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Comrades:

The High Price of the Free Market by P.A. said many things that needed saying. However, it was filled with ignorant stuff, as for instance on pages 40-41, where the author talks of the capitalist roaders as though they were different people from the Bolsheviks who seized state power in 1917. I don't think so. There were capitalist roaders hiding inside some old Bolsheviks all along. History speaks for itself.

On page 41 P.A. uses the phrase "for most of history." For most of history nothing! Markets are older than history. Markets are *much* older than capitalism. Class stratification is older than either. As soon as a surplus developed, for whatever reason—good fishing, the development of agriculture, etc.—there arose from among the bullshit artists—also known as wisemen—appropriators of that surplus. By Babylonian times traders supplied the court with luxury goods. In early times trade was a small part of production. As cities and agricultural surpluses grew, so did specialization and commercial agriculture. As the Middle Ages progressed, the capitalists—mercantile and finance branches—grew more and more important in the scheme of things and finally asserted their dominance through revolts against the aristocracies—some of whom quickly adapted to capitalism and learned that "their" land could be quite "profitable" if they were free to use it as they saw fit. If they were then free to stop feeding their serfs, so much the better. Hence, especially in the British Isles, the peasants were expelled or "freed" to become mostly wage laborers in the cities.

Under capitalism, all things, living and dead, are commodities (first rule of Marxism—look it up). Till the enclosure movement mentioned above, and the industrial revolution, free labor paid pretty well—in fact laws had to be passed to hold down wages, and people actually ran away from the "comforts" and "security" of serfdom to become wage laborers. The rise of the capitalists to the top rung of society and the concurrent growth of capitalism as the dominant means of production was regarded as progressive, partly because workers became "free" (to sell their labor). The distinctions drawn on page 42 between small family operations and later large-scale capitalism are incorrect. The smallest

capitalist extracted as much surplus value as he could. The aristocracy extracted more, because they controlled the vast majority of productive resources. But make no mistake: the smallest master exploited somebody, somewhere, somehow and not just sometime.

On page 44 P.A. mentions the **Lash of the Market**, but not the **Invisible Hand** which makes everything come out the best for everybody in spite of the fact that everybody is trying to do everybody else in. This notion was laughed out of economics for 100 years, but recently revived by non-European parvenu capitalists and hick U.S. economists. They, and P.A. ignore the fact that two-thirds of the world, and ninety percent of the world's poor, feel both the **Lash** and the **Hand**—since they are absent only in the gradually evaporating lakes of socialism. *Most* miserable people are made so by *private, free markets.*

The apologists don't know, or try to smokescreen the fact that all this privatization and development and such is only a scab over the misery. In some cases it even hides the misery from the miserable. People such as Milton Friedman probably don't believe in "privatization" and "development" any more than we do, but they know that economic rape and pillage may get them through the night, so to speak. They know they are condemning billions to starvation, illiteracy, subhumanity—and they also know that every market freak lines up at the public trough whenever he can. The earliest historic capitalists operated government-ordained monopolies. None refuse government help—in fact they expect and demand subsidies, tax breaks, government-funded research, etc. And they need their property rights defended, and an army for use at home and abroad. They know all this but they still talk this "privatization" jive.

The section on **Shoemakers Without Shoes** was well done. Japan, the U.S. and Mexico are good examples. Japan makes more cars than it can sell and has to export to keep the factories running, including to the U.S., which also cannot sell all the cars it can make—and can't export either. And Mexico, poor "Third World" Mexico, unbelievably can't sell the small number of cars it makes, either. In the last case it is because Mexican auto workers don't earn enough to buy the cars they make. They can't afford beans and tortillas, or the fresh fruits and vegetables shipped north. Who knows, in ten or twenty years most U.S. workers

may not be able to afford the fruits and veggies either.

Free competition never was. It was cynical bullshit dreamed up by people like Adam Smith—even the ancient Babylonian traders operated under license from the god/honcho. But the theory of this mythical condition has been parroted over and over for more than a century. The fact is that the era that came closest to a time of free markets was probably around 1800 in England—a time memorialized by Dickens in all its horrific splendor. The *areas* that came closest to the "ideal" are probably the former European colonies—the "Third World", where current living conditions in all *their* horrific splendor make the news most every night.

On page 48 the law of value a la Marx is mentioned. I think it could have been more clearly explained. Marx's law of value holds that commodities exchange at their values—more or less—and labor power is a commodity. In other words, workers are not cheated at the store, they are cheated in the factory. (They are cheated in the store if they work there.) The reason being that labor power produces more than it consumes. Bosses employ laborers who produce more than it costs to birth them, feed them, educate them and finally bury them—hence the surplus value of Marxist lore—which winds up as the bosses' profit. Wages are too low under capitalism relative to the value produced by the wage earners. That is why capitalists get richer.

The next fifteen pages of the article were pretty good.

On page 64 "critics" of communism are mentioned without calling them heathen liars and without stating that "human nature" is a fig-leaf, (as the old-time commies used to say), over greed—and an excuse for the critics' dependency on handouts. Put bluntly, they have never worked a day in their lives, but live above working class levels. Some call them whores.

The emphasis on page 65 is wrong. Most of history has seen a great deal of forced "cooperation." No Babylonian honcho, feudal lord or slavemaster ever got any crops picked without cooperation. They got cooperation via threats, violence and lies (if half-truths did not work).

But it has long been apparent that there has been a cooperative side to human nature and society. Even the creepy fascist capitalists of Japan emphasize the team concept, and the family, national loyalty and purpose, etc., are

everywhere endorsed. The role of communists is to make cooperation the cognizant basis of human society. According to Marx, etal, this would allow fuller development of more people's potential. This plan for the future is very much in contradistinction to past and present systems, where vast numbers of wretches scratch for a scrap of bread and are essentially powerless, while a few make all the decisions and have all the bread they can spend or eat. A system where the pus of humanity, often clad in military garb, is ready to murder those who speak against or resist the system.

On pages 66-7 P.A. mentions that market changes are intended to "salvage the economies" of Eastern Europe. I don't think that sort of phrase should be used except to point out the ludicrousness of it. How will what is wrong with Brazil fix what is wrong with Russia? And Japan is more "centralized" that the U.S., and yet more successful.

The analysis on page 69 is a little off-base. The consumerism of the Soviet workforce is due mostly to the fact it has been pushed at them by liars at home and abroad for a half century. The liars won out. For them, India does not exist, nor Africa—only the richer parts of U.S. cities, where charming happy (white) families have VCRs and Camaros and bungalows of their own. Like the leaders of Eastern Europe, P.A. is too USA/USSR oriented. It is a big world and it is damn near all capitalist. And we communists know better, much better, the highs and the lows of life under capitalism. We must keep that knowledge forward in whatever we do or say.

The piece closed with a related error. We should not forget that the "undermined" productivity of the USSR exceeds that of all but a handful of countries. And Russia was historically backward. And that the hoopla generated by the anti-communists in the USSR has the same goal as "efficiency" talk amongst GMAC or Toshiba bosses—lower wages, more work—the usual stuff. If the dissidents are displeased with the party's life style—wait till they check out Donald Trump's. And if they dislike waiting in line for limited goods, wait till they discover poverty amidst plenty.

We must always be clear—and not accept anything the boss class or its lackeys say without a grain of salt.

Fraternally,

PASADENA RED

FREEDOM AND DICTATORSHIP:

WHY PL WILL SUCCEED

People ask PL, "Why would the new communist movement you are trying to organize succeed any better than the old one did?" In this article we will try to answer this question.

This question mingles two points.

The first point is about communism itself. It is the notion that communism has failed.

The second point wonders how communism could be made to succeed.

As to the first point: Since the Russian revolution, every opinion molder committed to capitalism has endlessly brayed that communism has failed. A headline from the September 9, 1990 *New York Times* is typical:

From Moscow,
A Plan To Junk
Communism
In 500 Days

The message is clear: "Communism didn't work." It is hardly the average person's fault that he or she doesn't know the key fact that exposes this anti-communist trash for the lie that it is. That fact is this:

Never in any place where communists were in power, was a society ever led to introduce, much less develop, a communist way of life. No communist leadership ever tried to abandon the capitalist way of organizing and running the factories, farms, offices and stores they controlled. No communist leadership ever tried to develop production and distribution in a communist way.

Every communist leadership, in every country in which communists came to power, always claimed *the time was not yet ripe* to abandon the conscious copying and reproduction of the capitalist mode of production.

Socialism is what the old communist movement created after fighting to establish a proletarian dictatorship. Socialism was a grafting of the capitalist mode of production onto the proletarian dictatorship. In this sickly scheme, the capitalist mode of production was relied on to modernize the economy, while somehow—it was never clear exactly how—the proletarian dictatorship was supposed to push society toward communism.

Socialism never worked. While the dictatorship of the proletariat changed part of the society's ownership system, the capitalist mode of production undermined these changes, and prevented further changes in the direction of full ownership and control of society by the working people. Instead of being a path, a "first stage of communism," socialism's contradictions actually barred the road to communism while opening a path to the reproduction of capitalism, although a second-rate capitalism, as capitalisms go. This was true of Russia, of China, of all of Eastern Europe, of Cuba, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

In short, communism never existed in the countries that are now, according to the absurd capitalist propagandists, supposedly "junking" communism.

Communism didn't "fail," because the communists failed to use their opportunity to replace capitalism with communism. What never existed can't have failed, and can't be "junked." Capitalism failed. Again.

Through lack of experience (it was, after all, the first attempt at the dictatorship of the proletariat in human history), the old communist movement deluded itself, and misled the proletarian dictatorship. The old movement's crucial mistake was its policy of relying on the capitalist mode of production.

But what unites all communists, and sets them apart from all other political groups, is their un-

derstanding that the dictatorship of the proletariat is the *only* framework within which society can be rid of exploitation and oppression, and within which the working people can be free to create lives of dignity, creative achievement and solidarity. We understand the crucial mistake the old communist movement made in trying to lead the proletarian dictatorship. We break with this policy. But we remain united with Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, and the tens of millions of communists they led, in our commitment to fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In this we are similar to the communist workers in China who rebelled against, and tried to destroy, the capitalist mode of production during the Chinese Cultural Revolution of the late 1960s. They toppled the government and seized the factories. They junked the existing capitalist methods of deciding what should be produced and how work should be organized, and began experimenting with communist ideas of how to do these things. ***This forced them to change everything—planning methods, management systems, the wage system, the educational system, the medical system, the system of political representation—all of which are linked in the mode of production.***

This struggle finally proved that the class structures develped by the capitalist mode of prodution, *even in a proletarian dictatorship,* prevent the development of communist social relations.

Of course, by the 1960s the official old communist leaderships had already renounced communism in theory as well as practice. This was shown by their reaction to the communist revolution of the Chinese communist workers. In every country the official communist leaders applauded then Soviet boss Khrushchev's ridiculing remark that the Chinese workers were trying "to eat soup with an awl."

Khrushchev and his gang already represented an exploiting ruling class, which had previously arisen within the Soviet proletarian dictatorship on the basis of the Soviet reproduction of the capitalist mode of production. So when Khrushchev attacked the Chinese communist rebels he was merely defending exploiting class interests against the working class.

Despite the fact that Khrushchev headed an organization which still called itself the "Communist Party of the Soviet Union," these were no communists. On the basis of reproducing the capitalist mode of production the party had changed class position. By the 1960s it had already become the fascist organization it remains to this day, accompanied in this transformation by all the parties who followed their lead and copied their practices.

PL FIGHTS FOR COMMUNISM, NOT SOCIALISM

So, as to the first point: *Why will the new communist movement PL is trying to organize succeed any better than the old one did?* Our answer is: ***Because we propose to do what they failed to do.***

We aim to lead the working people to introduce a communist mode of production and a communist distribution of what is produced as soon as we have led the working people to win political power and so have the freedom to do this.

To hell with socialism. We stand for communism.

But introducing and developing communism will require conscious, planned collective activity. In order to succeed, a struggle for mass communist consciousness has to be developed today, so that the base will exist for communist practices to be instituted as soon as the working class has won political power.

This is a big difference from the old communist movement.

A WRONG ESTIMATE AND WHAT IT LED TO

The old movement honestly felt people wouldn't support communism right away, so they didn't struggle for it. Instead they generally tried to carry out the most radical demand the oppressed can make within a bourgeois society—the demand for equality. "We want to be treated equally."

Most people who demand "equality" don't actually mean equality. What they really feel is that they are oppressed, and what they mean to express is, "We want to get what we need." They think the satisfaction of their need is what they are demanding when they demand "equality." They know no word other than "equality" with which to react against their feeling of oppression.

So the demand for "equality" is double-edged. It has a good side to it. It arises as a spontaneous reaction against privilege. But this is as good as it gets. Its bad side is that it is not what it seems to be, and so it confuses the oppressed. Because, in reality, equality can't get rid of privilege, and so equality can't unite society.

The demand that everyone be treated equally means only that

everyone be measured by an equal standard. It means no more than this. Take as an example the most basic relation which concerns a worker, "Equal pay for equal work." This is a demand that an equal standard should apply. Everyone who does the same work, or works for the same length of time with the same skill, effort and responsibility, should get the same pay. No discrimination. That is the equal right involved here.

But if this equal right ever prevailed, privilege would *still* remain. After all, one person *is* different from another. One person is stronger or smarter, and can work harder or longer, and produce more, than another person. If they both get measured by an equal standard as *workers,* these ***natural differences*** would be transformed into ***natural privileges.*** The stronger would aways get more.

Here is another result of "equal pay for equal work." Here are two people who are equal as workers, but different in every other respect. One is married and has children to provide for, while the other is single. In the totality of life they have unequal needs. But, as equal workers, they both get the same pay. Therefore, one ends up richer than the other.

Equal rights always result in inequality and continue privilege. Communists want to get rid of privilege, across the board. For this, right has to be as unequal as are people. It has to be based on need. The "equality" that communism provides is equality in obtaining what is required to satisfy your needs. The "equal standard" here is unequal, because it is nothing but unequal humanity itself. All humans have an equal right to have their needs satisfied. Need is the communist basis of right.

But in capitalism, the right of private property, the class divisions based on private property rights and the fact that all social relations are developed through money and buying and selling to get money, prevent basing rights on need. In capitalism the worker's basic private property is his or her ability to work, which each worker sells to an employer for a wage. Since the wage determines how well they and their families can live, no worker wants to be discriminated against *as a worker, as a seller of labor power,* because of color or sex or for any other reason. *Where buying and selling is the rule, equality—starting with equality as a buyer or seller—is the highest right. Need can't enter the picture at all. In this distorted, cruel world, need actually appears as an "unfair" basis for right.*

Wherever it came to power, the old communist movement began to change the ownership system. In the most important change, the state replaced private individuals as the owner of industry. But labor power remained "private property" *in the sense that different levels of skill, effort and responsibility were paid differently.* In effect the stronger worker still "owned" his or her strength, the skilled worker still "owned" skill, and a scientist or technician still "owned" knowledge.

Communism required that, *alongside the change in the ownership of the factories, there needed to be a change in the ownership of labor power.* But so long as distribution was based on work done, on skill, effort and responsibility, there was no way for the worker to give up his or her "property" to the working class as a whole, to contribute it as just another quality useful to the common good. There was no way for a system of rights based on need to develop.

The leadership of the old movement knew all this, but they thought any attempt to communize labor would fail. They felt the working people wouldn't go along with it. *This judgment proved to be their downfall.* It led them to recreate class societies in the countries where they won power. And the irony was that at times of greatest crisis, as during the Russian Civil War, the Chinese revolutionary war, the Second World War, the communists relied on communist practices to mobilize the people. So it can be done. They did it.

So PL holds that history (including the continued growth of PL through following this line) teaches we *can* win people today to support communism. And these same experiences teach that it is the key idea we must win people to support. Again, the reason is that when we lead the working people to take power we must have a base that will allow us to implement communist practices immediately. Doing this is the only way to prevent reproducing the class society we will have just won the right to destroy.

PRAGMATISM CAUSED FAILURE

The error which ultimately destroyed the old communist movement, and allowed the later rise of the Khrushchevs, Dengs and Ceauscescus, was made by the revolutionary communist leaderships headed by Lenin and Stalin. Its origin was this: They were faced with disaster in 1919 if they couldn't get production started. People were starving. The Russian economy had been almost completely destroyed

during the First World War and by the anti-communist armies in the Civil War. The early Bolsheviks, who had a lot of support, but a small base for their ideas, saw no way out except to copy the technology, the system of production and the labor processes of developed capitalism. Anyway, they believed a communist revolution was about to break out in Germany. Then a communist Germany, already an industrially-developed country, would help backward Russia advance to communism.

What started as a panicky stopgap response to crisis succeeded in getting production restarted. It soon became a regularized, stable economic system. Within that system a privileged social stratum of loyal Soviet managers, planners, technocrats and financial experts quickly arose, who became powerful supporters of further developing the system. Meanwhile, the German communist revolution was crushed.

Marx had vigorously opposed capitalist forms of organizing and administering labor, and had strong reservations about adopting capitalist technology. But Soviet practice conformed to the interests and ideas of the economic leadership. Capitalist practices became acceptable provided working conditions were improved, provided some formal structure representing workers' interests was introduced into factory management, and provided party-sanctioned central planning determined accumulation and distribution. The Soviet working class came to lead a way of life essentially similar to, although relatively more privileged than, the life of the working class in capitalist countries.

As a result of this deliberate embrace by Marxists of the capitalist mode of production, the Marxist theoretical critique of that mode and of the class structure of socialism, withered. It will be useful now to review briefly the principal features of the capitalist mode of production.

THE CAPITALIST MODE OF PRODUCTION

The capitalist mode of production produces three things.

First, it produces prosperity by concentrating immense wealth and power in the hands of a comparatively few people, at an appalling social cost. This concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the capitalists is both the only *way* it produces prosperity, and the only *kind* of prosperity this mode of production is capable of generating.

Second, this mode of production requires, and produces, production processes which force the worker's life, on and off the job, into a torment of insecurity, powerlessness and frustration; which fill it with mindless detail or back-breaking effort—and for all these blessings, leave the worker constantly strapped for cash. These results of the capitalist mode of production can't be overcome by more prosperity or more jobs, because capitalist-style prosperity and capitalist jobs are the very things that produce these results in the first place (although, of course, some kinds of work are less dehumanizing than other kinds of work).

Third, the capitalist mode of production requires and produces an enormous number of workers whose torment is even worse than that inflicted on the employed. These are workers who can't find enough work to make ends meet. They and their families are forced into crushing, poverty-striken lives, and they are then blamed for the havoc poverty rains on them.

The capitalist mode of production is based on what any sane person realizes is legalized theft. When you work for a boss he gets to keep everything you make. He sells it and pockets the profit. You don't get paid the value of what you produce, nor does society get it. You make it, but you can't benefit from it. It's not yours.

In capitalism, labor is a process for accumulating profit, not for producing goods. The way work is organized is dominated and shaped by the capitalist's need to accumulate profit.

Capitalism is governed by the market, which is sometimes free and sometimes monopolized. *But the foundation of all markets is the trade in human flesh*: workers sell their lives to a capitalist—a workday or a workweek at a time—for whatever wage they can get.

During the workday workers produce things worth much more than the amount of wages the boss is paying them. Naturally the boss owns this extra value. This is a free gift by the workers to their boss. Of course, if they don't make this free gift, they get fired. This is legalized extortion. The boss really says to the workers: "I'll let you live, that is, I'll let you produce your pay, only if you agree to work for me for free to produce some surplus value after you've produced your pay."

The whole capitalist system of production depends on extending this free labor, this surplus value. There are two ways to do this. One way the boss gets more surplus value is by making the work

day longer. This adds to the amount of time the worker works for free. The other way the boss gets more surplus value is by increasing labor productivity. Either by speeding up the work, or by introducing machines and computers, or by cutting down on waste, the boss compels the worker to produce more each hour than before. ***The more economically developed a capitalist country is, the more productive it is, the more free labor its workers are donating to their bosses.***

Once the worker sells his ability to work to a capitalist, it becomes the capitalist's right and responsibility to organize the way in which work is to be carried out.

The capitalist's problem is to get the full potential out of the labor power he has bought. This means he has to get "his" workers to act in ways that will best serve his interests. This is a problem of management. ("Manage" is a nice word for the situation; it originally meant to train horses to do exercises in a ring.)

The prerequisite for the specifically capitalist way of management was the development of places of large-scale employment—big factories or offices. This management system became generalized only within the last 100 years, and keeps evolving.

The whole point of capitalist management (which called itself, from its birth, "Scientific Management") was to dismember humans by barring workers from thinking. Thinking (or the conception of the work processes) was placed exclusively in the hands of capital. To the workers was left only *doing* what had been planned for them.

(How many times has a worker heard from his boss: "You're not being paid to think. I'm paying you to work." Actually, not many times, before he or she is fired.)

The way the separation between conception and execution of productive labor was realized by the capitalist management of production was by dividing the work up into detailed tasks. This detailed division of labor within the workplace, historically characteristic of capitalism, aimed at destroying skills and occupations. It left each worker inadequate to carry out any complete production process. But the skill which was lost by all the individual workers was reconstituted on a plant level as a process under the control of the capitalist.

For example, a modern shop that produces kitchen cabinets employs no cabinet makers. It employs, instead, laborers, band saw operators, gluers, screw gun operators, staplers, spray gun operators and so on. Not one of these workers knows how to make a cabinet. But each day they turn out a huge number of cabinets.

The great advantage to the boss was that this is the most "efficient" use of labor. That means this was the cheapest way to utilize labor in production. Why pay high wages to a group of highly skilled mechanics, each capable of doing the whole job, if low wage, semi-skilled workers can produce the same amount when each worker masters just one operation?

For this reason—for the sake of wringing out the full potential from the purchased labor power—the generalized distribution of technical knowledge prevented the functioning of the capitalist mode of production.

Therefore, the capitalist mode of production resulted in the creation of a mass of cheap, simple, ignorant labor power. This is now the characteristic feature of the populations of developed capitalist countries.

As it developed historically, capitalist management was based on three principles:

- Dissociate the labor process from the skills of the workers.
- Dehumanize labor by divorcing conception from execution.
- Use by management of its monopoly of knowledge to determine each step of the labor process and how it should be executed.

In order to manipulate and habituate the worker to this kind of life (which has to be done with each new generation of workers), the specifically capitalist "science" called "industrial psychology" was born at the start of the 20th century. One of the founders of this "science" explained its role in these words:

> We ask how we can find the men whose mental qualities make them best fitted for the work which they have to do; secondly, under what psychological conditions we can secure the greatest and most satisfactory output of work from every man; and finally, how we can produce most completely the influence on human minds which are desired in the interests of business. (Hugo Munsterberg, *Psychology and Industrial Efficiency*, New York 1913, quoted in Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, New York, 1974, page 143.)

Workers ultimately conform to the schemes of capitalist management to deprive them of knowledge and power, and to make them function as parts of the machinery of production, not so much because of the efforts of the industrial psychologists and

their training departments, but rather because there is no other way to earn a living. All capitalist commerce and industry is organized this way.

The result, in the absence of class conscious revolutionary struggle for communism, is that the working class antagonism at being forced into this kind of life is turned into cynicism and into a revulsion for work.

Various reformists and reactionaries wedded to the capitalist mode of production try to overcome this revulsion for work, which causes such waste and is so costly in terms of labor turnover that it threatens to undermine the whole system of production, by raising the cry for "workers participation in management." This, they claim, is better for the workers than Marxism.

In the US this takes the form of union-led stock buyouts, such as the Pilots Union proposal to buy United Airlines, or appointing a union boss to a company board of directors.

The Japanese capitalists invented a form they called "quality circles." This started in an effort to break the strength of the Japanese left-wing unions. As it has developed, this form's main aims now are to cut down on wasted material; to manage inventory better; and perhaps to rid capital of the need for several layers of middle-management, (while cutting-down on labor turnover) by relying on a better trained workforce committed to the company's goals.

In Europe, what the Yugoslav reactionaries call "workers self-management" takes the form of a company's workers electing a portion, or even all, of the company's managing board, or voting on management decisions.

The aim of all this is to convince workers they control production. But it is a deception. In all these schemes the accumulation of private profit and capital remain as the purpose of production. Production goals remain the prerogative of capital. The capitalist division of labor remains. The workers remain dependent as ever on experts—scientists, engineers, industrial designers, even financiers—who continue to control science, engineering and technological knowledge.

In fact, in this industrial democracy the workers are enlisted to exploit themselves. In the jargon of the latest capitalist management fad, the workers are to be led to "buy-in to the system." Systematically enforced, such industrial democracy is a perfect fit for autocratic centralism.

ACCUMULATING MISERY

Marx observed that there was an "absolute general law of capitalist accumulation," which he stated as, "the greater the social wealth [the greater] also the absolute mass of the proletariat, the industrial reserve army [and] official pauperism." There is, wrote Marx, "an accumulation of misery corresponding with the accumulation of wealth."

In the USA the urban labor force was fully formed out of the farming population in a process that ended only around 1940. At that time the farming population stabilized at 4% of the total population.

