that the crumbling of the old colonial system was "prompted by national struggles". But that doesn't meet with JSD's approval. JSD can only see the efforts of the U.S. and Soviet imperialists to interfere in the liberation struggles. What's noteworthy is why JSD complains about imperialist meddling. JSD does not attack the imperialists for denying the right to self-determination, nor show how imperialist intrigues in the revolutionary struggles undermine and subvert the liberation movements, but to complain that imperialist "aid" is "why these struggles [were] so difficult to suppress"! In JSD's view, the national liberation movements are just creatures of this or that imperialist. And thus JSD considers it an "internationalist" duty to fret over the difficulties of suppressing the liberation struggle. Just as JSD in general rails against mass movements and organizations of the oppressed in this century, on the grounds that the capitalists will try to subvert them, so now the efforts of imperialism to subvert the liberation movement becomes an excuse to "repress" the liberation struggle. I suppose JSD would not hail the imperialist powers for crushing the liberation struggles. But JSD hold that it is the job of the proletariat to rail against the liberation movements.

Kneeling before almighty imperialism

But one question, JSD. Will not the bourgeoisie try to subvert the proletarian uprising and the organizations that try to bring it about? Why if organization and movements for more humble goals are futile because the bourgeoisie will fight against it, then the fury of the bourgeoisie against organizing for the proletarian insurrection will be a million times greater. Shouldn't the direct struggle for socialism be surrendered with even more determination than less ambitious struggle? Or take the various sponta-

neous outbursts that come up? Since they come up under capitalism, they can't possibly be immune from bad influences either. So why shouldn't unorganized struggles be cast aside with organized ones?

JSD's problem is that he passes from recognition of the power of imperialism to considering all struggle against it (save the socialist uprising) to be futility. JSD looks at the betrayal of the workers by the anti-Marxist social-democratic trade union leaders during WWI. And what does he conclude? Not that the workers need genuine class organizations (including trade unions), but that the workers should give up organizing mass movements and trade unions. And why should they give them up? Because imperialism will not allow mass movements, not allow real workers organizations. JSD has found the perfect way to avoid the difficulties and possible setbacks of struggle — abstain from the mass struggle.

Should we fight for the best conditions for the class struggle?

JSD's trump card is that every struggle that does not achieve socialism leaves some sort of system of exploitation in place. True. But to reduce the Marxism's stand on the class struggle to that is to distort it beyond recognition. Marxism calls attention to the fact that no democratic demand can overcome class exploitation. But Marxism also shows how the democratic demands clear the path for struggle against economic exploitation. No Marxist would deny that only socialism can end exploitation. But Marxism certainly does care about the particular conditions under which the struggle takes place. The proletariat cares about whether it has more or less political freedom, whether it is exploited in "normal" fashion or in chains, or in concentration camps under a police state. The proletariat cares whether capitalist relations are tangled up with semi-feudal relations or accompanied by virulent racist and nationalist oppression, the torture of immigrants, etc. If the workers fail to fight these outrages they allow the bourgeoisie to impede the class struggle. If the proletariat does not fight such oppression today, they will be driven into the ground, unfit to wage the great class battles of the future. And when JSD pontificates against mass movements and stable organization, he is not saving the workers for the "pure" struggle, not saving Marxism from the swamp of opportunism. He is assisting the bourgeois onslaught against the masses.

Turning *What Is To Be Done* upside-down

In passing, it's funny that JSD tries to back up his

position with reference to Lenin's *What Is To Be Done*. For the very "swamp" that Lenin cautioned against falling into is the swamp inhabited by JSD. In this work, Lenin was arguing against those Russian "Marxists" who failed to see that the proletariat would commit a grave blunder by thinking that it could stand aside from the struggles against oppression other than the exploitation of the worker by the capitalist. Lenin here argues against the narrow view of the proletarian struggle by the "economists" that negates the need for the workers to lead the struggle against all oppression, and in the particular conditions of Russia at the time, the democratic struggle against the autocracy. Lenin called on the Russian workers of the time to oppose every abuse of the autocracy against the peasantry, the students and liberal intelligentsia, etc. Lenin talked about the workers being the vanguard of the democratic revolution. He states: "The point we were discussing was the possible and necessary participation of various social strata in the overthrow of the autocracy; and not only are we able, but it is our bounden duty, to guide these 'activities of the various opposition strata' if we desire to be the 'vanguard.' (Chapter III, Section E.: "The working class as vanguard fighter for democracy".) And when years later, Lenin criticized Luxemburg, Pannekoek, and other "lefts" of his day for opposing the right of nations to self-determination, he rightly labeled their views "imperialist economism". In this way, Lenin linked the views of the "lefts" who negated the right to political independence in the era of imperialism to the "economists" of old who shunted the need for the worker class to be the foremost champions of democracy.

Ideological support for genocide

In closing, a note of the situation in the former Yugoslavia. JSD has figured out that the bourgeoisies in the various republics used nationalism to divide the workers. But what's amazing is that JSD thinks this is an argument against recognizing the right to self-determination of nations. Thus, when Joseph Green says recognition of this right is not the cause of the problems in the former Yugoslavia, JSD attacks Green for supporting the crimes of the bourgeoisie and blaming the workers for these crimes.

JSD refuses to recognize that the denial by the Serb bourgeoisie of the right to self-determination is also bourgeois nationalism. And the Croatian bourgeoisie is not guilty of recognizing the right of self-determination of nations, but of only recognizing this right for itself, not Bosnia. Denial of the right of self-determination of

Continued on page 6, see **Mark to Daborn**

More Debat on the "Middle Strata"

Introduction

by Jake

For some time now leftists have been debating the meaning of the changes in the class composition of the industrial countries. A large decrease in the proportion of manufacturing workers, along with an increase in service sector employment and the growth of the professional strata, has led some to question or to renounce the traditional view that the industrial proletariat will be the leading and/or the main force in a socialist revolution. Still others argue that revolution and socialism are now unattainable as the producer class is or will become too small and weak to overthrow capital. Moreover, these changes in the workforce are taking place in the context of a general demoralization within the left and a crisis of revolutionary theory.

The toilers are certainly in a weak position today. What is the cause of our weakness and what should we do about it? Does that mean socialist revolution is no longer a historical possibility? No way.

The contradictions of capitalism remain and are growing. Sooner or later there will be crises and upheavals. This may not seem very likely today. Tabolt, for example, decries "official optimism" and insists that it will be decades before class struggle resumes. When we look at the horror that is Yugoslavia, or the right wing threat in Russia (not to mention the rise of Gingrich and Buchanan in the U.S.), or the ebbing of revolutionary movements in Central America and South Africa, it is clear that things will get worse before they get better.

But capitalism is still unstable. For example, despite growth of the US economy, most people are doing worse and the concentration of wealth has grown to an astounding level. We have to look carefully at what is going on, at the forces behind the trends as well as the current state of affairs.

There is a connection between the political weakness of the working class and reindustrialization. The intense automation of production in manufacturing and agriculture has reduced the percentage of the workforce that is directly involved in production and the accompanying downsizing has disorganized many of the organized. This will certainly continue for some time. For example, 30% of the machine tools in Japan are the computerized CNC type while in the United States only 7% are CNC. The U.S. is accelerating its implementation of CNC technol-

ogy and in both countries, CNC automation will continue to replace manual operations. The result will be a net loss of manufacturing jobs as CNC implementation eliminates more jobs than it creates. Other sectors of manufacturing are similarly continuing to automate. There is no doubt that the percentage of the workforce in manufacturing will decrease further.

In my opinion this makes the outbreak of class struggle less likely in one sense -- the shifting employment scene disorganizes workers and workplaces -- while in other ways it portends the inevitable struggle. Wealth is becoming more concentrated and workers keep losing ground. When struggle does break out the workers in manufacturing may be fewer, but they potentially can control production just as they did in earlier periods.

When the inevitable struggle does break out, will the industrial proletariat be too small or too weak to lead service workers and other toilers in a class struggle? And will it be able to develop a class struggle into a successful revolution?

Why not? It did so before. In the October Revolution in Russia a numerically small working class rallied around itself a huge peasantry and led them to victory. There is every reason to believe that a united class of production workers (in factories and farms) could lead their working class brethren in the service sectors and rally to the cause of the proletariat significant sections of the "middle strata."

Which brings us to the current stage of CWVTJ's debate on the working class. In the last issue we presented an article by Peter Tabolt of the Boston Communist Study Group regarding the "middle strata" and an opposing article by myself which attacked his views. I argued that Tabolt's class analysis was wrong and that his political conclusions were liquidationist.

We continue in this issue with 4 articles. First, the second half of Tabolt's article on the middle strata; next, another reply from myself refuting Tabolt; third, Tabolt's letter of 3/22/96 replying to my criticism in CWVTJ #9; and fourth, a few comments on Peter's letter.

The reader may have to put up with a certain amount of acrimony and self-righteousness that infects ex-MLP circles but the material is worth reading. The issues at stake aren't simply the views of a small study group in Boston or a small journal in Chicago. What's at stake is the development of an accurate class analysis, an analysis needed for the development of revolutionary theory to guide the toilers in their inevitable struggle against capital.

Note that the debate materials presented here do not necessarily use the same arguments or follow the same reasoning as other left debates on the nature and compo-

sition of the working class. Nonetheless, they all connect to the questions of whether socialist revolution is possible or not and who will lead it. ◇

The Second half of:

Theories and evolution of the salaried middle strata — part I

by Peter Tabolt, Boston Communist Study Group
email: pt1947@llbean.ultranet.com

Lenin

Lenin is the other great Marxist who has influenced views of the Left on the question of the new middle class. Lenin supported Kautsky in his debate with Bernstein and Kautsky's views on the question.

In the 1890's Lenin had carried on a debate with the Narodniks on the role of the intelligentsia. He gave classical view that the Russian intelligentsia as a strata was a bourgeois and petit bourgeois intelligentsia. Thus Lenin wrote:

"It was a mistake that arose naturally at a time when the class antagonisms of bourgeois society were still quite undeveloped and were held down by serfdom, when the latter was evoking the unanimous protest and struggle of the entire intelligentsia, the creating the illusion that there was something particularly democratic about our intelligentsia, and that there was no profound gulf between the ideas of the liberals and the socialists. Now that economic development has advanced.... The composition of the "intelligentsia" is assuming just as clear an outline as that of society engaged in the production of material values; while the latter is ruled and governed by the capitalist, among the former the fashion is set by the rapidly growing horde of careerist and bourgeois hirelings, an intelligentsia" contented and satisfied, a stranger to all wild fantasy and very well aware of what they want" (Lenin Collected Works ,Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1969 v1 pp. 294-295).

In responding to the Kautsky Bernstein debate Lenin endorsed Kautsky's views on the middle nature of this strata as well as the tendency to proletarianization.

"The chapter on the "new middle estate" is likewise extremely interesting and for us Russians, particularly instructive. If Bernstein had merely wanted to say that in place of the declining petty producers a new middle estate, the intelligentsia, is appearing, he would be perfectly correct, says Kautsky, pointing out that he himself

noted the importance of this phenomenon several years before. In all spheres of people's labor, capitalism increases the number of office and professional workers with particular rapidity, and makes a growing demand for intellectuals. The latter occupy a special position among the other classes, attaching themselves partly to the bourgeoisie by their connections, their outlooks, etc, and partly to the wage workers as capitalism increasingly deprives the intellectual of his independent position, converts him into a hired worker and threatens to lower his living standard. The transitory, unstable and contradictory position of that stratum of society now under discussion is reflected in the particularly widespread diffusion in its midst of hybrid, eclectic views, a farrago of contrasting principles and ideas, an urge to rise verbally to the higher spheres and to conceal the conflicts between the historical groups of the population with phrases, all of which Marx lashed with his sarcasm a half century ago." (Note: The above quote is from a review of Kautsky's book: Bernstein and the Social-Democratic Program, a Counter Critique. Bernstein und das sozialdemokratische Programm, Eine Antikritik. LCW v4. p.201-202.)

Lenin on Bribery

Lenin's further contribution to the analysis of this strata was his view that the office, professional workers along with the upper section of skilled workers and the classical petit bourgeoisie were bribed out of the superprofits the big imperialist bourgeoisie made on its monopoly position and its plunder of the colonies and poor countries.

"...Firstly chauvinism and opportunism in the labor movement have the same economic basis: the alliance of a numerically small upper stratum of the proletariat and the petit bourgeoisie—who get but morsels of the privileges of their own national capital — against the masses of the proletarians, the masses of the toilers and the

oppressed in general” (LCW v.21 p. 244).

“The bourgeoisie of an imperialist “Great” Power can economically bribe the upper strata of “its” workers by spending on this a hundred million or so francs a year, for its superprofits most likely amount to a thousand million. And how this little sop is divided among the labor ministers, “labor representatives” (remember Engels splendid analysis of the term), labor members of war industries committees, labor officials, workers belonging to narrow craft unions, office employees etc. etc. is a secondary question” (LCW V. 23 p. 115).

Lenin has a major point here, the connection of imperialism to the new middle strata and to the upper sections of the working class. But it seems an overstatement to assign the political stand of these strata so strongly to bribery from imperialist superprofits. That such bribery exists and is a factor there is no doubt. But the market position of skilled and mental labor, the historical prejudices in favor of mental and skilled labor, the fact that the professional and managerial workers perform functions with a contradictory class role have a profound impact on the class outlook of the middle strata regardless of superprofit bribery. It would seem Lenin here was speaking as an agitator in the middle of a big fight emphasizing the fact that was important, not trying to be theoretically all sided.

The main point Lenin was making of the upper sections of the working class, the office workers and the petit bourgeoisie forming the social base of opportunism in the socialist movement has been born out many times. An interesting statistical confirmation of this was provided by Schorske in his classic study of the split in German Social Democracy (German Social Democracy, 1905-1917, The Development of the Great Schism. Harper Touchbooks, 1972 pp. 136-145.) which showed that opportunist voting patterns at German Social Democratic Party Congresses came from the districts with a large peasant and small proprietor electorate and from the largest cities which in Germany were commercial and administrative centers with a large white collar workforce (which at that time was very much a middle strata) and white collar membership in the party. The medium sized cities was where the mass production factory workers were located and they were staunch centers of the German Left.

Lenin overestimates the lower office workers

In the period just before the October revolution Lenin put forward views on the office workers that emphasized the aspect of proletarianization. In fact it was a high estimate of the degree of proletarianization of this strata that was a major part of the basis for Lenin’s confidence in the feasibility of running the economy through workers control plus soviets.

“The chief difficulty facing the proletarian revolution is the establishment on a countrywide scale of the most precise and most conscientious accounting and control, of workers control of production and distribution of goods....

“...If it is the proletariat, if we are speaking of a proletarian state, that is, of the proletarian dictatorship, then workers control can become the country wide, all embracing, omnipresent, most precise and most conscientious accounting of the production and distribution of goods...

“The big banks are the ‘state apparatus’ which we need to bring about socialism, and which we take ready made from capitalism; our job is to lop off what capitalistically mutates this excellent apparatus, to make it even bigger, even more democratic, even more comprehensive. Quantity will be transformed into quality. A single state bank ... with branches in every rural district, in every factory, will constitute as much as 9 tenths of the socialist apparatus. This will be countrywide book-keeping, country-wide accounting of the production and distribution of goods, this will be, so to speak, something in the nature of a skeleton of socialist society.

“We can “lay hold of” and “set in motion” this “state apparatus” (which is not fully a state apparatus under capitalism, but will be so with us under socialism) at one stroke, by a single decree, because the actual work of book-keeping, control, registering, accounting and counting is performed by employees the majority of whom themselves lead a proletarian or semi-proletarian existence.

“By a single decree of the proletarian government these employees can and must be transferred to the status of state employees...

“As for the higher officials, of whom there are very few, but who gravitate toward the capitalists, they will have to be dealt with the same way as the capitalists, i.e., ‘severely’...

“We can do this, for it is merely a question of breaking the resistance of an insignificant minor-

ity of the population, literally a handful of people, over each of whom the employee's unions, the trade unions, the consumers societies and the Soviets will institute such supervision that every Tit Titych will be surrounded as the French were at Sedan. We know these Tit Tityches by name: we have only to consult the lists of directors, board members, large shareholders, etc. There are several hundred, at most several thousand of them in the whole of Russia, and the proletarian state with the apparatus of the Soviets, of the employee's unions etc, will be able to appoint ten or even a hundred supervisors to each of them, so that instead of "breaking resistance it may be possible, by means of workers control to make all resistance impossible." (LCW v.26 p. 104-107)

But Lenin it turned out was overly optimistic in these passages about the degree to which the office workers, even the lowest sections would, actively join the proletariat. In actual fact they did not. Even the telephone operators opposed Soviet power and refused to cooperate. As a result to get the cooperation of this strata, the Bolsheviks had to bribe the upper strata of experts and managers. Workers control and red terror was able to break the resistance of the upper managers and bourgeoisie, but it was unable to render all resistance impossible and thus secure cooperation without high salaries etc. And these concessions to the experts made maintaining a high level of mass involvement all the more difficult.

After the seizure of power, there are numerous quotes in Lenin's works about the vacillating nature of the working intelligentsia who are willing to cooperate with the Soviet power when it is strong and who swing to the counterrevolution or whine when things go badly in the civil war.

It is most unfortunate that any serious work by organized Marxist parties on the question of the middle strata or even changes in class structure stops after the WWI, October revolution era. From this point as far as we can gather the theoretical work on this question is left to the academic sociologists, of Marxist, social democratic, neo weberian and other ideological persuasions. From here we will review some of the highlights of this research, theorizing and debate.

Research and Debate in German Academic Circles 1900-1940

Some of the most useful and interesting research and debate took place in German academic circles between the turn of the century and the 1930's. This debate is useful

not only for the ideas developed (many of which were proved wrong by subsequent developments) but for the picture of development of the middle strata and its role that the research and debate gives.

Prior to WWI German non Marxist academicians emphasized the importance of the peasants, artisans, shop keepers and independent professions, i.e. the old classical Marxist petit-bourgeoisie. After 1918, this concern with non-proletarian elements, focused increasingly on the roles of the middle class in salaried employment. Important in this shift of emphasis were Oswald Spengler, Ernst Niekishch and numerous contributors to the periodical *Die Tat*. The "Tat" circle published numerous investigations into the position of the new middle class, including their relationship to fascism and to the working class.

What united the theorists of the right was their conception that the new middle class would act as a check against the polarization of society. They saw the salaried workers as a third force, independent of both capitalists and workers. Mediating between increasingly concentrated capital on one hand and labor on the other, the new middle class would bring an end to the instability of the social system.

Within this perspective the position of the salaried worker was considered to be fundamentally different from that of the manual worker, because the former performed what were seen as delegated entrepreneurial functions. The influence of this view was very widespread among German white collar workers. The D.H.V by far the largest and most right wing of the organizations of salaried workers was particularly active in promoting this view.

The debate on white collar workers was also reflected in academic sociological circles. One of the most interesting of the characters in the debate was Emily Lederer. In 1912 Lederer wrote a book part of which was later translated into English under the title of *The Problem of the Modern Salaried Employee: Its Theoretical and Statistical Basis*. (WPA Project no. 165-6999-6027, New York, 1937. Cited by Carter in *Capitalism, Class Conflict and the New Middle Class*.)

In *The Problem of the Modern Salaried Employee* Lederer shared the judgement of Bernsteinians that Marxism oversimplified the stratification of classes. He admitted that there was a process of concentration of capital going on which reduced the number of employers and increased the number of workers. But that the process had other consequences as well namely emergence of a class of technicians and who could not categorically be classified as proletarians or as employers. In addition a socially analogous strata of salaried workers had emerged in commerce and in government.

Lederer defined membership to this strata as people who although wage laborers had work which was more intellectual than manual but more definitive for Lederer was their middle position between the industrial proletariat and the bourgeoisie. "This middle position between the two classes— a negative characteristic—rather than definite technical functions, is the social mark of the salaried employees and establishes on their own consciousness and in the estimation of the community."

Lederer did not deny that the salaried workers were far from a homogeneous lot or that there was a tendency on the edges for this strata to be absorbed into the proletariat on the bottom and into the bourgeoisie on the top. Nevertheless he felt that these tendencies did not preclude by any means the possibility that salaried employees would more and more become an independent group, not only on account of their increasing numbers, but as a result of their growing consciousness of their special interests.

Thus Lederer's original views coincided a great deal with those of Die Tat.

Then in 1926 Lederer together with Jacob Marschak wrote another work "Der Gnaw Mittelstand" in which while repeating much of the earlier analysis stressing the common social position between the two major classes of the time proletariat and bourgeoisie, Lederer and Marschak this time give a different description of where these strata are going. Lederer was very much influenced in this second work by the radicalized mood in German society following 1918 and the early Weimar Republic.