Since 1940 the US working class has grown by absorbing vast numbers of women workers and workers emigrating mainly from Latin America. These additions to the working class have been employed largely in the hugely expanded lower-paid occupations. One important result has been the rapid growth of the welfare system to help keep alive ever larger numbers of employed workers.

While the working class has grown, what Marx called the "industrial reserve army" has also grown, just as he forecast it would. This "reserve army" consists of the unemployed, the sporadically employed and the part-time employed. In the USA this reserve army is overwhelmingly composed of women, black and immigrant (both documented and undocumented) workers.

The 1970 US census attempted to develop a "subemployment index,"which illustrates this point.

To gauge the degree of labor-market failure, it is necessary to know not only the magnitude of overt unemployment, but also the extent of worker discouragement ("discouraged workers" are those who have given up looking for jobs); the number of people who can find only part-time work; and the number who hold jobs but at inadequate pay. The subemployment index attempts to encompass all these factors. (Braverman, op. cit., p 399)

The Census Employment Survey found that in the central-cities (this means "ghetto," but doesn't sound as bad) the 1970 unemployment rate was 9.6% of the labor force compared with 4.9% nationwide. In New York City the unemployment rate was 8.1% in the survey areas compared with 4.4% for the city's labor force as a whole.

When discouraged workers were added in, the New York City central-city subemployment rate jumped to 11%.

When New York ghetto-resident workers who wanted to work full time but could only find part-time work were added in, the subemployment rate jumped to 13.3% of the area's labor force.

When those full-time workers who earned less than the government's Bureau of Labor Statistics estimate of what was needed for a family to make ends meet were added in, the subemployment rate jumped to 66.6% in New York, and averaged 61.2% for all central-city areas in the United States.

Since 1970 the US proletariat and reserve army of labor have grown even larger. The accumulation of misery has leaped forward.

THE COST OF CAPITALIST PROSPERITY

Because of extorted free labor, extorted through the mechanism of the free market, the capitalist world's small upper class is able to pay for the wealth, health, knowledge and culture they enjoy by forcing impoverishment, illness and ignorance upon working people.

To get an idea of the real cost of the capitalist mode of production, and of capitalist prosperity, consider these two points:

- Thirty years ago two million Latin Americans died each year from hunger or from a preventable disease. Thirty years ago $2 billion a year in profits was sucked out of Latin America by US bosses alone. ***That works out to $1,000 a corpse, four corpses a minute, as the price Latin American workers donated to US bosses for the privilege of being part of the world capitalist system.***

Today the profits are higher and the corpses more numerous. The 1980s are known throughout Latin America as "The Lost Decade," because of the on-going economic crisis that has ravaged the whole region. The United Nations reported in 1990 that taking Latin America as a whole, the number of people too poor to feed themselves jumped from one in eight at the beginning of the 1980s, to one in three by the end. Nine of every ten Guatamalan families now lives in poverty, up from three in ten at the beginning of the decade. "A job is little more than a fading memory for the vast majority of Guatamalans. Poverty has swallowed thousands of formerly middle class families, pushing the already poor into desperate straights," reported the *New York Times* on October 14, 1990.

- In today's free market world 40,000 workers' children die every day from starvation or from some preventable disease. ***40,000 murders every day! 14.6 million murders every year, year after year.***

Each year capitalism routinely kills more than twice as many children than the total number of Jews the Nazi brutes murdered during their entire five year holocaust campaign.

Capitalism operating in its normal, "peaceful" way is the perpetrator of the greatest mass murder in human history. Capitalism is covered with the blood of its victims.

Are the free market's propagandists—men and women who drool lies about how individual entrepreneurship is the only way to produce abundance and guarantee freedom—led by the likes of Margeret Thatcher, Milton Friedman, Bush, Kohl, Gorbachev, Yeltsin, Walensa, Deng—are they any the less guilty of crimes against humanity than was Goebbels, Hitler's propaganda chief?

Every society based on class exploitation oozes corruption, worships selfishness and sets one group against another—men against women, nation against nation, race against race.

Nor does the peacefully murderous free market system stay peaceful for long. It constantly erupts into war. In the 19th century, and the first few years of the 20th century alone, for freedom's sake (the freedom to expand into more markets):

- England's bosses mobilized their workers and sent them to kill working people in what is now India, Pakistan, Burma, China, Egypt, Kenya, Zimbabwe, South Africa.

- The US bosses sent their workers to kill Native Americans, and then sent them to kill in Mexico, Cuba, Colombia, throughout Central America, to China and the Philippines, and then to Europe.

- The Belgian bosses sent Belgian workers to kill Congolese workers.

- The Dutch bosses sent their workers to kill Indonesian workers.

- The French bosses sent their workers to kill in Spain, Italy, Austria, Germany and throughout North and West Africa.

- The German bosses first sent their workers to kill French workers. Later they sent their workers out again to invade all of Europe.

Tens of millions killed in a little more than 100 years. All of this because of the free market. The first communist had not yet been born.

Legalized class theft and extortion. Oppression. Uncontrollable, ruthless selfishness. Racism. Sexism. Nationalism. Peacetime mass murder. War. ***These are the normal conditions of life under capitalism.*** It has been this way every day of the 200 years since capitalism came to dominate human society. Despite every attempt to reform it, capitalism has never been changed in even one of these essential features. It can't be changed—a leopard can't change its spots. But it can be killed.

In their own interests, the world's working people need, first and foremost, to kill capitalism. Experience teaches that there is only one way to do this: a revolutionary organization based in the working class and prepared to carry out this workers' need, seizes political power. It then uses that political power to mobilize the working peoples ideas, talents and energies to reorganize society so that classes are abolished and a structure erected in which everyone can contribute to the best of his or her ability, and can receive in return whatever he or she needs from the things produced. This is the only way working people—and not just working people—can hope to live in freedom. This is what communism is. This is the reason the communist movement arose.

HOW COMMUNISTS REBUILD SOCIETY IS KEY

Would-be communist revolutionaries who do not base themselves on communism should quit now. Their real future lies in management consulting. If by chance they won power, and somehow held on to it, they would be at a dead end. How will they rebuild their societies? If they try to fit into the world market they will be boycotted by the then-dominant imperialists, who will try to strangle them economically. If they make enough concessions to avoid the inevitable boycott, then nothing would be different from the regime they just got rid of, except they would now be running it. Capitalist production relations would continue. The old cycle would start up again. People would judge the revolution by whether it provided consumer goods on the order of what the upper class has. But no country is going to subsidize them like the Soviets did the Cubans, and there aren't going to be any consumer goods. Corruption and bureaucracy would mushroom, disillusionment and rightwing counter-revolution would grow. It would be the Sandinistas all over again.

The only course open to sincere revolutionaries is, first, to abolish

the capitalist mode of production, and with it, the free market. The buying and selling of labor power is abolished. The production of things as merchandise, because they can be sold at a profit, is abolished. Selling and buying is abolished. Instead of as merchandise, goods are produced because they are needed, and distributed to those who need them.

In communist society, as production increases, and people have transformed themselves so that they are no longer narrowly selfish, you could just pile the stuff up and let people come and take it. (In the early days of the Cuban revolution, before they became Khrushchev's followers, the Cuban government did this when there were some bumper fruit harvests.)

COMMUNIST WORK

Will people work if they will get what they need anyway? Can society be run if workers don't face the choice of either working as they are told to, or being fired?

Today, despite the fact that most workers would like to feel a sense of purpose and achievement at work (actually, because of this fact), workers normally consider work a burden. This is so wherever capitalist production relations prevail, whether the USA or the USSR. The best job is the one where we can collect our pay for doing nothing. We consider our real life begins when the work day is over. We envy those who don't have to work. The reason is simple. We have no control over our lives when we are at work. We have sold that control to a boss for a wage. Such control as we have over our lives begins only after work. We need a job in order to live, but that's not life. Our wage is all we can hope for from that job. We neither control our work, nor do we own what we produce. We are right to consider this kind of work a burden.

But productive labor has another side to it. The same worker who tries to do as little as possible on the job will eagerly spend as much time as possible tinkering with his or her car, or building something in his or her home, or baking or sewing or gardening or learning to play a musical instrument. People who retire and find no productive activity to turn to generally get sick, and often quickly die. It is not productive labor we object to, but only that work over whose processes and products we have no control. In fact, people can realize their creativity and freedom only through productive labor. Productive labor guided by intelligence is the special attribute of humans. It is not a characteristic of the master-weaver spi-

der, or the dam-building beaver. Intelligence-guided productive labor produced humanity. It is the force by which humans produced the world.

Capitalism creates a split between work and creative productive labor. It does so by making the workplace and the work product the private property of the boss. In this situation the worker can only be a tool to realize the boss' creativity and freedom, but never his or her own freedom. In this situation workers can only be made to work through the fear of starvation. Work here is merely the way to stay alive. Life is outside work.

A society organized as a communist proletarian dictatorship based on a communist mode of production transforms work into the foremost expression of human freedom. It unites work with creative productive labor. Work then becomes the prime necessity, the main content, of life. People can then feel about work as artists do about their art, or musicians about their music, or as workers in capitalism would like to feel about their work.

By making the workplace and the work product the common property of the entire working class, the conditions are created for ending the enslaving subordination of one individual to another under a division of labor. Then the working class is in a position to control the work process.

It does so by taking into its own hands the exclusive rights formerly held by the capitalists and their scientists, engineers, technicians, planners and managers. It revolutionizes the educational system that now leaves the working class ignorant despite years of schooling. It demystifies science and technology through lifelong education in theoretical and applied science and technology combined with practical experience in production.

A communist society has no privileged people. Whatever there is will be shared according to peoples needs. There is no weekend country estate for one and homelessness for another. The spirit that grows in such a society is the spirit of solidarity, of caring for one another, not the capitalist spirit of selfishness, greed and envy.

AN EXAMPLE OF COMMUNIST WORK

Will people work in a situation where they feel responsible for others and where they develop their creativity most freely through their work? In the few places and times that this has been tried—briefly in the Soviet Union and China—production

and morale soared. New ideas, innovations, and inventions poured out. Workers tackled problems and areas of knowledge they knew nothing about, and mastered them by pooling their experience. Managers weren't needed. There was no demand for private entrepreneurs. Responsible leadership grew out of political devotion to the common good. It can be done. It has been done.

The freedom enjoyed by the workers then [during the Chinese Cultural Revolution] was incredible—scandalous for those managers accustomed to our factory system. The workplace seemed to be a continuation of the personal world of the workers. In Luoyang, in the famous tractor factory, a worker's family came and went during work hours without the slightest inhibition. On the assembly line, workers would shift and switch duties by mutual consent without awaiting directions from on high...I remembered the Italian diplomat who was stupified to see coming out of such a madhouse cars produced perfectly down to the last bolt...In many places in China, for ten years factories functioned without even...routine rules; there were no controls, people could stop work to carry out some cultural activity; groups took time out of the working day to study; there was a true rejection of supervisory authority. For the first time in history, workers were without bosses in the factories. Perhaps an increase in production was a little slowed with respect to what—an unprovable hypothesis—it might possibly have been otherwise. However, it was certainly not slowed down in absolute terms, for with the start of the Cultural Revolution there was, on the whole and everywhere, a notable increase in production... (Edoarda Masi, *China Winter*, New York, 1982, Pp 292, 295)

CAPITALISM CREATES THE NEED FOR COMMUNISM

Modern class society created both the working peoples need for communism and their ability to bring communism into being. Karl Marx was the first to understand this, from his analysis of how capitalism operates. Since capitalism never has—and cannot—rid itself of its own essential features, its mode of production, Marx' critique of capitalism remains true. His work makes it possible for working people to become conscious of their need for communism, their need both as a class, and as individuals; and, based on this consciousness, to commit themselves to fighting for communism.

Lenin discovered how to organize the kind of powerful

communist groups working people need to win political power, so they can have the right and freedom to introduce communist practices. As a result of Lenin's work, communist-led workers were able to seize power in many countries, and began, however imperfectly, to reorganize society.

IF IT DOESN'T GIVE UP, THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT CANNOT DIE

Since the source of the communist movement's life is class society, it follows that, ***so long as class society remains, the movement cannot die.*** The working class' need for communism remains. ***Any particular party may go under if its internal contradictions allow it to accomodate itself to class society. But sooner or later revolutionary class consciousness develops and a new group arises to replace the old one.***

To illustrate this, consider the example of the Chinese communist movement. The Chinese Communist Party was founded at a meeting attended by nineteen revolutionaries in 1921. The policies they adopted aimed to stimulate class consciousness and organize mass working class organizations, like trade unions. They did not aim to take power. By 1927 the party led the Chinese urban working class. But in 1927 the alarmed Chinese reactionaries managed to arrest or kill most of the party members and leaders and destroy all of their organizations. The reactionaries imagined the communist threat to their power was over.

But the remaining handful of communists did not give up. They regrouped and, trying to learn from their experience, adopted new policies. This time they did try to win political power, through organizing armed insurrections aimed at winning control of China's large cities. Again masses of poor working people, through their participation in the communist-led struggles, became conscious of their class interests. They supported and joined the party, and its new army. A new group of leaders was developed. You could say this was a new party. But this policy failed to topple the reactionaries. Defeated, but still not giving up, the party had to retreat to a remote, isolated region.

Alarmed and upset, in 1932 the reactionaries again tried to destroy communism once and for all, by sending their army to destroy the communists. For four years a war was waged against the communists' base area. The communists were nearly wiped

out. Those who remained, far from giving up, tried to flee to an even more remote place, with the reactionary army in hot pursuit. Only 10% of the communists who started out survived to reach their destination. Once more the reactionaries, having captured the communists' old base area, and having killed most of the communists, imagined they had put an end to communism.

But in their new base, centered around a little town called Yenan in the remote northwest, the communists again applied their experience, changed their leadership and developed new policies.

In a sharp break with the past, they now concentrated on working among China's most oppressed classes—the poor farmers and landless farm workers. Village-by-village they supported the protests of these oppressed classes, and raised these protests to the level of armed revolt for local political power.

Organizing local poor peasant militias, and supporting them with better trained and armed centrally-led military units, slowly but surely the party toppled the local big-property owners' governments.

New mass organizations, made up of, and led by these poor farmers and workers, were developed in each liberated village. These organizations included a women's union, the militia, support groups for the militia, groups to promote education and spread Marxism, groups to promote cooperative farming methods, and new local party units. These groups governed and protected the village's new life.

This was how the party fought capitalism, and this was how it fought the Japanese invasion of World War II. Within ten years the party's base areas numbered 80 million people.

Of course, this was a desperately poor area. Both in order to survive, and to give an example of the ultimate meaning of the revolution, the party immediately introduced some communist practices as the Yenan region's way of life. In the party's central base area cooperative work for the good of the whole region was the basis of production. What was produced was shared with everyone according to need. Money was abolished. Within the army, rank was abolished. Methods were found to involve the area's working people in making decisions important to their lives, and in leading the implementation of those decisions.

These policies were successful. They saved the day by allowing the party and its base to survive and grow despite poverty and

blockade. But more than this, these were the policies which were the core of the party's spiritual appeal to the millions of Chinese of all oppressed classes.

On the basis of this new kind of base building and armed struggle a new base of supporters was won. Again a new party membership and a new leadership was developed. This was, in fact, another new party, united to the preceding parties only by tradition and by ultimate goal.

From 1936 on, the reactionaries tried to destroy the communists and Yenan, but instead the party's armed strength grew, and its organizations and influence spread throughout the country. By 1949 the reactionaries were finally totally defeated and the party won national power with a mandate to reorganize the whole society.

The Chinese example is especially dramatic. But apart from its drama it is a typical example of how everyone gets to his or her goal. The lesson is not to get discouraged, and not to give up, when your plans fail. You have to go through a process of change and renewal as you learn from your experience and adapt to your changing situation. That is how people, and movements, develop. On the surface, human events seem to proceed with a smooth flow. But look beneath the surface and you discover the smooth flow is really a series of starts, advances, set-backs, new starts, and so on, each series growing out of what went before and leading to something new.

THE PROCESS OF REVOLUTION

There is another reason why the new communist movement PL is organizing will succeed. We know what to expect in the revolutionary process.

The old movement had no way of knowing how the revolutionary process would develop in capitalist society, since it had never before happened. Now that it has happened, over and over again, in many countries, we can see a universal pattern. ***This pattern also tells us that the most important job we can undertake today is to build the strongest possible base for communist ideas and practices.***

How are we going to get the right to destroy capitalism? How do revolutionaries come to power?

It only happens in the midst of crisis and as the result of crisis.

THE RUSSIAN EXAMPLE

The Russian revolution followed this path: War had destroyed

the country. A massive opposition to the government developed, because different sections of the people united in feeling that life could not go on in the old way. All the discontented classes, groups and elements of the population participated in a series of battles. In addition to the revolutionary movement of the class conscious working people, movements emerged, and revolutionary outbursts erupted, among all sorts of middle class people with all their prejudices, among working people who had little or no class consciousness, among all those who felt oppressed beyond endurance by bosses, by landlords, by banks, by churches, even by foreign nations. The government finally could not resist this mass opposition. It fell.

Now the different victorious parties—the Constitutional Democrats, the Mensheviks, the Socialist Revolutionaries, the Left Socialist Revolutionaries, and the Communists—struggled against each other for dominance. By this means the mass of the people came finally to support the communists, who were, during this time, a small group.

Communists came to power in the crisis of a wrecked country. No sooner were they in power than the entire capitalist world sent its armies to overthrow them. The revolutionaries were not strong enough to maintain power throughout the entire territory ruled by the old government. During the War of Intervention the communists lost control of 90% of that territory. Even after they finally won the war, (as some two million workers and poor peasants volunteered for the newly-organized Red Army) huge chunks of territory couldn't be recaptured from capitalism: what is now Poland, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and parts of Byelorussia and the Ukraine.

Losing the war didn't stop the capitalists. They next tried to bring the revolution down economically, with boycotts.

When the fascists came to power in the 1930s in Germany and in the countries of Central Europe, the democratic capitalists in England, France and the United States tried to get the fascists to invade the USSR to destroy the revolution. The fascists did invade. The war against communism was the main aspect of World War II. But the fascists were beaten. .

THE CHINESE EXAMPLE

The Chinese revolution followed a broadly similar path. As we have seen, the Chinese communists created an independent

state, based in Yenan, within the capitalist state. For thirteen years they fought a constant war to maintain and expand this liberated area. The reactionary government suppressed all opposition it could lay its hands on (generally by killing them.) As a result, all the opposition gravitated to the communists, and many joined the party. After the old government was overthrown in 1949, the struggle for dominance started among the various revolutionary class forces, just as it had in Russia. But in China this struggle had to take the form of an inner-party struggle within the communist party, precisely because the party had so successfully embraced the whole revolution. This struggle continued for twenty years. The working class forces were defeated. (In the process the party was once more replaced, this time with the present fascist party—new members, new leaders—but its name stayed the same.)

After the 1949 nationwide liberation, China, too, was subject to economic boycott and war, waged against her by the combined capitalist countries. The US/UN war in Korea, which started in 1950, was intended to bring down the Chinese revolution. The US war in Vietnam was intended to stop the spread of Chinese communism.

If the revolutionaries can't be prevented from coming to power then, after they come to power, the imperialists send their armies or their secret forces to attack them and destroy the country. This happened in Russia, China, Korea, Vietnam, Albania, Cuba, Guatamala, Egypt, the Congo, Angola, Mozambique, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Afganistan, Guatamala, Nicaragua.

(The revolutionaries don't have to be communists. So long as they seem to threaten the dominant capitalist interests they qualify for attempted suppression. Anti-imperialist nationalists can get the same treatment.)

REVOLUTION IN THE USA

Lenin clearly understood that communists cannot avoid armed struggle. He emphasized this as often as he could. And history has shown that communists come to power only in reaction to capitalist-caused war—either war capitalists start to suppress workers who are demanding too much for capitalist comfort, or war one national capitalist class starts to win power over another national capitalist class. But from about 1936 onward the communist movement ran as fast as possible from what it considered an inconvenient truth. Except for the Chinese (who invented the strategy of people's war) and the Vietnamese (who adopted it), the various parties of the old movement became brain-dead. Rejecting armed struggle, they had no idea how they might come to power. They made peace with capitalist society and lost all reason for existing as communist organizations.

This was illustrated, in the case of the Communist Party of the United States, by the experience of a former member: for his entire political life, starting in the mid-1930s, he had been an underground activist. As it happened, he was quite successful in carrying out his assignments. Naturally he had very little contact with the party. He had hardly ever taken part in political discussions and had never met any of the party leaders. Finally around 1949 he was discovered by the enemy. A long jail term was possible. Personally, though, there was one good point. He could at last meet some of his party's leadership. After all, you can't be uncovered twice. So a lunch was arranged with one of the top leaders. Many years of devoted work—done pretty much on faith—behind him, facing jail, the underground revolutionary finally was able to ask the party leader the question that had long been upper-most on his mind: "Tell me, just what is our plan for carrying out the revolution?" The party leader flushed and answered: "If I ever raised that question, or used the word 'revolution,' at a meeting of the national leadership, half the people there would quit and I would be expelled." The underground revolutionary left the lunch, left the CPUSA, left the country and lived the remainder of his years in revolutionary China, trying his best to do the one thing that gives honor and distinction to life —fighting for communism.

Communist revolutionaries in the US, as in any other country, will come to power only in the midst of crisis and destruction caused by great violence. They are not likely to control at once the whole of the present national territory. There will be no peaceful election, no gracious turning over of the White House, no Inaugural Ball. No communist party that ignores the inevitability of armed struggle will ever succeed in coming to power.

In the United States this violence will erupt in one or the other of these ways.

- War could come to the United States. The struggle for markets is entering a new period, as Iraq shows, and that struggle has always been characterized by war. Such a war might, or might not, be a nuclear war. But either way

there would be enormous destruction, and this will touch off a struggle for power that will only be settled with arms.

•As more and more people become conscious of capitalist oppression, US bosses will be confronted with mass revolutionary demonstrations and upheavals against them. The bosses will surely react—as they always react when confronted with militant strikes, as they reacted when confronted with the Civil Rights movement and with the anti-Vietnam war movement—with force to try to suppress the opposition. They will destroy as much of the country as they feel they need to, to try to avoid going down in defeat. They have already issued the slogan for this: "Better dead than red."

In this crisis—however the capitalists cause it—which class dictatorship will rebuild society? Will it be a capitalist class dictatorship, based on privilege, which will have destroyed society in the first place? Or will it be a proletarian dictatorship, based on freedom for the working people? In this situation many people who had not yet been convinced of the need to oppose privilege, to give to each according to his or her needs, and to work together cooperatively for the good of all, will come to realize there is no way to live except through the communist proletarian dictatorship.

COMMUNIST POLITICAL SYSTEM

When the communist revolution takes power, and when production and distribution is organized in a communist way, what happens to politics? We have to remember that modern capitalism inevitably evolved toward a despotic centralization in exercising power and in controlling production, science and culture. That is what industrialization on the basis of the capitalist mode of production entails. (Socialism, which industrialized with this same capitalist mode of production, also reproduced this authoritarian centralization.) Combatting the practices and habits of despotic capitalist centralization will be the center of communist political struggle.

Once the working class wins political power the only questions it can regard as legitimate concern how to develop and advance communism, not whether to continue with communism. There will be no political space for anti-communism. The proletarian dictatorship will suppress anti-communism. The anti-communists will complain they are being repressed, they have no democracy. They will be right.

The revolutionary party, the leading force in the revolution, will be the leading force in society. (It would be ridiculous to imagine any other dynamic.) The most important aspect of that leadership will be ideological/political struggle for communist consciousness. Neither capitalist authoritarianism nor capitalist habits based on individualistic selfishness can be ended except within the political struggle for a mass ideological transformation. For this reason the main form of PL's leadership will be through base building. In one sense not much will change from the way we try to win our friends, neighbors and co-workers today. It will be critical to build vibrant, lively, local mass organizations to administer society.

There will be no reason to have a government as we now understand and experience government, with its corrupt, self-serving legislatures fawning on capitalists; its judicial system designed to protect capitalist property relations and deny justice to everyone else; its vast, all-but autonomous administrative bureaucracies; its autocratic executive, orchestrating the whole thing. This is government designed and operated in the interests of capitalism, and guaranteed to be insulated from any possibility of control by working people.

In the communist political system the revolutionary party and the local mass organizations will be the heart of new forms of mass political participation which will replace the kind of government we know today. The precise form this new government will take we do not, and cannot, now know. The form will be developed in the course of the revolutionary struggle for power itself. What we can and do know is the content. This form of social leadership is a structured process which connects the working people with ruling power, elaborated through the communist mode of production. Among other things, it allows the different ideas and concerns of the various groups which still exist within society to be expressed. (This was discussed in the second article of this series.) It allows the individual worker to know what has changed in his or her life that now makes them part of the ruling power of the state.

PL has for some time tried to experiment with this kind of relationship, within the limits available to it. For example, meetings of PL's Central Committee are open to all, PL members and non-members alike, and all who attend are en-

couraged to participate.

Through class struggle new forms of working class democratic centralism will replace capitalist authoritarian centralism. The new political system of democratic centralism will consist of decentralization leading to centralism, party base building and party leadership.