Lederer and Marschak noted that prior to 1918 the salaried workers had primarily come from the "bourgeois strata" small proprietors, independent professional strata, ruined businessmen etc. According to Lederer and Marschak "...[until] recently, it was possible for the salaried employee to attain a position consistent with his abilities or to become himself an independent. Such considerations foster among the employees those tendencies which seek to check the material and social degradation of their class and aim at the preservation of their middle class standards of living and prestige." (from Carter: Capitalism, Class Conflict... p 58)

As the salaried employees began to organize, they had to acknowledge their status as employees, as wage laborers. Thus the demands of the group had to take the form of a labor policy but with a distinctly middle class character—such as a demand for a separate salaried employees state pension system, abrogating clauses in contracts prohibiting people from going to work for rival firms, safeguarding employees property rights to their inventions etc. Lederer noted a wide variation in the degree to which various sections organized separately for their interests as

a middle class or strata, but pointed out that even the technicians who were most influenced by the labor movement staunchly rejected any cooperation with the manual workers trade union movement as well as socialist ideology.

But after the War and the crisis of 1918 the economic and social conditions that had underpinned this separate middle class movement were dramatically undermined.

"Proletarianization of the middle-class strata, which went on at an unprecedented pace, and the raising of the social status of the 'manual' worker, which brought him steadily closer to the employee, proved stronger than any class tradition. The economic conditions, the political changes, the recognition of the trade unions and the abolition of all traditional conceptions of the social order forced the employee organizations to adopt the aims and methods of the labor unions. ...

"The transformation of the whole employee movement after 1918 had the additional effect of shifting the balance of power to the more radical employee associations and of causing further changes in their policies. Such changes were the replacement, in associations of the policy of 'harmony' by a trade union policy, and the infiltration of the formerly rejected socialist doctrines into the radical organizations...What is still more important, activities characteristic of the policy of labor unions— such as collective wage agreements and 'organized labor's last resort', the strike— were finally adopted and practiced in the manner of labor organizations." "De Gnaw Mittlestand" by Lederer and Marschak 1926 cited in: Bob Carters Capitalism, class conflict, and the New Middle Class)

Lederer did not regard these changes as temporary effects of the immediate post war period, but regarded the allegiance of the office employees to the working class movement to be part of a long term developmental process.

"An intermediate position between the classes is no longer possible and the fact of being employed in a dependent capacity triumphs over all class and traditional restraints. The adoption by the salaried employees and public officials of the aims and methods of labor... are expressive of the fact that a single stratum of gainfully employed (if not a single organization) is in the process of formation." *ibid.*

No sooner however did Lederer and Marschak make such predictions than the new middle strata swung more than any other strata in society behind the Nazis. In 1940

Lederer wrote another work in which he returned to his original position of seeing the new middle strata as a stabilizing force for capitalism. Lederer's flip flops in assessment of the new middle strata mirror the swings of this strata with the balance of class forces in Germany. His errors highlight the dangers of taking any transient position of any middle strata as its permanent trajectory. The most prominent characteristic of a middle strata is its propensity to vacillate to go with those who appear to be winning.

Probably the most balanced of the German academic theorists was Hans Speir who pointed out that while economically the salaried employees were members of the working class i.e. wage laborers, they were separated from the manual workers and played a middle contradictory role. Speir was an academic who sympathized with the SDP in the 20's and 30's.

His work *German White Collar Workers and the Rise of Hitler* written in 1933 and published in English in 1986 by Yale University Press, is very useful for getting a picture of the development of various sectors and strata of the white collar workers and of the dominant psychology of German society in which these developments take place. As well Speir traces the changing political, economic and ideological attitudes of different sections through the first three decades of the century.

Speir raises a number of things that tend to separate the white collar workers from the manual workers:

1. The privilege of superior education, though how superior varies greatly.

2. Sharing in the authority of the employer. As capitalism developed the role of the capitalist in production and commerce was replaced by organizations of employees. These employees to one degree or another share in the authority and prestige of the employer. There is of course a tendency with the growth of the white collar employee strata for its proletarianization that more of the functions become routinized, the employees become extremely replaceable and their wages fall to the level of the manual workers and sometimes below. Speir also points out that this tendency to proletarianization is generally associated with feminization as well. Thus with proletarianization for the lower section this authority and prestige becomes hugely diluted. Meanwhile however he points out that there is a significant countertrend: that the growth of the white collar strata creates new opportunities to rise into managerial, specialist or supervisory functions for male employees usually of more middle class backgrounds. (At this time the lower strata of the white collar workers were being heavily or even predominantly recruited from the working class -eg retail clerks, office machine opera-

tors, some what smaller degree among stenographers, technicians, and higher level clerks. But engineers, professional employees and government bureaucrats and higher managers were still overwhelmingly recruited from bourgeois, independent producer or professional, or official classes though less so than when Kautsky wrote 30 years earlier.)

3. Masked class membership. Where as the factory production worker feel clearly that the capitalist and his management organization are the ones exploiting him or her and can see that his or her fellow workers are in the same condition, the situation is much less clear for the majority of white collar workers. The white collar worker Speir points out is part of capitalist management organization that is hierarchical in nature. Not only does this organization in part organize the exploitation of the manual workers with different degrees of participation in this process of exploitation by different sections of the white collar workers, many of whom may be quite far removed from that aspect, but within the white collar workforce the hierarchical organization makes it so that the workers experience their own exploitation and oppression from the strata immediately above while helping control, exploit and oppress to one degree or another the office workers below them. In many official and non official ways Speir says that this extends quite far down in even the clerical workforce even to stenographers in his day. In big offices he says he found only the office machine operators and messengers to be entirely free of this contradictory position and to have the clearest most objective assessment of the system of exploitation.

Speir pointed out that the situation was different for retail clerks. They were not so much ensnared in a hierarchical system. But most of their social activity on the job was acting to one degree or another as a representative of the employer to the buying public which they dealt with on a non class basis i.e. the customer does not act as a worker or a capitalist in the act of purchasing retail goods. This aspect of their work experience tended to slow the growth of class consciousness among this section although they were usually very exploited and oppressed and very heavily working class women especially in the cities and in the "one price stores" (apparently department stores).

4. The privilege of their nationalism. This seems a strange formulation by Speir but it speaks of a phenomenon that was very pronounced in Germany and exists to a degree in other countries. In pre 1918 Germany, the dominant Junker aristocratic prejudices defined the limits of the German nation at the border of the manual proletariat. The proletariat was considered a dangerous class,

a class without national loyalty by definition, not just because of the influence of Marxism, a class outside the German nation and as such was segregated to great extent physically and in the electoral system from the other classes. (No doubt this clumsy policy contributed mightily to growth of socialism among the German workers.) The white collar workers as wage laboring employees existed just on the other side of that border and to be forced over the border would be a great loss of prestige and privilege.

Spir also chronicles the motion among different sectors of the white collar workers. And this history verifies the analysis of a middle strata with its lower edge merging with the proletariat and its upper section with the bourgeoisie and a vast middle section which vacillates.

Before 1918-1919, the vast majority of white collar workers were not organized. To the extent that they organized they joined professional and office worker organizations that admitted employers as well. The exception being a small section of factory technicians and retail clerks who were organized into unions affiliated with the SDP. There was also a section of technicians who were organized into a union which believed in strikes and collective action but also wanted to maintain its distance from the unions and movement of the manual workers. But generally in this strata there was not only hostility to the manual workers but to the idea of collective strike action as being too proletarian a weapon. The majority of office workers to the extent that they were organized belonged to the DHV a reactionary pro capitalist, anti semitic extreme nationalist organization dominated by the upper sections. As well the stratification within the middle strata was also reflected organizationally. When the technicians formed their unions the Engineers formed a society to distinguish themselves from the technicians and so on.

WWI brought a tremendous fall in standard of living for the white collar workers who actually fell to a lower standard of living than a large section of the manual workers. General disenchantment with the imperialist war grew as the suffering grew. When the proletarian movement broke out in the last years of the war the office workers were impressed and there was widespread sympathy among the lower sections of white collar workers. With the end of the war and the revolution of 1918-1919 there was a huge wave of unionization among the white collar workers. Initially these workers streamed into the unions affiliated with the USDP (which in this period was an alliance between the centrists and the Communists) They were attracted to radical politics. But as the height of revolutionary fervor ebbed the affiliation with these unions fell off. The base of the more left white collar unions remained among the technicians the female retail

sales clerks and the lower level mostly female office workers and did not expand beyond this. But through the early 20's white collar workers continued to join various unions but mainly the conservative and liberal unions. There was a sense among the mass of especially male professional and middle and upper clerical and accounting and managerial workers of being caught between two large forces: the proletariat proper and the bourgeoisie. The conservative and liberal unions appealed to this sense of being in the middle and organized for the interests of the middle as opposed to joining the lower mass. Even the DHV, by the far the largest white collar union federation was compelled to recognize the need for strikes, but it was opposed to the idea that the office workers and manual workers were of the same class or should have solidarity with the manual workers struggle, unions or parties. The DHV and GDA representing 75 per cent of the white collar workers fought bitter battles for separate representation of white collar workers on factory councils, for separate social insurance for salaried workers and so on. They continued to push a nationalist male chauvinist and anti semitic line (The DHV much more so than the GDA).

As the SD led Weimar Republic fell into deeper crisis in the late 20's and as the Communists were unable to rally the working class decisively behind a revolutionary policy away from the SDP, the majority of the white collar workers moved to the right. They faced growing uncertainty in life and yet they had no confidence that the proletariat could lead society out of its crisis. So they turned to the Nazis and the right in general. The Nazis had enormous appeal to this strata. They recruited from the upper and middle sections of the white collar workers per capita more than from any other section of the population 2 times the rate as from the small farmers and almost 4 times the rate among the manual workers, even though the latter faced astronomical unemployment more than twice as high as among the office workers. By the late 20's early 30's the DHV leaders were all Nazis or Nazi sympathizers. The GDA too moved to the right. Only the Alpha Bund unions of technicians, and retail clerks and lowest female office workers stayed to the left or center. They were affiliated with the SDP but actually maintained positions to the left of SDP and the SDP unions of manual workers. (There were no KDP unions of office workers but then there were only 35,000 manual workers in red trade unions.)

This history should give pause to anyone who gets excited about the pace of proletarianization of the middle strata. We can see in Germany only the lowest level of clerical, technical and retail trade workers went very far to the left and stayed there while the professional, managerial

upper and middle clerical may have temporarily moved somewhat to the left but as the crisis deepened and the proletariat proved incapable of winning went to the extreme right. This strata resists its proletarianization with frequent detours into right wing politics ala Hitler or Perot or Reaganism. Bringing the even the lower majority of this section with the movement of the lower mass would require an extremely strong movement of the lower mass and the disintegration of the bourgeois order.

It should also be born in mind from Speir points on contradictory class position and masked class membership what the sinking of sections of the middle strata into the proletariat means for the composition attitudes and consciousness and cohesion of the proletarian lower mass, i.e. what influences from their previous middle strata existence they bring as a mass into the consciousness of the proletariat as a whole. Thus, future work will have to pay particular attention to the post WWII social research on the condition and outlooks of the clerical and lower technical workers and their role in the political and economic struggles in which they have participated.

Some concluding thoughts.

The materials reviewed above cannot help us have a definitive answer on whether the new middle strata form a separate class, form varietated strata between the working class and the owning bourgeois class or form a house servant labor aristocrat type section of the working class. Yet the materials from Marx, Kautsky, Lenin and the German authors do give us a basis to understand the contradictions in the social position of the segments of this strata which give rise to its conservative and vacillating political positions. As well the history reviewed should give pause to any illusions of straightline proletarianization and left radicalization of these strata or sections of them. In fact vacillations and rightwing politics are frequently to be expected.

The insights of Marx, Kautsky and the documentation of Speir give us some idea of the factors giving rise to the growth of this strata, the growing complexity and scope of capitalist production, distribution and finance, the management of the contradictions in society etc. At the same time they also point out a trend of routinization and proletarianization of functions and sectors of this strata. Thus both a tendency for a growth of the middle strata and a tendency for its bottom layers to get proletarianized and sink into the proletariat. As pointed out in the introduction in 1900 white collar office workers — managers, professionals and clerks — accounted for 15 per cent of the economically active population. Today they account for

over 50 per cent. But most clerical workers are now women and their position has become very proletarianized and most certainly their jobs are no longer a route to management. But meanwhile the more clearly middle strata professional/managerial occupations have grown to 25 per cent of the economically active population. The same trends will continue within this middle strata. For example, the functions of the engineer are increasingly being broken down into more routine, less responsible functions performed by technicians and the more professional managerial functions performed by graduate engineers. Thus the technician occupations are growing twice as fast as engineer jobs. A similar differentiation is taking place in the registered nurse occupation. Thus it would seem that at a certain point the process of the growth and of middle strata core and the process of the shedding of the lower layers of the middle strata should reach an equilibrium.

Such a stabilization has great importance for the development of class consciousness of the lower strata. So long as the middle strata grows above its internal replacement rate, there is considerable room for upward mobility out of the working class. And that factor has great effect on consciousness of the workers of their position as a hereditary class. (Engels pointed out a similar circumstance as a major factor inhibiting the emergence of a proletarian movement among the pre-industrial proletariat in Britain). In fact there has been considerable narrowing of the channels for upward mobility out of the working class over the last 15 years. Moreover even the position of a large section of professionals has become much more insecure with the restructuring of industry and government. How far this will go is an open question. There are already politicians and even business leaders expressing concern over the effect of restricting access to education and elimination of the higher paying jobs on social stability. At certain point resistance from the poor, from sections of workers, from many interests is bound to come up.

But the policies embodied in Gingrichism, restructuring etc are not just a whim. To a certain extent they are being forced on American and other Western capitalist establishments by the changes in the world economy. These include a decades long real stagnation of Western economies and much of the third world combined with the rapid growth of industrialization in Asia, which is causing intense price and wage competition and forcing up unemployment throughout the West. We have previously seen this competition from Japan and the Asian Tigers, but now China and even India and Indonesia are growing at phenomenal rates and their weight in the world economy

is becoming major. According to World Bank estimates, China's economy will be larger than the US economy in just 9 years (The Economist, October 1, 1994) This change in the world market is bound to keep up intense pressure on wages in the higher wage countries and not just on industrial and non-professional wages for several decades. In addition the tighter world market, the nearly instantaneous flows of capital around the world, and the changing relations of power among the various capitalist-imperialist powers make for great problems for capitalism to maintain its stability. Thus although the finding of a delicate balance that will maintain sufficient stability cannot be ruled out, there are major factors at work for the hardening of social stratification and for the eventual reemergence of working class political movements.

But it should not be considered that such a process will be quick or even. It will take a number of decades for the lower mass to become conscious that they are a class and a force. It will take time for the masses to shed the illusions

of the Post WWII prosperity, to shed the "we are all middle class" illusions, for the more dispersed office, service and now even industrial workers to find new centers, forms and hooks for organizing. Meanwhile we can expect a great deal of pain and suffering from right wing movements of hysterical members of the middle strata and upper sections of the working class who strive to maintain their previous relatively privileged position by attacking the lower mass of workers and the poor by falling for various race baiting schemes and vicious national chauvinism. Indeed capitalist politics world wide is playing this right wing card to divert the growing anger in society. And yet unless the capitalists can find some way to stabilize their system sufficiently to stop the deterioration of conditions for the lower middle strata and the upper sections of workers, race baiting, and scapegoating in general must eventually get pretty hollow. One way or another the fight against racism and rabid nationalism will play a major part in the reemergence of a new working class movement.



Reply to the second half of Peter Tabolt's article on the salaried middle strata

by Jake, CWV

In the last issue of CWVTJ I critiqued a number of points in the first half of Tabolt's article. I will try to avoid repetition here. There are several serious problems with Tabolt's presentation that I want to highlight. Unless otherwise noted, page numbers refer to this journal.

1) What is the "middle strata" anyway?

Tabolt never gives a definition. In the introduction he states that there has been a sharp decline in the weight of the industrial workers while the service workers and retail trade workers have grown dramatically. He goes on to state that there has been a change in the composition of the middle classes and strata. Note that at this point in the article the reader would most likely be thinking that service and retail workers are not middle strata. They would be right. Tabolt, however, confuses "white collar" and "middle strata" and this adds to the impression that the proletariat is disappearing in a middle class sea.

Talbot explains that 96 years ago small farmers were the majority of the middle strata while today they are only 2% of the workforce. The "white collar workforce has grown to 60 percent," says Peter, but this growth has been accompanied by proletarianization and feminization of the office and retail clerks. (CWVTJ #9 p. 36) Finally, he states that "there has been a steady growth of managerial/

professional employees ... who form the bulk of the middle strata." Since the managerial/professional people are the bulk of the middle strata, the other office employees must make up the rest of the middle strata. But which white collars? Managers, sure. But aren't clerk typists working class?

To determine who is middle class and who is working class we have to look at each section, each occupation and study them. Tabolt presents a vulgar class analysis in order to grind his ax, not to understand what is going on in the world.

2) Funny math.

At the beginning of his article Tabolt says "white collar workforce has grown to 60%." Then on p. 39 he states that "white collar office workers -- managers, professionals and clerks" account for "over 50%." I agree that 60% is over 50% but which is it exactly? Are white collars 60% or 50% of the workforce?

In CWVTJ #9, p. 36, Tabolt says:

"...the white collar workforce has grown to 60%. But this growth has been accompanied by a proletarianization and feminization of the office and retail clerks on one hand and the steady growth of a strata of managerial/professional employees who account for the bulk of the modern

middle strata.”

Obviously 25% is not the bulk of 60% so either Tabolt needs help with basic math or he holds that some of those white collars are middle strata and some are not (presumably the “nots” are working class). By not specifying which is which, Tabolt can impress us with the frightening size of the middle strata.

In the last issue of CWVTJ, I disputed Tabolt’s statistics, especially the claim that:

“Together [the professional/managerial] strata make up 25 per cent of the workforce....This is more people than all the production workers in manufacturing, all the transport workers and all the unskilled and semi-skilled manual workers in the service industries such as restaurants, hospitals etc., put together. And the professional/managerial strata are growing faster than any other section of the workforce and have been for decades.” (CWVTJ #9, p. 35)

This is wrong. While the professional/managerial strata is large and while it does present a problem, the statistics show that it is not larger than all the production workers in manufacturing and the service workers, etc.

Furthermore, he exaggerated the growth of this strata. The proportion of professionals and technical employees has certainly grown. The proportion of managers and proprietors, however, has declined. If you look at the overall strata of managers, professionals, and proprietors, it has been fairly constant since 1900 (see page 45 of CWVTJ #9). (Please note that the statistics we report use the term “professional and technical.” I believe Tabolt’s statistics for “professional/managerial” also include “technical.”)

For all his research on the “professional/managerial strata,” Talbot should have mentioned that managers are declining, especially in manufacturing. The professional/technical sector is the only part growing in this strata. There are some implications here, especially in regard to the working class taking over production. The latest trends in production techniques center on “operator control” or “control at the point of production.” Will these new methods train the working class to run production? I can’t say for sure but what I am seeing in the workplace is that these methods are helping the capitalists reduce their managerial staff by placing greater responsibilities on production workers. Am I going too far out on a limb if I say that capitalism is training the working class to run production without the overseers?

3) Tabolt dismisses the proletarianization of the middle strata.

Tabolt treats the phenomenon of the growth of the “middle strata” and the “proletarianization of the middle strata” very one-sidedly. This is particularly troublesome because much of the present-day “white collar” workforce (most clerks, for example) are working class.

“...in 1900 white collar office workers — managers, professionals and clerks— accounted for 15 per cent of the economically active population. Today they account for over 50 per cent. But most clerical workers are now women and their position has become very proletarianized and most certainly their jobs are no longer a route to management. But meanwhile the more clearly middle strata professional/managerial occupations have grown to 25% of the economically active population.” (p. 39)

Tabolt is basically saying that we should find no encouragement in the proletarianization of office work because the prof/manager section is growing. Yet Tabolt himself describes a middle strata that is being proletarianized. In addition to the passage above, he makes an important point about the current trends in engineering:

“For example, the functions of the engineer are increasingly being broken down into more routine, less responsible functions performed by technicians and the more professional managerial functions performed by graduate engineers. **Thus the technician occupations are growing twice as fast as engineer jobs.**” (p. 39 emphasis added)

There is a word for this trend, it is called “de-professionalization.”

This de-professionalization is hitting teachers and nurses very hard. A recent demonstration by nurses in Washington DC targeted the growing use of “patient care technicians.” These are much lower skilled (and lower paid) health care workers. Please note that In addition to replacing nurses with non-professionals, the nursing profession itself is being proletarianized.

It is a major principle of Marxism that capitalism creates its own grave diggers. It doesn’t just create factory workers, it slaps down many of the formerly privileged and even the unprivileged. Putting nurses on the clock and speeding them up is not enough. Capitalism wants to de-professionalize them. This is a basic feature of capitalism and can not be dismissed.

4) What makes the middle strata scary is that it vacillates and eventually turns to fascism.

Part of this is right. The middle classes do vacillate. Whether small farmer or school teacher or engineer, they tend to side with the proletariat when it is in motion and fighting strongly. They tend to side with the bourgeoisie when the working class is weak. This is not controversial but Tabolt keeps stressing it.

“His [Lederer’s] errors highlight the dangers of taking any transient position of any middle strata as its permanent trajectory. The most prominent characteristic of a middle strata is its propensity to vacillate to go with those who appear to be winning.” (p. 37)

In case you missed it:

“As well the history reviewed should give pause to any illusions of straightline proletarianization and left radicalization of these strata or sections of them....” (p. 39)

and again:

“This history should give pause to anyone who gets excited about the pace of proletarianization of the middle strata. We can see in Germany only the lowest level of clerical, technical and retail tradeworkers went very far to the left and stayed there while the professional, managerial upper and middle clerical ... went to the extreme right. This strata resists its proletarianization with frequent detours into right wing politics ala Hitler or Perot or Reaganism. Bringing even the lower majority of this section with the movement of the lower mass would require an extremely strong movement of the lower mass and the disintegration of the bourgeois order.” (pp. 38-39)

Perhaps our readers are wondering who it is that “gets excited about the pace of proletarianization of the middle strata.” Please note that one of the reasons that the Boston Communist Study Group took up this work was to reply to Fred (ex-MLP Seattle) who apparently is enthusiastic to organize technical workers and not so enthusiastic about the lower masses. Marxism correctly assesses the middle strata as vacillating to the right and left. Fred saw left-wing motion among engineers and technicians in a Boeing strike and got quite excited about the middle strata. Boston (allegedly) wanted to set him straight.

However, Tabolt is not responding directly to Fred in this article. He is laying out in general terms that the middle strata is dangerous and inevitably goes over to fascism. Please note that in all his discussion of the vacillating character of the middle strata there is no mention of leftward vacillations, only lurches to the right

Yet left motion is not uncommon in the middle strata (and Fred provides an object lesson in the problems caused by glorifying the revolutionary and oppositional character of the middle strata). Tabolt wants the reader to be scared of the middle strata. His article gives activists good reasons to be demoralized and no reasons to organize.

Note the last passage in the quote above. It is pessimistic about winning over even the “lower majority” of this section because that “Would require ... the disintegration of the bourgeois order.” Does that mean we’d need a revolution to win over the lower half of the “middle strata”? I might agree with Tabolt if he was talking about doctors and lawyers. I would expect to win over the majority of them only when the working class takes power. But even by Tabolt’s implicit definition, the lower middle strata is composed of teachers, nurses, technicians, engineers and even some clerks. Will they never join a mass fight against the bourgeoisie without smashing the bourgeois order? It’s hard to believe since so many nurses and teachers are willing to fight now.

And why do we need the majority of the middle strata anyway? Whatever the decline in industrial employment, the working class is the largest class and it is growing. The working class and a large minority of the middle strata would be quite a powerful force.

5) Organizing is for suckers.

Ok, Tabolt never said that. However, from his article and his letter of 3/22/96 I think that’s what he means.

Above I discussed Tabolt’s repetitious warning against organizing the middle strata. However many readers (including supporters of the late MLP) might not see this as such a big deal because to them the key issue would be to organize the working class, not the middle strata. Furthermore, no matter what, the key to organizing the middle elements is to organize the working class. When workers are in motion fighting capital, they will win allies from the middle classes.

It is hard to argue against this. Tabolt, however, gives it a try. First, he declares it a “truism” (see p. 45) and insists that the problem of the huge middle strata can’t be left to such “barebones” formulas. Certainly we can’t just leave it at “Organize the working class!” So what does Tabolt want to add to this, what analysis, what organizing strategies could be put forth to flesh it out? Nothing. I have to conclude, then, that Tabolt disagrees with the truism.

In his article on the middle strata, he stresses that it will be decades before the working class movement re-emerges. Unfortunately, that may be true. I hope class struggle will break out much sooner but I can’t prove that

it will. In any case Tabolt thinks it will take decades and he says that we ought to drop that simple-minded "organize the workers" mentality. Moreover, during this period of decades, Tabolt predicts that vicious right wing movements will be kicking our ass.

"Meanwhile we can expect a great deal of pain and suffering from right wing movements of hysterical members of the middle strata and upper sections of the working class...." (p. 41)

It is clear then that what we should do is hide. Seriously, his arguments lead to the conclusion that it is pointless to organize working people today.

6) Stability or Stagnation

And why does Tabolt insist on "decades" when he says that Western capitalism is in trouble? It is a major inconsistency that Tabolt's class analysis implies a strong and stable capitalism while in his concluding section he talks about the "decades-long stagnation of Western economies."

In his letter of March 22 Tabolt complains that: "He [Jake] would have the reader believe that I think that capitalism is moving in the direction of more stability."

Forgive me for reading your article Pete, but the second section is subtitled "Middle strata as Stabilizer of Capitalism." This comes after your description of the tremendous growth of this strata and before the sections that describe how it "has enormous impact on the mood and cohesiveness of the working class," a negative impact you point out. (See CWVTJ #9, p. 36)

I disagree with Tabolt's assessment of the Western economies. But regardless of how I assess the Western powers, Tabolt's estimation of the workers' movement and his analysis of the middle strata suggests a stable capitalism which offers little or no room for a workers' movement to develop.

7) A vague call for a struggle against racism and nationalism.

"One way or another the fight against racism and rabid nationalism will play a major part in the reemergence of a new working class movement." (p. 41)

I agree that struggles against racism and nationalism will play a big role in the emergence of a new workers' movement. It could hardly get off the ground without it. However, the fight against racism will include sharp class conflicts both inside and outside the movement. Without taking up the demands of the lower classes in the anti-racist struggle, the masses will not maintain their enthusi-

asm for the struggle.

Note, this is the only thing Tabolt says about the shape of a future workers' movement. He doesn't speak of fights between classes, or fights between different strata within a class. What he said is that (1) it will take decades to re-emerge (2) the middle class and the upper sections of the working class will take up racist crusades against the poor and this will provoke (3) a fight against rabid nationalism and racism which will play a part in the resurgence of a new movement.

There is a race question today in the U.S. and elsewhere. It is closely connected to the class question. How can you counter racism except from the class angle? Tabolt may consider this a "truism" but without pushing class issues to the fore anti-racist movements don't go very far.

I have to wonder, is Tabolt presenting race as the key factor in US society? Some left theorists (Prairie Fire Organizing Committee and other "primeval three-worldsists," for example) do exactly that. They argue that the demands of working class people have to be left out of the movement, "to preserve unity," "to focus on the main enemy," or other such claptrap. There are also left nationalists from every national minority in the U.S. who uphold that race and nationality are paramount.

I also have to wonder if Tabolt is saying that the fight against racism is as good as, or is a substitute for, a fight for socialism? If so, he is wrong. Socialism is a demand in its own right and communists must do work to popularize socialism and win workers to this goal.

Finally I want to stress that in order to counter a right wing threat, we have to organize the working masses. Only a movement of the lower masses can stop fascism. In order to mobilize the lower masses we have to bring their class demands to the fore. Even in anti-racist struggles the class angle has to be brought out sharply.

8) Tabolt vs Marx, Engels, Lenin

Coming from the MLP tradition, where Marx, Engels and Lenin were revered, it would be hard for Tabolt to take an unorthodox position in class analysis without disputing the classic teachers of Marxism-Leninism.

Regarding Marx and Engels, Tabolt implies that since they never saw the full development of modern capitalism's middle strata, they can't be taken as authorities on the middle strata. He further states:

"They did not expect capitalism to last beyond the point where industrialization of the production of goods was the main thing going on and the growth of the weight of the industrial proletariat in society had reached its peak. As prophets in the

narrow sense they failed.” (CWVTJ #9, p. 38)

But Tabolt also points out that:

“they saw a long term epochal tendency in capitalism to turn the professionals and educated people into proletarians, but that it by no means had yet happened.” (CWVTJ #9, p. 41)

We could argue about the reduction of the industrial workforce and the increase in the service sector and what this means for socialist revolution. But there is no argument that the size of the proletariat is increasing. Moreover in regard to the middle strata, in particular the managerial/professional/technical strata, it is clear that the epochal tendency of capitalism to turn professionals into proles is real and is accelerating. Thus, as prophets,

Marx and Engels aren't bad.

Regarding Lenin, Tabolt asserts that he made some mistakes. In particular, Tabolt holds that Lenin seemed to overstate bribery from imperialist superprofits as the cause of opportunism and he underestimated the resistance of the middle strata to socialism. Of course Lenin made mistakes. However, the point that Tabolt is trying to make here is that the middle class will stop you from getting to socialism.

For example, Tabolt raises that workers' control failed and blames this on an overestimation of the office workers. He gives as an example the telephone operators. Note that John Reed's *Ten Days that Shook the World*

Continued on page 48, see **Reply to Tabolt**

Letter from Peter Tabolt Replying to Jake's Criticism March, 22, 1996

To the editors of CWVTJ:

I appreciate the printing of my article on the middle strata. However, I am disappointed that Jake's article commenting on my article showed so little understanding of what I had said. I had hoped that after your fight with Joseph, Jake might see the problems with demagoguery and shallow point making in his own methods and improve. I hope that his views are not shared by all in Chicago as I had been encouraged by some of the more recent thoughtful articles by Jack and Sarah.

Jake seems obsessed with painting me a pessimistic liquidator responsible for the demise of MLP and this really seems to prevent him from grasping the theoretical issues I and BCSG have raised. For example on page 2 and numerous times throughout his article I am accused of being pessimistic about both the proletariat and the middle strata being forces for change. But on page 44 BCSG and myself are told that even the French bourgeoisie understands that it is the industrial workers that are the force in society, not the lawyers and engineers while we do not. This is an example of Jake's tendency to just try to score points without even trying to be consistent let alone accurate.

More seriously, Jake quotes a section from our 1994 letter where we compare the size of the professional/managerial strata to the core of the working class, the unskilled and semiskilled manual workers in industry, transport, and service sectors. We point out that the statistics from the Bureau of Labor statistics show that professional/managerial strata is larger than the core of the working class and growing. Jake concludes from this that myself and others in Boston must then think that the

cause of the proletariat is hopeless. But we did not say that. In fact we raised this stark fact to emphasize the need to look more deeply into the changes in class structure. But Jake goes off to assert that if the fact that we have pointed out is true then the future looks bleak indeed. He tries to refute the fact by pointing out that 36 per cent of the professional strata are teachers, counselors, and librarians especially teachers. He says that such occupations are proletarian, well almost proletarian and henceforth uses quotation marks around the word professional when referring to teachers, even college instructors.

Jake's approach here is very weak. Even if it were true that 36 per cent of the professional strata were actually as much proletarians as factory workers that would only make a minor difference in the overall relative size of the professional /managerial strata to the core of the proletariat. But Jake's assertions are very questionable. Now it is true that teachers (who form the bulk of his 36 per cent, are for the most part lower in status and closer to the workers than lawyers, doctors and probably most engineers. But they share with those sections not only advantages in education but also they play role in the ideological indoctrination of the youth and in training of youth of different classes for their role in society. At the boundaries between classes and strata there are of course gray areas and this is especially true with regards to the boundary between the professional/managerial strata and the capitalists above them and workers below them. But Jake goes too far in fudging.

But having gone out on a limb and realizing that this is a fairly weak way of maintaining official optimism, Jake then says the real issue with the middle strata is that the

struggle of the working class will win over the lower section of the middle strata. Now certainly this is a truism. Any working class revolutionary party any thinking workers would adopt tactics to accelerate such a process. But is that all there is to the question? Shall we reduce everything to a barebones formula good for all times and all places and all middle forces?

Then Jake goes on to say that capitalism is not only ruining the workers but also lower sections of the middle strata, thus paving the way for instability and class struggle. He would have the reader believe that I think that capitalism is moving in the direction of more stability. But Jake is not being quite honest with the reader. In the second section of my article which Jake has not yet printed I give my thoughts on where development is heading including the factors that are pushing things toward a greater class polarization and a renewal of the working class movement. It is quite an abuse of editorial privilege to attack me mainly for painting a hopeless picture about the future of the class struggle while holding back from the reader my views. Jake most likely does not agree with my views about the future prospects for the working class movement, not so much on the question of whether the movement will revive, but on my pointing out that the revival of a sizable movement is extremely likely to be slow and that the propensity of the insecure middle strata and formerly privileged sections of workers to fall for nationalism, racism and scapegoating is and will continue to be point of struggle. I do not think theoretical work should be reduced to slogans or cheerleading but should point out both the factors for revival of the movement and the expected difficulties.

I believe that it is necessary to look at what effect the growth of the professional/managerial strata has had on the working class in the post World War 2 era. I believe that it is important to look at what in the social being of this strata tends to make it a middle force. Moreover as the largest growth in the working class has been in occupations (clerical and technicians and to some extent retail sales people) which were previously considered middle strata but have since been overwhelmingly proletarianized and often feminized, would it not be worth considering what influence such a development has had on the working class and its consciousness. As we enter a new era in which the post WWII prosperity is gone, in which upward mobility out of the working class is being closed off and new sections of the middle strata are sinking into the working class proper, should we not look at history for some assessment of the pace of change we can expect in class consciousness and the problems that can be expected coming out of a period such as we have been through.

Since Jake has confused my views, I would like to restate them here in summary form.

1. There has been a major change in the composition of the middle forces in Western Society in this century. In 1900 small proprietors, storekeepers, small farmers i.e. the classical petit bourgeois class constituted the bulk of the middle forces. Today the professional/ managerial strata from corporate managerial organizations to doctors and lawyers to engineers, to registered nurses and teachers and social workers and certain technicians at the lower end form the bulk of the middle forces. (politically the upper skilled section of manual workers plays a similar, though not identical role, but we will leave that out for the moment).

2. The growth of the professional managerial strata in the post WWII period, the opportunity this growth offered to probably most of the brightest working class youth to step upward out of the working class proper, and the fact that an enormous part of the growth of the working class was in occupations formerly part of the middle strata and which retained certain traces of cultures of that history (eg most clerical occupations) combined in the post World War 2 era (along with other factors such as welfare state, prolonged prosperity, automobilization, smaller workplaces etc.) to dilute the workers sense of class, of being a force in society etc. (Jake should consider some time why it was that in over 20 years of activism MLP and its predecessors could count on one hand the number of factory or service workers recruited to actually join the party, even for a short period of time even though our work enjoyed a good deal of sympathy from the workers? Were we worse organizers than CPUSA in the 20's and 30's. Or did not the above mentioned factors determine the limits of our success?)

3. The phenomenon of marked lack of class politics in the spontaneous political movements of the later post WWII period is often referred to by a number of social-democratic theorists as evidence that society has developed to the point that class politics and struggle has been superseded by identity politics. In actual fact this phenomenon has a class basis in the late post WWII condition of the weakness and political passivity of the working class and the predominance of students and professionals in the mass movements of the period.

4. The Marxist theory is not sufficiently developed on this subject to say definitively whether or not the professional/managerial strata form a separate class from the workers, or the bourgeoisie, whether its lower section forms a house servant section of the working class and the upper section a part of the bourgeoisie etc. But that they do occupy a contradictory social position is clear. (How

contradictory a social position and which aspect predominates varies widely from top to bottom). On one hand economically they are wage earners, they do not own their own means of production. Most perform functions in production and distribution of goods and services that would be necessary in any society. On the other hand many help the capitalists exploit the workers below them and even members of the middle strata below them. Others are trusted employees of the capitalists performing tasks of planning production, marketing, designing products for the market etc. that in an earlier day would have been done by the capitalist him or her self. Others such as teachers, perform in part functions of ideological and social control. In general throughout this strata there is a marked hierarchical culture which gives rise to such things as tendencies for each person to maneuver for him or her self within this culture (eg networking, and sucking up — especially marked in the upper section but in less crude forms it filters down.). This strata is now almost universally trained in the colleges and universities. While much of their education is in science and technology etc. it still carries with it individualist above class or elitist ideological indoctrination.

5. Capitalist economic development continually creates two trends within this strata. On one hand it opens up new opportunities for upward mobility within this strata for the more ambitious and or better educated. On the other it divides up and routinizes the occupations of the lower section and eventually sinks many of these occupations into the working class proper.

6. The middle strata like any middle force vacillates between the fundamental forces tending to go with the winner. This vacillation has given rise to numerous theoretical mistakes by those who see as permanent any vacillation to either side. The middle strata tend to stubbornly remain middle. And unless the working class is very strong will tend to side with the bourgeoisie and will likely rally to reaction to save its position when the working class is weak.

The vacillating nature of this strata and the tendency for even the lowest parts of this strata to maintain middle ground for a long time, have lead to numerous theoretical mistakes which take any particular vacillation to be a permanent trend as well as to tactical misestimation of the pace of change in this strata.

Even Lenin's tactical estimation of the degree that the lower section of the office workers would align with the workers in the period leading up to the October Revolution proved wrong.

Also all theories that see the growth of this strata leading to abolishing class division in society and a

peaceful transition to socialism or a more benevolent capitalism have been proved wrong in every crisis.

7. Over the last 15 to 20 years the Western capitalist countries and most of world capitalism have entered a period of stagnation. For most of the workers and in the US probably the lower majority of the middle strata employees this has meant a decline of living standards and a growth of economic insecurity. This slowly growing crisis is similar to Engels description of the crisis of British capitalism in the late 19th century. Underlying this crisis are such factors as the end of the market provided by rebuilding from WWII, a tighter world market due to more equal economic players among the big powers, enormous pressure on the world market from the rapid development of Asia in general and now China in particular, reaching the limit of the economic impetus from US militarization etc. These factors indicate that the current malaise is not a passing phenomenon but very likely to continue for a number of decades and probably worsen.

8. This malaise or crisis of Western capitalism is leading to a sharpening of class divisions and unless some unforeseen twist of history overcomes the crisis prematurely, will eventually lead to the reemergence of a working class movement. The constant restructuring, downsizing, outsourcing, wage cutting, cutbacks in educational subsidies etc. are not only leading to greater bitterness among the workers, but they are cutting off the channels of upward mobility out of the working class into the professional/managerial strata and out of the lower sections of unskilled and semi-skilled work into higher paying, skilled and technician jobs. Thus the factors are developing for workers to regain their stronger sense of being a hereditary class, for illusions of upward mobility to dissipate. Moreover the crisis is accentuating the factors of capitalist development that increasingly proletarianize the lower sections of the middle strata and sink them down into the working class proper.

9. Nevertheless one should not think that these factors will lead to a revival of the working class movement in a short period of time, nor should one think that sections of the middle strata who are facing increasing proletarianization of their lives will straight away lean toward the working class. In fact this process is going to be fairly slow and very painful with a lot of reverses. (Of course a major protracted war or crisis of similar magnitude could greatly accelerate the development of class antagonisms in some countries, but such catastrophes do not look to be on the near term horizon.)

It will take some time for the workers to overcome the illusions of the post war prosperity and upward mobility and for a mass consciousness of class and class conscious-

ness to really set in. In addition the workers will take some time to recover from the fragmentation of over two decades of layoffs and transfers to new more dispersed industries. It will take time some of the newer sections of the class whose occupations still carry some middle strata vestiges to establish traditions of class solidarity.

Meanwhile if history is any teacher we can expect significant parts the upper sections of the working class and much of the middle strata who are losing ground to be attracted to all kinds of scapegoating racist and nationalist agitation—to attempt to regain their former security and position by helping the bourgeoisie stomp on the workers below them. And of course as Buchanan shows, there will be no lack of such agitation coming from bourgeois politics. Moreover lower sections of workers will not be immune from the influence of such politics even though it has its social basis elsewhere. Hence as I said in my document a revival of the working class movement will have to come up in a fight against such racism, nationalism and scapegoating.

This does not necessarily mean that the working class movement will develop in pure form in opposition to pure reactionary movements incited among the middle forces. In fact given that we are emerging from a period of very low class consciousness where a very large part of the working class considers itself middle class, and a where a malaise affects the middle strata as well, we are likely to see the emergence of a working class movement from the midst of a milieu of oppositional and semi oppositional movements that include workers, professionals, petit producers and are often under middle class slogans and banners, with a mixed bag of left, right and weird politics.

As a broader ferment finally develops, a class differentiation will also develop within the movements over orientation, over scapegoating, over attitude to the poorest and most oppressed, and workers of other countries, the economic struggles of the workers etc.

When a movement does reemerge how far it can and will go will depend on a whole host of objective and subjective factors that cannot be forecasted with any accuracy at this point.

This is not a hopeless picture. Sooner or later a movement of the workers and other toilers will reemerge. But a sizeable movement is likely to be a couple decades away. And the sway of reaction will be pretty painful in the meantime. Jake may not like such frank statements and assessments of the facts, but I believe them to be true.