TO SUM UP:

- The new communist movement being organized by PL will succeed because it is armed with the lessons of the successes and failures of the old communist movement. This makes it the only force that can lead humanity's immense majority, the working people,
- to conquer political power;
- to organize the proletarian dictatorship, without which the working people cannot exercise their political power;
- and to use their political power to fight for their freedom, which the working people can realize only through communism.
- Winning people to support communism is the immediate task for today for two practical reasons.
- The first reason is that the inevitable, suicidal, capitalist crisis that is coming will be resolved in the working peoples' interests, and never be allowed to recur, only if a communist society is organized on capitalism's ruins. To do this we must develop a mass base for communism.
- The second reason winning people to support communism is the immediate task for today is that anything else is futile: unless the working class institutes communist practices as soon as it takes power, it will create a new class system that will require a new revolution.
- Communist revolutionaries who win the working people to fight for communism are the only ones who have a chance to transform their society, and lead the working people to freedom, no matter how isolated or small or poor their territory. For a long time there will be shared physical hardships and fewer consumer goods. This is bequeathed to us by capitalism. But when the communist revolution takes power, and institutes communist practices, the working people immediately will live better and freer lives.

Communism, which is the liberation of humanity, is the worthiest cause there is. We who join in the struggle for communism are bound in comradeship with the oppressed men and women of every race and nation. We are of one blood. We share

their hatred of the oppressors, we share their pain and humiliation, we share their hopes. Their triumphs are also our triumphs. Through this comradeship and struggle we are able to transcend the limitations of our own lives. We do not pine for the future, nor regret we may not see the day of victory, because our continuing struggle is our victory. The communist cause offers the most honorable and meaningful life imaginable. It is a privilege open to all. Working people of all countries, unite. We have a world to win.

By B. T.

Our Job:

MAKE COMMUNISM, NOT IMPERIALISM, THE WORLD'S MAIN TREND

PL MEMBERS WRITE UP A POLITICAL DISCUSSION RECENTLY HELD BY THEIR CLUB,, TO SHARE WITH OUR READERS. WE INVITE OTHER CLUBS TO DO THE SAME.

Fifteen years ago, we made the estimate that Soviet imperialism was on the rise and U.S. on the decline, and that war between the two was likely sooner rather than later.[1] How has that estimate stood up? More important, what is the main contradiction in the world today?

In a nutshell: Unfortunately, communist revolution is not the main trend in the world right now. Nor are national liberation struggles doing well. The main contradiction is rivalry among imperialists. There are four big imperialists: both the Soviets and the U.S. imperialists are doing poorly, while German and Japanese imperialists are rising quickly.

(1) "U. S. Depression Opens the Door to Revolution," *PL Magazine,* 1975.

The main contradiction is between U.S. imperialism and the alliance of German and Soviet imperialism, based on German economic might and Soviet military muscle.

Capitalism is bringing misery to the world. Living standards are not rising for most of humanity. Even where they are rising, so is exploitation, alienation, and cultural decay — capitalism stinks even when it delivers the goods.

THE COMMUNIST REVOLUTION: HUMANITY'S BRIGHTEST HOPE

The world working class movement still suffers from the bodyblows of betrayal and confusion, caused by the reversal of socialism in the Soviet Union and China. Marxism-Leninism has been identified in many workers' minds with the idiotic nonsense mouthed by Soviet and Chinese bosses, who used the words of communism to justify brutal exploitation and ruthless repression. Their system of privileges for a few and dictatorship over the workers has nothing to do with communism! Our party fights for a system of equality — economic equality (from each according to his ability, to each according to his need) and political equality (democratic centralism, not periodic elections to choose which liar will screw us next).

There are some hopeful signs for the world communist movement. Our Party is becoming international in organization, not just in outlook. This is as important a transformation as the change in the 1970s, when our Party became working class in composition as well as in outlook.

But honesty requires us to say the Party is small. We are not now able to challenge the capitalists for state power in any country. Things could change quickly. Revolutions are like thunderstorms — they build up slowly and then burst out.

NATIONALIST MOVEMENTS DOING POORLY

The 1950s and 1960s were the era of national liberation struggles, which basically ended the colonial empires ruling Africa and, in Vietnam and Cuba, shook the foundations of U.S. imperialism. These struggles attracted millions of honest workers and their allies, who hated the foreign capitalists. Unfortunately, their leaders were nationalists with no interest in communist egalitarianism, who used the words of Marxism to cover a capitalist program — namely, replacing one set of bosses

(foreign) with another (local).

Some liberation struggles continue, as in the Phillipines, El Salvador, South Africa, and Palestine. The struggle in Peru has partly the character of a liberation struggle and some important communist elements. However, these movements are not so widespread as to threaten imperialism.

The main trend in Africa, Asia, and Latin America is not national liberation but rabid capitalism. The capitalists in Latin America, Africa and Asia want to become more independent from control by U.S./European/Japanese/Soviet imperialists. They are abandoning any claim to be "socialists" and implementing all sorts of "reforms" to make capitalism more vicious — that is what they mean by "letting markets work their magic." These bosses are looting public treasuries through "privatizations" which, for a song, hand over to the rich state-owned industries paid for by workers with their taxes.

These "Third World" capitalists are basically weak. They have been made to pay the heaviest price for the capitalist world crisis of the 1980s, and they in turn forced the working class in "their" countries to bear the burden. In other words, the imperialist powers forced the "Third World" capitalists to pay a fortune to US/European/Japanese banks, which has driven the "Third World" economies into deep crisis. The weakest countries got hit the most: Africa has to pay nearly half its export earnings in debt service, and so its output per person has sunk to the levels of 1960. Within each country, the working class has had to tighten its belt to repay the banks, while the capitalist class has had to give up a little of its champagne.

In short, nationalism — whether of the fake-left "national liberation" or the openly capitalist "Third World" sort — is not doing so well. The contradiction between imperialism and nationalism is not the main contradiction in the world today.

Nevertheless, some of these "Third World" capitalists are powerful bosses in their own

right. Brazil has the world's 9th largest economy; India, the 12th.[2] It is racist nonsense to assume that African, Asian, and Latin American capitalists will always be under the thumb of European, U.S. and Japanese capitalism. The capitalist system always has winners and losers, but nothing guarantees the winners have white skins. For instance, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea now have world-class capitalists. Taiwan has $65 billion in foreign exchange reserves, more than any other country in the world.

The growth of powerful capitalists in the ex-colonies has eroded the control of the traditional imperialists and has led to wars among the new capitalists. The most obvious example of this process is Iraq under Saddam Hussein. What a change in the world when a relatively small Middle Eastern country — one emerging from the devastation of a brutal eight-year war with Iran — can challenge the major imperialists! In order to defeat just this one new capitalist, the U.S. has to mobilize most of its armed forces and to pressure all its old allies to join it. What a vast difference from 40 years ago, when an oil embargo against a nationalist leader in Iran (named Mossadegh) took exactly one British destroyer! With that one ship, a tired imperialist like Britain kept Iran from selling any oil for two years until the CIA overthrew Mossadegh and brought back the Shah. Now, the old imperialists have to marshall everything they have got to stop a determined new capitalist like Saddam Hussein. "Third World" capitalists are no longer minor players: Saddam has more tanks than West Germany and 90% as many fighter planes! His 5,500 tanks are quite impressive compared to the U.S.' 16,000; he has 3,500 artillery guns compared to the U.S.' 5,500.

The rise of the new bourgeoisies in the Middle East, Asia, Latin America, and Africa means that the world is becoming more unstable, as these new capitalists push for more power and the old imperialists control them less. We can expect to see more wars in these parts of the world. But, despite this, the main contradiction remains between U.S. im-

(2) The 20 with output of $100 billion or more are: USA, Japan, USSR, Germany, France, Italy, Britain, Canada, Brazil, China, Spain, India, Australia, Netherlands, Switzerland, South Korea, Sweden, Belgium, Mexico and Austria.

perialism and the alliance of German and Soviet imperialism.

Capitalism is in its young stages in the "Third World." As Marx explained 125 years ago, young capitalism unleashes tremendous productive forces. Society's output grows by leaps and bounds. Capitalists take all that they can, but workers' organization and resistance usually means that workers get part of the wealth. The workers' standard of living has been rising in the successful capitalist countries: life expectancy is way up, people eat much better, and consumer goods like TVs and phones have become much more common. Workers in Singapore have a higher standard of living than in Britain. But they are tremendously exploited. South Korean workers typically work 80 hours a week (12 hours a day, 2-3 days off per month). The wealth comes from super-hard work, and the capitalists keep the vast bulk of what the workers' sweat has created.

CRISIS FOR SOVIETS?

The Soviet economy has done worse than we expected back in 1975. In fact, it has done almost as badly as the U.S. economy! So the basic trend from 1975 to 1990 has been that Soviet capitalism has stayed steady relative to U.S. capitalism.

That is not what the U.S. propaganda machine tells us every day; for that matter, Gorbachev's propaganda machine also tells us that the Soviet economy has done terribly. Both of them are exaggerating Soviet weaknesses for their own reasons. The U.S. "experts" do not bother to look at how the Soviets stack up relative to the U.S.; they only tell us that the Soviet economy has done badly while concealing that the U.S. economy has been doing horribly as well. The relative comparison is very different from the usual picture: it shows the Soviets climbing relative to the U.S. from 1975 through about 1984 and then declining since. Note that the decline has been under that magician Gorbachev! His propaganda machine likes to emphasize Soviet economic problems in order to blame all the problems he is causing on those that came before him. The more he can slander the communist rule under Lenin and Stalin, the more he can hide how workers are suffering under his rule.

Since the late 1970s, the Soviet economy has performed badly for its capitalist masters. The basic problems have been the contradictions created by capitalism, especially the falling rate of profit caused by overinvestment. The Soviet capitalists under Brezhnev (1965-1981) poured

billions and billions into investment. They had invested so much that the surplus value they squeezed from workers was not enough to make the rate of profit they needed to keep on growing. The problem was made worse by the increasingly sloppy managers and alienated workers, as the positive effects of the socialist period faded.

We in PLP underestimated the Soviet capitalists' problems in the late 1970s. We saw the tremendous growth of Soviet capitalism in the period 1955-1975 and we thought it would continue. In fact, that earlier growth was based in large part on the fruits of the socialist past and on the immediate gains that the capitalists could make after abandoning socialism. We underestimated how strong would be the problems created by capitalism. Maybe we were still influenced by that nonsense that sees the Soviet Union has somehow different from other capitalism, so we did not look hard enough at the contradictions in the Soviet economy.

The Soviet capitalists were especially hard hit by the decline in world markets for oil. The USSR is the world's largest oil producer. It produces 4.5 billion barrels a year of the stuff, not to speak of lots of gas and coal. When the price of oil fell from $35 per barrel to $15, that cost the Soviet capitalists a stunning $90 billion a year in profits. The effect was dramatic. Much of the oil profit went to the government budget, and that budget went into a deficit which has now reached $100 billion a year. Plus the Soviets export about 1 billion barrels of this oil each year, so much of their oil profits was in foreign earnings. With those foreign earnings gone, the Soviet bosses had to borrow $50 billion in five years and now can not pay their foriegn bills on time. In short, the Soviet capitalists have suffered from the oil price collapse almost as much as the OPEC nations, many of which

have had riots (Algeria, Venezuela) or slid into complete poverty (Nigeria, Iran).

The prospects for the Soviet economy are not good in the short run. The local capitalists in each of the 15 republics are all trying to get a bigger share of the pie. Gorbachev is not strong and bold enough to force through the complete restructuring of Soviet capitalism needed to restart growth (That is how capitalists resolve their crises of overinvestment and overproduction: by slashing wages and, as important, by shutting down or writing off some of the factories). But in the medium term, the situation for Soviet capitalism is good. The Soviet economy is functioning at a level 45% the U.S. size (down from its 55% peak) despite the tremendous inefficiency caused by the paralysis over which capitalists to force out of business in order to resolve the crisis. Once the capitalists resolve their indecision, growth could resume at a decent rate. Indeed, the billions of dollars in recent windfall oil profits brought about by the Persian Gulf crisis will serve to accelerate this growth.

Furthermore, the Soviet bosses remain a powerful imperialist force. Their army is the world's strongest, bigger than the U.S. and with more modern equipment. The Soviet capitalists can use their military might to get a better deal from their new partners, the German imperialists. Despite all the talk of peace, the Soviet rulers are not going to disarm. In fact, weapon production continues at a pace much, much faster than in the West. The nationalist rebellions in the U.S.S.R. are sure to distract some units of the Soviet army. But even if reduced to the core Russian units, that army would remain the biggest and most powerful in Europe and second only to the U.S. in the world.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN EAST EUROPE?

East European events are mixed for the Soviets — not a clear plus, but also not the complete loss that the Western media claims. Obviously, the Soviets are losing their absolute control. But that tight rule has its price (all those troops to occupy East Europe costs the Soviet capitalists dearly), so a looser rule may be more cost-effective, if the Soviets can still squeeze high profits out of the area. Let's look at the plus side of the balance sheet:

Soviets gain if U.S. forces leave Europe. This could save them $25 billion or more a year from a smaller military, leaves them able to dominate Europe at lower cost. Plus the combined German army probably will be limited to

400,000 (while the Soviet army is sure to have 3 times that many). So the Soviet Army's strength relative to the other European armies will actually increase a great deal. The Soviet Army is now about 1/3 the total of all armies in Europe; by 2000, it will probably be 60% or more.

Soviets gain from the shift to hard currency for trade. They made East Europeans pay for plants in return for promise of low prices on the plants' output; now, they are going back on the promise. The profit is about $15 billion a year, $10 billion of which is on oil. This is a huge gain for the Soviets, and it will all be in foreign currency. That $15 billion will be enough to double the imports of consumer goods (other than food) plus to double the imports of machinery! This by itself would almost be enough to fill the Soviet stores with so many goods that many of the lines would disappear.[3]

West Europeans will pay huge sums to Soviets. Aid to East Europeans — $10 billion or so per year — will go to pay Soviets for oil. West Germany will pay $1 billion a year for Soviet troops in East Germany (how bizarre — the West Germans spend $35 billion on an army to defend against Soviet troops, while paying $1 billion to the Soviet army). All that money is pure profit, not just a loan. Plus the EC and Germans will lend Soviets $5 billion a year at a minimum: they are already talking about maybe going up to $10 billion.

Still, the balance for the Soviets from events in East Europe is mixed. True, they gain on a net basis — but their German competitors/allies gain more. And any capitalist has to worry when his competitor is doing better than he! While the Soviet bosses have some worries about East Europe, it is the U.S. capitalists who are the big losers: they have

(3) The lines and empty shelves in Soviet stores say nothing about shortages: they only show how the Soviets allocate goods. U.S. capitalism allocates goods through prices, so the stores are full but no one can afford anything. The Soviet capitalists keep prices low and then limit access through long lines and shortages. What means Soviet workers have billions or rubles (their money) in cash that they cannot spend in the stores. If the Soviet capitalists imported about $10 billion a year more in consumer goods and sold them at the current high prices, the extra cash would get soaked up—so Soviet workers would no longer have so much cash that they could afford anything that shows up in the stores.

been essentially frozen out of the profitable new markets being gobbled up by German firms. German imperialism is consolidating its hold over the European economy, which is as large as that of all of North and South American combined.

GERMANY AND JAPAN WON THE COLD WAR

Two areas of world economy have incredibly dynamic economies at the moment: the old German and Japanese blocs.

Japan dominates completely the rapidly growing smaller nations of East Asia (South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong). These countries plus Japan have gone from having a GNP that was 14% of the U.S. in 1965 to 59% today! Most economists expect this Japanese sphere to exceed the U.S. economy in size by 2020, while the other economists expect them to reach that size by 2005! The capitalists in these countries force workers to accept such low wages that the capitalists are able to invest one-third or more of output. All that investment leads to an incredible growth rate. By contrast, the U.S. invests 16% or less of its output.

Plus Japan has a solid grasp of the broader East Asian region, meaning China and ASEAN (Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Phillipines, Singapore, Brunei). These economies have a GNP that is at least 12% of the U.S. level (probably more — for various reasons, these countries understate their output while most countries overstate theirs). That means the Greater Japanese Co-Prosperity Sphere (as the Japanese fascists used to call their empire during World War II) is 70% of the U.S. size![4] Furthermore, the growth in the Southeast Asian part of this outer Japanese sphere is speeding up: in particular, Thailand is racing along. China's capitalists have got to tighten their fascist grip and keep workers from demanding decent wages, but then their growth may return to its fast clip of 1978-88. Even this year of

(4) The U.S. capitalists have a sphere of influence, of course. But these days that sphere is basically the Americas (north and south), which have an economy 25% the U.S.'s size, plus maybe some of the Middle East (Egypt, Israel, Saudia Arabia and their small neighbors), with another 5% to the U.S. size. So comparing the whole U.S. sphere to the Japanese sphere, the ratio is 55%. The broad German sphere (with East Europe) is 75% the size of the U.S. sphere.

Chinese "recession" will see 2-4% growth.

Despite all this strength, Japanese imperialism faces some serious problems. Their sphere of influence is a lot poorer than either the German sphere in Europe or the U.S. sphere in the Americas. Plus their military might is puny, despite the plans for future expansion. Furthermore, their neighbors China and the Soviet Union are powerful compared to them, which makes it hard for the Japanese capitalists to dominate the region. For all these reasons, Japanese imperialists will have problems being an independent power, much as they might want to be. They are more likely to throw their lot in with another imperialist. They have been actively exploring a link with the Soviet capitalists for 15 years, but so far not much has come of it: not one of the big investment projects has ever begun at all. But still, the Japan-Soviet link would seem a good fit for the capitalists on both sides. Certainly the U.S.-Japan relationship has gotten to be pretty bad!

Unfortunately, the conflict between the capitalists in the two countries has had some effect on U.S. workers. We need to convert the racist resentment against Japan into communist solidarity with Japan's workers — solidarity against capitalists who set one worker against another.

Germans dominate Europe more and more. They dominate the Common Market (the European Community, or EC), with 25% of the population, and 30% of the GNP. The EC is a huge bloc: it has 92% GNP of US, up from 65% in 1965. The EC countries are integrating their economies in a program called Europe 1992. By the end of 1992, the EC will have implemented hundreds of "directives" which will tie the economies together. In some ways, the EC will be then a tighter union than that among the U.S. states — for instance, it will be easier for a bank in one EC country to open branches in another than it is for a bank from one U.S. state to open in another. The prospects for this bloc are great. After years of stagnation, the EC capitalists have restructured their industry and forced down wages, so now they are growing quickly.

Then the Germans are making out like bandits in Eastern Europe. They have already taken over completely the crown jewel of East Europe, namely, East Germany with its modern industry and skilled workforce. German firms are swarming all over Eastern Europe, while capitalists from Eastern Europe are begg-

ing to be taken over by German firms (literally — a number of firms have offered themselves free to German comanies, in hopes that they will grow rapidly under German rule). The prospects for growth in the area are spectacular, as it was held back by the small amounts of capital the Soviet bosses could invest in the region. Now, East Europe has a combined output that is less than 10% of the U.S., but that could double in 10-15 years.

However, if we previously underestimated the problems of capitalism in the Soviet Union, we should take care not to make the same mistake with regard to what currently appears to be boom-times for German and Japanese capitalists. Crises are inherent in capitalism whatever language it speaks. Indeed, the recent sharp drop in the stock markets, and soaring inflation in Germany and Japan, while blamed on the Persian Gulf affair, could be signs of just such an impending crisis. Germany, in particular, confronted with the new unification-cum-colonization of the former German Democratic Republic, is facing a staggering inflationary prospect.

According to figures released in September, 1990 by the European Commission, inflation in EC member states averaged 5.7% in August, the highest it has been for the past five years, and higher than that of the USA.

The German capitalists are eagerly building their alliance with Soviet capitalism. The new united Germany will be the Soviet Union's biggest trading partner. West German businesses are quickly taking over the East German factories that produce for the Soviet market, and new contracts are being signed every day for credits and sales to the USSR This relationship makes excellence sense from a capitalist perspective: the Soviet and German economies complement each other nicely (one has raw materials and heavy industry, the other has sophisticated technology and consumer goods), the two countries are physically close, and the two countries together can dominate the markets of all Europe. German businessmen are all excited about the prospects in eastern Europe, including the USSR.

The German-Soviet link-up is becoming the main imperialist alliance in the world. Together with the economies of the rest of Europe which they dominate, the German and Soviet capitalists outproduce the U.S. at least 3 to 2 if not more. The growth prospects for this block are excellent. The main trend in the world is for this alliance to be cemented, what with the rush to West Eu-

ropean economic unity for 1992 and the reforms in East Europe. In this new German-Soviet capitalist alliance, the Germans are clearly on top economically: they have the better industry and the more finance. The Soviet capitalists have the more powerful military, so at least for now, the alliance is between more-or-less equals. But the dynamic of the situation is clear: the German capitalists are rising relative to the Soviet bosses.

One thing is for sure: the new alliance will quickly reduce the power of the U.S. imperialists in Europe. Look at the process of German unification to see what the future holds. At each steps, the German bosses announced what they are going to do and got the Soviet capitalists blessing. George Bush had nothing to say about this: he was barely kept informed.

U.S. ON THE DECLINE

We have been right on target about the U.S. decline, ever since our 1975 article. The facts are stunning. In 1965 the U.S. made half the world's automobiles and now makes fewer than Japan alone. The U.S. had six times the German GNP and seven times the Japanese while now it has four times and twice respectively. All ten of the world's top ten banks were U.S. in 1965; now, they are all Japanese. And so on, on and on.

U.S. capitalists are abandoning the future. They are selling off the assets with the best prospects for future growth in order to pay today's bills. This trend has become dramatic in 1989-90. In industry after industry, U.S. firms have sold the subsidiaries with the best hope to Japanese and European firms. One obvious case: the 7-11 store chain was one of the few companies to have a spectacular success in Japan. So what did the Southland Corporation (7-11's owner) do? It sold the 7-11 chain in Japan to a Japanese firm!

More important than these convenience stores are what has happened in banking and in electronics. One after another, most big U.S. banks have given up on building international networks, selling out to Europeans or at least not bidding to win the profitable new prospects opening up. The situation is so dramatic that European and Japanese bankers have begun to worry that the U.S. economy will shrink so fast that their large loans to the U.S. may turn sour.

U.S. capitalists are always moaning about the government's budget deficit. They are right to worry! U.S. capitalism is surviving now only by selling off the family's furniture and going into debt. Perceptive capitalists

know that U.S. capitalism is eating its seed corn.

The picture for the U.S. working class is grim. Workers' standard of living has stagnated for twenty years. The best future U.S. workers can hope for under capitalism is more of the same! In order to compete and to pay off their heavy overseas debt, the U.S. capitalists will fight tooth and nail to force down real wages. It is inevitable that the income per person in the U.S. will fall for years to come — more and more of what is produced here will have to go to repay the foreign debt, now $500 billion and counting. If U.S. workers are able to lead strong reform struggles, they will be able to force the capitalists to steal less of the value they produce. However, the U.S. capitalists will fight tooth and nail to force down real wages, in order to compete internationally and to repay their overseas debt. Because the capitalists control society — the media, the courts, the armed forces — the battle between them and the workers is unequal. The capitalist system is doing so badly that our reform struggles will probably only be able to slow down the decline in our incomes.

THE OVERALL PICTURE: IMPERIALIST FIGHTS, WITH WAR AHEAD

Imperialists are always out for the maximum profit. That means they are not satisfied with what they have, no matter how much that is: they always want more. Is that because they are greedy? Sure they are greedy, but their drive for super-profits is motivated by a more basic desire — the desire to survive! Each imperialist is always worried about the competition. If he does not grow, his competitor will, and so eventually be able to beat him.

For thirty or forty years — ever since the capitalists won control over the Soviet Union by worming from within — the main imperialist conflict has been between the Soviet Union and the U.S.A. That conflict was put in the language of communism versus capitalism, which was not true — it was one group of capitalists versus another group of capitalists. But whatever the language, it was a bitter struggle of power and of military might. It colored everything that happened in the world.

The bitterness has gone out of that struggle. Now, the various imperialists are more cold and calculating, ready to make and break alliances wherever and

whenever necessary. In other words, the new world is one with shifting alliances among imperialists, without any solid anchor. The most likely alliance remains a coalition around the U.S. versus a coalition around the Soviet Union, but that is not inevitable. The Soviet and American capitalists could even end up on the same side, against the Germans and Japanese! Stranger things have happened; after all, the Soviets and Americans both want to defend their existing empire, while the Germans and Japanese both want to grab more. Indeed, the hot talk in Washington is nostalgia for the days when the U.S. and Soviets ruled the world without having to worry about the Germans and Japanese. Some top U.S. officials speak openly about the advantages to the U.S. of the old "co-dominion" ("co" meaning 'two who decided together;' "dominion" meaning 'rule over others').

We can expect lots of complicated alliance-building. The main trend will be alliances based on narrow nationalism, not on any talk about "the Free World" or other nonsense. The U.S. media has fallen into line with this trend: they talk about the Soviets now being not so threatening to the U.S., while Germans are made out to be Nazi butchers who behave only because they are made to, and the Japanese are robots who crush all competition. In this atmosphere, the U.S. bosses could shift alliances from one to the other without too much trouble.

The old military alliances — NATO for the U.S. and West Europe, Warsaw Pact for the Soviet Union and East Europe — are obsolete, but they are have not yet been replaced yet. In particular, the Germans have to unify the old East and West German Armies and to get rid of the U.S. forces in Germany. It will take some time to cement the new German-Soviet alliance by combining their military might. So the German and Soviet imperialists have reason to wait. Meanwhile, the U.S. capitalists are busy with their problems at home and with upstarts who challenge their decaying empire at every weak point, from Panama to the Persian Gulf.

But the danger of world war has not faded, as the rising imperialists will want to take more and more while the sinking imperialists will try to hang on to what they have. Of course, nothing is completely inevitable: it is not inevitable that the sun will rise tomorrow! The Soviet and U.S. imperialists could fade slowly, making themselves irrelevant — but that is so unlikely that we can ignore it. What we should not rule out is a war soon: while the

most likely case is that war will come when German imperialism are ready for it, the American capitalists could provoke a war sooner, while they are still strong, or the Soviet capitalists could decide to fight while they are still senior partner in their alliance with German (and maybe later Japanese) capital. So world war could come soon, but it is more likely in 10-15 years than in the next 5 years.

However, as the number and intensity of "local" wars increases—the current conflict in the Persian Gulf is the best example—it is clear that any one of these could escalate. How will the USA react if Iraq bombs Israel? The potential for world nuclear war is there. And the liklihood is that these "local" wars will increase, especially as the USA tries to hold its hegemony over rebellious working people of Latin America.

FASCISM AS THE MAIN TREND IN THE WORLD

Fifteen years ago, we predicted that the ruling class in the U.S., and also many other countries, would move to an open and brutal dictatorship over the workers and a strong central command over all the capitalists, justified by and paid for with a vicious racist super-exploitation of minorities — in a word, fascism. How has that forecast stood the test of time?

In country after country, racism has gotten vastly worse and the dictatorship over workers has become more brutal. To take some obvious examples:

Western Europe: France is marching to the tune played by the openly fascist LePen (he is proud to have tortured Algerians in 1960 while fighting national liberation there; he calls the Nazi gas chambers a "footnote" that should be overlooked). All the other political parties called a huge conference in spring 1990 to isolate LePen, and they ended up "countering" him by endorsing his program of repressing immigrants. Meanwhile, in Britain, Thatcherism has meant not only broad attack on workers but also violent racism: a wave of "Pak-bashing" (thug gangs roam the streets looking for Pakistani immigrants to beat up), refusal to allow British citizens of Chinese origin to move from Hong Kong, etc.

U.S.: the Reagan Revolution had led to open racism in the streets (as at Howard Beach) and on the campuses. The general attitude of the U.S. ruling class seems to be to abandon the black ghettos: nothing is being done about the miserable housing and schools, while billions are spent on jails and court systems that now hold one black male in four in their grip.

Soviet Union: Racist mass killings, provoked by capitalists, are being used to divert workers from the strike wave that threatened their profits in 1988. The Soviet bosses have engineered an extreme decline in living standards, designed to provoke calls for "reforms" that will drive up prices for basic goods and take away the workers' guaranteed jobs.

We could go on, listing country after country where racism and brutal exploitation is now openly justified. The world's capitalists do not hypocritically condemn the evils that sustain their system — they now sing the praises of keeping workers' wages low while profits are sky-high (that's supposed to give us an "incentive"). Racism is now OK; the "problem" is upitty minorities, we are told.

But all this has not taken the form of classic, Nazi-style fascism with mass killings of communists and minorities and the abandonment of any pretense of democracy. The old-style fascism was not very successful for the capitalists: it provoked too much hatred and rebellion from workers. So the new style repression has been what we called "grey suit fascism" in our writings 15 years ago — not the white-hooded KKK or the uniformed Nazi goons, but instead the bankers, lawyers, and professors who smoothly and slickly take away any reforms won by workers and justify brutal racism.

WHAT IS OUR FUTURE?

The future under capitalism is grim.Unfortunately, we are not in a position to get rid of capitalism right now: our communist movement must become stronger.Our brightest hope is a stronger communist movement. We must approach our day-to-day political work as the best investment we can make: an investment in humanity's future.

The struggle for reforms is good in so far as it builds the communist movement. The reforms make our lives marginally better for the moment. But we should never forget that because the capitalists control the system, they have many ways to turn the reforms against us — to make the reforms into a tool for oppressing us more. So the reform struggle is not an end in itself, only a way to organize for a better — communist — society.

The events of the 1989-90 show that history can move quickly. In June 1989, the fake 'communists' were in power everyone in Eastern Europe and looked like they were going to stay there forever. But, as dialectics teaches us, pre-

ssures that have long been building slowly can suddenly burst forth into qualitative change, as water being heated can suddenly boil. The biggest pressures in capitalist societies the world over is the working class's hatred of capitalism.

We should never underestimate our ability to create a revolutionary situation, which could develop quite quickly. Capitalism creates contradictions that can squeeze workers in a vice — and workers can sometimes explode from the pressure. Our Party's job is organize that powerful working class anger into a productive direction, to show that only the violent seizure of state power by a communist party can end capitalism's ills. We do not expect such a situation soon in the U.S. — though it may occur in some other countries where our Party is active — but things could change quickly. The history of the communist movement is one of rapid advances despite years of defeat. The Bolsheviks were a small party in 1914, but only three years later in 1917 they took state power. Our goal remains ***Revolution Soon, Communism In Our Lifetime***. Let us never give in to pessimism and defeatism.

By a PLP Club

The following is printed at the insistence of the corporate law firm representing May McNeer Ward. It is a textbook example of art's commodification.

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NEO-MARXISM, NEO-CONFUSIONISM

'NEO-MARXISM' IS TO THE LEADING GROUP OF U.S. AND WEST EUROPEAN LEFTISH INTELLECTUALS WHAT JUNK BONDS WERE TO WALL STREET—A GREAT WAY TO MAKE A LIVING. NEVER MIND THAT BOTH ARE FAKES. IN THE CASE OF 'NEO-MARXISM,' LENIN EXPOSED THE FRAUD SOME 80 YEARS AGO. NOW IT'S BEING REPACKAGED.

"The sole conclusion to be drawn from the opinion held by Marxists that Marx's theory is an objective truth is that by following the *path* of Marxist theory we shall draw closer and closer to objective truth (without ever exhausting it); but by following *any other path* we shall arrive at nothing but confusion and lies."

(Lenin, Materialism and Empirio-criticism)

The sudden and massive collapse of the socialist facade in Eastern Europe and the USSR, revealing to the world what had long been its essentially capitalist underpinning, has profound implications for the practice and theory of Marxism-Leninism. It has given Western capitalism the opportunity to unleash a torrent of anti-communism and to proclaim an "end of history", while its erstwhile opponents in the East make what appear to be concession after concession to the "superiority" of the "free market." Some workers, and many more intellectuals, will be, for a time at least, swayed by what is now proclaimed to be the death and burial of Marxism.

But the contradictions of capitalism, meanwhile, remain in full force, and ripening fast. And, whether or not they know it, the corpse whose burial the cold warriors are witnessing in the East had already been long dead. The old Communist Movement ceased being communist in anything but name when—by 1956 in the USSR, by the late 60s in the PRC (People's Republic of China) — it took upon itself the task of nurturing and safeguarding the 'socialist' state capitalism whose germs proved more resilient and contagious than the old movement's ability to quarantine them. All that remained thirty years later was a name perched atop a rotted-out and precarious 'socialist' superstructure, whose final and grotesque collapse we are now seeing.

Will the revolutionary doctrines of Marx, Engels and Lenin survive this crisis and betrayal? Hundreds of thousands of practicing communists from the Philippines, to El Salvador to South Africa, though often compromised by the opportunism of their leaders, don't appear to harbor any serious doubts on this score. Is it just that they missed reading Fukuyama's[1] *The End of History,* and aren't aware that the return of the "free" market to Warsaw signals the "victory of one idea over another"?

Perhaps. But even if one discounts the fact that Marxism-Leninism continues to guide militants outside the counterrevolutionary arenas of Eastern Europe, the USSR and China, the fact remains that, ever since its first promulgation in the 1840s, Marxism has had to struggle constantly, not just against external adversaries—who began announcing the "death" of Marxism only moments after its birth—but equally against hostile distortions of Marx which claim themselves to be 'Marxist.' It is this latter kind of adversary which Lenin termed "revisionism" and which he spent the better part of his life as a revolutionary combatting. In his 1908 article, *Marxism and Revisionism,* Lenin recounts the initial phase of struggle between Marxism and "pre-Marxist socialism": against the Young

(1) Francis Fukuyama is a U. S. State Department theorist who has pronounced that, with the "victory" of liberal Western capitalism, the dialectic of history has ground to a halt.

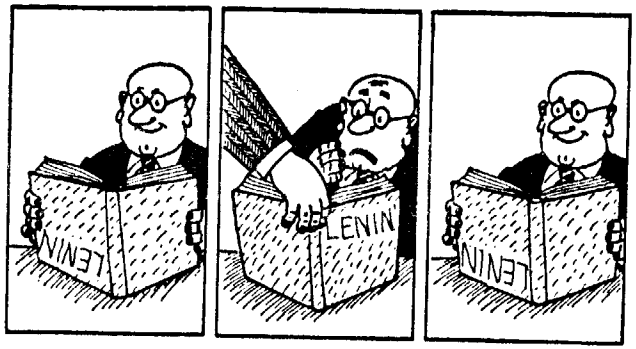
Hegelians in the 1840s; against Proudhonism in the 1850's; against Bakuninism in the 1860's; and in the 1870's against the doctrines of Muhlberger and Duhring. "By the nineties," writes Lenin,

> The victory was in the main completed. But the tendencies expressed in those doctrines began to seek other channels. The forms and causes of the struggle changed, but the struggle continued. And the second half-century of the existence of Marxism began (in the nineties) with the struggle of a trend hostile to Marxism within Marxism itself. Pre-Marxist socialism has been defeated. It is continuing the struggle, no longer on its own independent ground, but on the general ground of Marxism, as revisionism. (*Selected Works,* vol. 3 [Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970] p.72)

Lenin's "revisionists" were the Second International theorists, especially Bernstein, and later Kautsky, who had sought to deny the necessity both for the dictatorship of the proletariat and for violent revolution per se, in place of which they proposed a 'peaceful' road to socialism through parliamentarism and reforms. The victory of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 dealt a serious blow to revisionism, forcing it to adopt a more defensive posture. But, as the present situation clearly attests, the roots of revisionism remained. To the end of his life, Lenin never regarded the struggle against revisionism as being safely resolved. Even as early as 1908 he could write the following, remarkably prophetic lines:

> What we now frequently experience only in the domain of ideology, namely, disputes over theoretical amendments to Marx; what now crops up in practice only over individual partial issues of the labor movement, as tactical differences with the revisionists and splits on this basis—is bound to be experienced by the working class on an incomparably larger scale when the proletarian revolution will sharpen all disputed issues, will focus all differences on points which are of the most immediate importance in determining the conduct of the masses, and will make it necessary in the heat of the fight to distinguish enemies from friends and to cast out bad allies in order to deal decisive blows at the enemy. (Ibid., p. 78)

In this "fight to distinguish enemies from friends" revolutionary Marxism has itself now been dealt a considerable blow by the capitalist aspects contained in the very theory and practice of socialism. But even this is not entirely unprecedented. Such a blow was the failure of the imminent Central European revolutions of 1918-1919—due essentially to the political hold of revisionism—that is, capitalist



ideas parading as Marxism—in the form of Social Democracy. And yet the Communist movement, learning important lessons from this defeat, continued to advance, within the USSR itself and later in China. This latest 'reversal', as Lenin would have been the first to observe, performs the historically positive task of exposing for all to see the disastrous results obtained when communists make it their business to foster and preserve such unequivocally capitalist practices as, for example, wage labor.

It would, however, be an oversimplification to suggest that the demise of socialism, as marked by its accelerating reversion to openly capitalist relations, clears the theoretical field of all revisionist tendencies. It is true that it is already almost impossible to provide a 'leftist' cover for *glasnost* and *perestroika*, as their anti-communist and neo-fascist reality becomes increasingly clear. Witness the recent ideological evolution to nationalist/fascist positions of the Polish intellectuals associated with Solidarnosc. But there continue to arise efforts "on the general ground of Marxism" to promote theories and policies essentially hostile to Marxism. This is particularly true within 'radical' intellectual circles in the U.S. and Western Europe, where "neo"-Marxism has proved to be something of a growth-industry among intellectuals in the humanities and the social sciences. Self-described Marxist-oriented treatises, periodicals and professional associations have become a familiar part of academic life.

The dominant trend within this "neo"-Marxist theorizing, whether of politics, economics, philosophy, or culture and aesthetics, is indirectly to ratify the general capitalist assault on Marxism by focusing its "critique" on precisely Marxism's most distinctive and revolutionary contributions: above all, the theory of class struggle, of the dictatorship of the proletariat, of dialectical materialism as a scientific method, and even of revolution itself. Indeed, the classic works in which Lenin rose to defend and enrich these essential aspects of Marxism against revisionism—*Materialism and Empirio-criticism, What Is To Be Done?, State and Revolution*—sound almost contemporary again, so close are the polemical correspondences. What gives modern neo-Marxism, or, as we will refer to it, neo-revisionism, its distinctive character vis a vis the revisionism of Lenin's epoch is its seemingly 'left' flair. To be credible, neo-revisionism must, on some level at least, acknowledge the crisis of socialism and of the old communist movement and appear to offer theoretical and strategic alternatives.

In this article I shall formulate a communist critique of several of the central theses of neo-revisionism. My main models and sources for this critique are Engels' *Anti-Duhring* and Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-criticism,* works which must necessarily dwarf this modest effort but which I think must also be brought up to date. I should also mention my debt to Georg Lukacs' *The Destruction of Reason.* Despite the checkered political and ideological history of its author, I believe this work still stands as the best Marxist-Leninist critique of what have come to be the reactionary philosophical underpinnings of much neo-revisionism.

In the interests of both brevity and adequate scope, I will focus on some of the main arguments in a single tract of neo-revisionism, although I will refer when appropriate to several other of the many works in this theoretical genre. This work is Stanley Aronowitz's *The Crisis in Historical Materialism* (New York:Praeger, 1981; 2nd revised edition, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990). Aronowitz is an academic and self-proclaimed "labor activist" whose influence probably doesn't extend beyond the fairly narrow intellectual confines in which it is often cited. I select this work (hereafter cited as *CHM* in the text) not for its notoriety, however, but because it rehearses, in the course of its

various critical forays against historical materialism, the most typical routines of neo-revisionist ideology in a fairly open and straightforward way, keeping to a minimum the obscurantist jargon which chokes (mercifully, no doubt) many of the more fashionable neo-revisionist treatises. *CHM* also has the "advantage" for critical purposes that it derives equally from the two most important theoretical sources for practically all contemporary neo-revisionist Marxism: the "Critical Theory" of the so-called Frankfurt School (usually associated with Herbert Marcuse in the U.S. but most strongly represented for ideologues like Aronowitz by the philosophical writings of Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno) and the works of Louis Althusser (a one-time theorist of the French Communist Party whose attempt to integrate Marxism with both the "structuralist" linguistic theory stemming from Saussure and with Freudian psychoanalytic theory continues to influence a wide range of intellectual radicalism.)

THE NEO-MARXIST THESES

I have reduced *CHM*, for purposes of exposition, to four theses, each of which Aronowitz attempts to use as a basis for revising what he represents as Marxist, and in some cases Leninist "orthodoxy":

1. Proletarian revolution has failed to achieve the emancipatory ideals of Marxism. In the East, "existing socialism" has proved to be just another system of repression; while in the West, the working class has shown itself to be "non-revolutionary."

2. Class struggle exercises no necessary determination over social and political development. Class is only one of a multiplicity of societal contradictions—politically and culturally as well as economically based—no one of which necessarily determines the others. This is sometimes expressed as the theory of "new social movements."

3. History possesses no uniform, progressive, law-governed character, but rather is "non-synchronous." Marxism's commitment to the ideas of progress and universality renders it incapable of explaining apparently retrograde events such as fascism or the resurgence of religious movements.

4. Genuine emancipation requires the "self-management" of society. In the past, Marxism has suppressed this in favor of the more "authoritarian" and "rigid" ideals of, e.g., Lenin's democratic centralism.

OUR RESPONSE:

1. History is ignored...

Aronowitz claims that proletarian revolution has failed to achieve the emancipatory ideals of Marxism. According to Aronowitz, this "fact" is above all the responsibility] of Leninism, especially of the Leninist theory of the revolutionary party. From the leading position of the party, we are told, there automatically follows a corrupt, self-perpetuating and oppressive "party bureaucracy." After a youthful allegiance to Leninism, Aronowitz "came to realize that the party could be no more than an educational instrument of the workers' themselves, that a socialism without forms of self-management of production and all other aspects of social life, degenerated into statism and that Stalinism, far from being an aberration, was a logical outcome of Leninism." (*CHM* p. 25; page references are to 2nd edition)

Aronowitz's "critique" of democratic centralism is basically a vulgarized version of the Trotskyist analysis which attributes all the ills of socialism to a "deformation" of the party into a "bureaucracy." And mere mention of this latter term—along with the obligatory ritual curse of "Stalinism"—here suffices for Aronowitz, as it does for any one of the army of anti-communist hacks who have learned the liturgy, to dispense with any historical analysis whatsoever of the actual experience of democratic centralism in the USSR and elsewhere. Aronowitz blithely reduces the whole complex history of the relations between Leninist parties and their constituencies to the simple and mechanical "opposition" between a rigid, self-perpetuating bureaucratic monolith and a cowed population.

The fundamental error in the Trotskyist theory which Aronowitz borrows here is, in brief, that it views the relationship between the party and the masses in an abstract way. There is no analysis of the concrete terms of ***class relations*** (including the complex relations ***within*** a particular class between its more advanced and more backward elements) nor of ***the specific political line which the party itself is attempting to put into practice.*** In reality, relations between the party and the masses—whether "bureaucratic" or not— can be correctly assessed only on this concrete basis. As has

been explained in PL's documents *Road to Revolution III* and *Road to Revolution IV*, the fundamental error of the Bolsheviks and those who have followed on the same path was not bureaucratism—i.e., the tendency to run society through a permanent caste of bureaucrats with its own vested interests—but a line that considered the masses as too backward either to grasp communism or put it into practice. Bureaucratism undoubtedly follows from this. *Starting* from the abstract critique of bureaucratism, however, it is a short step to advocating Gorbachev's free market *perestroika*—since, after all, this process has meant the dismantling of economic planning bureaucracies in favor of private capitalism. In a manner typical of neo-revisionism, Aronowitz writes off the historical experience of socialism as if it were a non-event, or just a colossal mistake in which millions of workers were inexplicably enthralled to deviant Leninist "bureaucrats."

As a corollary to the myth of a fated Leninist autocracy in the East, Aronowitz rehearses the standard claim that the "Western" working class is "non-revolutionary," or, as Aronowitz phrases it, "hopelessly integrated into advanced capitalism." (*CHM* p. 29) Here again, Aronowitz never provides the slightest argument or historical explanation for this purported piece of 'truth'—a 'truth' which, though unexplainable by him, has forced upon Aronowitz "the glaring realization that the theoretical basis of Marxism was being called into question and had to be faced." (*CHM* p. 25)

With the important exception of the Paris Commune, it is true, of course, that, despite several attempts, there have been no successful proletarian revolutions in the most advanced monopoly capitalist/imperialist societies. But what explains this? And does this failure justify the qualification of the proletariat of the imperialist countries as "non-revolutionary"?

Volumes could be written on this subject, but a correct understanding must start with the fact that imperialism has, in the words of Lenin, "the tendency to create privileged sections. . .among the workers, and to detach them from the broad masses of the proletariat." (Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Collected Works, Vol. 1, p. 751)

In periods of relative capitalist "prosperity", this tendency is abetted by the promotion of revisionism in the form of Social

Democracy; in times of crisis, the ideological weapon is Fascism. Racism, of course, is a constant of both. As the Anglo-Indian communist R. Palme Dutt explained in *Fascism and Social Revolution:*

> Social Democracy. . . prepare[s] the way ideologically for Fascism: first, by the abandonment or corruption of Marxism; second, by the denial of internationalism and attaching of the workers to the service of "their own" imperialist State; third by the war on Communism and the proletarian revolution; fourth, by the distortion of "Socialism" or the use of vaguely "socialist" phrases. . .to cover monopoly capitalism; fifth, by the advocacy of class-collaboration and the unification of the working-class organizations with the capitalist State. All this provides the ideological basis and groundwork of Fascism, which represents the final stage of the policy of ***the complete absorption of the working class, bound hand and foot, into capitalism and the capitalist State.*** (p. 182, my emphasis)

It is instructive to compare this final observation of Dutt's, the result of an historical, class analysis of concrete conditions, to Aronowitz's claim that the working class in the West is "hopelessly integrated into advanced capitalism," which this "critic" of historical materialism merely copies in the most dogmatic manner from the intellectually fashionable defeatism of his Frankfurt School masters, Adorno and Horkheimer. Dutt's explanation for the failure of proletarian revolutions in the imperialist countries (following Lenin's) leads to the conclusion that this failure must and can be reversed only by a political, ideological struggle against revisionism and fascism and ***for*** the more advanced line of communism. Unfortunately, the Comintern rejected Dutt's analysis in favor of Dimitroff's policy of alliance with Social Democracy and with "anti-fascist" imperialism. This policy ultimately transformed the old "Western" CPs themselves into capitalism's ideological path-clearers. But for this collaborationist policy, France and Italy almost surely would have witnessed a proletarian seizure of power with the military defeat of Fascism in World War II.

Aronowitz just ignores this line of analysis. Evidently nothing can be permitted to distract here from Aronowitz's dismal neo-revisionist credo. After all, if such ideas and facts were to become widely known, the result might very well be a revolutionary Western proletariat—a result which, one senses, Aronowitz would just as soon defer.

2. The reality of the objective world is denied...

Aronowitz claims that class

struggle exercises no necessary determination over social and political development. If there is one theme common to all currents of neo-revisionism, it is this. Aronowitz, in the chapter of *CHM* devoted to "the question of class", endorses the theory advanced by the Althusserian 'Marxist' Adam Przeworski, who criticizes Marxism for its insistence that classes constitute the necessary basis of class struggle. According to Przeworski's thinking, "classes are bound to form as the result of struggles (rather than the other way around). [. . .] Historical subjects are themselves an effect of struggles about class formation." *(CHM*, p. 105 & 106) "Struggles" that is—although precisely ***which*** struggles we are never really told—are the basic reality;"classes" are just temporary groupings which form in the course of "struggle". There is nothing ***objective*** in social classes—say, for example, their relation to production or forms of property—which predisposes them to struggle with each other.

Aronowitz tries to support this theory by arguing that, in the 1960s and '70s, "feminism and racial nationalism"—i.e., "struggles" that were not class-based per se—"became decisive forces leading to class formation." (*CIM*, p. 111). This, however, simply begs the question of how class itself is to be defined—something Aronowitz conveniently omits. Even so, it is significant that in attempting to derive the supposedly "extrinsic" (non-class) factors of feminism and nationalism, *CHM* must resort to the "intrinsic" (class) categories of political-economy. (see. p. 113) That is, the principle of class-determination is surreptitiously re-introduced in the course of what is supposed to be its "theoretical" refutation.

Where Aronowitz hesitates, however, others have not feared to tread. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, in their joint work (and veritable neo-revisionist cult text) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* openly declare that "the unity of the class is a symbolic unity." (p. 11) "Class", that is, is just a name—and not the only name—which can be given to the fluid groupings that coalesce in the course of "struggles". Class identity is purely a matter of contingency. To be a "worker" means only that somehow you have been persuaded to think or imagine yourself to be a "worker". "There is no logical connection whatsoever between positions in the relations of production and the mentality of the producers." (*HSS*, p. 85) Or, as the neo-revisionists Stephen Resnick and

Richard Wolff express it in *Knowledge and Class*, "Class is an adjective, not a noun."

Even on their own terms, such "theories" soon lead their adherents in theoretical dead-ends. For if class is ***purely*** a matter of consciousness—or, as Laclau and Mouffe express it, of the "discourse" that supplies the terms in which we speak and think—then what accounts for differences or changes in consciousness? Since the Marxist, materialist answer has already been ruled out as "determininist", then it is only a ***prior*** consciousness—other "discourses"—that can account for ***actual*** consciousness. But this is flagrant idealism. To avoid this embarrassment, neo-revisionism takes refuge in the concept, popularized by Althusser, of "overdetermination", according to which everything determines everything else all the time. It's not that consciousness determines being, nor vice versa; in fact, says neo-revisionism, they mutually determine—'overdetermine'—each other. But you don't have to be a genius to realize that such logic is tantamount to saying that there is ***no*** determination: things just are the way they are, there's ***no*** explaining it.