Such an assessment does not oppose or rule out activism against the bourgeoisie and on behalf of renewal of the class movement. But it does oppose trying to keep going on the basis of dreams of an incipient movement or that practical mass activity is going to have a major impact in the near future, or that rebuilding of a revolutionary working class party or even prototype organization on a national basis is a near term prospect.

I myself have chosen to use this period to investigate deeper the laws of social development, to look at some of the weaknesses and incompleteness in revolutionary theory, (see July 1995 statement), and recharge the batteries of my personal life. I am not very active in what little motion exists and Jake may consider that liquidationist. But whatever Jake thinks of me personally does not justify distorting my views or reducing theoretical questions to slogans. The future movement deserves a more serious theoretical discussion. ◇

A brief reply to Tabolt's letter of March 22, 1996

by Jake, CWV

Debates among the ex-MLP often take the form that not only is an opponent's position wrong, but it is also "unprincipled"! It seems that self-righteousness is considered a virtue by many in the MLP tradition. Tabolt adheres to this, and his distracting moral outrage and diversionary charges of unprincipled debating methods ("demagoguery," "shallow point making" and "abuse of editorial privilege") should be ignored while we study the issues at hand.

Of course that's easier for you than it is for me; after all, I'm the one being attacked here. So forgive me for a minute while I defend myself:

- 1) I uphold the original charges of pessimism and

liquidationism.

In the last issue of CWVTJ I stated that the overall tone of Tabolt's article is "very pessimistic." Tabolt took strong exception to this in his letter of 3/22/96, even calling it an "abuse of editorial privilege." He is wrong. In the article above I discuss the depressing tone and content of his article in detail.

In fact, the second part of Tabolt's article proves that what I said about the first half is accurate. Note, this has nothing to do with the dissolution of the MLP. Tabolt's article is liquidationist because the politics he presents in his analysis of the middle strata are liquidationist.

As to his motivation, I think a major purpose of his
Continued on next page, see **Middle Strata**

Middle Strata, Continued from previous page.

article is to justify the pessimistic outlook shared by the majority of the Central Committee of the now-dissolved MLP and, in a sense, to apologize for the passivity of ex-MLP members.

Many (perhaps most) of our ex-comrades have dropped out of revolutionary politics, and I regret this. However, I do not begrudge any of them getting on with their lives.

Finally, everyone has a right to propagate their views and to justify their actions. Peter Tabolt does this in his article and that's fine. We also have the right to criticize and to develop theory. That is why I am opposing the wrong class analysis and the liquidationist politics presented by Tabolt. This does not mean that everything argued by Tabolt and the BCSG is wrong. It does mean exposing the errors in their work and the source of those errors.

2) Tabolt's article was very confusing in its discussion of the middle strata. Odd that an article on the middle strata was not very scientific about the composition of that strata. Odder still that it was at times contradictory in regard to what it considered middle strata. Peter's rebuttal

letter provides no clarification. In fact it offers more confusion. While I point out some specifics on the "professional/managerial strata", Tabolt complains that I identify teachers as "proletarians" and that in regard to class analysis and alignment, "Jake goes to far in fudging."

In point of fact, teachers are not proletarians and I never said they were. As for fudging, that's precisely what I think Tabolt has been doing. When he doesn't specify what the middle forces are but jumps into a discussion of the implications of the tremendous growth of the "professional/managerial" strata, he creates the impression that the professional/managerial strata is the middle strata.

3) Tabolt should stop whining.

"It is quite an abuse of editorial privilege to attack me [Peter Tabolt] mainly for painting a hopeless picture about the future of the class struggle while holding back from the reader my views."

It is not abuse of editorial privilege to give an unfavorable opinion. We didn't misrepresent Tabolt's views; we published them! ◇

Reply to Tabolt, continued from p. 44

gives one a pretty good feeling for the situation with the phone operators, stuck-up middle class girls who bear little resemblance to the women who ran the phones for Ma Bell.

There is no question that there was resistance from white collar workers in the Russian revolution but each section has to be looked into. It's true that the Bolsheviks did not get very far with workers' control but why? Was this because the clerks were *contras* or because the economy collapsed or for other reasons? The failure of the Russian revolution to construct socialism is a major theoretical question. It must be treated rigorously.

Conclusions

Tabolt sees a middle class society where the working class has lost a lot of weight and the prospects for fascism are very good. To make this case Tabolt has presented his class analysis in an unscientific way. His figures are suspect (or wrong), he did not break down the broad, undefined categories "middle strata," and "white collar" and he looks at dynamic processes in society with a jaundiced eye, an eye that always sees the glass as half empty.

The "middle strata," for example, is now in close proximity to the workers, and from there Tabolt sees that it corrupts the proletariat with bourgeois and petty bour-

geois values and consciousness. Tabolt never mentioned, and presumably does not believe, that the close proximity to the proletariat serves to influence the petty bourgeoisie with proletarian values, and could make them more sympathetic to the proletariat.

Consider the changes in the middle strata since the turn of the century. We have gone from small farmers to urban technical, professional and managerial elements. If we have traded rural reaction for yuppies, then haven't the conditions for socialism advanced?

The managerial strata is shrinking and the technical strata is growing. Production workers from machinists to unskilled assemblers are shouldering more responsibilities. The lower professions are being de-professionalized and even the more exalted physicians and lawyers are mostly employees today. The work of "professionals" is more and more being carried out by workers. Doesn't this mean that the next time a proletarian force takes power, it will have more technical skills within its own ranks and in the ranks of its allies than did the workers of Russia in 1917?

However, the key to understanding Tabolt's analysis of the "middle strata" is not in his article but in his rebuttal letter of 3/22.

"2. The growth of the professional managerial strata in the post WWII period, the opportunity this growth offered to probably most of the bright

Continued on page 65, see **Reply to Tabolt**

Rosa Luxemburg, Semi-Anarchism -- and Trotsky, Part III

by Barb, CWV

Principles are not an aim, a programme, a tactic or a theory. Tactics and theory are not principles (1).

[Author's Note: I would like to remind any others besides Joseph who are having a problem with my quoting of Lenin that I expressly stated in Part I of this series that I was proceeding from the standpoint of Lenin's criticism of Luxemburg as a "semi-anarchist". I believe that is what I have done. Also, if anyone else is having a problem locating the Lenin quotes, I would like to point out that I have included the edition year in each citation because pagination varies. When the M-L Party dissolved, I was lucky enough to inherit a collection of Lenin's works. I was unlucky enough, however, to inherit a collection of mixed editions. So that is the best I can do. I also wish to apologize for the condition of Part II. All indents and text markings dropped out during computer layout, leaving it very hard to read.]

This section on Rosa Luxemburg will cover two more aspects of her thought: her view of imperialism and her view of the Bolshevik Revolution. As well, it will discuss her relationship to Karl Kautsky. The final section, Part IV -- next issue -- will cover her revolutionary program. It will also discuss to what extent she had overcome her "semi-anarchistic" tendencies, as Lenin believed she had, and attempt to assess her place in the revolutionary tradition.

Luxemburg's Theory of Imperialism

Luxemburg's *Accumulation of Capital* (1913) came out of her teaching of economics at a Social Democratic party school. She thought she had discovered errors in Marx's theory of expanded reproduction, i.e., the accumulation of capital, because his theory was developed before the epoch of imperialism. Therefore, she undertook to "correct" Marx. Her work inspired vehement criticism from the party, which she answered in *Vol. II of Accumulation of Capital, or What the Epigones Have Made of It. An Anti-Critique* (1915) (2). But there was more to it than just outrage because Luxemburg had dared to try to improve upon Marx. It was the motive behind her work. She wanted to "prove" that imperialism necessitated the socialist revolution. Therefore, this work must be seen in context of Luxemburg's fight against the revisionists in the German Party whose theory of imperi-

alism eventually led them into the social-chauvinist position of supporting German imperialism in World War I. Her work was an attempt to refute opportunist theories that imperialism has limitless expansion possibilities, that it is "progressive" or, on the other hand, that it will collapse on its own, or that a peaceful coalition of imperialists is possible -- in other words, that proletarian revolution is impossible, unnecessary, or must lie somewhere in the far-off future. Thus, Luxemburg's work was not only a criticism of the outright social chauvinists, but a criticism of Kautsky as well.

Lenin was obviously familiar with this work, as he included her analysis of Marx as one of the matters on which she was wrong. It was left to Bukharin in 1924 to delineate her errors in his work, *Imperialism and the Accumulation of Capital* (3). Despite her errors, both Lenin and Bukharin treated Luxemburg with great respect as an economic theorist.

What follows is a very simplified explanation of the problems in Luxemburg's theory. Basically, she proceeded from a misinterpretation of Marx, whose analysis of capitalism was deliberately constructed on the abstract premise of a "closed capitalist society". Luxemburg, however, conceived of this as a false premise, as assuming that societies were composed solely of workers and capitalists and as supposing "the rule of capitalism in the entire world." She maintained that "surplus value [is] realized outside of capitalist production," in fact, is "inconceivable in any respect whatever" without non-capitalist or pre-capitalist markets." By this she meant agrarian strata or countries.

Essentially Luxemburg had substituted for Marx's theory that capital accumulation, i.e., surplus profit, derives from exploited labor, the idea that capital accumulation must derive from non-capitalist sources or "markets" of laborers and consumers because, within the capitalist context, the two classes of bourgeoisie and proletariat cannot possibly consume the ever-increasing totality of goods produced as capitalism expands, as it must. So for expansion to take place, there had to be a "3rd market" of

consumers who receive their means of purchase on the basis of commodity exchange, i.e., also production of goods, but taking place outside of capitalist commodity production. They must be producers, whose means of pro-

duction are not to be seen as capital, and who belong to neither of the two classes -- capitalists or workers -- but who still have a need, one way or another, for capitalist commodities (*Anti-Critique*, p. 57).

Therefore, her theory was a "consumptionist" or "demand" theory, which turned Marx on his head. In her view, it is not production that determines the market, but the market which determines production. Luxemburg had substituted a relationship between capitalism and non-capitalism for Marx's relationship between capital and labor. "By making the 'third market' such a vital element in the process, "Luxemburg has changed the basis of capitalist accumulation from something derived from surplus labour into a process which draws its main sustenance from an outside source" (*Anti-Critique*, Intro., p. 31). Therefore, in effect, this denied Marx's conclusion that the expansion of capital in the large capitalist countries creates a reserve army of labor, and that the proletariat must be the "gravedigger" of capitalism.

Luxemburg objected to Marx's thesis that capital could reproduce itself endlessly, and instead predicted that imperialist capitalism will reach its limits when these "non-capitalist" sources are exhausted. As western capitalism capitalizes this "3rd market" and destroys its economy, these consumers are also turned into proletariat, and finally the world will approach the "point where humanity only consists of capitalists and proletarians, [and] further accumulation will become impossible" (*Anti-Critique*, p. 60). When this happens, what must result will be either "barbarism" or "socialism".

Bukharin pointed out that Luxemburg's underlying premise was mistaken. While capitalism had always sought outside markets, it was not an essential condition of capitalism in order to realize "normal" surplus value. The aim of colonial expansion, of imperialism, was to realize super-profits. "In hunting for maximum profits, the capitalist looks for *cheaper* labour and, at the same time, the *highest rate of exploitation*" (Bukharin, p. 249). That is, surplus value comes from exploited labor, not expanded consumerism.

So what was imperialism to Luxemburg? And how did imperialism necessitate the socialist revolution? Since "non-capitalist markets" were essential for capitalism, she viewed imperialism merely as an intensification of this process. Imperialism is:

the expansion of the rule of capital from the old capitalist countries to new areas, and the economic and political competition of those coun-

tries for the new parts of the world (Anti-Critique, p. 61).

In her preface, Luxemburg had stated that her goal was to define the economic basis of imperialism, yet she really gave a political definition of imperialism as:

the political expression of the accumulation of capital in its competitive struggle for what remains still open of the non-capitalist environment (Bukharin, p. 253).

She had ignored the intrinsic structural and qualitative changes in capitalism that imperialism brought as an economic "stage". While she mentioned monopolies and export of finance capital, she did not analyze the role they played in this stage, or acknowledge the contradictions therein which necessitated the ever-increasing vicious wars between imperialists or the anti-colonial struggles against imperialism. From her thesis it would also follow that the fight among capitalists for lands already capitalized would not be imperialism.

In short, Luxemburg did not approach the matter dialectically. Bukharin noted: "She prefers to talk about things 'in general', without regard to the real, concrete, historical *peculiarities* of our epoch...." (Bukharin, p. 253). This "undialecticalness" -- over-generalizations and the separation of economics from politics -- were errors she had also made in her analyses of the mass strike and the self-determination of nations. Worse, she had asserted that

Imperialism is as much a historical method for prolonging capital's existence as it is the surest way of setting an objective limit to its existence as fast as possible (*Anti-Critique*, p. 146).

Bukharin felt her view of imperialism as a method of accumulation came dangerously close to proposing a "voluntaristic" theory of imperialism, i.e., something that can be changed by the "good will" of the capitalists. He was certain that that was not what she meant to imply.

Now one might ask, what real difference did it make that Luxemburg's theory of capitalist accumulation was mistaken? She had prefaced her work with the expectation that her *Accumulation of Capital* should "apart from a merely theoretical interest...also have some importance for the practical struggle against imperialism" (Bukharin, p. 252). And this is where she had backed herself into a corner. Her theory of imperialism simply did not lead to proletarian revolution. If accumulation is "inconceiv-

able” without this outside force, then it is this force, and not labor, which will bring about the downfall of capitalism. As Bukharin stated, “By proposing the ‘impossibility’ of capitalism without non-capitalist labour [she] destroys the foundations of her own theory, as this thesis denies the ‘misery of the masses’, without which one cannot take a single step” (p. 252). For example, here is one of her really muddled statements: “But the global drive to expand leads to a collision between capital and pre-capitalist forms of society, [my underline] resulting in violence, war, revolution: in brief, catastrophes from start to finish, the vital element of capitalism” (*Anti-Critique*, p. 145). Here she not only ignored the contradictions between capitalists, but mixed together all sorts of wars - inter-imperialist wars, national-liberation wars, anti-colonial wars, proletarian wars.

However, Bukharin, as did Lenin, recognized the sincerity of Luxemburg’s revolutionary aims. He stated: “The intentions of the author, as well as her later role in the class struggle, are unambiguous. Nevertheless, her work contains no solution to this question,” i.e., of how the revolution relates to the imperialist epoch (Bukharin, p. 252).

But Luxemburg not only desperately wanted the socialist revolution to begin, but all her observations saw it as immanent. So how did she get to the revolution? As Raya Dunayevskaya put it: “Luxemburg, the revolutionist, feels the abysmal gap between her theory and her revolutionary activity, and comes to the rescue of Luxemburg, the theorist” (*Rosa Luxemburg*, p. 45). Because the economic determinism of her theory did not logically lead to the revolutionary overthrow of bourgeoisie by the proletariat, she had to make another one of her “leaps”. She asserted:

What distinguishes imperialism as the last struggle for capitalist world domination is not simply the remarkable energy and universality of expansion but -- and this is the specific sign that the circle of development is beginning to close -- the return of the decisive struggle for expansion from those areas which are being fought over back to its home countries (*Anti-Critique*, p. 147).

...the endless chain of political and social catastrophes and convulsions; these latter, together with the periodic economic catastrophes in the shape of crises, make continued accumulation impossible and the rebellion of the international working class against the rule of capital

necessary, even before it has economically reached the limits it set for itself (p. 146).

Or as Bukharin put it: Before these “non-capitalist” markets are exhausted, the horrors of imperialist expansion “brought home” will impel the proletariat to overthrow capitalism. This is surely an expression of the anarchistic idea of revolution brought about by “revolutionary will” (will inspired from misery!), not a necessity impelled by the internal contradictions of capitalism.

Luxemburg’s erroneous theory of imperialism obviously underlay her blindness toward the issue of self-determination. She failed to see the importance of national liberation struggles as preparing the ground for socialism, or the oppressed colonized peoples as potential revolutionary allies of the proletariat (see Part II). As well, her theory of imperialism underlay her incorrect assessment of the peasantry, i.e., Trotsky’s “permanent revolution” (Part I), which depreciated the peasantry as allies of the proletariat. She did not see that the permeation of capitalism into the countryside had already impelled the process of class differentiation there. To her, all the “non-capitalized” masses were merely a suffering mass to be “used up”, because the total transformation of the world into one bourgeoisie “trust” and an “international” proletariat had to lie in the inconceivably far distant future. Yet when the proletariat in the imperialism countries can’t “take it” any more and makes its leap into revolution, somehow all these other matters will begin to be magically resolved.

Although he accused her of wanting to be “ultra-revolutionary”, still, Bukharin saw the theoretical merits of Luxemburg in that she raised the question of the relation between the capitalist and the non-capitalist milieu (although she did not answer it). But most important, she raised the question of the historical necessity of imperialism. He stated:

Opposed to the reformists, who had betrayed Marxism with open cynicism, and opposed to the quasi orthodox *a la* Kautsky, who was at the time already starting to stutter about the possibilities of an ‘English style’ reformed ‘ideal capitalism’, Rosa Luxemburg sharply raised the question of imperialism as the unavoidable ‘immanent appearance’ of capitalism at a certain state of development...and in general answered it properly, although her answer was based on theoretically wrong arguments. Rosa Luxemburg’s work rose high above the bungling efforts and the miserable chattering of the

reformists of both directions, the open revisionists as well as the Kautskyans. It represents a daring theoretical attempt, it is the deed of a brilliant theoretical intellect. We do not have to mention especially that the historical part of the work has remained unsurpassed until today in its description of the history of the colonial conquests of capitalism (p. 268).

Luxemburg's theory of capitalist accumulation has unfortunately contributed to the many bourgeois economic "consumptionist" and "demand" theories which seek to prop up capitalism. As Bukharin observed, "Such is the revenge of Marx's teaching, which does not forgive critical attacks on its unity" (Bukharin, p. 252).

Kautsky's Theory of Imperialism

Bukharin pointed out that unwittingly Luxemburg was lending support to the very reformist theories of imperialism she intended to oppose. Most people are probably familiar with Kautsky's infamous theory of "ultra-imperialism" which Lenin set out to destroy in *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capital*, 1916, pub. 1917. Kautsky's revisionist views on imperialism can be found in his book *Imperialism*, 1909. While Luxemburg called imperialism a "method", Kautsky asserted that imperialism was a "particular kind of capitalist policy," the "policy preferred by finance capital" (*Karl Kautsky: Selected Political Writings*, p. 90). "It is not ...an 'economic phase', not an 'advanced capitalism of a higher stage', but...the policy of the dominant capitalist strata" (p. 91). Moreover, imperialism was not only not an economic necessity for capitalism, but a policy not even in the interests of capitalism. "Imperialism is only one among various means of expanding capitalism" (p. 88).

Therefore, he posed the question:

Cannot the present imperialist policy be supplanted by a new, ultraimperialist policy which will introduce the joint exploitation of the world by internationally united finance capital in place of the mutual rivalries of national finance capitals? (Lenin, *Imperialism*, p. 142).

If there can be such an agreement, then there can also be an agreement to end imperialism. Kautsky predicted that imperialism "will pass away, it will be 'eradicated', its decline is a necessity" (KK, p. 92). It can be "dissolved" by a "holy alliance of the imperialists" (p. 89). Now this is very definitely the "voluntarist" theory that Bukharin

saw latent in Luxemburg's theory.

Why would the capitalists want to do this? Because, Kautsky said, the wars between the capitalists are not in the best interests of achieving the desired high profits. So,

"There is no economic necessity to continue the armaments race after world war, not even from the standpoint of the capitalist class itself, but at most from the standpoint of some armaments interests" (p. 86).

Therefore, the imperialists can establish a peace which will annul the necessity of revolution. This kind of thinking led into such things as the League of Nations, pacifist "disarmament" treaties among the imperialists, etc.

Kautsky arrived at his ignominious revisionist theory through an approach similar to Luxemburg's, that is, a "3rd market" theory of capital accumulation. Here is his definition of imperialism:

Imperialism is a product of highly developed industrial capitalism. It consists in the striving of every industrial capitalist nation to bring under its control or to annex larger and larger areas of agrarian territory, irrespective of what nations inhabit those regions (*Imperialism*, p. 108).

Kautsky differed from Luxemburg in the respect that he was talking about sources of raw materials, rather than an outlet for products. He found the basis of capitalist crises to lie in the "disproportion between industry and agriculture", not between capital and labor. He stated: "The continual striving of the capitalist industrial nations to extend the agrarian sector which has an exchange relation with them can adopt the most various forms... One particular form of this tendency is imperialism" (KK, p. 83). Only proceeding from this erroneous theory, could he ask: "Does imperialism offer the only form still possible within capitalism of expanding world trade between industry and agriculture?" (p. 96).