The real question here for revolutionary communism, however, is not how to refute the neo-revisionist denial of class, but rather: ***why*** such ideas have become so prevalent among "left" intellectuals?; ***what*** their practical implications have been and are likely to be?; and ***how*** we can best oppose them?

The answer to the first of these questions lies, somewhat ironically, within the course of the class struggle itself over the past half-century or so. As the revolutionary class outlook of the old communist movement has declined over this period, giving way to the revisionist, class-collaborationist stance with which it was continuously in contention, the character of class politics itself has followed suit. The working class, especially in the imperialist countries, has indeed *seemed* to quit the center-stage of political struggle in favor of a variety of so-called "new social movements" including feminism, gay liberation, ecology, etc. The deeper, less apparent reality is that working class struggle continues, but largely without revolutionary communist leadership. Neo-revisionism, itself a product of this political phenomenon, draws from it the "theory" that class-struggle has ceased to be the driving force of history. But in doing so neo-revisionism merely confirms its underlying continuity with the

revisionism of the old movement, however much it may appear to repudiate it.

The answer to the second question lies in a critical scrutinyof the "new social movements" that neo-revisionism invokes as models for an alternative "oppositional" politics. In the rhetoric of Aronowitz, Laclau and Mouffe, Felix Guattari, and other "revisers" of Marx who propose a re-warmed New Leftism, the revolutionary party is dismissed as "totalitarian," and the categories of class analysis are dismissed as "monolithic." The new "in" term is "pluralism" (otherwise known, in the new jargon, as "heterogeneity," "dispersal," "alterity"). The social movements that are most frequently cited as embodying this emancipated political spirit are feminism, ecology, gay rights, and ethnic/minority nationalism. But what have such movements, divorced from communist leadership, offered the working class and its allies over the past two decades? Feminism has urged its adherents to follow a white, middle-class movement focused on run-of-the-mill electoral politics (National Organization of Women) or a narrowly defined abortion rights movement premised on the justice of the American political system (the logo of the National Abortion Rights Action League is the slogan "Freedom to Choose" overlaid on the Statue of Liberty). The ecological movement—whether the European "Green" parties or U.S. spin-offs from Earth Day or the groups recently formed to combat the destruction of the Amazonian rain forests—obscures the causality of ecological disaster in capital's drive for profits and promotes the non-class view that all humanity is to blame for the depletion and destruction of the planet's resources. The gay pride movement, failing to link homophobia to capitalism's need for scapegoats, endorses a thoroughly bourgeois conception of "rights" and promotes the view that social emancipation is a matter of life-style. Political groupings calling for ethnic and racial nationalism are generally racist and destructive of working-class unity at the same time that they urge workers to follow bourgeois politicians and other misleaders. By the logic of the neo-revisionist argument, Louis Farrakhan—a vicious black nationalist and anti-Semite who sports the American flag at his rallies—is an exemplary embodiment of the "new politics."

While it has a superficially anti-sexist, anti-racist and "progressive" appeal, the "new politics" urged by neo-revisionism is nothing new. Its theoretical rationale is fundamentally anti-communist: repudiating the "authoritarian" rule of a Marxist party that would crush all "non-class-based" expressions of "difference," this "new politics" purports to allow free expression to a proliferation of what Aronowitz calls "autonomous" and "micropolitical" social movements. But, like other forms of anti-communism, where it leads workers and their allies is right into the arms of the bourgeoisie. While it accuses Marxism of trotting out an old program that has been historically discredited, it is neo-revisionism that is passing off the old as the new, cloaking a stale patriotism beneath its radical panache. Only the rhetoric is different: instead of the melting-pot as the metaphor for the United States, now we have Jesse Jackson's patchwork quilt. But the supposedly new "pluralism" of the "new political movements" is the same old pluralism of "e pluribus unum"—from many one—which is stamped on the coins of the "one"—the U.S. government—that is still in control.

Despite neo-revisionism's warnings against the "totalitarianism" of class analysis, struggles to combat racism, sex and gender oppression, and destruction of the environment cannot be separated from the class struggle. In answer to the third question posed above, then—how can we best oppose the neo-revisionist denial of the primacy of class?—communists and their allies must fight all the harder for an analysis and a practice that link the many forms of oppression and exploitation in the world today to capitalism's need to amass profits and divide and confuse the opposition. A coalitional politics based on the transient and provisional unity of "micropolitical" interest groups—embodied in such organizations as the New Alliance Party—only obscures what the true (and common) "interests" of the masses of workers really are.

3. Marxism is falsified...

Aronowitz claims that history possesses no uniform, progressive, law-governed character. In order to "argue" this thesis, Aronowitz begins with a typically dogmatic assertion: the "unity of history", he tells us, "is in severe jeopardy." (*CHM* , p. 151) What leads him to this realization? Here, as throughout *CHM*, the analysis of concrete realities which might conceivably support such a view is in short supply. The best Aronowitz can offer is to note the resurgence of religious movements in the 1970s and '80s, e.g., the Iranian Revolution

and the supposedly new and "progressive" role of the Catholic Church in places such as Latin America and Poland. Here we are said to have an example of how social and ideological movements, which according to Marxism ought long ago to have relinquished any historic role, show, on the contrary, a capacity for recurrence. "The mass turn to religion attests to the fact that the past has a vital life within the present." (*CHM* , p. 159) There is, in short, "nonsynchrony." "Each social formation exists in a different now, their temporal reference is not only at variance, but is often mutually antagonistic." (*CHM* , p.156) Marxism, however, with its insistence on history as both uniform and progressive, "cannot integrate the nonsynchronous into its dialectical conception of history." (*CHM* p. 154)

Aronowitz is in error here on two counts. In the first place, it is the most threadbare falsification to suggest that Marxism rules out any capacity for regression within the general forward movement of history. In an effort to comprehend the course of the class struggle in France after the failure of the June proletarian insurrection in Paris in 1848 and the rise to power of Napoleon III (see *The 18 Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* and *Class Struggles in France (1848-1850)* Marx engaged in the most profound reflection on precisely this phenomenon. He understood that regression is always a possibility—and at some point, no doubt, an inevitability. But, Marx argued, the regression itself must be understood dialectically as a movement within the general, uniform forward motion. Hence Marx's comment on the defeat of the proletarian revolution in 1848:

> But what succumbed in these defeats was not the revolution. It was the pre-revolutionary traditional appendages, results of social relationships, which had not yet come to the point of sharp class antagonisms..... (*Class Struggles in France*, p. 33)

With or without the patent falsification of Marxism, however, the theory of history as "nonsynchronous"—borrowed here from the "Marxist" irrationalist Ernst Bloch—can scarcely begin to account for historical regressions. Taken to its logical conclusion, "nonsynchrony" can only signify the purely subjective character of time as such. For if "each social formation exists in a different now", why not each individual within each social formation? And who is even to say whether my "now" of yesterday at five o'clock might not be completely

different from my "now" of tomorrow at noon? Instead of the law of uneven development, we arrive at the law of no development, of no history at all, but rather just an endless series of uncoordinated "nows".

Aronowitz's claims regarding Marxism's supposed inability to account for the resurgence of religious movements are, I think, a mere smokescreen. What Aronowitz wants to conclude, without being able or willing to find the arguments for doing so, is not that "progress" is refuted by religion, but that religion is progressive.

The pathetic ineptitude of Aronowitz's "critique" of historical materialism on this score, however, should not blind us to the broader implications of the viewpoint from which it stems: namely, that the very idea of progress has become both false and repressive. One of the most distinctive traits of neo-revisionism lies in fact in its efforts to discover "radical" reasons for reviving this oldest of reactionary saws. Taking up positions first advanced under a 'left' cover by Adorno and Horkheimer, neo-revisionists from Laclau and Mouffe to Cornell West now join in the celebration of a so-called "postmodern" epoch. In this "postmodern" epoch the last vestiges of "modernity"—the ideas of progress, reason, universality, etc.—finally give way to the purportedly emancipatory ideas embodied in the post-Enlightenment philosophies of phenomenology, pragmatism, existentialism, etc. Marxism is either condemned to the trash heap of modernity as the last and biggest failure to make good on the principles of Enlightenment, or, if retained, it is only as a mere "discourse" (in effect, as a myth) with which to construct what Laclau has called a "new radical imaginary." Forget such things as the "laws of history", which, so we are told, are an illusion anyway and can only lead straight to "totalitarianism" and "the Gulag".

> Humankind, having always bowed to external forces—God, Nature, the necessary laws of History—can now, at the threshold of post-modernity, consider itself for the first time the creator and constructor of its own history. (Ernesto Laclau, "Politics and the Limits of Modernity", *Universal Abandon?: the Politics of Postmodernism*, p. 80)

Space limitations prevent the thorough refutation which such "post-Marxism" deserves, but two of its central points should at least be mentioned here: First, the "postmodern" attempt to equate Marxism with Enlightenment philosophy falls to pieces as

soon as dialectical criticism is brought to bear upon it. Thus the neo-revisionist claim that progress is falsified by the persistence of historical regressions in the 'modern' age is effectively nullified as soon as one turns (as a good postmodernist certainly never does) to the dialectical view that progress as itself governed by contradiction. See, for example, Engels' unsurpassed critique of Enlightenment in the first section of *Socialism: Scientific and Utopian*:

> We know today that this realm of reason [proclaimed by the rationalist philosophers of the Enlightenment] was nothing more than the idealized realm of the bourgeoisie; that eternal justice found its realization in bourgeois justice; that equality reduced itself to bourgeois equality before the law; that bourgeois property was proclaimed as one of the most essential rights of man; and that the government of reason, Rousseau's social contract, came into being and could only come into being as a bourgeois democratic republic.

"Pure reason" culminates in the social irrationality of capitalism. But from this realization Engels does ***not*** proceed to the denial of all rationality in history, but rather to the historicization of rationality. "The great thinkers of the eighteenth century were no more able than their predecessors to go beyond the limits imposed on them by their epoch." Reason now dictates that the capitalist order be overthrown and replaced with the ***socially*** rational system of communism.

The second is that there is a close family resemblance between the 'postmodern' celebration of history as purely subjective and willed and the irrationalist ideology of fascism. A neo-revisionist such as Laclau will of course express the hope that progressive, pro-working class and "radical democratic" forces (however these are now to be defined) prove to be the stronger, more willful myth-makers. But it is just as possible for the forces of reaction to be the more powerful "articulators" of the "radical imaginary." It all really comes down to whether the right or the left offers the sexier utopia, of which side has more charisma. At no point is it even so much as dreamed that the masses of workers, ***organized by a revolutionary party,*** might be capable of a scientifically based practice. In effect, the postmodern "Marxists" propose the necessity for a kind of left-wing fascism, if such a thing can be imagined. But given the present-day realities of power throughout the world, in which it is capitalism that owns and operates the dream-machines,

doesn't this become—objectively—an open invitation for fascism pure and simple?

4. Neo-Marxism is either illogical, or the logic of exploiters...

Aronowitz claims that genuine emancipation requires the "self-management" of society. The term "self-management", along with expressions such as "self-emancipation", "self-liberation", etc, crops up throughout *CHM* , whenever Aronowitz needs a left-sounding slogan with which to flail away at Lenin and the Leninist theory of the revolutionary party. Although Aronowitz specifically recognizes the so-called "Council Communism" of Pannekoek and Mattick (who opposed the institution of the Leninist party) as a historical source of inspiration, *CHM* nowhere provides any substantive definition of "self-management", etc. It seem clear, however, that Aronowitz does not mean what Lenin and other Bolsheviks understood by this term, namely, the progressive taking up by the direct producers themselves of all managerial and administrative tasks ***given the existence of a proletarian dictatorship organized and enforced by a centralized revolutionary party*** . (See the discussion of this in "Freedom and Dictatorship, Part Two: Lessons from the History of Proletarian Dictatorship", *The Communist,* Number 2, Spring 1990, pp. 25-27.) In Aronowitz's view—and here again he is typical of neo-revisionist thinking—the "self-emancipation" and "self-management" of the working class specifically exclude any role for a centralized organ of working class political power that is in any way distinct or set apart from the working class as a whole.

Aronowitz's case **for** "self-management" and **against** the Leninist party, i.e., democratic centralism, turns on a central concept: that of **representation.** According to Aronowitz, any democratic centralist organ inevitably betrays the working class due to its presumption to represent the workers, and hence to act in their stead. Once this premise of representation is accepted, the result must be the substitution of the party for its class base, and hence the transformation of class rule into the rule of the party. Such a premise is reinforced, according to *CHM* , by the democratic centralist party's false claim to embody a ***scientific*** vantage point: the party represents the workers because only the party can bring revolutionary theory to bear on the practical experiences of the workers themselves. In

Aronowitz's words:

> The party brings socialism to the working class as an aim that is not' given' by the circumstances of the daily struggle for workers' demands. Therefore there is already an incommensurability between the scientific basis upon which the politics of socialism are formed and the 'ideological' basis of actual class struggles.... (*CHM* , p. 164)

Here Aronowitz alludes of course to Lenin's now classic formulation of democratic centralism in *What Is To Be Done?* (1902). In that work, Lenin argued? against the economism and spontaneism that had arisen in the Russian working-class movement. In essence, these two trends maintained that only those movements and organs that arose *spontaneously* from working class actions at the point of production—i.e., for practical purposes, trade unions—could lead to the emancipation of the workers. Lenin thus argued against something more or less equivalent to the viewpoint advanced in a purely dogmatic spirit by Aronowitz under the heading of "self-management." For the spontaneists and economists, too, the working class could not be *represented* by some more advanced and conscious class detachment.

Against this, Lenin argued *for* a strategy of bringing revolutionary consciousness to the working class through concerted ***political*** agitation that pointed beyond the economic sphere to the need for a revolutionary social transformation. Consciousness had to come "from without." Every neo-revisionist worth his or her salt has, of course, heard tell of this "from without" and points to it triumphantly as proof of Leninism's inherent elitism and authoritarianism. But here let us do something highly uncharacteristic of neo-revisionism and turn directly to Lenin's words in *What Is To Be Done?*

> Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers only from without, that is, only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers. The sphere from which alone it is possible to obtain this knowledge is the sphere of relationships of all classes and strata to the state and the government, the sphere of the interrelations between all classes.

"From without"—that is, ***not from outside the working class***, but "from outside the ***economic struggle.***" Lenin's point here is essentially dialectical: the economic relation of worker to employer is ***only one relation*** (albeit the most basic) in the totality of class relations which make up society. ***Class relations include political relations as well.*** In order to emancipate themselves from capital, the workers must alter this ***totality*** of class relations—hence they must become conscious of it, come to master it theoretically. "Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary practice."

It is from this dialectical standpoint that the capacity of the party to *represent* the working class—i.e., the workability of democratic centralism— must be understood. Lenin, as anyone who bothers to read him carefully will quickly perceive, grasps the "spontaneous" and the "conscious," the "within" and the "without", as the inseparable poles of a contradiction, as interlocking realities which are always relative to the overall development of the class struggle itself. The working class as such is not a completely uniform entity, but develops unevenly into more and less conscious levels. Democratic centralism proposes simply that the more conscious level—communists—exert a leading influence over the less conscious, leading them, in the process, to a higher level of consciousness. ***To do otherwise, as Lenin points out, is to let the capitalists represent the workers.*** Some degree of representation is inevitable, but it is also always approximative, temporary, subject to revision. This is the meaning Lenin gives to representation in *What Is To Be Done?*, however far Soviet practice came to strayed. from it in subsequent events.

But, it might be objected, even if Aronowitz fails to make his case theoretically, doesn't practice itself tend to bear out his conclusions? Didn't the Soviet CP effectively **become** a remote, autocratic authority, totally alienated from the workers it continued to claim to represent? Didn't the Soviet CP effectively annul the "self-management" endorsed by Lenin, putting managers and technocrats and no the direct producers in command of production? The answer is yes—***but not, as Aronowitz would have it, because of the line of democratic centralism.*** These developments flowed inevitably from the capitalist practices retained in the very concept of "socialism" (e.g., wage labor, "one-man management" and a "restricted" utilization of the law of value, all in the service of increasing production) . It's not that the Bolsheviks couldn't or didn't see the need to win the workers democratically. This they by all accounts did, otherwise Soviet socialism never would have withstood the onslaughts of the world's capitalists. It's what the Bolsheviks won the workers ***to*** that proved crucial to subsequent

reversals. A genuinely Left rethinking of Marxism-Leninism must start by grasping this crucial point. Without it, all the "left"-sounding lines in the world can only find themselves taking up positions that are objectively to the right of those advanced by the old Communist movement.

CONCLUSION

Before bringing this discussion to close, it should again be pointed out that the criticisms raised against neo-revisionism in this essay only begin the task of a comprehensive and systematic critique. Entirely unmentioned here, for example, is the major influence which Freudianism has exerted on many neo-revisionists from Marcuse and Co. down to more recent adepts. Aronowitz, for example, adds to the 'revolutionary' demand for "self-management" the call for a "liberation of desire"— by which he evidently means the unleashing of what, in the Freudian conception, is supposed to be the repressed sexuality that underlies all our conscious thought and behavior. The "fulfillment of desire," intones Aronowitz, is "anathema to all repression." (*CHM*, p.176) But, we might inquire, precisely *whose* desire is to be "fulfilled"? The "desire" of those who find ultimate fulfillment in the hoarding of wealth, perhaps? Or of those who take pleasure in the physical abuse of their spouses and children? Aren't these "desires" that a revolutionary communist society would indeed seek to repress, preparatory to their hoped for extinction from the social psyche? Anticipating these difficulties, Aronowitz can only claim, entirely without argument, that "differences of desire would not constitute the basis for antagonism." (ibid.)

Perhaps some readers may object at this point that in categorically rejecting the attempts of thinkers such as Aronowitz to revise the theory of Marxism-Leninism we are in fact attributing to this theory an almost religious infallibility. This is not the case. The doctrines of Marx, Engels, Lenin and other great communist thinkers are not blue-prints for reality and clearly stand in need of re-thinking in certain crucial areas, most notably on the question of socialism itself as a "transition" phase between capitalism and communism.

As Lenin observes in the epigram at the beginning of this essay, the objective truth of Marxism-Leninism pertains to its ***method*** of approximating objective reality—a reality that undergoes constant change and that therefore cannot be "exhausted" by any theory. This is the method of dialectical materialism, within which are subsumed the basic categories associated with historical materialism: class struggle, mode of production, base and superstructure, etc. The possibility for error in applying both method and categories is permanent; so is the possibility for correction, for an ever greater and more adequate approximation to the truth.

What both traditional and neo-revisionism propose, however, is not this process of correction but rather a partial, if not total rejection of both method and categories. Aronowitz expresses this quite openly when he states that in "postmodern" radical theory "the form of Marxism is retained while its categories are not." ("Postmodernism and Politics," in *Universal Abandon?*, p. 52) What then does neo-revisionism put in the place of Marxist categories? The foregoing analysis has provided some partial answers to this question. The general point is that the new categories proposed by neo-revisionism are, in truth, anything but "new." In virtually all cases they revert to philosophies—idealism, irrationalism, pragmatism, etc.—that have underpinned opposition to Marxism for at least the past century. Anyone who doubts this should refer to Lukacs' *The Destruction of Reason*, where one discovers that the Aronowitzes and Adornos have' little substantive to say that the likes of Schelling, Kierkegaard, Schopenauer and Nietzsche didn't express much more compellingly long before.

What is new about neo-revisionism is the set of historical conditions from which it stems: the decline and demise of the old Communist Parties and of the socialist movements and societies that they led. But neo-revisionism fails to understand that it was the very concept of socialism that ultimately slowed and reversed the revolutionary advance to communism. Nor does it see—or want to see—that communism, far from being a dead letter, is only now being firmly placed on the historical agenda.

In place of communism, neo-revisionism devises a host of "revolutionary" goals and strategies that in reality mere tie the oppressed all the more solidly to capitalist ideas and practices. This is not just an idle observation. Neo-revisionist ideas have, in fact, guided, and continue to guide, certain contemporary mass movements: the example of Solidarnosc — whose rapid

moves towards open fascism shed an interesting light on Aronowitz's celebration of it as a show-case of "self-management" in *CHM* — should be mentioned. To it might be added the current wave of mass struggles in Latin America that follow the theoretical leadership of "liberation theology." Though more obvious in the case of Poland, the historical outcome in both cases has been disastrous for the masses of exploited who follow a neo-revisionist line.

Communist ideas presently guide class struggles only to a very limited degree—in effect, only where the line advanced by PLP has reached significant numbers. This fact, combined with the events in Eastern Europe, the USSR and China, has given anti-communism what looks like the historical advantage. It has also provided fertile ground for the cultivation of neo-revisionism. This, however, will change—slowly at first, perhaps, but change it will.

Then we shall see what is old and what is new. As the communist poet Bertolt Brecht once said it in the *Parade of the Old New*:

So the Old strode in disguised as the New, but it brought the New with it in its triumphal procession and presented it as the Old.

The New went fettered and in rags; they revealed its splendid limbs.

And the procession moved through the night, but what they thought was the light of dawn was the light of fires in the sky. And the cry: ***Here comes the New, it's all new, salute the New, be new like us!*** *would have been easier to hear if all had not been drowned in a thunder of guns.*

By U.P.

SORDID SOVIET AFFAIRS...

...That seems to describe what is going on now in the Soviet Union. But our readers want to know more. So we are looking for people to help us research and write some articles on current Soviet political, economic and social developments. Your interest is your only qualification. Get in touch with the Editors of THE COMMUNIST, either through PLP, or by writing to us at GPO Box 808, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11202.

Historical Materialism and the Fight Against Racism

Harriet Tubman (left) and a group of slaves she led to freedom

THE STRUGGLE TO END SLAVERY IN THE UNITED STATES

Racism is the cornerstone of the international capitalist system in all parts of the world today. Revolutionaries must win the struggle against racism in order to smash capitalism. But how? Racism is on the rise everywhere, from Israel to South Africa, from the USA to the USSR, from Brazil to Canada. Many of the gains won in

past anti-racist struggles have been lost. At the same time, new movements and organizations against racism are surging forth, from England to Ecuador. How can these new forces accomplish their aims in the face of the rising tide of reaction?

We have much to learn from history. A good example of a successful fight against racism and reaction is the story of the Abolitionists in the United States in the middle third of the nineteenth century. They set out to "abolish" the North American system of racial slavery, one of the most viciously oppressive social systems in modern history, and they succeeded in destroying it. They did so without an explicitly revolutionary ideology to guide them; indeed, their movement started twenty years before Marx and Engels even wrote the Communist Manifesto, when the proletarian movement was in its infancy. Because of this, the Abolitionists could not succeed in eradicating racism itself. But they saved hundreds of thousands from the horrors of chattel slavery, and they established a powerful tradition of anti-racism in U.S. history, which continues down to the present. The history of the development of their movement teaches us much about how to conduct a struggle against racism—and win!

INTRODUCTION: HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

Our method for studying the experience of the Abolitionists is historical materialism. Marx developed this method of analysis, which goes beyond the "great ideas of great men" garbage that is usually taught in school. Instead, historical materialism takes as its starting point the activities and struggles of the millions and millions of men and women whose conscious actions combined to make things happen the way they did. It examines the ways in which economic and political (ideological) forces interact to produce historical change.

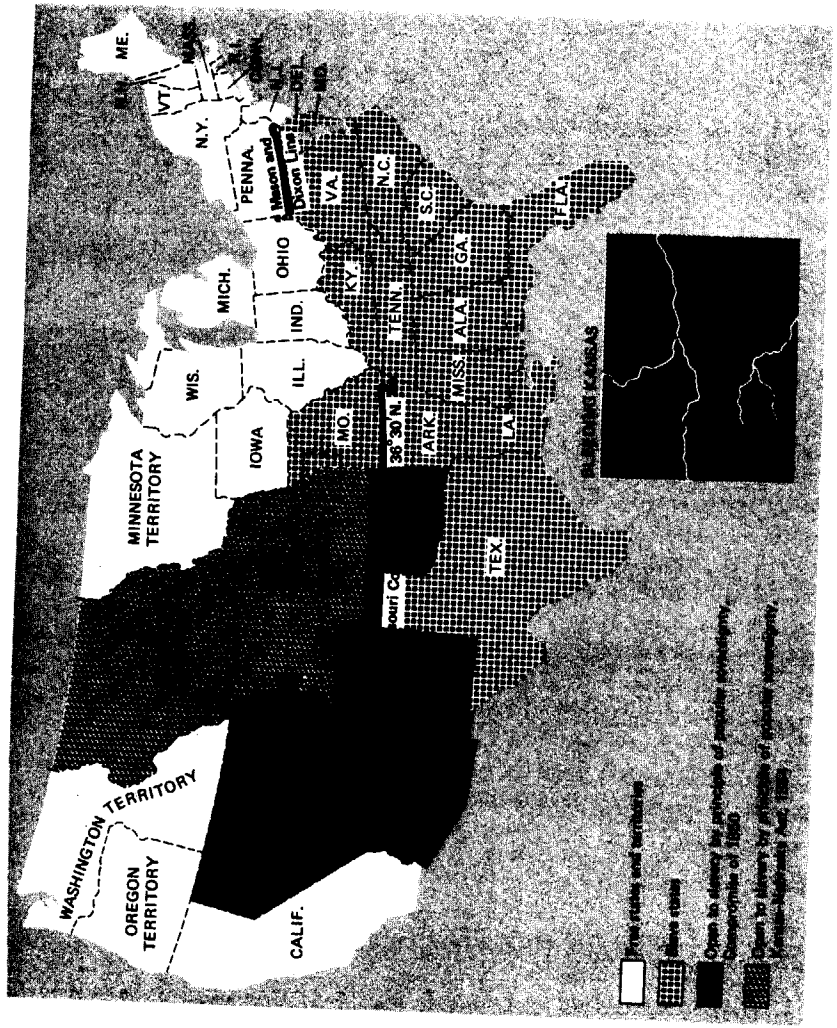
We are taught to see society (and even nature) as basically unchanging. Most of us live as though today were pretty much the same as yesterday, and tomorrow will be today all over again. Social institutions like nations, governments, workplaces, and schools seem to be like mountain ranges or stars: permanent features of the world, changing very, very slowly—if at all. But even stars are born and die. Even mountains can be thrust up by the clash of gigantic plates that make up the earth's crust, and they can be sheared off by glacial flow. Everything

changes. Things change even when they don't seem to be changing at all. Beneath the appearance of stability, contradictions are developing. The forces of change are at work.