In her *Anti-Critique*, Luxemburg attacked Kautsky's theory of "ultra-imperialism", ridiculing his conclusions that imperialism could be "modified", made to "draw [in] its claws" (p. 148). However, what is most interesting is her concurrence with Kautsky's theory of capitalist accumulation in 1902-3, which is a similar "3rd market" theory. Although she objected to Kautsky's vagueness of terminology, she praised his two major points as the "commonly accepted opinion among 'orthodox Marx-

ists': 1) That capitalists and workers alone do not represent a sufficient market for accumulation, and 2) That capitalist accumulation needs an additional market in *non-capitalist strata and nations*" (*Anti-Critique*, p. 80) (4).

Like Luxemburg, Kautsky did not entirely ignore the export of capital, but also like her, he did not consider it to be a defining factor of imperialism, only that: "Imperialism was particularly encouraged by the system of capital export to the agrarian areas" (*KK*, p. 84). In other words, for both, imperialism was only an intensified continuation of capitalism. There was no recognition that the factor of finance capital qualitatively changes the nature of capitalism, increases its unevenness and contradictions, nor what implications that has for revolutionary struggle. As Bukharin pointed out about Luxemburg, Lenin also pointed out about Kautsky -- that he separated economics from politics.

Many of Lenin's criticisms of Kautsky could as well apply to Luxemburg: As Lenin stated:

[Kautsky's theory] evades and obscures the very profound and fundamental contradictions of imperialism: the contradictions between monopoly and free competition which exists side by side with it, between the gigantic 'operations' (and gigantic profits) of finance capital and 'honest' trade in the free market, the contradictions between cartels and trusts, on the one hand, and non-cartelized industry, on the other, etc. (*Imperialism*, pp. 141-42).

Further, "Kautsky detaches the politics of imperialism from its economics, speaks of annexations as being a policy 'preferred' by finance capital, and opposes to it another bourgeois policy which, he alleges, is possible on this very same basis of finance capital" (*Imperialism*, p. 110). Like Luxemburg, Kautsky thought imperialism could continue in purely economic terms, as long as it had these agricultural market sources.

Kautsky maintained that as long as imperialism brings high profits, only socialism can destroy it. But if the world does become one big cartel promoting a world peace and agreeing on mutual exploitation of the world proletariat, how can the proletariat oppose it, without being also united as one big oppositional force? That is the real crux of the matter with Kautsky: revolution ceased to be a reality (5).

So, although Luxemburg and Kautsky proceeded from a similar premise, i.e., a "3rd market" factor, they arrived at opposite conclusions. Both thought imperial-

ism could continue "economically" for a long, long time until it ran out of resources. At that point it would have to be overthrown by the "political" force of the world proletariat. But since, to Kautsky, this condition does not even lie within the realm of thought, he maintained that, in the meantime, the only recourse of the proletariat of each country was to cooperate with their bourgeoisie for peaceful reforms which might "wear down" the bourgeoisie which would "give in" because wars were not good for profits! Lenin considered Kautsky's theory a mockery of the historical concrete features of modern imperialism. "Kautsky advocates a 'reactionary ideal,' 'peaceful democracy,' this ideal drags us back from monopoly to non-monopolist capitalism, and is a reformist swindle" (*Imperialism*, p. 136).

Kautsky's "logic" led him into reaction. Whereas, Luxemburg rejected the logical conclusions of her own not-too-different theory, because she was a sincere revolutionist.

Trotsky's Theory of Imperialism

Before the Revolution, while Trotsky also criticized some of Kautsky's theoretical errors, he refused to attack Kautsky politically, and he continued to argue for unity between the revolutionary elements (Spartacists) and Kautsky and his supporters (6). In late 1916, Lenin still called Trotsky a "Kautskyite" who "preferred to maintain a discreet silence on the question of Kautskyism as a trend [and did not] criticize his war-time writings" (*CW*, 1964, Vol. 23, "Imperialism and the Split in Socialism," p. 108).

It is not easy to pin down Trotsky's view of imperialism because nowhere does he set down a coherent account of his views, but the general trend of his thought can be gleaned from different essays. What Luxemburg and Kautsky saw as an eventuality, Trotsky saw as an already obtaining situation. In 1905 he wrote, "Binding all countries together with its mode of production and its commerce, capitalism has converted the whole world into a single economic and political organism" (*The Permanent Revolution*, IX, "Europe and Revolution," p. 107). Trotsky didn't call this "imperialism" but that is what he meant. Further,

All the forces of reaction, into a kind of world-wide joint-stock company, has not only resisted all individual political crises, but also prepared the basis for a social crisis of unheard-of dimensions....the bourgeoisie has managed to postpone the denouement, but thereby has prepared a radical liquidation of

its rule on a world-wide scale [my underlines],
(p. 108).

Therefore, the political emancipation of Russia led by the working class...will make it the initiator of the liquidation of world capitalism" (p. 108). Surely, this is what Lenin termed seeing the world as one wants it to be, not as it is! It is an incredibly ultra-left, "utopian" vision.

In retrospect, Trotsky's conclusion seems unbelievably naive: He asserted:

Only profound confidence or crazy adventurism can thrust two nations into conflict...the interests of capitalist grabbing, which from time to time induce now one and now another government to clank its spurs and rattle its sabre in the face of the world, cannot arouse any response among the masses. For that reason the bourgeoisie either cannot or will not proclaim or conduct any national wars...fear of the revolt of the proletariat...even that compels the bourgeois parties, even while voting monstrous sums for military expenditure, to make solemn declarations in favour of peace, to dream of International Arbitration Courts and even of the organization of a United States of Europe [my underline] (pp. 111-12).

What is this if not a variation on Kautsky's "imperialist peace"? Except that the motive for Kautsky's imperialists is profits, and for Trotsky's imperialists it is fear of the proletariat.

By 1914, the reality of the impending world war (between nations!) had obviously disproved this theory. Now Trotsky had to adjust his theory and, in order to do so, he had to get rid of that ever-troublesome-to-all-Marxists factor -- nationalism. In his essay "War and the Internationale," we find the idea that "the [imperialist] war heralds the break-up of the nation state; and, at the same time, also the crack-up of the *capitalist form* of economy" (p. 72), and that "capitalism finds its position intolerable within the constriction of the nation-state" (p. 74). This is a very Luxemburgian concept, as expressed in her views on self-determination. Then comes a "leap": "In place of the national Great Power must come the imperialist World Power", i.e., Kautsky's "ultra-imperialism".

So how is this World Power to be fought? "Imperialism has led the capitalist peoples into a blind alley, forcefully driving the proletariat onto the road of the socialist revolution" (p. 73). So the European proletariat,

presumably *en masse*, will rise up and create "a more powerful and stable fatherland -- [their own] republican United States of Europe, as a transition to the United States of the World. To the impasse of imperialism, the proletariat can counterpoise only the socialist organization of world economy as the practical program of the day," [my underline] (p. 74). I say *en masse* because Trotsky also proposed that the old national parties had outlived their day. They had become the "chief obstacle in the way of the proletarian revolutionary movement" (p. 77). What Trotsky envisioned was a World Communist Party to combat the imperialist World Power. Thus, it most logically followed that his 4th Internationale was set up precisely as a one-world party (composed of credentialed individuals), with national sections to be created later.

And what did Lenin have to say about this? In "The Slogan for a United States of Europe" (*CW*, 1961, Vol. 21), he stated that, even without Trotsky's disclaimer (that this slogan is meaningless and false "without the revolutionary overthrow of the German, Austrian and Russian monarchies"), this slogan may be useful as a "political slogan". However, the problem is that it is a bourgeois slogan! "From the standpoint of the economic conditions of imperialism, i.e., the export of capital and the division of the world by the 'advanced' and 'civilized' colonial powers -- a United States of Europe, under capitalism, is either impossible or reactionary, is tantamount to an agreement on the partition of colonies" (p. 341). Trotsky's use of the same slogan at this time caused nothing but confusion:

it merges with socialism; second, because it may be wrongly interpreted to mean that the victory of socialism in a single country is impossible, and it may also create misconceptions as to the relations of such a country to the others. Uneven economic and political development is an absolute law of capitalism. Hence, the victory of socialism is possible first in several or even in one capitalist country alone (p. 342).

So Trotsky had blithely skipped over all the contradictions of monopoly capital, all the contradictions among nations, all the twists and turns of the uneven economic and political development of the world. And yet, Trotsky talked a lot about uneven economic and political development when he was using this to justify his theory of "permanent revolution," i.e., that in a backwards country like Russia, one could skip over the bourgeois-democratic stage and go right over to the rule of the proletariat.

Lenin did distinguish Trotsky's concept of a "United States of Europe" from Kautsky's interpretation of this slogan, which was pacifist, i.e., the "United States of Europe" would agree on imperialist peace! Trotsky's use of the slogan was "ultra-socialist", by which Lenin always meant "ultra-left", anarchistic. Still, it is a fact that this slogan, aided by Trotsky's promotion of it, also had a direct influence on President Wilson's "Fourteen Points" and League of Nations peace plan. This is another example of how Trotsky's anarchistic "leaps" from capitalism to socialism boomeranged and landed him in the camp of reaction. As Lenin said somewhere, you can tell a man's real politics by those who applaud him.

What emerges as a common thread in the theories of Luxemburg, Kautsky and Trotsky is the idea of a world where imperialism becomes a world-wide bourgeoisie "trust", a monolithic, blanket condition, and the international proletariat becomes also a homogenous counterforce which will rise up monolithically against it. However, they came to different conclusions. With Kautsky, this situation could be mitigated or retarded by the cooperation of the imperialists for "peace," so that gradual reform was the only revolutionary program of the day. With Trotsky, after he was forced to conclude this situation was not immanent, he advocated putting the Soviet Union on hold until the process accelerated. With Luxemburg, this situation is an inevitability, but also in the unforeseeable future. Long before this happens, the western proletariat will have suffered enough and will rise up to create socialism anyway. What is also common among the three is an "either-or" dichotomy. All three used the phrase, "Socialism or Barbarism", which may be fine as a rallying cry, but is no materialist analysis of historical conditions. In the end, of course, the "renegade Kautsky" wriggled out of this dilemma by proposing a ridiculous third alternative — "world peace" under capitalism!

The Bolshevik Revolution

Written while she was in prison for her revolutionary activities, Luxemburg's analysis of the October Revolution, "The Russian Revolution" (1917-18) remained unfinished. As it contained serious criticisms of Bolshevik policies, she was persuaded not to publish it by Jogiches and other comrades for fear of giving support to the counterrevolution. Like Trotsky, she did not go over to the Bolsheviks until the last minute. She continued to believe that the Mensheviks would break with the bourgeoisie in the Provisional Government and take over the power for themselves. When the Menshevik's bourgeois nature became unescapably apparent, she then whole-

heartedly supported the Bolsheviks.

Like Trotsky, Luxemburg regarded the Bolshevik revolution from an internationalist, really a Euro-centered, standpoint. Its great service was to have "put socialism on the order of the day" (*Russian Revolution*, p. 21); it was the "salvation of the honor of international socialism" (p. 40). It was a blow to the German social-patriots who had advanced the idea that Germany's mission was to overthrow czarism and free the oppressed Russian people, and it was a blow to the opportunists like Kautsky, who had adopted the Menshevik view that only a bourgeois revolution was feasible in Russia.

Its chief value was to give the European (i.e., German) revolution the necessary push by "the attractive power of the example of the Russian Revolution, which alone can overcome the fatal inertia of the German masses" (p. 29). But like Trotsky, she was pessimistic about its success: "They won't be able to maintain themselves in this witches' Sabbath...because Social Democracy in the highly developed West consists of a pack of piteous cowards who are prepared to look on quietly and let the Russians bleed to death" (Frolich, p. 239).

But while Luxemburg hailed the Bolshevik Revolution *per se*, she had reservations about nearly all the Bolshevik policies.

The Bolshevik Land Policy

Luxemburg regarded the Bolshevik agrarian program as a betrayal of socialism. She felt that giving land to the peasants for private plots would result in the growth of a kulak class which would be strong enough to doom the revolution. She stated: "The direct seizure of the land by the peasants has in general nothing at all in common with socialist economy" (*RR*, p. 41). "It piles up insurmountable obstacles to the socialist transformation of agrarian relations" (p. 43). This is a very Trotskyite view, a holdover from the "permanent revolution" theory, a dismissal of the stage of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. Lenin regarded such a view as "ultra-left" and utopian. One doesn't build a socialist economy the day after the proletarian revolution. One must prepare the ground for it. The seizure of land by the peasants swept away in one sweep the remnants of feudalism, which resided in the landowning class. This cleared the way for the development of capitalism and, therefore, the class struggle in the countryside.

In addition, her views were based on false information about the Bolshevik land policy. She stated that nationalization of the large landed estates was necessary; by this she meant run by the state. This was indeed the Bolshevik's

original conception, but proved impossible to achieve, for one reason because the peasants had already on their own been confiscating these estates, and the proletariat did not take land away from the peasantry, as the bourgeois robbers had done (7). Second, she maintained that actual land ownership must belong to the state, but this too, in a certain sense, was the case. As Lenin pointed out, the abolition of feudal-bourgeois private property meant “nationalization”. The peasants had a tenure or lease on the land for a long period, but not actual ownership in the old sense, in that land could not be inherited, etc.

Luxemburg demanded an end to the separation between the rural economy and industry, and reproached the Soviet government for not carrying through such a policy. This too was a Bolshevik goal, but it was simply ridiculous to demand this immediately after the revolution! She reluctantly admitted this. How should this be done? Luxemburg’s only solution was a vague concept of a “reform introduced by the center” (p. 42). Finally, she accused the Bolsheviks of having “sold out” by taking over the program of the Social Revolutionaries, or the spontaneous peasant movement, by appropriating the slogan “Go and take the land for yourselves.” She interpreted this as a sudden about-face from Lenin’s agrarian program before the revolution.

But this was a common misinterpretation of the Bolshevik agrarian program which actually had a long and complex evolution. [An article on the evolution of the Bolshevik agrarian program is planned.] Lenin readily admitted they took over the S.R. “program,” but he made the important point that “program” did not mean “principles”. First and foremost the S.R. “principle” was that they didn’t want a socialist revolution or a proletarian government. The S.R. program of peasant communalism could never create socialism. Therefore, the S.R. “program” was a program under capitalism. Moreover, it was actually only the Bolsheviks who advocated violent seizure of the land by the peasants. The S.R.s urged the peasants to wait until the Constituent Assembly could distribute the land.

Lenin’s policy had been that nationalization of the land would create optimal conditions for capitalism to develop, in addition to being the demand of the peasantry. However, 1) in a bourgeois state, this was not realistic, and 2) even if it were possible, it would still keep the land under the control of the bourgeoisie. Under a dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, this was an entirely different matter, and the “April Conference” had demanded nationalization of all land. That is, the Bolshevik concept was seizure of all of the land, including kulak plots, and distribution according to consumers (eaters) which would

favor the small peasant. The S.R. conception was seizure of only the landlord’s land and distribution according to workers, which would leave the kulaks intact.

Luxemburg’s section on the peasantry is the weakest part of her critique. It is full of question marks and half-finished statements. She was distressed because she thought the Bolsheviks weren’t being consistent. She seemed out of her depth on this issue, and the Spartacists actually had very little in the way of a peasant or farmer program. In her statements, one can detect the common anarchistic tendency to want immediate socialism, and she demonstrated little understanding of the dialectics involved in a transitional period. For example, she objected that under the Bolshevik program, “social and economic inequality was not eliminated, but rather increased, and that class antagonisms were further sharpened” (p. 44). Influences from “permanent revolution” are strong. Both Luxemburg and Trotsky tended to view the peasantry more or less as a whole and as the enemy of socialism. Luxemburg concluded: “Now that the Russian peasant has seized the land with his own fist, he does not even dream of defending Russia and the revolution to which he owes the land” (p. 45). Although she warned against a rising kulak class, at other times she slipped into rhetoric about “the Russian peasant” not seeing that the increased differentiation and class conflict which was taking place, and that would inevitably accelerate in the countryside, was a necessary feature of the second stage of the Revolution.

The Nationalities Question

True to her previous ideas [see Part II], Luxemburg objected to the self-determination policy of the Bolsheviks as “hollow, nationalist and petty-bourgeois phraseology”, “doctrinaire obstinacy”, a mechanical “hobby” carried over from a previous era. Again she warned about the “disintegration of Russia” and repeated that unfortunate phrase which Lenin ridiculed -- the revolutionary forces through the Empire should “[defend] tooth and nail the integrity of the Russian Empire!” (p. 53). Lenin’s explanation of the importance of self-determination after the Revolution has been dealt with in Part II, and I won’t repeat his criticisms of Luxemburg’s position. However, in this essay she added a new wrinkle. She saw the Bolshevik’s self-determination policy now either as a “tactical flourish against Germany” or a calculated “ploy” of the Bolsheviks to gain support for the Revolution (much as giving land to the peasants) which was a gamble that did not succeed. She used the examples of the Ukraine and Finland which had fallen to the bourgeois counter-revolu-

tion to support her views.

Luxemburg's arguments were not logical. First, she criticized the Bolsheviks for not allowing internal democracy within the Russian nation, but granting external democracy to other nations, thereby equating the two policies. She did not seem to recognize that the lack of Bolshevik internal "democracy" was really the fight against bourgeois capitalism and feudal remnants, the fight against previous oppression. While the granting of external democracy, i.e., the self-determination of nations, was actually a part of that same battle, the corrective to the same previous oppression of czarism. She ignored the fact that these nations had previously been separate nations, until conquered by czarist Russia and forced into union. Second, Luxemburg felt that only the proletariat of these nations had the right to vote for secession or unification, but that it was the bourgeoisie who controlled all the secessionist movements. Therefore, the Bolsheviks were encouraging the counter-revolution. Now, even if the communists had not had a policy that a socialist nation does not coerce other nations, at this time to "take on" the bourgeoisie of these lands which had voted to secede would have been an impossible task, and the proletariat of these lands weren't strong enough to do so. [Perhaps the later example of Lenin's miscalculation of the Polish proletariat bears this out.]

Finally, Luxemburg betrayed leftovers from that very bourgeois "parliamentarism" in the German SD party which she fought so hard against and termed "cretinism". In reference to deciding self-determination, she talked about the electoral system being controlled by each nation's bourgeoisie, who "make it impossible to introduce socialism by a popular vote" (p. 51). There are two errors here: 1) first the mere concept of "socialism being introduced by "popular vote" at this time and in these lands is a utopian concept, and 2) she spoke as if this "vote" were something honorably engraved in stone, as if final decisions would be based on a "vote" and not on the actual (and probably violent) struggle of class forces within each nation. Luxemburg had actually weakened her earlier analysis of self-determination, under capitalism, by taking on the issue of self-determination under socialism.

Democracy

Luxemburg spent most of her efforts castigating the Bolsheviks for their lack of "democracy". The whole crux of her criticism lay in her confusion of bourgeois democracy and proletarian democracy. She was horrified at the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly -- as an institution. While she acknowledged that the old one did not

represent the new forces, she felt the Bolsheviks should have called for a new one. She felt that the dissolution of the CA curtailed the initiative of the masses, destroyed democracy and alienated the European socialists (those parliamentarians!).

But she was mistaken on several matters. First, she felt Lenin had made an abrupt about-turn after the Revolution, complaining that "Lenin and his comrades were stormily demanding the calling of a CA up to the time of their October victory" (p. 57). This is incorrect. As my previous article on Trotsky demonstrated, it was Lenin who demanded "Forget the Constituent Assembly," and Trotsky who, as Luxemburg quoted, said that the October Revolution represented "the salvation of the Constituent Assembly!" (p. 57). So, while Luxemburg associated Lenin and Trotsky together, it was actually Trotsky (but after the Revolution) who made the about-turn, not Lenin.

Second, Luxemburg drew a false analogy to previous revolutionary situations, i.e., the "Long Parliament" of England in 1642 where the parliament had been turned to the left through the pressure of the masses. She therefore felt a newly elected CA, inflamed by the revolutionary situation, could become the instrument of proletarian control over the state and party bureaucracy. To her embarrassment, she even used the example of the reactionary Fourth Duma (1909), calling it the "point of departure for the revolution" (pp. 61-62). [After huge popular demonstrations, it had sent emissaries to the czar to "request" his abdication.] She regarded the dissolution of the CA as the "elimination of democracy" and despaired that the "mechanism of democratic institutions" as such was being called into question (p. 60).

The fact is, as Lenin pointed out in many places, the parliament is a mechanism of the bourgeois state, of bourgeois democracy. The soviet is a mechanism of the proletarian state, of proletarian democracy. Nor can the two co-exist. This is another example of Luxemburg seemingly stuck in the traditions of German SD parliamentarism. At this time, she had not yet recognized the role of the soviets, as organs of proletarian government, not just fighting organizations. She could not understand why formerly they were considered "reactionary" and then when the Bolsheviks achieved a majority, they were considered "the correct representatives of popular opinion" (p. 66). She saw this as another instance of inconsistency justified by expediency. Later, however, when founding the German Communist Party, as the German proletariat was already establishing soviets, they were included in the KPD party program.

Luxemburg wanted "the broadest democracy and public opinion" (p. 71). She criticized the Bolshevik

suffrage system, based on the soviets and on the principle of those who live by their own labor. She called it a "utopian product of fantasy, cut loose from social reality." She maintained it was "an anticipation of the juridical situation which is proper on the basis on an already completed socialist economy, but not in the transition period of the proletarian dictatorship" (p. 65). She argued that the economy at this time simply did not allow all people to be employed, to live by their own labor. Therefore, this law disenfranchised broad sections of the middle classes and even sections of the working class. She did not, however, offer an alternative plan; she obviously could not call for universal suffrage, which would include the reactionary bourgeoisie. This is actually an incorrect interpretation of the Bolshevik suffrage law. But what really worried Luxemburg was that it would be regarded as a principle set in stone for all time to come, in other words, the model for the European revolutions.

Luxemburg also called for a "free and untrammelled press, [for] without the unlimited right of association and assemblage, the rule of the broad mass of the people is entirely unthinkable" (p. 67). That is, the masses could not gain political experience otherwise. Her oft-quoted statement is not only based on error but is inconsistent:

Freedom only for the supporters of the government, only for the members of one party...is no freedom at all. Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently (p. 69).

Freedom only for members of one party, was not the Bolshevik's original concept, but rather freedom for the proletariat and the other exploited suffering masses! Why not freedom for supporters of proletarian rule and curtailed liberties for those who opposed it and even sought to overthrow it? How else could the regime survive? And Luxemburg declared she was in favor of force used against the counter-revolution. Moreover, "thinking differently" was not the problem; "acting differently" was the problem. While she admitted that the bourgeoisie must be kept down, she seemed not to recognize that taking away their right to vote, publish and associate was a means of ensuring that they were kept down. She allowed that negative decrees should be made against property, etc., but that positive decrees should not be made. She didn't recognize the inseparability of the two concepts.

While Luxemburg called her ideal "socialist democracy," it always sounded as if it were bourgeois democracy she was advocating. Interestingly, she contrasted Lenin (and Trotsky) with Kautsky as two poles of the "bour-

geois" model, i.e., bourgeois "dictatorship" as against bourgeois "democracy." Kautsky was clearly an advocate of bourgeois reformist "democracy", but she interpreted the Bolshevik's concept of democracy as dictatorship by elite leaders, and thus another form of the bourgeois model. But confused as her statements were, I don't think the case is quite what it looked like. I think it is more that this was further evidence of her anarchistic tendencies. Here is her definition of "socialist democracy":

Socialist democracy begins simultaneously with the beginning of the destruction of class rule and of the construction of socialism. It begins at the very moment of the seizure of power by the socialist party. it is the same thing as the dictatorship of the proletariat [my underlines] (p. 77).

She was projecting an idea of freedom that lay in the far-off future, when there was no more class struggle. But she wanted it now!

Luxemburg's chapter on "Problems of Dictatorship" has been much quoted as predicting the Stalin regime. It has unfortunately been used by anarchists who wish to prove that all governments are bad; and the same line of reasoning has been used by anti-communists who wish to show that "socialism" is bad by claiming an unbroken succession from Lenin to Stalin:

But with the repression of political life in the land as a whole, life in the soviets must also become more and more crippled. Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinion, life dies out in every public institution, becomes a mere semblance of life, in which only the bureaucracy remains as the active element. Public life gradually falls asleep, a few dozen party leaders of inexhaustible energy and boundless experience direct and rule. among them, in reality only a dozen outstanding heads to the leading and an elite of the working class is invited from time to time to meetings where they are to applaud the speeches of the leaders, and to approve proposed resolutions unanimously -- at bottom, then, a clique affair -- a dictatorship, to be sure, not the dictatorship of the proletariat, however, but only the dictatorship of a handful of politicians, that is a dictatorship in the bourgeois sense.... (pp. 71-72).

In this context, she railed against what she, and subsequent bourgeoisie anti-communists forever after, have termed the “Red Terror” which she evidently thought to be the consequence of this “dictatorship”. She stated that Lenin is “completely mistaken in the means he employs: Decree, dictatorial force....draconian penalizes, rule by terror....” (p. 71). First, she confused terror with war. The early regime was in a state of civil war against the bourgeoisie from its inception, and not just during what is called the Civil War years. Second, this had to do with her essential semi-anarchistic view toward the party and toward government. In arguing for a government by the proletariat, instead of by a “party elite” as she saw the original Bolshevik government, she was jumping the gun, leaping to a conception which could only come about at a much later point in history. She simply could not stomach the reality of what a revolutionary government must be at the beginning.

Her actual argument, however, was based on very curious reasoning. She was objecting to measures used against the corruption, petty crime and sabotage, which was being carried on a grand scale amongst the declassed bourgeoisie and the *lumpenproletariat*. And Luxemburg always had great sympathy for the *lumpen*. Here is her reasoning: The bourgeoisie degenerates into the *lumpenproletariat* which also includes declassed workers. Terror is useless against the *lumpenproletariat*. And it makes the *lumpenproletariat* even more fertile ground for fascists and counter-revolutionaries. Martial law is impotent against outbreaks of the “*lumpenproletarian*” sickness. “Every persistent regime of martial law leads to arbitrariness and every form of arbitrariness tends to deprave society” (p. 74). What was the “only anti-toxin”? “the idealism and social activity of the masses, unlimited political freedom” (p. 75). In reality, this campaign against corruption was a not inconsiderable part of the “civil war” the Bolsheviks were fighting. And while there obviously were excesses committed, Luxemburg slipped into an old anarchistic sentiment: that left on their own the “masses” will embody, instill, and respond to “idealism” and justice.

Lenin’s famous pamphlet, “Left-Wing’ Communism – An Infantile Disorder,” 1920, was explicitly directed against the “ultra-lefts” or “semi-anarchist” elements in the Internationale. One of the groups he singled out was the “Left-wing” of the KPD, which became the KAPD (Communist Workers Party of Germany). This was a fairly sizeable group of anarchistic youth who split off from the KPD, were ousted from the Internationale in 1920, and subsequently disappeared. What is important is that some

of their views which Lenin refuted sound very much like Luxemburg’s. They too posed the dichotomy between the dictatorship of the proletariat and the dictatorship of the party, which so bothered Luxemburg. They concocted the same dichotomy as she did between “rule from above” vs. “rule from below”.

First, Lenin pointed out that the German communists had been reared in the tradition of the old German SDP and its parliamentary basis, where leaders were “elected”. Confusion had resulted in confronting an illegal party, such as the Bolsheviks, which had to operate on a different basis. They had also become disgusted with the relationship of party leaders to the masses because of the opportunism of all the old SD party leaders, as well as the obvious opportunism of the union labor aristocracy. They had forgotten that all parties have a class base, all classes are represented by their parties, and all parties have leaders who represent the interests of the class. They had equated party leadership *per se* with bourgeois party leadership [some thought the mere concept of “party” was a bourgeois concept!] and thus had fallen into cynicism.

Lenin then outlined the Bolshevik system of democratic centralism, the soviets, the congresses, the unions, etc., and recounted the whole history of the party to demonstrate his point that there could be no such concept as “below” or “above”. This is his key statement: “The dictatorship is exercised by the proletariat organised in the Soviets; the proletariat is guided by the Communist Party of Bolsheviks” (p. 47). This seems to underline the point that Luxemburg had not understood the role of the soviets. He concluded:

From the standpoint of communism, repudiation of the Party principle and of Party discipline means attempting to leap from the eve of capitalism’s collapse..., not to the lower or the intermediate phase of communism, but to the higher...Classes still remain, and will remain everywhere *for years after* the proletariat’s conquest of power...The strictest centralisation and discipline are required within the political party of the proletariat in order to counteract this, in order that the organisational role of the proletariat (and that is its principal role) may be exercised correctly, successfully and victoriously ...Whoever brings about even the slightest weakening of the iron discipline of the party of the proletariat (especially

during its dictatorship), is actually aiding the bourgeoisie against the proletariat (CW, 1966, Vol. 31, pp. 44-45).

And in the end, this is precisely why Luxemburg did not publish her very serious criticisms of the Bolsheviks. She did not want to lend support to the bourgeois counter-revolution.

The KAPD went over into complete anarchism, and in the process destroyed themselves! Besides denying the role of party leaders, even parties, the KAPD opposed any kind of tactical compromises with other parties, taking part in parliamentary bodies, or even unions. These were certainly not Luxemburg's tenets, quite the opposite, and she fought against this faction on many issues. Yet at times, she came dangerously close to their views in her over-zealous praise of the "spontaneity of the masses" and in her concept of "dictatorship". There is evidence that it was this KAPD element who urged on the Jan. 1919 uprising, against the better judgment of Luxemburg. And committed as she was to mass democracy, she was forced to go along (8).

Luxemburg accused the Bolsheviks of "making a virtue of necessity and of freezing into a complete theoretical system all the tactics formed upon them by these fatal circumstances and want[ing] to recommend them to the international proletariat as a model of socialist tactics" (p. 79). This was not true, Lenin asserted, the revolution will not probably proceed in the same manner elsewhere as in Russia. Lenin made the point many times that the suffrage policy, the land policy, and many other policies of the Bolsheviks as well were specifically Russian policies, necessitated by the peculiarities of the Russian situation, not universal models.

Yet in the end, Luxemburg was a staunch supporter of the Bolsheviks; she just didn't approve of any of their methods! Yet she also excused the Bolsheviks: they had no alternative due to the failure of the German proletariat and the occupation of Russia by German imperialism. Like Trotsky, she saw the Bolshevik Revolution mainly as an "opening chapter," an example and inspiration to Europe, to Germany. She seemed always to want to "blame" and "shame" the German proletariat: (9)

In this, Lenin and Trotsky and their friends were the *first*, those who went ahead as an example to the proletariat of the world; they are still the *only ones* up to now who can cry..."I have dared!" (p. 80).

Kautsky and the Bolshevik Revolution

Luxemburg's "The Russian Revolution" was definitely directed at Kautsky and the other "Mensheviks" who regarded Russia as "unripe" for anything but a bourgeois revolution, and wanted the revolution to stop at this point. Therefore, it is disconcerting to read Kautsky's own assessment of the Revolution, *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat* (1918-1919), and discover how much Luxemburg sounded like Kautsky, her bitter enemy. There is no evidence that either had seen the other's work. Kautsky's motive was "to warn the Bolsheviks urgently against the road they had taken" (p. ix). He wanted to prevent the impending German (and Austrian) revolutions from coming under the "communist" influence of the Bolsheviks. Moreover, he felt that if the Bolsheviks had succeeded that would have amounted to proving that "the teachings of Marxism, however, could then no longer be maintained. They would be proved false...."(p. viii). That is, he attributed to Marx the idea that the socialist revolution can only be the product of, and hence must be preceded by a long period of advanced capitalism. Therefore, he denied that the Bolshevik seizure of power could be socialist or even proletarian, and certainly not part of the international anti-capitalist movement. It could only be the completion of the bourgeois-democratic movement. Luxemburg saw it as the attempt to create socialism. So Kautsky's criticisms stem from the premise that the Bolsheviks were not honoring the conditions of "bourgeois democracy", whereas Luxemburg's criticism stem from the premise that the Bolsheviks were not implementing "socialist democracy".

So in motive and overall assessment, Kautsky was poles apart from Luxemburg; yet in specific criticisms, they were very similar. Both criticized the regime as not being a dictatorship of the proletariat but rather a dictatorship of a party elite over the proletariat, and feared this could lead to a "one-man dictatorship". Both felt the Bolsheviks were imposing their will by "brute force". Both criticized the lack of "democracy" and various "freedoms" after the Revolution. Kautsky advocated "universal suffrage" because he did not regard the expropriated bourgeoisie as a real threat. Both felt that without these freedoms, the proletariat could not mature, learn, expand, emancipate itself in order to take over its historical mission of exercising the proletarian dictatorship. Both saw the CA as a bulwark of democracy and depreciated the soviets. Both deplored the violence of the Revolution, although Luxemburg recognized that a violent takeover was inevitable. Both saw the peasant program as a restoration of bourgeois property. Kautsky

went much further and actually predicted that there would eventually be a “dictatorship of the peasants” (KK, p. 120).

Here is Kautsky’s reasoning: “The most effective weapon of the proletariat is its numerical strength. It cannot emancipate itself until it has become the largest class of the population, and until capitalist society is so far developed that the small peasants and the lower middle classes no longer overweight the proletariat” (p. 29). He gave a very specious argument based on a perversion of Marx’s analysis of the Paris Commune, i.e., that Marx did not really mean “dictatorship” of the proletariat. He attributed to Marx the confusing idea that “a class can rule, but not govern” (p. 31): Marx...only intended to describe a political *condition*, and not a *form of government*” (p. 140), totally omitting Marx’s concept of the proletarian state. But all this really only led up to Kautsky’s real purpose: he did not want the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat in Germany. Instead:

I anticipate that the social revolution of the proletariat will assume quite other forms than that of the middle class (i.e., the violent overthrow of the French Revolution), and that it will be possible to carry it out by peaceful economic, legal and moral means, instead of by physical force, in all places where democracy has been established (p. 38).

Both Kautsky and Luxemburg were fairly certain that the Bolsheviks would perish. In Luxemburg’s view, this would be a great tragedy, but their revolutionary courage and will would remain as the inspiration for the European proletariat. In Kautsky’s view this would be a blessing which would clear the way for conditions to develop the real socialist revolution. But if the Soviet regime perished, “the nationalization of many branches of industry, for which the Soviet government has paved the way, will persist, even if the Soviet republic should be destroyed, and, after the destruction of the big estates, this will constitute the most considerable permanent achievement of the dictatorship of the proletariat” [my underlines] (p. 126). This was essentially Trotsky’s view. Or one may say, Trotsky’s view was essentially Kautsky’s view.

Lenin’s regarded Kautsky as the worst betrayer of all the opportunists. This was the man regarded by all as the leading Marxist theoretician, who knew his Marx backwards and forwards, who could quote long passages from memory. Lenin’s scathing reply to Kautsky is, of course,

the famous “The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky,” 1918. Lenin called Kautsky’s work “a bourgeois-liberal theory recognizing the non-revolutionary ‘class’ struggle of the proletariat”, and “the social product of the contradictions within the Second International, a blend of loyalty to Marxism in word and subordination to opportunism in deed” (CW, 1965, Vol. 28, p. 229-230). He had tried to turn Marx into a “bourgeois liberal gentleman” (10).

I won’t go into all of Lenin’s specific arguments as many readers are already familiar with them. But I want to give a few examples where Lenin’s refutation of Kautsky’s points actually clarify Luxemburg’s mistakes.

First, on the matter of democracy. All democracy is “class” democracy. Bourgeois democracy protects the rights of the bourgeois exploiters; proletarian democracy protects the rights of the majority. Therefore, Luxemburg’s “freedom for those who think differently” is a concept of giving power to the bourgeoisie, not a concept of “pure” democracy, which is impossible until “all possibility of the exploitation of one class by another has been totally destroyed, and furthermore once you achieved this, you had no state whatsoever anymore” (p. 252). Lenin quoted Engels:

The state is only a transitional institution which is used in the struggle, in the revolution, to hold down one’s adversaries by force, it is sheer nonsense to talk of a “free people’s state”; so long as the proletariat still needs the state, it does not need it in the interests of freedom but in order to hold down its adversaries, and as soon as it becomes possible to speak of freedom the state as such ceases to exist (p. 243).

Should there be equality between the exploited and the exploiters? Obviously not.

If the exploiters are defeated in one country only -- and this, of course, is typical, since simultaneous revolution in a number of countries is a rare exception -- they still remain stronger than the exploited, for the international connections of the exploiters are enormous. That a section of the exploited from the least advanced middle-peasant, artisan and similar groups of the population may, and indeed does, fol-

low the exploiters has been proved by all revolutions, including the Commune.... (p. 253).

Therefore, what both Kautsky and Luxemburg called "terror" is, according to Engels, "the authority of the armed people against the bourgeoisie" (p. 251). On the specific matter of suffrage, however, Lenin pointed out that it was only after a year's experience that the Soviets deprived the exploiters of the franchise:

depriving the exploiters of the franchise is a purely Russian question, and not a question of the dictatorship of the proletariat in general (p. 255)..It does not enter as an indispensable condition in the historical and class concept "dictatorship". The indispensable characteristic...of dictatorship is the forcible suppression of the exploiters as a class, and, consequently, the infringement of 'pure democracy', i.e., of equality and freedom, in regard to that class (p. 256).

As for this not being "fair", Lenin ironically posed the alternative: "Would it not clearly be better to grant the vote to all exploiters...rather than risk the possibility of...the 'small master who lives and feels quite like a proletarian' being wronged by the workers?" (p. 278).

On the matters of the Constituent Assembly vs. the soviets, Both Kautsky and Luxemburg saw the CA as a repository of "democracy". Lenin maintained that Kautsky had deliberately falsified Marx's lesson of the Paris Commune, i.e., that of smashing the state machine. And this is also a weakness in Luxemburg's conception. Inherent in this smashing meant replacing the bourgeois state machine by a new proletarian machine, of which the soviets were a part, whereas the CA belonged to the old capitalist machine. On the other hand, "The Soviets are the [peculiar, national] Russian form of the proletarian dictatorship" (p. 257); other countries may in the future discover their own peculiar, national "proletarian form".

Upholding the CA had been a proper slogan during the first, bourgeois-democratic phase of the revolution, but it since became the slogan of the Cadets, the Mensheviks and other reactionaries. [Kautsky thought of the bourgeois "state machine" as chiefly the military and the bureaucracy, and of course he wanted to retain the bourgeois parliamentary apparatus so that the workers could effect their gradual takeover.] Lenin pointed out that his "April

Thesis" had "proclaimed the superiority of the Paris Commune type of state over the bourgeois parliamentary republic" (p. 265); and moreover, that the CA had been issued the alternative of "reconcil[ing] yourselves to the proletarian dictatorship, or else we shall defeat you by 'revolutionary means' (p. 268). In fact, as far back as 1903, the Russian SD program had declared that it would "disperse any parliament that was found to be counter-revolutionary" (p. 280). The defeat of the CA was a bringing of "the fight against the bourgeoisie...to a finish" (p. 270).

On the peasant/land problem, both Kautsky and Luxemburg believed that the Bolsheviks had "surrendered the dictatorship...to the petty-bourgeois peasants" (p. 298). To Kautsky, this posed the possibility of a permanent "dictatorship of the peasantry"; whereas to Luxemburg, it posed the likelihood of the overthrow of the proletarian dictatorship by the peasantry (p. 298). Neither saw the logic of the next and inevitable step, which Lenin described thus:

Having completed the bourgeois democratic revolution in alliance with the peasants as a whole, the Russian proletariat finally passed on to the socialist revolution when it succeeded in splitting the rural population, in winning over the rural proletarians and semi-proletarians, and in uniting them against the kulaks and the bourgeoisie, including the peasant bourgeoisie (pp. 304-305).

Luxemburg particularly failed to see that the general peasant revolution was a bourgeois revolution, and "that without a series of transitions, of transitional stages, it cannot be transformed into a socialist revolution in a backward country" (p. 305). This meant the "dictatorship of the proletariat and the poor peasants" (p. 303). "It is only now, in the summer and autumn of 1918, that the rural districts themselves are passing through the 'October' (i.e., the proletarian Revolution)" (p. 304).

On the matter of the land issue, both Kautsky and Luxemburg implied that the Bolsheviks had "capitulated" to peasant demands. Lenin pointed out that "equal land tenure" had a revolutionary basis during the bourgeois stage of the Revolution. The Bolsheviks at the time had

most explicitly and definitely declared: this is not our idea, we do not agree with this slogan, but we think it our

duty to enforce it because this is the demand of the overwhelming majority of the peasants. And the idea and demands of the majority of the working people are things that the working people must *discard of their own accord*; such demands cannot be either “abolished” or “skipped over”. We Bolsheviks shall *help* the peasants to discard petty-bourgeois slogans, to *pass* from them as quickly and as easily as possible to socialist slogans ... By reaching its limit, it all the more clearly, rapidly and easily reveals to the people the inadequacy of bourgeois democratic solutions and the necessity of proceeding beyond their limits, of passing on to socialism (p. 310).

Moreover, the Bolshevik Land Law had advocated the transfer to the state “lands on which high-level scientific farming is practised...and that “all livestock and farm implements of the confiscated estates shall pass into the exclusive use of the state or a commune...and no compensation shall be paid for this”, and that “all land shall become part of the national land fund” (p. 308). In addition, it gave “*direct* preference to communes and cooperative societies” (p. 311). Neither Kautsky or Luxemburg had seen the Bolshevik program as “nationalization” of the land. To all those who denied this, Lenin asserted:

They are wrong in theory. Insofar as we remain within the framework of commodity production and capitalism, the abolition of private ownership of land is nationalisation of the land [my underline] (p. 313).