"The history of all hitherto existing society," wrote Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848, "is the history of class struggle." People fight back against oppression, and their struggle changes the world. Periods of seeming passivity among the oppressed, however prolonged, are replaced by blazing struggle. Passivity is relative, activity is absolute. Systems of class exploitation, although they seem at times permanent and even "natural," end. But class hatred by itself is not enough. Utopian visions of an "ideal society" are not enough. After all, the oppressed have dreamed and fought for equality for thousands of years. We must also understand the historical laws of development of society.

Let's look at two familiar slogans: "what you do counts," and "history is on our side." The first of these is one of the main things to keep in mind today! We will see from the story of the Abolitionists that the lives of millions were changed by the work of a relatively small group of dedicated activists. But if we take this slogan in isolation, it may suggest to us that people can make history just as they please. We may think that anything is possible, develop a short-sighted and pragmatic style of work, and then become frustrated when we don't see things change as fast as we would like.

The second slogan reminds us that patience and persistence pay off in the long run. It suggests that there are scientific laws describing general aspects of social development. These laws show that chattel slavery "had to" end in the U.S. south, and that capitalism likewise contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction. But there is a common and dangerous distortion of this slogan. Many have taken it to mean that historical laws operate independently of human activity. In this one-sided, mechanical view, only the actual is (or was) possible, and everything that happens (or happened, or will happen) is necessary. People who believe this are likely to be passive and to take an excessively "long view" of the struggle. Through the story of the Abolitionists we will try to show how these two slogans—"what you do counts" and "history is on our side"—represent opposite aspects of one important truth: social laws do determine historical outcomes, but they do so precisely through the struggles of real human beings who make



conscious decisions—based on their ideology—about what to do. Chattel slavery in the U.S. south had to end, but how it ended and when it ended made a huge difference in the the human cost and the outcome of the process. What the Abolitionists did, counted.

THE SLAVE SYSTEM AND CAPITALISM IN THE U.S.

Slavery in the United States was one of the most grotesque and vicious forms of exploitation devised in the terrible history of capitalism. It was also one of the most profitable. Indeed, the African slave trade provided much of the capital that made possible the "industrial revolution" in England and elsewhere in Europe, as well as in the northern United States. Because of this, it took a long and bitter struggle—including a four-year civil war—to end it. The struggle against the racist slave system in the U.S. is a good example of how things change.

KING COTTON: FOUNDATION OF US ECONOMY

The U. S. economy in the first quarter of the nineteenth century was largely agricultural. Most people in the North still lived and worked on small farms, and the Southern economy and politics were dominated by large plantation owners. In terms of politics, bourgeois political parties were beginning to develop. There was little left of the popular fervor that had characterized the era of the American Revolution of 1776 (at least among the free population) just a few decades earlier. Industrialization had not yet occurred on a large scale, and most workers labored in very small shops. There was little in the way of a developed working class, although some skilled workers (for example, Philadelphia carpenters) had begun to organize and certain industries (like textiles in Massachusetts) were beginning to flourish. From all external appearances, the time did not seem ripe for rapid social change. But the appearance of stability belied a critical set of internal contradictions which would eventually lead to the great armed struggle that destroyed the slave system.

The U.S. economy of the early nineteenth century was built literally on the backs of slaves. Cotton became an important crop in the South with the development of the gin around 1800, and was soon thedominant export of the entire country. Southern agricultural goods combined to account for more than sixty percent of all American exports.

Slave labor in the U.S. was thus used to produce commodities for the sake of expanding the capital of the plantation owners. It was a form of capitalism. By the 1830s, millions of pounds of cotton were shipped every year to factories in Great Britain, where textiles were manufactured for world markets. One Southerner bragged that "the slaveholding South is now the controlling power of the world . . . no power on Earth dares make war on cotton."

Such exaggerated boasts reflected the Southern plantation capitalists' inflated sense of power, and the fantastic profits they reaped. But the cotton trade also profited the key ship-building industry and the merchant capitalists in the North, whose ships transported cotton across the Atlantic and returned with British manufactured goods. The profits earned from the slave-cotton system provided the capital for early development in the United States, including the formation and growth of the banking system. As a consequence, few capitalists opposed it. As a New York businessman told an Abolitionist in 1835, "We cannot afford, sir, to let you and your associates endeavor to overthrow slavery. It is not a matter of principle with us. It is a matter of business necessity." In fact, the most powerful members of the emerging capitalist class in the North were still, in the 1830s, strong supporters of the status quo in the South. This, too, would change.

SLAVES FOUGHT CLASS OPPRESSION

This "status quo" was a life of misery and unrelenting oppression for the slaves. This inevitably created a struggle between slave owners and slaves that, in the long run, doomed the slave system. Even though slavery was not ended in the United States as a direct result of large-scale slave insurrection, we need to understand how the actions of the slaves themselves—based on their own understanding of their situation—created the basis for the Abolitionist movement.

The most dramatic—and least frequent—form of struggle was armed slave rebellion against the oppressors. As W. E. B. DuBois eloquently described it,

> The flaming fury of their mad attempts at vengeance echoes all down the blood-swept path of slavery. In Jamaica they upturned the government and harried the land until England crept and sued for peace. In the Danish Isles they started a whirlwind of slaughter; in Haiti they drove their masters into the sea; and in South Carolina they rose twice like a threatening wave against the terror-stricken whites, but were betrayed. Such outbreaks here and there," DuBois continued, "foretold the possibility of coordinate action and organic development."

The incomplete historical records that have come down to us reveal no fewer than 250 conspiracies and revolts of more than ten slaves in the United States itself: an average of one per year, not counting smaller actions. These isolated rebellions displayed the slaves' heroism and determination under the most oppressive conditions, but they could never have brought down the whole slave system, with its nerve center in Washington, D.C. Nonetheless, the specter of Haiti would haunt the U.S. South until the abolition of slavery finally laid it to rest.

Like any other exploited laborers, slaves found ways to resist their masters on a daily basis, individually and in small groups. They worked as slowly and carelessly as they dared, and sabotaged what they could. They burned barns and smokehouses, helping themselves to food produced by their own labor and stolen by the masters from their tables. Such spontaneous economic struggles could no more overthrow the slave system than industrial strikes can overthrow capitalism. But slaves could not be fired, and even the most brutal tortures devised by the plantation capitalists to terrorize them could not subdue them entirely. These social relations of production limited the development of the Southern economy, even at its height, and virtually guaranteed that it would eventually be overwhelmed by the industrial capitalism emerging in the North. But "eventually" would be far too late for the long-suffering slaves. More significant was the political "backlash" of slavery: its dreadful brutality not only bred resistance from the slaves themselves, but also began to provoke a response from northern whites and even from a few daughters and sons of the planters themselves, who would desert their class to take the side of the slaves. The slave system was producing its own gravediggers.

The chief form of resistance by slaves was "stealing themselves," or running away. In the early years of slavery, groups of Africans took to the woods and swamps of the vast Southland. Later runaways joined native Americans in Florida to form the Seminole tribe, and fought off the army of the United States for years. After the War of 1812, with increased commerce between the northern and southern states, fugitive slaves more often headed north. As DuBois put it,

> these men [sic] saved slavery and killed it. They saved it by leaving it to a false seductive dream of peace and the eternal subjugation of the

laboring class. They destroyed it by presenting themselves before the eyes of the North and the world as living specimens of the real meaning of slavery. They [destroyed] it too by joining the free Negroes of the North, and with them organizing themselves into a great black phalanx that worked and schemed and paid and finally fought for the freedom of black men in America.

By 1831, the trickle was becoming a flood. The fugitives were getting more and more assistance from whites as well as growing numbers of free blacks in the north. As we will see later, the Abolitionists would engage directly in the struggle by assisting these run-aways in a large-scale, organized fashion. The firing up of this "Underground Railroad" would take the struggle against slavery to a new level.

BEGINNINGS OF THE ABOLITIONIST MOVEMENT

A clear and effective anti-slavery, anti-racist understanding did not develop right away, at least not among the white population. It took years of hard and often dangerous work for anti-slavery activists to comprehend just what they were up against, and what it would take to eliminate it. And it took a profound ideological struggle.

In the early years of the nineteenth century, there was little open anti-slavery agitation. Some white people in the North opposed slavery on religious grounds, usually advocating some means of "gradual" emancipation. That often meant freeing slave children when they reached age 21, so that the "investments" of slaveowners were protected! A small movement of conservative merchant capitalists and politicians succeeded by the 1820's in getting slavery ended in most Northern states. It had never been an important economic institution there anyway: neither the small farms with long winter seasons, nor manufacturing enterprises contending with the ups and downs of business cycles, could make profitable use of slave labor. In both the North and the South, many supporters of gradual emancipation (including Abraham Lincoln) backed "colonization," an organized effort to send American blacks to Africa. They were motivated mainly by racist ideology, wanting to live in a "white" society. Most black people opposed this bitterly. A meeting of 3000 in Philadelphia condemned colonization in 1817 as "an outrage, having no other object in view than the benefit of the slaveholding interests of the country." The "gradualist" anti-slavery movement in 1830, then, was dominated by

wealthy white merchants, ignored the misery of blacks, and was often openly racist.

In 1829 a courageous black man named David Walker had published a call for blacks to throw off the yoke of slavery, by whatever means necessary. *Walker's Appeal* was quickly suppressed in the South, and condemned by the "gradualist" movement in the North. Only a few free black communities in the North heeded his appeal, and there was little outcry when Walker was found dead in front of his Boston shop immediately afterward. There was little indication of impending radical change in the Southern slave system.

But by ending slavery in the Northern states the gradualists created the conditions for sizable free black urban communities there. These free black people—many of them workers—would provide critical support and leadership in the struggles against slavery and racism in the years ahead. And some anti-slavery whites became frustrated with the inaction and ineffectiveness of the gradualist movement, especially regarding emancipation in the South. They learned that a more militant and confrontational approach to anti-slavery was needed. By 1831, these black and white activists had formed the Abolitionist movement, a coordinated effort for the immediate end of slavery and against racism in both the North and the South.

Free black people in the North had been organizing meetings and publishing anti-slavery papers for years. By 1830 they had organized fifty anti-slavery groups based in cities and towns across the North. They would remain the most important base of support—both financial and moral—for the movement. But—perhaps unlike Haiti, where black people formed an overwhelming majority of the population—they could not destroy slavery in the U.S. by themselves. Beginning in the 1830s, significant numbers of whites began to join them. This multi-racial unity was essential, even though white Abolitionists were themselves affected by racism and often hesitated to allow black Abolitionists to take positions of leadership within the movement.

Most white Abolitionists were still pacifists in the 1830s, opposing slavery on religious grounds and relying on tactics of moral persuasion. It is to their credit that they interpreted Christianity to demand freedom for the slaves. After all, the southern churches defended slavery on Christian principles, while the Catholic Church incited race hatred among immigrant workers

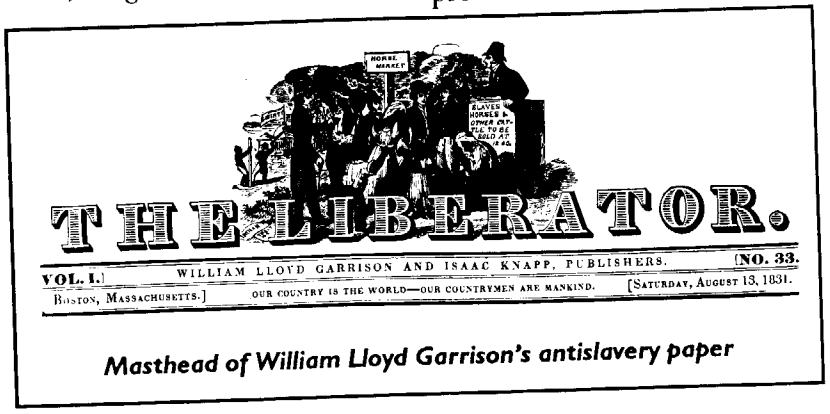
in the north, and even Quaker meeting-houses usually seated black guests separately in the back of the room. But religious ideology held the Abolitionist movement back. Many white Abolitionist leaders condemned slavery as a sin, but so was any form of coercion (including anti-slavery violence) a sin to them. Often they seemed more concerned with their own spiritual purity than with the suffering of the slaves. They believed in the rule of "God", not in creating a more just or egalitarian human government. Some of these ideas would weaken or change as the struggle against slavery escalated in the 1850s. But even the deeply religious John Brown, whose commitment to violent struggle against slavery relied more on the Old Testament doctrine of "an eye for an eye" than on the New Testament's "turn the other cheek," would have been a more effective and far-sighted leader if he had gotten his nose out of his Bible more often.

The Abolitionists had a wider appeal than many contemporaries—or the Abolitionists themselves—may have realized. They appealed to the basic hatred of slavery, exploitation, and discrimination felt by many workers and farmers, and even by many intellectuals, religious leaders, and small time entrepreneurs. This partly reflected a basic contradiction between the slave system in the South and Northern wage-labor capitalism. Capitalists needed to be legally free of responsibility for their workers, so they could be laid off when the capitalists wanted. Consequently, they promoted an ideology of "freedom," which most ordinary people interpreted as political and economic independence. Many linked this "freedom" to the ideals of the American Revolution of 1776, particularly the notions of republican equality and fair play. Workers in particular also opposed exploitation, and hated slavery for its vicious treatment of black workers (even though many of these white workers were infected with racist ideas as well). They saw the existence of slave labor as a threat to their livelihood. Many workers came to understand that they had nothing to benefit—and a great deal to lose—from the development of the slave system.

Unlike the gradualists, Abolitionists refused to worry about the capital investment which slaves represented. They demanded an immediate and total end to slavery, regardless of the cost to slaveowners or other capitalists. This was a significant step forward in the political line of the anti-slavery movement, and one which had a big impact.

It represented a willingness to break from the capitalist leadership that had dominated the gradualist movement. For the first time in U.S. history a serious movement opposed slavery as a vile crime against humanity, not just the inconsistency with republican principles that had irked the gradualists. "You are guilty of a great wrong against God and humanity," Abolitionist leader John Brown would declare to the slaveowning Virginia aristocrats who captured him in 1859, "The cry of distress of the oppressed is my reason, and the only thing that prompted me."

Another critical development was the Abolitionists' decision to take their cause to the public in a mass way. In 1831 William Lloyd Garrison started publishing *The Liberator*, the most prominent newspaper of the anti-slavery movement. Within a few years Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimke, and others were organizing a massive petition drive to inform people (mainly Northern whites) of the evils of slavery. This drive fanned out across the countryside, organized in hundreds of local communities, often through the churches. It was conducted by thousands of rank and file activists, the vast majority of them women who were excluded from formal electoral politics. Petitioners circulated a pamphlet, written by Weld, which described the horrors of slavery in graphic detail and revealed the power wielded by Southern capitalists over the national government. This gave many Northerners a clearer picture of the enemy, often described as the "Slave Power." Within several years more than half a million signatures had been collected on petitions, mostly from northern states, and sent to Congress. While these petitions had little effect on Washington politicians, they provided a vehicle for millions of


THE LIBERATOR.

VOL. I.] WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON AND ISAAC KNAPP, PUBLISHERS. [NO. 33.

Boston, Massachusetts.] OUR COUNTRY IS THE WORLD—OUR COUNTRYMEN ARE MANKIND. [Saturday, August 13, 1831.

Masthead of William Lloyd Garrison's antislavery paper

people to discuss the issues of slavery and racism and their immediate abolition.

By the end of the 1830s the Abolitionists had established a mass base for the idea of immediate emancipation in communities across the North. They were outlawed and persecuted by state and local authorities in the South. They were no longer taken lightly anywhere. And when Congress refused in 1836 even to accept anti-slavery petitions for consideration—the so-called "gag rule"—many Abolitionists began to lose confidence in the efficacy of moral pressure. The movement would turn to more concrete methods of struggle, electoral and confrontational.

It took time for the Abolitionist movement to get started. And it was not easy. Many whites regarded the first Abolitionist meetings and anti-slavery newspapers as little more than the work of a radical fringe. Contradictions such as racism among white Abolitionists and conflicting class interests among wage-workers, capitalists and petit-bourgeois elements in the movement threatened to divide Abolitionism even as the broad base of the movement seemed to be its greatest strength. Few channels of mass communication were open to Abolitionists. By 1836, slave owners and other racists across the country recognized the threat which abolitionism posed, and actively organized against it. Abolitionist leaders like Garrison and Weld were threatened and violently attacked, meetings were broken up, and local supporters were harassed. The white Abolitionist Elijah Lovejoy was murdered in Illinois, and lecture halls burned and sacked in Boston and Philadelphia. But the Abolitionists persisted, for they understood the importance of every speech, every meeting, every conversation over a petition, every newspaper and pamphlet they could distribute. Without the determination of these individuals at this critical stage of the movement, the hell of slavery would have lasted considerably longer in the United States.

ABOLITIONISTS' POLITICAL LINE ADVANCES THROUGH STRUGGLE

Abolitionism did not stand still. The Abolitionist critique of slavery and racism grew more radical and comprehensive as the movement gained experience in fighting the slaveowners and their agents, and debating the key issues of the day. The political development of the movement was primary in ending the slave

system through the Civil War, and dealing a major blow to racism in the process. Most important, Abolitionists came to understand that they could not obey the rules of law established by the government if they were going to defeat slavery. They learned that a violent struggle would be necessary.

NAT TURNER: THE CHALLENGE OF SLAVE REBELLION

The bloody slave rebellion led by Nat Turner in Southampton County, Virginia in 1831 terrified the planter class and posed a sharp challenge to the infant Abolitionist movement. Many white Abolitionist leaders were ministers or other religious figures who were often outright pacifists. Some regretted Turner's bold attempt, and others condemned it openly. But many black and some white Abolitionists hailed Turner as a hero, drawing inspiration from his example. On hearing news of the uprising, old Squire Hudson of Ohio rejoiced, "Thank God for that! I am glad of it! Thank God they have risen at last!"

And as panicky slaveowners began enacting ever more repressive measures to control the slaves, yet others joined the movement. The ideological struggle between pacifism and revolutionary violence would intensify in years ahead. Black Abolitionists more often had the most advanced understanding of the need for violence, but even most white Abolitionists eventually came to accept it as a legitimate and important form of resistance to the vile institution of slavery. Even the pacifists among them, after all, accepted the American revolution against England as a moral necessity. How could slave rebellions be viewed as any different? "A baptism of blood awaits the slaveholder and his abbettors," wrote one Abolitionist in the 1850's, "So be it. The Retribution is just." It would be a short step from advocating slave revolts to supporting armed violence against slavery by both blacks and whites.

WORKERS AND SLAVES: STRUGGLE AGAINST RACISM

The increasingly rapid emergence of the working class posed another challenge to Abolitionism. The economic panic of 1837 was followed by a depression that brought into sharp focus some disturbing effects of capitalist development: declining working conditions, periodic crises, the rise of factory labor, and widening inequality. Be-

ginning in the 1840s, factory workers—such as the young women of the Lowell textile mills—began to replace skilled tradesmen in the forefront of the labor movement. Demand grew for the ten-hour day. In New York, Philadelphia and other places newly organized workingmen's parties protested economic conditions and promoted egalitarianism—at least for white workers.

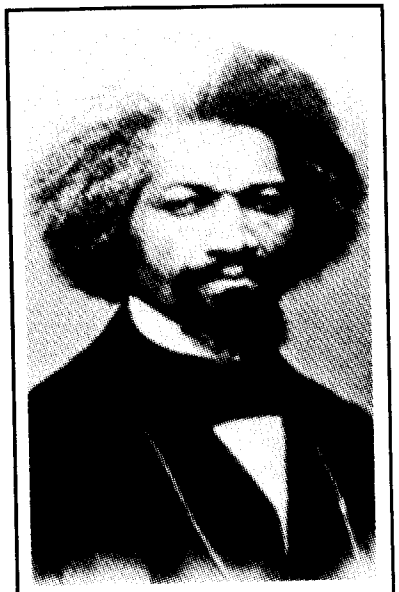
The Lowell factory "girls" organized an active Female Anti-Slavery Society in 1832, but a sharp struggle against racism was needed to win the labor movement to support the cause of abolition. Some white workers fell for the lie—promoted heavily in the bosses' press and by the Catholic church—that emancipated slaves would threaten their already precarious livelihood. Others, especially immigrants, feared that anti-slavery agitation would split the Democratic Party and bring to power the Whigs, an openly anti-immigrant party led by the northern bosses. Some followed land-reformers and other opportunists, arguing that their Utopian schemes for ending wage slavery would automatically solve the problem of chattel slavery. Most northern white workers, often laboring twelve to fourteen hours a day, six or seven days a week, probably gave little thought to the slaves.

Abolitionists appealed to these workers with two basic arguments. First, of course, was the "moral" one. Labor parties in New York state in the 1830s, for example, called for the abolition of slavery as "the darkest, foulest blot upon the nation's character." Many white workers were sympathetic to the cause of anti-slavery, and eventually became avid supporters of it. "Will you ever return to his master the slave who once sets foot on the soil of Massachusetts?" the Abolitionist Wendell Phillips asked a mass meeting of thousands of Irish workers in Boston in 1841. "No, no, no!" they shouted in reply.

The second argument went beyond this in appealing to the interests of the white workers themselves in abolishing slavery. Slavery was a degradation of labor, Weld and other Abolitionists argued, and wherever it existed free labor was defiled. They could point to factories in the South, where wage laborers were already being displaced by slaves. Thus, they maintained, racism undermined the power of the working class. Delegates to the New England Workingmen's Association in 1846 resolved that "American slavery must be uprooted before the elevation sought by the laboring classes

can be effected." This was an argument with powerful appeal, and one that Karl Marx would later repeat in *Capital*. "I wish to make a new issue out of the slave question," an anti-slavery leader wrote in 1856, "giving importance to the mischief inflicted on the poor whites as well as blacks. [This] proves that the contest ought not to be considered a sectional one but rather a war of a class—the slaveholders against the laboring people of all classes."

Some northern white workers went yet another step further, recognizing that they and the slaves had a common enemy in the northern capitalist class as well as in the slaveocracy. "The factory operatives," wrote Abolitionist George W. Putnam in 1852, "felt that the northern capitalist was closely akin to the Southern slaveholder, and that the design of the Slave Power and the Money Power is to crush both black and white." But this was an argument that the Abolitionists themselves could not make, for capitalists like Gerrit Smith and the Tappan brothers were too important to their movement. They did not benefit directly from southern slavery, as had the northern capitalists in the gradualist movement, but they certainly depended on the exploitation of wage labor.



Frederick Douglass

While the "united front" of progressive capitalists and other anti-slavery activists seems on the surface to have been a strength of the Abolitionist movement, the limitations it imposed hampered the movement as well. In particular, many northern workers were put off by the indifference (or even hostility) of Abolitionist leaders to their own oppression. Labor papers criticized those Abolitionists who had "pity for the southern slave, but would crush with an iron hand the white laborer of the north."

Garrison, for example, had denounced the trade-union movement in the first issue of *The*

Liberator as a conspiracy to "inflame the minds of our working classes against the more opulent." Frederick Douglass, in contrast, spoke out often in favor of wage workers' efforts to organize for better working conditions. Wendell Phillips still thought in 1847 that northern workers were "neither wronged nor oppressed," though he modified this view a year later and campaigned actively for the eight-hour day after the Civil War.

In April 1861, the Mechanics' Phalanx of Lowell, Massachusetts became the first regiment ready to march off to the Civil War, followed quickly by Wisconsin lumberjacks and Irish, Polish and Italian workingmen from New York. Entire local unions of printers, spinners, miners, machinists, and iron molders enlisted en masse. They, and thousands like them, were moved by Abolitionist ideas, the result of much ideological struggle.

The working class was vastly overrepresented in the Union Army relative to its proportion in the general population. How far would the Abolitionists have gotten in winning the workers to the cause without an analysis of how the racist slave system hurt them, too? How much farther might the movement for equality have gone if abolitionism itself had taken a decisive turn toward the working class?