In other words, “nationalization of the land” was really a bourgeois slogan, a condition of “ideal capitalism”. It “has given the proletarian state the maximum opportunity of passing to socialism in agriculture” (p. 316).

In *The State and Revolution*, Lenin made an elaborate distinction between Marxism and Anarchism:

(1) The former (Marxists), aiming at the complete destruction of the state, recognize that this aim can only be achieved after classes have been abolished by the socialist revolution, as the result of the establishment of socialism,

which leads to the withering away of the state; the latter (Anarchists) want to destroy the state completely overnight, failing to understand the conditions under which the state can be destroyed. [my underline]. (2) The former (Marxists) recognize that after the proletariat has conquered political power **it must utterly demolish the old state machine** [my underline] and substitute for it a new one consisting of an organization of the armed workers, after the type of the commune; the latter (Anarchists), while insisting on the demolition of the state machine, have absolutely no clear idea of *what* the proletariat will put in its place and *how* it will use its revolutionary power; the anarchists even reject the utilization of state power by the revolutionary proletariat, they reject its revolutionary dictatorship. (3) The former (Marxists) demand that use be made of the present-day state in preparing the proletariat for revolution; the anarchists reject this (*State and Revolution*, p. 137).

From this definition, one could conclude that Luxemburg particularly falls under conditions (1) and (2) in her failure to understand the nature of the dictatorship of the proletariat and how it must suppress the bourgeoisie, and that Kautsky falls particularly under condition (2) in his avoidance of smashing the bourgeois state, and in his concept of using the machinery of the “present-day state” as the actual means of arriving at proletarian power.

Despite what she saw as the dangers and failings of the Bolshevik Revolution, Luxemburg regarded it as positive, in fact as the turning point in history. For Kautsky it was frightening. He called it a rash coup, an abomination and perversion of scientific socialism, and he wanted it squashed.

Lenin believed that Luxemburg’s erroneous views about the Bolshevik Revolution were due to her isolation in prison and limited access to correct information. He evidently did not consider her errors that serious. He felt they were errors of misunderstanding, perhaps errors in tactics, but not opposition on principle. He believed that before she died, she had corrected many of her “errors”. The final installment will attempt to assess the validity of this belief. <>

Notes:

(1) Lenin, *CW*, 1973, Vol. 32, "Speech in Defence of the Tactics of the Communist International," p. 469. This statement was made in the context of relations with anarchists; elsewhere Lenin used the same statement in defending the Bolshevik peasant program which adopted that of the Social Revolutionaries.

(2) Luxemburg's work was published in 1922 by Paul Levi after he had been expelled from the KPD. [Levi had taken over the leadership of the KPD after the deaths of Luxemburg, Liebknecht and Jogiches.] This has been interpreted as a spiteful act on Levi's part after his break with Lenin who excoriated him for his open criticism of the KPD's errors in the second German failed uprising of March, 1921. Levi was expelled from the CI (and the KPD) for calling the uprising a "putsch" and for depreciating the revolutionary activity of the German workers. At first Lenin had defended Levi, as some of the matters he criticized served as a corrective to the ultra-leftism in the KPD. Later it became clear that Levi held a "centrist", "anarchist intellectual", Menshevik position. [See *CW*, 1973, Vol. 32, "A Letter to the German Communists" for his early assessment of Levi, and *CW*, 1966, Vol. 33, "Notes of a Publicist" for his final assessment.]

(3) At the time Bukharin wrote this, there was a campaign being waged against "Luxemburgism," considered as a "right deviation" within the KPD. "Luxemburgism" was later condemned by Stalin as a "left deviation".

(4) It is also interesting that the first major revisionist, Bernstein, whom Kautsky and Luxemburg exposed, also held a "consumptionist" theory. He proposed that the strata of the rising "middle class" would be the element that would "save" capitalism by providing a new consumer base, thereby justifying his program of bourgeois reformism. So Luxemburg actually came out of a tradition of "consumptionist theory" in the German SD Party.

(5) Luxemburg claimed that one of Kautsky's "revisions" of Marx was his theory that socialism was a national and domestic affair in each country, thereby absolving the German proletariat from its burden of achieving its own socialist revolution and in the near future having to come to the aid of the Russian proletariat. [Does this credit Kautsky with inventing the theory of "Socialism in One Country"??]

(6) Whereas Lenin thought the Spartacists should have

split off sooner from Kautsky's group. The Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany (USPD), split off from the SDs immediately after the Russian Revolution. In its centrist position, it continued to preach revolution, but advocated unity with the social chauvinists and in essence renounced the class struggle. During the war, it held a pacifist position between the right-wing chauvinists in the German Party who advocated defense of the fatherland, and the revolutionary opposition of Luxemburg and Liebknecht. For a time, the Spartacus League affiliated with it while retaining its organizational and political independence and attempting to win members away from it. The Spartacus League left this party and formed the German Communist Party (KPD) in Dec. 1918/Jan. 1919. In October, 1920 the USPD split apart, the left wing joining the KPD and the right wing retaining the old name. It existed until 1922.

(7) In the end only about 11% of these estates (mainly belonging to the czar and the church) were turned into government-run model farms and 3% into collectives. I refer the reader to Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1923*, Vol. Two, Chapter 16, "The Impact of the Revolution" for a discussion of the complexities of the land policy.

(8) This anarcho-syndicalist group was expelled from the German Party in 1919, and formed the KAPD (Communist Workers' Party of Germany). They were temporarily allowed representation in the CI on the grounds that they merge with the KPD (now called the United Communist Party of Germany). They refused and were expelled. They soon disintegrated. To their anti-parliamentarism stance, Lenin contrasted Karl Liebknecht's "truly revolutionary utilisation of reactionary parliaments" (*CW*, 1966, Vol. 31, "Left-Wing' Communism...", p. 65).

(9) Lenin defended Luxemburg's (and Liebknecht's) accusations against the European and especially the German proletariat as "betraying the revolution". He felt that "This accusation is leveled primarily and above all, not against the masses, who are always downtrodden, but against those leaders who, like the Scheidemanns and the Kautskys, failed in their duty..." (*CW*, 1965 Vol. 28, "The Renegade Kautsky," p. 292). He surmised that owing to the censorship prevailing in Germany, this was the only form in which this "accusation" could be made. Possibly, Lenin was a bit too generous.

(10) For other works refuting Kautsky, see Lenin, *CV*,

Vol. 25, *The State and Revolution*; Vol. 22, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*; Vol. 23, "Imperialism and the Split in Socialism," and Vol. 21, "The Collapse of the Second Internationale."

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Reply to Tabolt, continued from page 48

est working class youth to step upward out of the working class proper, and the fact that an enormous part of the growth of the working class was in occupations formerly part of the middle strata and which retained certain traces of cultures of that history (e.g. most clerical occupations) combined in the post World War 2 era (along with other factors such as welfare state, prolonged prosperity, automobilization, smaller workplaces etc.) to dilute the workers sense of class, of being a force in society etc. (Jake should consider some time why it was that in over 20 years of activism MLP and its predecessors could count on one hand the number of factory or service workers recruited to actually join the party, even for a short period of time even though our work enjoyed a good deal of sympathy from the workers? Were we worse organizers than CPUSA in the 20's and 30's. Or did not the above mentioned factors determine the limits of our success?)" (p. 45)

As a parenthetical comment, Tabolt asks me to ponder a rhetorical question. He has already concluded that the MLP could never get more than a handful of actual workers to join it primarily because the working class in this period has such a dilute class consciousness. His list of factors dulling class consciousness makes the overall point that the huge middle strata is to blame for the proletariat's weak class consciousness. (Compare this

statement with a similar one from the first half of his article, the section titled, "The effect of the growth of the Professional/Managerial Strata and White Collar Work in General on Working Class Cohesion" (CWVTJ #9, page 36)).

Tabolt believes that the MLP could not recruit workers to communism because, let's face it, we are all too middle class. There is too much class mobility, too much prosperity, and too many new jobs are in what used to be middle class occupations.

This is bad but it gets worse. Tabolt makes a very strong implication here that since the MLP didn't and couldn't succeed in organizing workers on a class basis, then there is no point to even attempting it now. As for the middle strata, the only force left to confront the bourgeoisie, it vacillates to the right, so why bother?

I want to point out that Tabolt is posing a legitimate question in regard to the MLP's recruitment of workers. Certainly class consciousness is a major factor in building a working class movement. Tabolt has also listed several factors that would retard class consciousness. However, there are a few other things to take into consideration, like the existence of a large mass movement, such as the workers' movement in the 1930's. The point I'm trying to make is that Tabolt does not have a thorough analysis of all this, he does not have a good accounting what happened and why. What he has is a rationale for passivity and an argument for liquidationism. <>

Comments on the movie *Land and Freedom*

by Sarah, Chicago Workers' Voice

The movie *Land and Freedom* directed by Ken Loach was recently shown in Chicago. Many left wing and revolutionary activists saw it. The movie provoked some discussion about the role of various trends in the Spanish Civil War, especially the trend of the Communist Party of Spain and the Comintern and the role of Stalinism.

The movie follows David, an English worker and a member of the Communist Party. David leaves England in 1936, making his way to Spain. In the early part of the film, he fights with a militia led by the POUM. He participates in a heated debate of villagers and militia after the fascist forces were defeated in that village. In this debate, another Communist Party member argues against the peasantry collectivizing the large estates that they captured. This, it was argued, would alienate the bourgeoisie and various foreign forces. Nevertheless, in this film the peasantry in the town decided to collectivize the land.

He is involved in a further debate over whether the militia should disband as ordered to by the Republican government in close alliance with the communists. This militia decides to stay together despite orders to the contrary and after being told that it would not receive arms from the Republican government.

Women fighters in the movie objected to being told by the Republican government that they could not fight in the militias.

The main character then ends up in Barcelona to observe the fighting between the Communist Party and the anarchist dominated CNT in Barcelona.

The main character remains with a POUM militia and we see the order to make the POUM illegal and to have its leaders arrested. In the movie communist-led troops murder a POUM member. The movie follows the main characters subsequent demoralization and return to England.

Several people have commented that there were scenes in the movie that reminded them of passages of George Orwell's book *Homage to Catalonia*.

The movie is one of the more political movies I have seen. It shows the debate over some of the issues of how a revolutionary movement should advance. This is one of the reasons it has provoked discussion. And the debates it showed continue to have a lot of relevance. One can well imagine similar debates taking place in the revolutionary movements of El Salvador or Nicaragua.

The movie aims to make the viewer very angry with Stalinism. It goes very far in blaming the defeat of the

revolutionaries on the Communist Party of Spain and Stalinism. For sure, the Communist Party of Spain and the Comintern followed wrong policies in the Spanish Civil War. These policies did a lot of harm to the struggle and demoralized many revolutionary workers and peasants. It is not, however, a given that if correct policies had been followed, the revolution would have won. The revolutionaries faced formidable fascist forces.

In the interests of developing the discussion on what can be learned from the struggle of trends in the Spanish Civil War we are reprinting an article that was originally published in *The Workers' Advocate*, the newspaper of the former Marxist-Leninist Party. This article was the first in a series detailing the problems in the policies of the Communist Party of Spain and the Comintern.

At the time the article was published the Marxist-Leninist Party was looking into Soviet and communist history of the 1930's. The Marxist-Leninist Party had developed an analysis of the problems in Soviet policies in the post World War II period. Furthermore, at the time it had the analysis that a major backward and wrong turn was taken by the international communist movement at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern. The work on the policies and trends in the Spanish Civil War was serious theoretical work to deepen that analysis. The MLP later developed analysis that the problems in the politics and line in the international communist movement began much earlier. The series of articles gave a detailed discussion of what was wrong with the policies of the Spanish Communist Party and the Comintern.

While at the time of these articles the MLP had the analysis that the turn in the International communist movement came at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, it later viewed the problems which led to the degeneration of the Soviet revolution as beginning much earlier. Furthermore, at the time of these articles the MLP had not yet denounced Stalin or Stalinism.

The Marxist-Leninist Party came out of a trend which was opposed to modern revisionism. Its predecessors organized in opposition to the politics of the Communist Party U.S.A. and Trotskyism which were restricting and chaining the political movement of the 1960's from developing in a revolutionary direction. These organizations saw the politics coming from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as revisionism. However, they mistakenly viewed the revisionist Soviet politics as developing with Khrushchev in the 1950's. From the late 1970's many

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What are its lessons for today?

Revolution and Civil War in Spain

More on the backward turn in the line of the international communist movement
at the Seventh Congress of the CI in 1935



Workers on the barricades of Barcelona, July 1936

It began fifty years ago, on the eve of the Second World War. It was a momentous clash between the working masses and the fascist offensive of international capitalism. This was the Spanish Civil War, in which the proletariat and the other toilers inspired the whole world with their revolutionary heroism.

With this issue, *The Workers' Advocate* joins the debate that has broken out anew this anniversary year over the lessons to be drawn from the events in Spain. In particular, we will outline our assessments of the line pursued by the Communist Party of Spain, and what this showed about the change in the general line of the international communist movement from the time of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International in 1935.

Over the last three years our Party has been publishing its studies of the orientation of the Communist International on the problems of the united front. Our aim is to revive and defend Leninist united front tactics in the face of the rightist and liquidationist distortions of the revisionists and other pseudo-“Marxists.”

Up to the mid-1930's, the CI fought for a revolutionary line. But at that time, formalized at the Seventh Congress of the CI, a “new tactical orientation” was adopted. It was advertised as a new and better line for facing up to the worldwide offensive of fascism. But in reality it was a negation of the Marxist-Leninist principles on which the CI had been built; a step backwards which weakened the struggle against fascism; a turn to the right which undermined the communist parties and opened the doors to the later complete betrayal by the modern revisionists.

The leadership of the CI made this turn under the cover of highfalutin demagoguery and double-meaning phrases. That it is important to look at how this "new line" was translated into practice. We have pointed out how the turn in line adopted at the Seventh Congress of the CI backed up the policy of the American revisionist Earl Browder which placed the CPUSA at the tail of the Roosevelt administration's liberal-labor coalition. We also published a study of the policy of the French Communist Party, whose "Popular Front" tactics were heralded as a model of the CI's new line for the anti-fascist struggle. As it turned out, the French experience was an example of placing more weight in the hollow promises of a reformist parliamentary combination than in the mass anti-fascist struggle.

On the surface, the "new line" may appear to have been a greater success in Spain. After all, in Spain the workers and peasants rose up in arms against the fascist onslaught, striking hard blows against Franco's fascist plans as well as against the German nazis and Italian fascists who intervened on Franco's behalf. The heroic defense of Madrid and the other Spanish battlefields became symbols of anti-fascist resistance around the world.

The name of the Communist International was inseparable from this struggle. The CP of Spain itself played a critical role. Among the political forces in Spain, it was the party that best understood the burning necessity of the war against the fascists, and it had the greatest level of organization and discipline for carrying out this war. Moreover, the CI organized a powerful worldwide solidarity movement, including the legendary International Brigade volunteers who hurled themselves onto the anti-fascist barricades.

Nonetheless, despite all the heroism and sacrifice of the working masses and the communists, the orientation pursued by the CI and CP in the Spanish Civil War was fundamentally flawed. If one strips away the clouds of nostalgia surrounding the Spanish events, the only conclusion to be drawn is that, given the heroic and determined struggle of the communists and working masses, they could have accomplished much more if it weren't for the limits of this orientation. Just as in France, the U.S. and the other countries, in Spain also the "new line" of the Seventh Congress of the CI added up to a wrong and harmful policy.

Below we will outline some of the principal failings of the communists' orientation in Spain. But first let us look at the main forces involved in the conflict.

Revolution and Civil War

By the late 20's, the old monarchist Spain was crumbling. Alongside the semi-feudal estates and the vast holdings of the Catholic church, modern capitalism was rapidly gaining ground. Under the blows of the world economic crisis and the upsurge of the workers and peasants, the Primo de Rivera dictatorship was broken and King Alfonso soon fled, giving way to the Second Republic in April, 1931. A coalition of the social-democratic PSOE (Socialist Workers Party of Spain) and the left wing of the bourgeois republican parties formed the new government.

But the new Republic satisfied no one. The hopes of the workers and peasants that the new government

would bring them a better life were soon dashed. And, on the other side, the hopes of the ruling classes that the change in government would stem the revolutionary tide also proved illusory; the big capitalists, landlords, generals, and priests cursed the Republic as it proved ineffective in putting down the growing upheaval among the toilers.

The government moved rightward, with the reformist coalition being replaced by a more right-wing republican coalition, and eventually the pro-fascist CEDA was brought aboard the cabinet. The regime resorted to massacres against the revolts of the workers and peasants. In October 1934, the Republic called in General Franco and his foreign legion to crush the heroic uprising of the Asturias miners. Meanwhile, the big capitalists, landlords, generals and priests plotted for the overthrow of the Republic in order to smash the revolution under a new dictatorship.

The left-wing coalition of the more radical bourgeois republicans and the PSOE was put back together again in 1936. The CP boasts that it was the one who baptized this renewed liberal/social-democratic bloc a "Peoples Front." In the February 1936 elections, promising to free workers who were imprisoned for their part in the Asturias revolt, the Peoples Front defeated the fascist National Front bloc of the Falangists, monarchists, military officers, and the Catholic right wing.

The workers and the peasants pressed ahead with strike waves and land seizures, demanding much more than the mild reforms offered by the new government. At the same time, the generals and the fascists openly prepared for a coup, with the liberal and reformist ministers of the Peoples Front refusing to lift a finger against the plotters.

The expected coup was launched in July by the fascist generals stationed in Spanish Morocco. The republican government was paralyzed: on the one side deserted by the great majority of the armed forces, police, and bureaucracy; and, on the other side, terrified by the working masses who were pouring into the streets, demanding arms to fight the fascists, and taking matters into their own hands. By November, Franco's forces had seized nearly half the territory of the country before the fascists were ought to a standstill on the outskirts of Madrid by the heroic working class militias. For two-and-a-half more years Spain was gripped by a bloody struggle between fascist reaction and the revolution of the working masses.

Subordinating the Revolution to the Bourgeois Republic

To defend the revolutionary movement the fascist coup had to be resisted at all costs. But by no means did this require straight-jacketing the revolution by restricting it to the framework of the bourgeois republic; or spreading illusions about republicanism; or falling silent about the need to go beyond the bourgeois republic to achieve the emancipation of the working masses and socialism. But that is just what the PCE did.

Defense of the bourgeois parliamentary republic was the north star of the communist policy. The CI and the PCE presented two interrelated arguments for this policy. First was the basic axiom of the Seventh Con-

gress that in the face of the threat of fascism the only alternative for the proletariat was to embrace capitalist democracy. And closely connected to this — reviving a classic dogma of social-democracy — they theorized that the completion of the bourgeois democratic revolution in Spain was only possible with a protracted period of consolidation of bourgeois democratic rule.

From time to time the PCE leaders would use radical-sounding phrases to cover up its subservience to the bourgeois state by theorizing about creating a “new type of democratic parliamentary republic.” But their definition of this “different republic” was no more nor less than the modern capitalist state as idealized and exalted in the fantasies of the petty bourgeois about “pure democracy.” (See speech of General Secretary Jose Diaz to the March 5 enlarged plenum of the Central Committee in *The Communist International*, May 1937)

By the time it made its Peoples Front proposal in the winter of 1935-36, the PCE had dropped all its earlier agitation for a workers’ and peasants’ government or for the proletarian revolution and socialism. In fact, it violently denounced even the slightest hints of such agitation and demanded that the workers declare loyalty to the bourgeois Republic. After all, they argued, anything else may alarm the bourgeoisie. At the same time, the PCE became mired in petty-bourgeois democratic phrasemongering, painting up the parliamentary Republic in wonderful liberation colors as the only system that could bring the Spanish people real happiness and freedom.

This infatuation with bourgeois republicanism had a major bearing on how the anti-fascist war was to be conducted. In the wake of Franco’s coup, the disintegration of the regime unleashed a torrent of mass energy. The armed workers replaced the police, judges, etc. In Barcelona and other key centers of the country, the workers organizations became the real power, pushing aside the republican institutions. In this situation, the PCE jumped into the breach to rebuild the tattered republican structures for the bourgeoisie. It played a pivotal role in dismantling the workers’ militias and the other forms of the revolutionary initiative of the masses. The PCE prided itself as the number one party of republican law and order.

The PCE’s policy won the approval of the capitalist liberals and the right-wing PSOE ministers. But this was at the great cost of disorganizing the revolutionary impulse of the toilers.

Far from detracting from the anti-fascist struggle, upholding the perspective of carrying the revolution beyond the bourgeois Republic was essential for rallying the working class to the resistance. The workers were feeling their own power and clamoring for revolutionary change, while their distrust for the capitalist Republic ran deep. Instead of seizing on this positive revolutionary factor, the PCE devoted itself to corraling the workers to bring them back in line behind the bourgeoisie and the republican tricolor.