DIRECT ACTION OR ELECTORAL POLITICS?

Throughout the late 1830s and early '40s, Abolitionists debated hotly about what direction the movement should take. A major split occurred between those who favored forming a bourgeois political party to seek elected office in order to legislate against slavery, and those who believed that an end to slavery and racism could only happen through agitation and development of a popular movement.

The first group rallied around the Liberty Party, especially under the leadership of Salmon P. Chase after 1840. They rested their case on the argument that the Constitution, properly understood and enforced, would prohibit Federal government involvement with slavery. Their strategy was to build a broad-based electoral coalition by downplaying or even rejecting the more "extreme" views of abolition. For example, Chase argued strongly that the Liberty Party should not encourage slaves to run away. They hoped in this way to appeal to more voters: clearly black people, and women, who had no vote were

less important to them.

This electoral strategy was quite successful—on its own terms. During the 1840s, northern capitalists became less dependent on Southern capital and shipping contracts, and began to develop an independent outlook which often clashed with the interests of slaveowners. Thus the slavery issue increasingly polarized the nation, and found its way into electoral politics.

The Mexican-American War intensified this process, splitting both major parties. Delighted political Abolitionists reorganized as the Free Soil Party for the 1848 elections, taking in dissident Democrats and Whigs—though not without internal struggle over the political line. In doing so, its main focus shifted from anti-slavery to opposing the extension of slavery into the territories. It reorganized again in 1854, taking shape as the Republican Party. and won the Presidency for Lincoln in 1860.

But it was Lincoln who had said in his 1858 senatorial campaign that "I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races."

It was Lincoln who wrote in 1862—after war had already broken out—that "if I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it."

The opportunist electoral strategy did nothing to hasten the destruction of slavery. It set back the cause by building illusions about the federal government and the constitution.

What about those who rejected electoral politics?

Most white leaders among them were still Christian pacifist "nonresistants." But their unwillingness to compromise the principle of immediate abolition allowed them to take part in the leftward development of the movement.

In rejecting mainstream capitalist politics, they were able to develop a radical critique of federal government complicity in the perpetuation of slavery. They were thus generally more prepared than the "political" (that is, electoral) Abolitionists to reject capitalist government authority when it stood in the way of anti-slavery action.

MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR: CRISIS AND DECISION

When President Polk annexed Texas in 1845 and declared war on Mexico a year later, he set in motion a process that would have a profound impact on the

Abolitionist movement. War has a way of intensifying contradictions in society, and this was no exception. "The Mexican War and slavery will derange all party calculations," predicted Charles Sumner, "The Abolitionists have at least got their lever upon a *fulcrum* where it can operate."

Democrat and Whig politicians alike—with only a handful of exceptions—supported the war. Even those, like Lincoln, who complained about the way it had been started still voted repeatedly for military appropriations. Racism ran wild: pro-war propagandists ranted about the "destiny of the Anglo-Saxon race" and even some vocal opponents of the war, such as the Abolitionist Theodore Parker, referred to Mexicans as a "wretched race." Thousands of volunteers, many of them impoverished immigrants, signed up to fight. Some Abolitionists, like William Jay, despaired that slavery would now spread to Texas and California "& will there mock all our puny efforts to destroy her."

But radical abolitionism moved sharply to the left during the year-long war, even as the electoral wing of the movement turned to the right. First, many Abolitionists became clearer on the role of the federal government. Earlier, many radical Abolitionists had shunned bourgeois politics as inherently corrupt, as they thought any human government must be. They had also noted that the many Southern slaveowners who were congressmen or other government officials tainted the whole institution. But the Mexican-American War—with federal troops mobilized under the American flag to take by force new territory for the expansion of the slave system—clearly demonstrated that the federal government was dominated by the growing strength of the "slave power." Abstract opposition became concrete: the once-pacifist Garrison's *Liberator* even called for the military defeat of the U.S. troops. "We only hope that, if blood has had to flow, that it has been that of the Americans," he wrote, "and that the next news we shall hear will be that General Scott and his army are in the hands of the Mexicans. We wish him and his troops no bodily harm," Garrison added, "but the most utter defeat and disgrace."

Second, the Abolitionists' warnings about "slave power" control now found a mass audience. An anti-slavery convention in 1839, for example, had declared that "the slave power is waging a deliberate and determined war against the liberties of the free states." Many now saw that the

Mexican-American War, designed to expand the power of the Southern slave-owners, as evidence of "slave-power" control of the country. Indeed, slaveholders themselves were calling for the annexation, not only of Texas and Mexico, but of Cuba and Nicaragua as well. Northern Democrats and so-called "Conscience" Whigs, who had thus far deferred to southern interests within their own parties, now came out against the extension of slavery into the territories, although not for abolition of slavery itself.

And as the war continued, opposition mounted. "Neither have I the least idea of 'joining' you, or in any way assisting the unjust war waging against Mexico," a young man wrote to the Cambridge *Chronicle*, "I won't go." Those who had joined, for adventure or (more likely) for money, became disgruntled. "The balance of [our officers] are very tyrannical and brutal toward the men," wrote a Pennsylvania volunteer, "A soldier's life is very disgusting." A group of Irish volunteers deserted en masse to form the "San Patricio" (St. Patrick's) battallion of the Mexican Army. Even volunteer regiments from the Southern states of Virginia, Mississippi, and North Carolina mutinied in northern Mexico. Over nine thousand U.S. troops deserted. We don't know what all these young men thought about slavery, but clearly they were no longer willing to fight for it.

The war intensified contradictions within the Abolitionist movement as well. The old petition campaigns went by the boards. The split between radical and electoral strategies widened. Some white Abolitionists—those most profoundly influenced by the religious-pacifist ideology—withdrew from the struggle to join Christian utopian communities like Hopedale, or other such diversions. But others—the majority—deepened their commitment and their understanding. They began to absorb the lesson that American capitalist politicians as a body would defend slavery and racism. They learned that the fight against slavery was not just another reform struggle like temperance (the anti-alcohol movement) or prison reform. Like anti-racists in later periods (and today in particular) many Abolitionists learned that in order to win, you have to be prepared to break the rules, struggling actively outside of the law. During the Mexican-American War, for example, John Brown first began to formulate his plans to establish an anti-slavery guerrilla army in the Appalachian Mountains of Virginia, heart of the slaveholding south.

The Underground Railroad:

ABOLITIONISTS RAISE THE LEVEL OF CLASS STRUGGLE

By the 1840s, the main form of Abolitionist activity revolved around what had become known as the Underground Railroad. Thousands of black fugitives "rode" to freedom, aided by a growing network of over three thousand black and white anti-racists extending across the country (but mainly in the North). Harriet Tubman, an escaped slave, and other courageous "conductors" (men and women, black and white) went into the South to bring escaped slaves out. John Fairfield, white son of a Virginia slaveholder, travelled all over the south to bring slaves out in groups of up to twenty-eight, until his death during a slave insurrection in 1860. Jane Lewis, a black resident of Ohio, ferried fugitives across the Ohio River in a rowboat. Elijah Anderson, also black, led more than a thousand to freedom in five years, before he was thrown into the Kentucky prison where he died.

These heroes had an organization behind them. "Stations" every ten or twenty miles sheltered fugitives during the day, and sent coded messages ahead to the next station. Disguises, food, and supplies were provided by many in the north and south whose names appear in no records. Abolitionist orators and other publicly identified agents of the movement raised money to support the expeditions South and for other costs. And the frequency and boldness of escapes increased with time. By 1850, some one hundred thousand slaves had been helped to freedom.

Running slaves away—even in such numbers—could weaken the slave system but could not end it. But the Underground Railroad also advanced abolitionism as a movement. Stories of the conditions which blacks faced in the South, including the elaborate system of highway patrols and passes they had to avoid, provided compelling evidence of the evils of the slave system. Slaveholders' attempts to infiltrate and spy on the Underground Railroad were soon discovered, and underlined the threat posed by the slaveocracy to liberty in the north. Free black communities in the northern states and in Canada grew in numbers and in boldness. And ex-slaves—most prominently Frederick Douglass—became key leaders of the movement. A convention of black Abolitionists declared in 1854 that "our relations to the Anti-Slavery movement must be

and are changed. Instead of depending on it we must lead it." This leadership meant less Christian pacifism, more militancy, and a more serious fight against racism.

Supporting the Underground Railroad meant giving aid and financial support to escaped slaves, but it also meant confronting slaveowners or bounty hunters, chasing them, and sometimes even fighting them. Such incidents were rare in the forties, for blacks were protected by law in many Northern states, and the Abolitionists had established legal defense funds to protect blacks from being taken back to the South once they had escaped to freedom. But they did occur, and convinced a growing number of both blacks and whites that armed struggle would eventually be necessary to defeat slavery.

Fugitive Slave Act:

ABOLITIONISM CONFRONTS REPRESSION

By the close of the forties Southern slaveholders were clamoring for an end to the growing stream of slaves escaping to the North. They feared the growing power of the Abolitionists and the spread of anti-slavery sentiments throughout the North. Many saw that they would have to fight to preserve their racist system of exploitation. In 1850 the Fugitive Slave Law gave Southern slaveowners and their agents the right (already written into the U.S. Constitution) to claim escaped slaves in the North. More: by offering greater rewards to federal agents who approved slaveholders' claims to blacks in the north than to those who denied such claims, the federal government actually encouraged the enslavement of black people who had been living as freedmen in the north. And in a direct assault on the Abolitionists, the law required all citizens in the north to assist slave-catchers and federal marshals when askeds to do so.

For the Abolitionists this posed a major challenge. Would they abide by the law, as some Union-minded northerners preached, or would they engage in violent struggle to defend black people in their own towns? The principle of non-violence had been easy to maintain as long as the struggle against slavery was waged chiefly in the South, or in raising money, but now the battleground shifted to the North. The Underground Railroad slowed down for a time, as some Abolitionists and many supporters hesitated. "This is the darkest day of our cause," lamented Senator Charles Sum-

ner in 1852. But Sumner's view was distorted by his immersion in electoral politics. Although many did retreat in the face of the fascistic Fugitive Slave law, the Abolitionist movement took yet another step forward. "It now seems that the Fugitive Slave Law was to be the means of making more Abolitionists than all the lectures we have had for years," John Brown wrote to his wife in November, 1850. He was right. Events escalated quickly in the years following 1851, and for most Abolitionist leaders, non-violence became a relic of the past.

When slave-owners' agents appeared in Boston in the fall of 1850 searching for escaped slaves, they were told to leave town in five days or face the consequences. They left, but later came back and enlisted the aid of the federal and local authorities. Ex-slaves were usually spirited away to Canada or Great Britain in such situations, but in 1851 federal marshals in Boston arrested a black waiter named Shadrack and took him to the courthouse. An angry mob of whites and blacks gathered outside, broke into the court, and took Shadrack off to Canada before the authorities could do anything.

Later that same year, another ex-slave was arrested, and it took more than 300 federal marshals and troops to prevent a large crowd from seizing him back again. Workers in Lynn expressed their outrage at racist inequality by tearing apart a train which had stopped there to eject Frederick Douglass for riding on a car reserved for whites. In Christiana, Pennsylvania, two dozen armed black men killed a slave owner and wounded his son and two bounty hunters when they captured two fugitives. "Civil War" proclaimed one local newspaper immediately after this incident, and it was right. The movement against slavery which had started so timidly some twenty years earlier had finally resulted in open gunfire to defend black people.

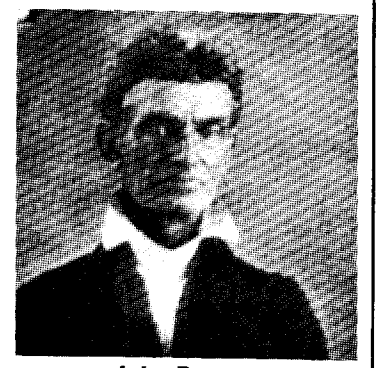
Conflict impelled the Abolitionist movement forward. As the conflict became more intense, no one could avoid taking sides, and outside of the South (where anti-racism was viciously repressed) most chose the side of abolition. Incensed by Federal efforts to capture fugitive slaves in 1854, one staid Boston capitalist wrote, "we went to bed one night old fashioned, conservative, Compromise Union Whigs & waked up stark mad Abolitionists." The Abolitionists, ignoring calls for compromise, had not buckled under to the Fugitive Slave Law. Instead, they had stepped up the struggle—and their movement grew.

Bleeding Kansas:

ABOLITIONISTS ON THE OFFENSIVE

Abolitionists had broken the back of the Fugitive Slave Act, and therefore the Compromise of 1850 between northern and southern capitalists. The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, which would allow the voters of these territories to decide whether to allow slavery there, was the next concession made by the North to patch over differences. "Free-Soilers" soon began to move in, most of them farmers seeking land under the auspices of the New England Emigrant Aid Society, an investment company. But slaveowners and their agents, especially in Missouri, began pouring in, too. The front in the anti-slavery war had shifted to Kansas.

The slaveholders' forces were both more committed ideologically and more experienced in the use of violence than most of the free-soilers, many of whom opposed slavery because they didn't want black people for neighbors. Pro-slavery forces unleashed a bloody reign of terror, and were on the verge of winning control, when a new force entered the picture: a dedicated white Abolitionist named John Brown.



John Brown

Brown had long been part of the Underground Railroad, but he had not spent much time with other white Abolitionists, preferring to confer with black Abolitionists like Dr. James McCune Smith and Henry Highland Garnet. Although he, too, was strongly motivated by religious feeling, he had quickly abandoned the pacifism of "non-resistance" and had little interest in electoral politics. When he decided in 1839 to devote his entire energies to abolition, his thoughts turned to direct action. He soon formulated a plan to escalate the work of the Underground Railroad with the formation of a guerrilla army based in the Appalachians, to run off slaves in even larger numbers, thereby destroying the money value of slavery property (as he explained to Frederick Douglass) by making it insecure. In 1851 he had helped to organize the

"League of the Gileadites," a group of forty-four black Abolitionists in Springfield, Ohio who pledged to rescue fugitives there. "Hold on to your weapons," Brown advised them, "and never be persuaded to leave them, part with them, or have them far away from you." This episode illustrates Brown's main strengths as an organizer: he had early on shed any illusions about the need for violence, and he was anti-racist to the core.

As the struggle for control of Kansas escalated, Brown organized and led some of the more militant free-soilers to fight proslavery forces there with repeating rifles and artillery. And in May 1856, with the free-soil capital of Lawrence burned to the ground and the proslavery forces apparently in control, Brown went on the offensive. He led a small band of fighters in the dead of the night to the Swamp of the Swan, where they took seven notorious pro-slavery thugs from their homes and chopped off their heads with broadswords.

This bold anti-racist terror turned the tide, emboldening the free-soilers once more and preventing the spread of slavery to Kansas. More importantly, it posed the question of violence to other Abolitionists as it never had been before. Brown's own son Frederick—himself an Abolitionist who had fought in the Kansas war—said, "I could not feel as if it was right." But within months, events had proved that Brown had understood correctly the objective situation in Kansas. James Townley, an eye-witness to the raid, wrote later that at the time he "thought that the transaction was terrible" but later "became satisfied that it resulted in good to the Free State cause. The pro-slavery men were dreadfully terrified, and large numbers of them soon left the Territory.

As Dubois put it:

> the man who in all this bewildering broil was least the puppet of circumstances—the man who most clearly saw the real crux of the conflict, most definitely knew his own convictions and was readiest at the crisis for decisive action, was a man whose leadership lay not in his office, wealth, or influence, but in the white flame of his utter devotion to an ideal.

Thousands came to agree that violence was absolutely necessary, and to respect Brown as a leader. This was a critical step both for the Abolitionists and the racists in the South. Both sides became convinced that the dispute over slavery would not be settled peacefully. In many respects, the civil war in "Bloody Kansas" marked the culmination of fifteen years of agitation for an immediate end to slavery and the beginning of the Civil War.

Harper's Ferry:

THE APEX OF ABOLITIONISM

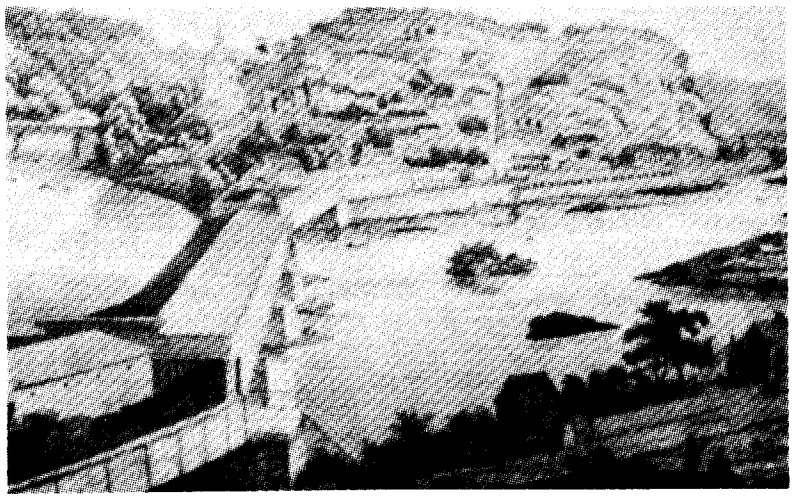
Kansas was a victory for the free-soil cause and a big step forward for the movement, but from the anti-slavery point of view it was (in Brown's word) an "abortion." Brown was more determined than ever to carry out his well-developed plan to strike a decisive blow against slavery (not just its extension) in the heart of Virginia. And now, at last, a significant section of the Abolitionist movement was ready to take this idea seriously.

The history of John Brown's raid on the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia (now West Virginia) is one of the most inspiring stories of all in the history of anti-racist struggle. There is not room here to do full justice to it, and English-language readers are strongly urged to read the article John Brown's Raid in *PL Magazine* (Fall 1979) or the account in W. E. B. DuBois' biography *John Brown*. Here we will concentrate on the significance of the raid in the development of the Abolitionist movement.

Brown proposed to organize a small group of heavily armed black and white fighters to take the arsenal, capture the weapons stored there, and then advance into the mountains to set up a string of guerrilla bases. From these his soldiers would make forays into nearby counties with huge concentrations of slaves, and win the slaves (plantation by plantation) to escape in large groups. Those who wished to join Brown's army would be armed, and the rest taken by the Underground Railroad to the northern states or Canada. The army would live off the produce of the land, which Brown considered to belong rightfully to the slaves.

Brown needed to organize three things to carry out the plan: a few dozen men (except for Harriet Tubman, Brown didn't want women) to join the initial action; a network of organizations to provide support and future recruits; and money for pikes, guns, and transportation for the vanguard raiders. The raiders themselves were recruited by Brown personally: a few from his family, a few from the Kansas struggle, a few from among his acquaintances in the free black communities, others he had met in the course of his anti-slavery work. For the rest, Brown turned to organized abolitionism.

For money Brown could appeal to radical white Abolitionist groups like the National Kansas Committee and the Boston



John Brown's target—the Federal Arsenal at Harper's Ferry.

Relief Committee. He did not trust them enough to let them in on his plans—except to hint broadly that material given to him would not necessarily be used in Kansas—but many of them trusted him. The wealthy Gerrit Smith told him, "I have known you for many years, and have highly esteemed you as long as I have known you." These men, who probably preferred not to know his plans anyway, gave him custody of several hundred rifles as well as a pledge of money. But to collect the money he needed, Brown had to describe his plans in detail to a few trusted friends among the white Boston Abolitionists, meeting in secret. Frank B. Sanborn later reported being astonished and dismayed at first by Brown's bold plan. But after several days of intense discussion, these former pacifists and non-resistants agreed to back Brown. "We cannot give him up to die alone," Smith told Sanborn, "we must support him."

For organizational support, however, Brown turned to the network of black Abolitionist communities and groups. He knew far more about the black secret society in the U.S. (known variously as the League of Freedom, the Liberty League, or the "American Mysteries") and the fourteen Canadian "True Bands," numbering over a thousand menbers, than did other white Abolitionists. Brown's confidence in launching what would amount to an armed insurrection among the slaves was firmly based in the ties he had developed over the years with free black people, many of whom had been slaves themselves. He conferred with Douglass, Garnet, Martin Delaney, J. W. Loguen, and other prominent black Abolitionists, but did not base his plans on them either. Douglass, for example, liked the idea of armed guerrillas running off slaves, but objected to an attack on the arsenal because, in his words, "it would be an attack upon the Federal government, and would array the whole country against us." He and Brown argued for two days: "he for striking a blow that would instantly rouse the country, and I for the policy of gradually and unaccountably drawing slaves off to the mountains, as at first suggested and proposed by him." In the end, Douglass was not convinced, hesitating because of "my discretion or my cowardice, perhaps something of both," as he later admitted. But the fugitive Shields Green, with them at the time, decided, "I guess I'll go with the old man." The renowned "General" Harriet Tubman, a frequent user of the Appalachian "tracks" of the Underground Railroad, also pledged to be there; only illness, in the end, kept her away.

Brown relied on the masses. He carefully laid the groundwork for an interracial convention in Chatham, Canada, attended by 33 black and 12 white Abolitionists, with black men presiding. Even to this group he did not reveal the details of his tactical plan, but the convention struggled over principles, adopted a constitution to govern Brown's army, and established a leadership body that functioned until after the Harper's Ferry raid. John Brown's religious commitment may have driven him to put his life on the line to end slavery, but his materialist grasp of the practical situation led him to build an organization to carry out the struggle.

The political struggle at this convention illuminates the limits of the Abolitionist movement, of which Brown and his group were surely the highest expression. Brown clearly saw the need to organize violent struggle against slavery, and he was ready and willing to take on federal authorities with an armed attack on the arsenal. But he was a patriot, not a revolutionary, when it came to the United States government. The forty-sixth article of his constitution stated that "the foregoing articles shall not be understood so as in any way to encourage the overthrow of any state government, or the general government of the United States." The black coppersmith G. J. Reynolds, a leader of the

Underground Railroad in Sandusky City, disagreed sharply with Brown over this. He said he felt no allegiance to the nation that had robbed and humiliated him, but was unable to convince a majority of the convention. Again, some at the convention argued that the best time for an attack would be while the United States was at war with a major foreign power. Brown was deeply disturbed by this suggestion, not because it might mean postponing an attack but because he "would be the last one to take advantage of my country in the face of a foreign foe." For him, racism in any form (including slavery) was a diabolical evil that disfigured American society; he did not understand that it is a cornerstone of capitalism itself. In this respect, religious idealism clearly dominated his thinking.

Brown and his soldiers succeeded in capturing Harper's Ferry on October 17, 1859. But for reasons that are not fully clear they delayed their departure for the mountains, and were trapped in the Harper's Ferry firehouse by the arrival of one hundred United States Marines, commanded by Colonel Robert E. Lee of Virginia. They chose to fight. Fifteen of Brown's soldiers died in the battle or were executed afterward. Brown himself was captured, tried and convicted for treason against the state of Virginia, and executed quickly, just six weeks after his heroic raid. But much happened in those six weeks.

Abolitionism was electrified by the news of Brown's bold and unsuccessful frontal assault on the slave system. The first reactions of many seemed to justify Brown's long-standing contempt for the Garrisonian "non-resistants." Gerrit Smith, who had given Brown $1000, now denied knowledge of his plans. Samuel Gridley Howe vacillated on the witness stand, then fled to Canada. Douglass, hearing that President Buchanan and Governor Wise of Virginia were on his track, also fled. Even then, however, George L. Stearns of the Boston Relief Committee declared "John Brown to be the representative man of this century, as Washington was of the last."

And Brown's trial helped rally public opinion in the North against slavery in the weeks that followed. The conservative Republican journalist Horace Greeley admitted reluctantly on the eve of the trial that "the end of Slavery in Virginia and the Union is ten years nearer than it seemed a few weeks ago." Northern workers and Abolitionists held mass meetings on his behalf. German Marxists in the Social Working Men's Association of Cincinnati, Ohio

resolved that "The act of John Brown has powerfully contributed to bring out the hidden consciousness of the majority of the people." Even pacifists could no longer criticize Brown. "I claim to be a Non-Resistant," Stephen S. Foster declared, "but not to be a fool. I think John Brown has shown himself a *man*, in comparison with the Non-Resistants." Tens of thousands across the country understood the last written words of the old man: "I, John Brown, am quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land will never be purged away but with blood. I had, as I now think vainly, flattered myself that without very much bloodshed it might be done." At least for the time being, nonviolence was dead.

THE CIVIL WAR: SLAVERY DESTROYED BY MASS VIOLENCE

Frederick Douglass later declared that "If John Brown did not end the war that ended slavery, he did, at least, begin the war that ended slavery." The Harper's Ferry raid and Brown's trial showed many on both sides that armed conflict was necessary. By the time of his trial, Brown was hailed as a hero in the North, and condemned by slaveholders in the South. The black population of Virginia was indeed aroused by the raid, even though it had been crushed. Five incendiary fires in the immediate neighborhood in one week testified to that. Slaveholders in the counties adjoining Harper's Ferry frantically sold off their slaves, often at a monetary loss. Fearful that yet other such raids would occur in the future, Southern racists decided to secede from the Union when Lincoln (a Republican backed by many Abolitionists) was elected President a year later. With that decision—and the subsequent shelling of Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina—the official war began.