Harmonizing the Class Struggle in Favor of the Bourgeoisie

Even with the outbreak of Civil War the class

struggle continued to forcefully exert itself within the republican zone. Given the war conditions, some of the forms and bounds of the class struggle may have had to be modified, but strengthening the spirit of the class struggle was essential for inspiring the masses to the anti-fascist resistance. The communists should have taken advantage of this revolutionary energy of the workers and poor peasants to organize them to advance their own class interests and to rally them for struggle against the fascist onslaught. But the PCE did just the opposite.

The PCE attempted to suspend the class struggle until after the victory over Franco and beyond, advocating a permanent alliance with the republican bourgeoisie. In practice this meant subordinating the revolutionary movement of the working class and poor peasants to this alliance with the capitalist liberals.

According to the PCE leadership, the key to victory over Franco was the elimination of all strife among the different classes and political parties of the Peoples Front. The logic of such an attempt at class harmony was that the workers and the poor were supposed to grin and bear it so as to not offend the sensitivities of the liberal capitalist gentlemen. This is how the PCE put the decrepit group of bourgeois republicans in the drivers’ seat. Meanwhile the working class and peasantry, who were doing all the fighting and dying, were assigned to obediently carry the load of the anti-fascist war with the promise that the bourgeois republic would give them a better life *en la manana*.

The PCE worked day and night to repair the breaches in capitalist relations. Among other things, it put its forces at the disposal of the bourgeoisie for the suppression of the workers’ control movement and the revolutionary upheaval gripping the impoverished farm laborers (braceros). While the communists worked hard to carry out the literacy campaigns and other popular reforms of the Peoples Front government, they drew a line at any reforms that were not acceptable to the bourgeois ministers.

The PCE argued that any other policy would push the republicans into the hands of the fascists. What they failed to take into account is that the fascist rebellion was aimed first and foremost at the suppression of the revolution of the workers and peasants, and the strength of this revolution was the only hope for defeating Franco.

True, on account of various historical, regional and other factors, a section of the bourgeois liberals ended up on the same side of the barricades as the workers. This is not to say that the bourgeois republicans were valiant anti-fascists, as the PCE tried so hard to portray them; from the first shot of the war to the last, these liberal capitalist politicians showed themselves as a disgracefully flabby bunch of cowards and defeatists. Nonetheless, this rupture within the ranks of the exploiting classes called for careful and flexible tactics to allow the working class to take advantage of the situation to strengthen its hand. This may have even required some type of alliance allowing the workers to “march separately but to strike jointly” with these republican bourgeois. But the PCE’s tactics were simply tailist, opportunist tactics that strengthened the hand of the liberals at the cost of the demoralization of

the workers.

Petty-Bourgeois Nationalism

The PCE spread a petty-bourgeois nationalist appeal to smooth over the class antagonisms within the Republic and to cement the alliance with the capitalist liberals.

The Spanish working people loathed German nazism and Italian fascism and wanted to live free and independent of these imperialist monsters. Agitation against the nazi-fascist intervention was an integral part of mobilizing the masses for the resistance.

However, the PCE's agitation against foreign fascism went to the point of glossing over that it was the Spanish exploiting classes who made up the internal basis of Franco's fascist counterrevolution. The fighting appeal of the communists was for "the unity of all Spaniards" for the national liberation war in defense of "Spanish national independence." The effect of such agitation was to slur over the class nature of the anti-fascist resistance, and to provide a further rationale for the policy of kow-towing to the liberal bourgeoisie.

In the last chapter of the war, the PCE leadership called for changing the Peoples Front into a "national united front." The content of this change was to welcome into the front those forces on the fascist side of the barricades who sought "Spanish independence" from the Germans and Italians. Among other things, this showed the lengths to which the PCE leadership was willing to go in slurring over the fact that the fascist onslaught, while having the backing of the foreign fascists, sprung from the soil of capitalist and landlord Spain.

(To take this proposed "national united front" at face value, even Franco himself could find a place for himself in it. After all, Franco's careful maneuvering between his Rome and Berlin sponsors, and between the fascist axis and the capitalist "democracies," was to gain neutrality for fascist Spain during the WWII and to avoid a foreign occupation.)

Betrayal of the Oppressed Moroccans

The PCE took pride in the Republic's civilized policy on the national problem because, unlike the fascists, it recognized autonomy and language rights of the Catalans and Basques, nationalities representing the two most modern and developed regions of Spain. **Meanwhile, the PCE carried its petty-bourgeois nationalism to outright social-chauvinism in defending the colonial subjugation of the "uncivilized" Moors of Spanish Morocco.**

In the 1920's, the bloody colonial war to subjugate the insurgent Moroccan tribesmen was more or less a Spanish Viet Nam. The Spanish ruling classes were determined to crush Morocco no matter the cost in lives and hardship, and no matter that Spain was shaken by the popular opposition to this war. Franco's role in the pacification of Morocco was what first endeared him to the ruling classes.

The governments of the Second Republic, including the Peoples Front, pursued the same colonialist policy as the monarchy, with the liberal and social-democratic

politicians turning a deaf ear to the cries of the Moroccans for liberation. This played right into the hands of Franco and the right-wing officers who had succeeded in coopting some of the Moroccan chiefs. The colonialist stand of the Peoples Front government pushed the Moroccans deeper into Franco's grip as Morocco became the springboard for the fascist coup. Particularly in the early part of the Civil War, some 135,000 Moroccan soldiers played a critical role in the success of the fascist offensives.

In the mid-1920's, when the PCE was still a small party, the communists reportedly were known and respected among the Moroccans because they had taken a militant stand in support of the Moroccan insurgency. However, by the time of the Peoples Front the PCE leadership had shamelessly abandoned this internationalist stand. There was a deafening silence about the Moroccan question. We have looked but have not even found a hint that the PCE made as much as a whisper of protest against the colonialist policy of the Peoples Front.

This was a question of internationalist principles. It was also an immediate and vital question for winning the war against fascism. If the communists had raised a powerful voice in support of Moroccan liberation, they were in a position to gain the attention of the Moroccans, undermining the stability of Franco's rear and possibly fomenting unrest among his most important divisions. But taking the side of the oppressed Moroccans would have offended the liberal and social-democratic ministers, something which the PCE was not about to do. This was a striking example of what it meant for the PCE to place the alliance with the republican bourgeoisie above all other considerations.

The failure to champion the liberation of the Moroccans was one of the greatest tragedies of the anti-fascist war.

From Militant Unity in Action to Liquidationist Merger With Social-Democracy

Events in Spain provided some of the most dramatic examples of militant unity in action between communist workers and workers under social-democratic influence, such as in the Asturias uprising of October 1934, as well as in the heroic defense of Madrid by the workers' militias. The revolutionary temper of the workers was running high and they were clamoring for united action against the exploiters and fascists.

This situation opened up wide prospects for the communists to apply united front tactics to organize united struggle and, in the process, win the workers away from the opportunist influence of the social-democrats. Besides the struggle against the right-wing PSOE chieftains, there was also the necessity of exposing the demagogic and vacillating nature of the left-phrasemongering wing of the PSOE led by the inveterate opportunist Largo Caballero, as this wing controlled the UGT trade union center and had considerable influence among the revolutionary-minded workers. Successful united front tactics could have gone a long way in organizing the working class for its own aims, mobilizing it as an independent force at the

head of the anti-fascist resistance, and in undermining the strength of the social-democratic leaders who stood in the way of this line.

The problem was that by the time of the Peoples Front the PCE leadership also rejected this line. Their appeals to the social-democratic workers began and ended with the call to rally to the Republic. Having lost their class footing, the united front tactics of the PCE were reduced to cynical maneuvers and jockeying among the PSOE chieftains. (One day the PCE leaders would be praising the left-phrasemonger Caballero as the "Spanish Lenin." The next day they would be cursing Caballero and praising the "realism" of Prieto, Negrin or other right-wing PSOE ministers.) The only consistency in the PCE leadership's approach to the social-democrats was their unending search for the best ministerial combination for shoring up the alliance with the bourgeois liberals and stabilizing the Republic.

At the same time, the PCE pursued a line of liquidationist merger with the PSOE, slurring over all ideological and political distinctions between Marxism-Leninism and social-democracy.

Indeed, the PCE leaders brought this to the brink of the complete fusion of the two parties, as they campaigned hard and long for the creation of the "single party of the proletariat." The proposals for the united party kept up the obligatory phrases about the theory of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. This, however, was only window dressing to hide that these were straight up liquidationist proposals for the creation of a party stripped of Marxist-Leninist features and with a platform that didn't go beyond unity to defend the Republic and win the war.

Celebrated "successes" of these fusion attempts were the merger of the PSOE and PCE organizations in Catalonia into the United Socialist Party of Catalonia (PSUC) and the merger of the socialist and communist youth organizations. However, the negotiations for the complete fusion floundered. The obstacles to fusion included the sharp rift inside the PSOE itself, which persisted despite the PCE's wishful sermons about the need to do away with all "divergencies of opinions" in the workers' movement.

How Not to Fight Anarchism in the Working Class Movement

One of the most hotly debated problems of PCE's policy during the Civil War was its struggle against the anarchists. This was a complex and critical question of the success of the revolution given that anarchism in Spain was a truly mass phenomenon, gripping millions of workers and peasants.

In general, the workers affiliated to the anarchosyndicalist unions of the CNT were revolutionary-minded, harboring bitter hatred for the bourgeoisie. Anarchism also influenced a large section of the braceros (farm laborers) and starving rural poor who were engaged in a profound, albeit very confused, agrarian revolt against the landlords, the church and all the wealthy classes in the countryside.

The Civil War threw the anarchist movement into a crisis. The anarchist center (FAI, Iberian Anarchist Federation) was paralyzed by its dogmas. They failed to fully understand the political significance of the anti-

fascist resistance, and the anarchist hostility to firm organization proved disastrous in battle. Burdened by their "anti-state-ism," when the CNT/FAI became the virtual ruling power in Barcelona and elsewhere they had no idea what to do. In the main, the anarchist leaders ended up trailing in the wake of Caballero and the Republic, complaining and griping all the way but incapable of demonstrating an alternative.

This situation should have opened the door to the massive defection of the militant CNT workers to Marxism-Leninism. The previous experiences of the Communist International had demonstrated that the communists could win over the anarchosyndicalist workers by appealing to their revolutionary instincts against the exploiters, while exposing the gulf between the radical phrases of anarchism and its petty-bourgeois and conservative essence.

But such a revolutionary appeal went against the grain of the PCE's whole policy. Instead they attacked the anarchists for their radical phrases, and charged them with disrespect for the Republic, for the liberal-reformist cabinet, for the laws and the police — all of which were anathema to the anarchosyndicalist workers. Not surprisingly, such political appeals to the CNT masses went over like a lead balloon. While the immense courage in battle of the disciplined communist fighters won prestige for communism among the anarchist rank and file, a revolutionary political approach would have allowed this influence to grow much further and stronger than it did.

Demanding discipline in the rear, the PCE's propaganda decried the anarchist "excesses" in the workers' control movement and the "extremism" of the poor peasants. However, if the communists were to bring discipline to these masses it could only be done by rallying them in revolutionary struggle for their own class interests. But the PCE's preoccupation with protecting the alliance with the bourgeoisie made this impossible. For instance, instead of entering the workers' control movement to purge it of petty-bourgeois projects and bring fighting discipline to the workers, the PCE sought to ban this movement, and it attempted to do so by government decree from above. Similarly with the upheaval among the rural laborers. Instead of linking up with their movement and using it to better reinforce the urban revolution and anti-fascist war, PCE cursed the movement for its "lawlessness" and violations of private property.

The PCE tried to entice the CNT leaders to commit themselves to the government; but when the CNT leaders resisted or when they failed to control the rank and file, the PCE leadership would cry out for the police suppression of the "anarchist provocateurs." The anarchists' preference for disorganization may very well have made them a special target of fascist infiltration. Nonetheless, the PCE's violent appeal against the "anarchist fifth column of fascism" — as if the mass anarchist movement in Spain was just a tool of Franco's secret service — was right-wing sectarianism at its worst. It was a grave blunder that showed just how not to win over the anarchosyndicalist workers.

This attitude towards the anarchists is closely connected to the PCE's fight against the POUM (Workers Party of Marxist Unification). This was a small group in Barcelona whose leaders included a number of former

trotskyists. It appears to have been a left-phrase-mongering social-democratic phenomenon which pursued a tailist policy towards the CNT. Whatever the POUM may have represented, the main significance of its clumsy suppression by the PCE and the regime was that this step served a much larger repressive campaign against the anarchosyndicalist and left social-democratic workers, as well as "uncontrollable" peasants, who resisted the attempts of the Republic to disarm them and to break up their committees.

Along with this the PCE leadership went on a propaganda rampage — backed up with police measures — against anything that smacked of the spirit of the class struggle and socialism or that criticized the Republic or the capitalist liberals. To give voice to such things was alleged to be proof of the counterrevolutionary acts of the "ultra-left," anarchist, and trotskyist agents of the fascist fifth column.

Illusions in the "Democratic" Imperialist Powers

The petty-bourgeois democratic orientation of the PCE also had its reflection in its stand towards international imperialism. The PCE leadership closed its eyes to the real policy followed by the so-called "democratic" imperialist powers.

All the big imperialist powers threw their weight against the toilers' revolution in Spain. Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy carried out a massive and direct intervention, providing Franco with funds, tanks, planes and artillery, nazi pilots and advisors, and tens of thousands of Italian fascist troops. Meanwhile, Britain, France, and the U.S. played the game of the "non-intervention" policy. In practice "non-intervention" meant an iron blockade against the republican forces, while quietly providing Franco support and winking at the German and Italian intervention. This pro-fascist policy was pursued equally by the British Conservatives, by the Roosevelt liberals, and by the Peoples Front government in France. (The French Peoples Front government, led by social-democratic premier Leon Blum, shamelessly took part in this blockade against the Spanish Peoples Front, a government led by their brother republicans and social-democrats.) Of the major countries, only the then-socialist Soviet Union came out openly on the side of the Spanish Republic and gave it support.

It was only natural that the republican forces would try to take the best advantage of any cracks among the imperialist powers to purchase arms and to weaken the imperialist blockade. But such maneuvers required the utmost vigilance. The working masses had to be conscious that the so-called "democratic" states were also imperialist powers who would never come to the support of the revolution of the Spanish proletariat and oppressed.

But from the beginning to the bitter end, the leadership of the PCE was mired in illusions about the so-called "democratic" imperialist powers. They considered these powers to be part of "international democracy," which sooner or later would see the folly of

"non-intervention" and come to "offer deserved and categorical resistance to Germany and Italy, countries which are endangering the interests of France, Great Britain and all the democratic countries of the world." (Jose Diaz, *The Communist International*, May 1937)

In deliberating every major question of policy, the PCE leaders placed great weight on how it would sell in London or Paris. They were very concerned to convince the British, French and other capitalists that there were no revolutionary fires blazing under the Spanish Republic and that their economic and strategic interests in Spain were in good hands. This provided them with yet another argument for such Popular Front policies as propping up the bourgeois liberals and right social-democrats; protecting capitalist property and especially the capital of foreign firms; disarming the militias and reestablishing the republican structures; suppressing the "uncontrollables" and establishing "normalcy" in the rear. While all these policies had their own domestic basis, they were also seen as a means of gaining the "confidence" of the French, British and other imperialists.

The International Brigades also appear to have fallen victim to such "confidence" building. In the fall of 1938 the International Brigades were abruptly withdrawn from Spain, despite the significant role they continued to play at the front. Apparently this was agreed to by the PCE and the CI as a conciliatory gesture to the imperialist "democracies." These were the days of Munich, and in the Munich spirit Chamberlain had just reached a gentlemen's agreement with Mussolini over the division of Spain. Incredibly, the communists seemed to have concluded from this agreement that even more concessions had to be made to convince Lord Chamberlain to change his ways. As one CI leader wrote at the time: "Thus, developments in Spain depend upon the rapidity with which the British government is compelled...to modify its pro-fascist foreign policy, and to join in combined international action to aid the Spanish Republic." (P. Weiden, "Three Years After the Seventh World Congress," *The Communist International*, August 1938) Indeed, it looks like the withdrawal of the International Brigades was part of a last ditch attempt to compel the "democratic" imperialists to "modify their pro-fascist policy."

The PCE's shameless betrayal of oppressed Morocco also had international ramifications. To take a stand for Moroccan independence would not only have meant going up against the Spanish bourgeoisie, it also would have meant a challenge to the French and British imperialists, who undoubtedly would not have welcomed a liberated Spanish Morocco kindling the liberation movement throughout North Africa.

The Collapse of the Revolution

In the last phases of the war the PCE leadership was boasting of the complete triumph of its policy. Under the "realistic" social-democrat Juan Negrin they had succeeded in "consolidating the machinery of state." The militias were disbanded and the regular army was "establishing itself on a firmer basis from day to day." And the Peoples Front was so solid and strong that it was "rapidly becoming an all national front...on which

the strongest fascist beasts of prey will break their teeth." (See "Two and One-Half Years of War for the Independence of Spain," *The Communist International*, January 1939)

The PCE had won the battle for its policy, but the war was already lost. The revolutionary energy and initiative of the masses had been dissipated. Demoralization and fatalism began to grip the workers who had put up such a ferocious resistance to the fascists. Meanwhile, the government was honeycombed with capitulationist ministers and military officers plotting to stab the communists in the back to reach a deal with Franco. The rotten foundation on which the Peoples Front was built could no longer withstand the blows of the fascist military offensives. In the spring of 1939, the Republic disintegrated. Ministers began deserting their posts and on March 6 a group of republican officers launched a coup directed against the PCE. On March 27 Franco's forces occupied Madrid.

One cannot guarantee that defeat would have been averted with a better policy; the revolution in Spain faced powerful and savage enemies. But what can be said is that a better policy would have gone much further in building on and keeping alive the revolutionary impulse of the masses. A better policy would have backed up the anti-fascist war by building up the independence of the workers and poor peasants, rallying them for their own class interests, and inspiring them with the goal of socialism.

Such a policy would have provided the best hope of victory, and it would have dramatically changed the complexion of the resistance. Even if Franco still had come out on top, a revolutionary policy would have laid a much firmer groundwork for carrying on the resistance after the fascist conquest, avoiding the depths of disorganization and demoralization that gripped the masses.

A Legacy of the Wrong Orientations of the Seventh Congress of the CI

It must be stressed that the wrong policies pursued by the Spanish communists during the Civil War were not the isolated mistakes of a wayward party. From the outset, top leaders of the Communist International were intimately involved in the work of the PCE; and the Peoples Front policies of the PCE were endorsed by the guiding bodies of the CI as a "brilliant confirmation of the new line of the Seventh Congress." Moreover, this policy had the encouragement of the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, as well as Soviet diplomacy which played an active role in Spain.

For the world's communists, including thousands of International Brigade volunteers who took a direct part, the Spanish Civil War was a dress rehearsal for the looming anti-fascist battles of the Second World War. Unfortunately, it did not only set an example of courage against fascism. It also trained the communists in a wrong orientation which compromised the gains of the triumph over fascism and undermined the international communist movement. (See "In Defense of Marxism-Leninism: On Problems in the Orientation of the International Communist Movement in the Period from

the End of World War II to the Death of Stalin," *The Workers' Advocate* theoretical issue, May 1, 1984)

The tactical model provided by the Spanish Civil War still has its impact to this day. The pro-Soviet revisionists along with other reformist and social-democratic forces continue to make Spain a basic reference point. Their views on the Nicaraguan revolution are but the latest example. According to these voices, the need for a "broad cross-class popular front founded on the basis of defending a bourgeois democratic republic" is one of the "timely lessons" for Nicaragua offered by the legacy of the Spanish war. (*Frontline*, July 21, 1986) From this standpoint they applaud the Nicaraguan government's petty-bourgeois policy of compromise with the big exploiters, its bureaucratic suppression of the class struggle of the workers and peasants, and its repressive steps against the "ultra-left" revolutionary workers who adhere to the Marxist-Leninist Party of Nicaragua (MAP-ML).

Similar "lessons" are drawn for El Salvador, the Philippines, Chile, South Africa, and even the fight against the Reaganite offensive here in U.S. Wherever the masses are in struggle against reaction, the Spanish legacy is dredged up to justify bowing before the liberal capitalists in the name of "broad unity," while combating the "greatest danger" posed by the allegedly "ultra-left" ideas about the political independence of the working class, the class struggle, the proletarian revolution and socialism.

More in the form of nostalgic folklore than a scientific summation, the experience of the Spanish Civil War has been passed down as a tactical model. It is about time that the revolutionary Marxist-Leninists made a critical summation, liberating the movement once and for all from the influences of the wrong orientations of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International. Indeed, this is a burning task for rebuilding the international communist movement on a solid Marxist-Leninist line.



Worker militias on the streets of Madrid.