In 1861 the workers of Lynn, all of them volunteers, marched off to war, singing a new song: "John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave/But his soul goes marching on." Theirs was not a war for the Union as much as it was a war against slavery. They were openly in alliance with the millions of slaves in the South who had struggled against slavery for generations. The workers' battle song also testified to the efforts of hundreds of Abolitionists who had struggled to sustain and build their movement in the face of what appeared at times to be overwhelming odds. Who could have guessed that a small band of radical religious leaders, supported by a network of free blacks and

women petitioners scattered in small communities across the country, would become a violent mass movement against racism that would at long last bring "King Cotton" to his knees?

Lincoln and the statesmen of the North wanted, above all, to restore the union of the states. They refused outright to free the slaves, and turned away thousands of free black people who volunteered immediately to serve in the Union army. Even Lincoln's famous "Emancipation Proclamation" only freed the slaves in those states which were still rebelling: that is, those states which would not abide by it anyway.

But once the war began, it could not end without abolishing chattel slavery. Two years into the bloody conflict with no end in sight, Congress was persuaded that the North could only win the war with the help of black troops. Thousands in the North enlisted in the "United States Colored Troops" and, despite racist harassment and lower pay, were among the best and the bravest soldiers in the army. Thousands more in the South took the first opportunity to leave the plantations and join the Union Army, even when that meant doing the hardest and dirtiest menial jobs. And in March 1865, only weeks before the final collapse of the Confederacy, a desperate Jefferson Davis signed a "Negro Soldier Law" permitting slaveholders (with the consent of their state goverments) to free their slaves to serve as soldiers in the Confederate Army. It was too late for the Confederacy, and much too late for black Southerners: many, if not most, had already freed themselves by then anyway.

CONCLUSION: LESSONS OF THE ABOLITIONIST MOVEMENT

The Civil War was the culmination of the Abolitionist movement. The movement succeeded, although not exactly in the way that Abolitionists had expected. And weaknesses that had been secondary in earlier decades now came to the fore. With Lincoln and the Republicans in power, and leading an army against the hated southern slaveocracy, the confidence of most Abolitionists in the federal government was restored. The strategy of petitions was resurrected, once again begging Congress to legislate the slaves free. Abolitionists no longer fought federal marshalls, but commanded federal troops and were elected to federal office. After the Emancipation Proclamation

realized (at least formally) their demands, the movement as such disbanded. The disastrous results only became clear years after the war, in 1876, when capitalist interests dictated the sacrifice of legally free but economically enslaved black southern sharecroppers to the still-wealthy southern plantation owners. The federal government pulled its troops out of the south, and neither black southerners nor anti-racists in the north were organized independently to defend their own interests. If you rely on a capitalist "democratic" government, you can't end racism.

If the strength of the Abolitionist movement was its staunch commitment to the principle of an immediate end to chattel slavery, its main weakness was that its principles did not extend further. Abolitionists generally did not look beyond legal emancipation to the social conditions that could make former slaves (or anyone else) free in a real, material sense. To the extent that they did, the model of "freedom" was the independence of the skilled craftsman or farmer, already becoming an anachronism in an industrializing world. More often, Abolitionists who looked beyond emancipation thought in anarchistic terms of freedom from society: the replacement of human government by a "kingdom of god," and of material concerns by a struggle for spiritual perfection. John Brown, for example, thought that society should be organized "on a less selfish basis; for while material interests gained something by the deification of pure selfishness, men and women lost much by it." He had a point, of course, but by placing "material interests" in opposition to unselfishness he left open only the possibility of an abstract Christian community of interest. Oppression and inequality in the modern world are firmly rooted in capitalism. If you don't end capitalism, you can't end racism.

What, then, can we learn from the Abolitionists? More than anything else, the importance of political struggle: not only over strategy and tactics, but also about ultimate goals. To put it another way, one example of a social law is the generalization that the internal struggle within a social movement determines (within limits, of course) its outcome. Those who understand this law and fight hard to develop the sharpest possible line, and to struggle for it in the broadest possible way, will have the most effect on the course of events. Many of the most important aspects of the ideological struggle today were already issues among the Abolitionists: willingness to break the law when the interests of the laboring classes require it;

the need for violence to end class oppression; the need to build multi-racial unity with a conscious struggle against racist ideas and practices within and outside the movement; the importance of rejecting religious idealism in favor of a scientific materialist analysis of society. Let's say it again: what you do counts. And of all the things you do, struggling for the correct political line counts most.

AFTERWORD

Some bourgeois historians tell us that history is not and never can be a science. Others try to make history into a science mechanically, by leaving out any reference to the consciousness of the people whose actions, in groups and as classes, have shaped the past. Both are wrong. Communist philosophy (often called Marxism-Leninism or dialectical materialism) gives us the tools to analyze history scientifically. The better we understand history, the more confidence we will have in the working class. The better prepared we will be for our role in making history.

The course of history is not linear, and it is not smooth. There is no magic formula for predicting exactly what will happen when. But those who say that history can therefore not be a science are wrong. Is a science of physics impossible because we cannot predict the path of each individual water molecule in a river, or because we have no formula to describe the river's turbulent flow through a rocky shoal? Of course not. Just as we know that the river flows to the sea, we know that the racist slave system had to come to an end.

But how much longer might it have taken without the boldness of David Walker, the persistence of William Lloyd Garrison, the courage of Harriet Tubman, the insight and daring of John Brown? More to the point, how much longer might slavery lasted without the ideological struggle that enabled the Abolitionists to learn from their mistakes and move forward? None of these people was a super-hero. Their strength was that they learned to grasp the essential contradictions of the society in which they lived.

In Lenin's words,

> political life as a whole is an endless chain consisting of an infinite number of links. The whole art of politics lies in finding and taking as firm a grip as we can of the link that is least likely to be struck from our hands, the one that is most important at the given moment, the one that most of all guarantees its possessor the possession of the whole chain.

The Abolitionists saw that the interests of the vast majority of

the laboring people of the United States demanded the immediate abolition of slavery. Therefore they had the confidence to continue organizing energetically and patiently even when the tide seemed to be turning against them. And when their enemies lashed out at them—for example, with the Fugitive Slave Law—they boldly turned these attacks around, and moved the struggle to a higher stage. They understood that history was on their side—and that their every action counted.

The struggle for equality has not yet been won. The Abolitionists did not see that so-called "free labor" would become wage slavery. The best of them saw that racism was the bosses' tool to divide and oppress laborers—but even they did not see that racism was so fundamental to capitalism that to destroy either one, both must be torn down. Revolutionary history, like the history of natural science, is full of partial truths. It moves forward by recognizing, through practice, the limits of its ideas and the nature of its errors. The Abolitionists made mistakes. The PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY has made mistakes in the past, and we will make more in the future. The only way to avoid mistakes is to do nothing—and that is the worst mistake of all. We cannot see the whole process of social development at once, and we should not expect to anticipate every twist and turn in the road. But we can grasp the essential dynamic of the process from the part we can see.

To win equality we need communism. To win communism, workers must fight for it: millions of workers, won to communist ideas. Now and in the foreseeable future the task of leadership is to guarantee a sharp and ongoing ideological struggle in the broadest possible way. It is to build a base for communism and the PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY. It is to win new leaders into this struggle. Just as millions in the nineteenth century U.S. who feared the degradation of their labor learned to fight against slavery, so will those today who hate the decadence, misery, and exploitation of capitalism learn to fight for communism. If the key slogan of 1859 was "immediate abolition of slavery, by any means necessary," the word of the hour today is "fight for communism." We have a world to win.

By B.C.

19th CENTURY COMMUNISTS IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST U.S. SLAVERY

Scientific socialism, or communism, reached the United States in the early 1850s. By then the abolitionist movement was already twenty years old. Most U.S. communist leaders were immigrants, like Joseph Weydemeyer, who had left Germany after the failed revolution of 1848. They made abolition one of their first tasks. The Cleveland, Ohio, Communist Club resolved in 1851 to use "all means which are adapted to abolish slavery." The Communist Club of New York, founded in 1857, demanded that its members "recognize the complete equality of all men [sic]—no matter of what color or sex." The communists' main contribution was spreading the idea among workers that (as Marx later put it) "labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded." But their influence was limited, especially because their nationalism led them to work almost exclusively among the German-American labor organizations.

One example of communist activity, although exceptional, is especially inspiring. In San Antonio, Texas (a slave state) German-American communist workers published anti-slavery bulletins in the early 1850s. These led to a German-language abolitionist newspaper, put out for nearly three years by the communist Adolph Douai, until the Texas slaveholders drove him out of the state in 1856. But he must have left an organization behind, for a communist leaflet appeared in San Antonio during the Civil War. It called for insurrection against the Confederate government, and a Confederate general reported in alarm that many whites as well as blacks sympathized with its message.

The German-American socialist Turner organization and the Communist Clubs sent more than half their members to fight in the Civil War. Robert Rosa of the New York Communist Club became a major in Lincoln's army. Weydemeyer became a colonel,

and Marx's friend August Willich became a brigadier-general.

WEAKNESSES IN THE COMMUNISTS' LINE

The stories of these men show the communists' willingness to put their lives on the line in the fight against slavery. On the other hand, however, they illustrate an important weakness in the communist movement: its virtually uncritical support for the Union government and for Lincoln himself. Representatives of the International Workingmen's Association even hailed this racist representative of the northern bourgeoisie in 1865 as a "single-minded son of the working class."

Marx and Engels followed the Civil War closely, writing letters to each other as well as articles for the press. They feared, with much justification, that the northern capitalists might be tied too closely to the southern rulers to put up a real fight. However, they said not a word—even in their private letters—about revolution against capitalism itself, at least until the war was over. Instead, they hoped that the pressure of the anti-slavery masses would push the Union government into legally emancipating the slaves and taking decisive military action.

In effect, communists were carrying out a "two-stage" theory of revolution: supporting a "progressive" bourgeoisie in the fight for "democracy" in the short run, and deferring the fight for socialism. They recognized that the racist enslavement and looting of African and native American (Indian) people was the cornerstone of the capitalist system historically. But they mistakenly thought (or allowed workers to believe) that racism could be ended without the destruction of capitalism. Slavery died, but racism lived on—and the fight against it was disarmed. For nineteenth century communists, this was perhaps an unavoidable error; for us to make the same mistake today, with a century and a half of experience behind us, would be a criminal betrayal of the working class.

PL's OPINION

Excerpts from recent CHALLENGE/DESAFIO editorials

ORGANIZE NOW TO SMASH IMPERIALIST WARMAKERS

Is it the lull before the storm in the Persian Gulf? Or is the U.S. war machine just spinning its wheels in the desert until Hussein cries "uncle" in the face of the U.S. blockade and other assorted U.S. military pressures?

The U.S. bosses are going nowhere fast in the Gulf. But no one should have illusions that the U.S. rulers will squeeze out of their oil dilemma without resorting to all-out war. This is not the time for passiveness. This is not the time to rely on illusions. This is the time to organize boldly against the U.S.'s war efforts in the Mid-East. This is the time to bring home aggressively the point that capitalism means war and fascism. This is the moment to bring out the line of turning the imperialist war into a class war for communism! This message must be brought into every shop, school and community that we work in.

We should dispel the notion that the development of anti-war sentiment will give rise to an anti-war movement capable of throttling U.S. imperialism. As long as capitalism exists there will be wars large and small. If it isn't this war it will be another, as the bosses fight amongst themselves for power and profits. War in the Mid-East and elsewhere is inevitable. To think otherwise is a terrible mistake.

The anti-war movement that arose during the Vietnam war did not stop imperialist war. Since the end of the Vietnam war, the U.S. bosses have invaded Lebanon, Grenada and recently Panama. The CIA has funded its secret armies to make war in Afghanistan, Angola, Nicaragua, El Salvador, etc. These wars, while limited, hardly give confidence in capitalism bringing peace.

If the U.S. was ready to wage war in these lesser areas, consider the Mid-East. Trillions of dollars in oil profits are involved. This slimy money far exceeds the amount in any of the above mentioned countries where the U.S. rulers killed time and again in order to maintain their profits and political position. But even more important than

profits from Mid-East oil is the control the U.S. can exert over Europe, Japan and elsewhere through the control of the flow of oil. Oil is the main source of energy for any industrial country. The U.S. imperialists seek to dominate the world by their control of Mid-East oil. Make no error about this! They will fight to our deaths over the control of Mid-East oil.

The present situation is very serious. No prospect is on the horizon to give the idea that the U.S. rulers will abandon their quest for the cheap and plentiful oil in the Mid-East. All is not going well with the imperialist aims of the U.S. The international united front that Bush has hailed has begun to unravel. As the U.S. international problems multiply, the bosses' home front is weakening. Through their media the bosses have been yapping about how the U.S. people support Bush's war plans. Nothing could be further from the truth. We know from our own rich experiences in our areas of concentration how workers, students and soldiers detest the Persian Gulf war.

But even among Bush's own political base there is no enthusiasm for the U.S. Mid-East war. For example, Evens and Novak, two leading right-wing writers, say in their syndicated column of October 1, 1990:

The solemn silence that greeted President Bush's recital of his demands on Saddam Hussein at a packed political fundraiser here was jarring after the raucous applause for his toughest-ever attack on Congressional Democrats over thebudget stalemate.

The lack of a solitary hand clap as Bush explained his Gulf policy sent a warning. In this Midwestern heartland, Bush's Persian Gulf operation remains mysterious.

"No one wants us to end up as the aggressor," stated Rep. Tom Watkins, the [local] Republican Assemblyman.

Last week PLP marched in front of the White-War House in Washington, D.C., and in Los Angeles and Chicago. Our message was clear: We called for the destruction of imperialism. We advocated that GIs should turn the guns on the generals and bosses who sent them into the hell of the desert to preserve rulers' profits. Above all we called for the building of a revolutionary communist movement that can secure the future of the workers.

The same weekend we were demonstrating, the bosses of the world met in the United Nations about how to save the millions of children that they are solely responsible for killing every year. As a comrade

who gave a speech at the PLP protest in Washington, D.C. said, these crocodile tears only mean that millions more children will die on the profit alters of imperialism.*(October 10, 1990)*

ABOUT THE CERTAINTY OF WAR

Some people ask why PLP takes an uncompromising line about the certainty of U.S. wars. Let us say, for example, that the U.S. manages to wriggle out of escalating the current war in the Mid-East. It is a possibility. Sooner or later the U.S. will be forced to wage war in the area, on a larger scale, for the vital oil. If not now, then later, another nationalist or group of Arab bosses, possibly with the collusion of another imperialist power or powers, will contest the U.S. for control of Mid-East oil. This is the irreversible law of capitalism—the constant division and redivision of the world's resources and markets by the imperialists, as each struggles to become top dog.

LATER IS TOO LATE

Isn't it farfetched of PLP to suggest now the idea of "turning the guns around" and "turning the imperialist war into a class war for communism"? Not really! We know from history that upheavals like wars open the eyes of millions to the horrors and true nature of capitalism. It is during these upheavals that the working classes and others seek radical ways to deal with their lives, which have become untenable under capitalism. During these momentous events the masses become radicalized and move a thousand times faster politically. The time to raise and win workers to a communist outlook is now! *Later is too late.* Workers don't need you after the fact. The Party is the **vanguard** of the working class. We should never tail the workers.

The U.S. rulers stand ready to wipe out every man, woman and child in the Mid-East to protect their oil profits and political power. Millions of workers and their children have already died in the Mid-East at the hands of the U.S. bosses and their henchmen in Israel and elsewhere. Capitalism is an insult. Capitalism is death and destruction! Communism is life, hope and, eventually, abundance for the world's workers. *(October 10, 1990)*

MY ENEMY'S ENEMY IS NOT NECESSARILY MY FRIEND

Many Palestinians are supporting Saddam Hussein, considering him the only Arab leader who is capable of standing up to imperialism,

Zionism and reactionary rulers, and therefore the only one capable of ending the oppression suffered by Palestinians in Israel and the occupied territories.

This is the all-too-common mistake many make of believing that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." Even if his regime is not as corrupt as the rulers of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco, etc., Hussein is no friend of working class or poor Arabs. Hussein is a ruthless bourgeois ruler who is out for himself and his close allies. Anyone who considers himself or herself anti-imperialist or anti-capitalist and who supports Hussein will end up like thousands who made that mistake in Iraq.

Hussein rules Iraq as his personal fiefdom. Hussein relies on his relatives and his closest friends and associates to maintain power—just as the Sabah royal family did in Kuwait and the el-Saud family does in Saudi Arabia. (The thousands of princes of the el-Saud family control most of the power and wealth in that country.) *(October 3, 1990)*

IRAQI COMMUNIST PARTY OPPORTUNISM OPENED THE DOORS TO HUSSEIN

In 1968 [after it seized power in a coup] the Ba'ath only had 800 members and "its potential political constituency 'on the left' was far more pro-Communist than pro-Ba'athist," according to a bourgeois journal specializing in Middle East studies. So Hussein and his colleagues began to place their close allies in positions of power in the armed forces and the state bureaucracy. But Hussein knew that the Ba'athists were still weak. So he began to make overtures to the party's arch-enemies, the Communist Party of Iraq (CPI). He managed to convince the CPI, partially through the land reform of 1970 and the nationalization of oil in 1972, to join a National Progressive Front in 1973.

The new alliance not only strengthened the power of the Ba'ath party, but the personal power of Hussein in the Ba'ath party leadership. He had already ousted or eliminated his main rivals inside the Ba'athist movement. In March, 1975, Hussein signed a deal with the Shah of Iran under which the Shah would end his support of the Kurds who were fighting against Hussein.

Having neutralized the Kurdish rebellion, and having consolidated an alliance with the Shah, Hussein did not need the CPI, and turned against the members of the pro-Soviet CPI with great savagery, killing most, and driving the rest out of the country or underground. Again many learned with their lives the old lesson that alliances with so-called 'progressive' bourgeois forces are deadly for the working class and their allies. *(October 3, 1990)*

ECONOMIC DEPRESSION, IMPERIALIST WAR AND REVOLUTION

U.S. capitalists are not only in big trouble in the Middle East, they are also finding themselves in a bind domestically. Their economy is sinking very rapidly, to the point where Bush must beg Japan, Germany and Saudi Arabia to pay for the military intervention in the Persian Gulf. Basically, the U.S. troops are mercenaries.

We are now treated to the farce of the bosses' economists debating what constitutes a recession! Even Alan Greenspan, head of the Federal Reserve, admitted this past week that economists who are predicting an imminent dip into recession are not being unreasonable. Yet he shied away from daying that a tilt into a recession has yet happened, prtteferring instead to note that the U.S. economy is growing "very slowly."

For the 5,000 workers Chase Manhattan Bank is laying off, for the millions who are unemployed, for the millions more homesless, the economy is not growing slowly, is not in a recession; it is in a depression.

Based on the record-high consumer, corporate and government debt, many are saying that the recession is the most dangerous one endured by the U.S. economy in the last sixty years. And the rise of oil to over $38 a barrel, because of the crisis in the Middle East, will make things even worse. Even moguls like Donald Trump can't pay their debts. Let's look at some facts:

- Chase Manhattan—the bank of the Rockefellers, and the U.S.'s second largest bank—is not the only big name in trouble. The continuing rise of problem loans affects all U.S. banks.

- The Dow Jones industrial average has plunged nearly 500 points—about 16%—in the last two months.

- Several key manufacturing sectors are steeling themselves for an avalanche of unhappy third quarter results.

- More than half of the 50 economists recently canvassed by Blue

Chips Economic Indicators said they thought a recession would start this year or in 1991.

• The Federal debt has risen from $1 trillion when Reagan came to office in 1981, to the current $3.5 trillion. Interest payments due annually on that debt rose from $50 billion in 1980 to $170 billion in 1989. State and local deficits have risen from zero to $50 billion in the last five years. Nearly half of all corporate income is used to pay debt.

• Paying the average mortgage requires more than 100 hours of work a month for the average U.S. factory worker, compared with forty hours twenty years ago.

• Japanese and European investors who used to help finance the U.S. economy by buying U.S. government bonds are not doing that any more. The economies of those countries are not doing too well either.

So what we in PLP warned many years ago, that the so-called boom years of the Reagan administration were based on nothing of real value, has proven true. Reaganomics was based on the destruction of millions of industrial jobs, on the lowering of wages of all workers, on increased poverty of the poor and enrichment of the wealthy, and on yuppies (who produced nothing of value).

For millions, particularly black and Latin workers and youth, Reaganomics was a depression. Now all workers are beginning to suffer the effects of that racism. Again, what PLP has been saying, that racism hurts all workers, has been proven correct.

For workers in the so-called Third World (Latin America, Africa, Asia), Reaganomics meant even more misery, as the U.S. and other imperialist banks suck the blood of the working class on those continents. And now with the oil crisis and the coming world-wide depression, conditions will worsen even more.

Again, we can see that while the world's bosses and their apologists are saying that communism is dead, the fact is that capitalism is the system which is dying, and killing millions of workers and their families along the way. We in PLP believe that as the class struggle sharpens, because workers won't play dead, and while the bosses make them pay even more for their recession and depression, the need to build a new international communist movement is more important than ever. Workers need to fight for social equality, for a society without bosses, without bankers and without racism. Join PLP and fight for communism! *(October 3, 1990)*

RED READS•RED READS•RED READS

HOW GOVERNMENT SHAPED U.S. CONFORMISM IN THE 1950s

ELAINE TYLER MAY
Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era
Basic Books, 1988

The post-World War II era was a time of rigidly conservative sex roles, a time for conformity, not dissent. Old news; but why was it that way? In ***Homeward Bound*** Elaine Tyler May uncovers some provocative answers. She subtitles her book *American Families in the Cold War Era*. But a better subtitle might be **The Sinister Effects of Anti-Communism on People's Personal Lives.** This is easily understandable, yet in-depth analysis of how the U. S. government's foreign and domestic policies shaped the conformist nature of the era, and in particular how the same policies underhandedly set back the gains of the early feminist movement of the twenties and thirties. It provides a point-blank indictment of the sexism inherent in the capitalist system.

May explains that the theory of containment established by foreign policy guru George F. Kennan did not just apply to the containment of "Soviet aggression" in the USA's five spheres of interest, but also to containment of the sexual energy, and the economic mobility of women. Hollywood sex symbols like Lana Turner who, during the war, appeared in pinup posters to remind GIs what was waiting for them at home, were remerchandised into mothers and housewives in the fifties. Turner was giving up her career to take care of her family, and she urged other women to do so too. Women's sexuality was seen as a potentially dangerous thing. It had to be contained inside of marriage. Women who had free sex lives, or who looked for a career outside the home, were not to be trusted. They might even be communists.

A good white middle class American woman quit college to get

married. She gave up that silly notion about a career. If her husband was a good provider, she need not work. She should stay at home in her pretty suburban ranch house and raise four kids. Volunteer community service work was ok, but her main jobs were homemaker, mother and dynamite sex partner. And of course the reason she would have time to do all these jobs was that all sorts of wonderful time-saving appliances were being produced: washing machines, dishwashers and so on. And if she and her husband did their jobs right the kids would grow up straight strong defenders of capitalism. That was the ruling class line, and a large number of suburbanites swallowed it, but the government helped them along with policies that aided the cold war consensus.

Government mortgages as well as new federally funded highways helped the white working and middle class move out of the inner cities and into suburbia. Blacks were excluded by segregation, not just by economic conditions. Nixon and other politicians believed that the best way to defuse class struggle was to make home ownership possible. May quotes Mayor Joseph Darst of St. Louis who wrote to the board of aldermen that if everyone had good housing, "No one in the United States need worry about the threat of communism in this country. Communists love American slums."

The division and separation of black and white workers was not just due to prejudice and fear on the part of the fleeing whites, but also to a well-planned conspiracy of the ruling class. By 1948 they had already decided that "...Central city plants are more subject to outside disrupting influences and have less happy relations with management than in smaller suburban plants."

Since blacks were excluded from suburbia and businesses were moving there, this not only deepened the gaps between white and black workers, but eventually helped lead to the devastation of many cities, the economic ruin of many black families, and the attractiveness of drugs as an escape route from the ruling class sponsored urban decay. May does not make all these connections but it is obvious from her research that the seeds for many of the social problems we face today were sown in the name of anti-communism.

Sprawling suburbs also decreased family ties adding more to the alienation and isolation of the nuclear family. By encouraging conformity as a way of life, suburbia also encouraged traditional gender roles in the home.

The fallacy that modern commodity society brings more leisure time is also exposed by May. In order to buy all these wonderful consumer goods (to keep up with the Joneses) 25% of the suburban wives had to work. This combined with the lengthy commute to work for many of the husbands meant that actually leisure time was decreased. Add to this that many of the men were so stressed out because of the highly conformist nature of their corporation jobs, that when they got home they were too exhausted to spend time with the family, and we can see that the ideals that the ruling class promoted were really unattainable. People began to question their abilities rather than the system

The solution that middle class people sought was not to change the social conditions but to try and change themselves, so they could fit into them. Only commies and comsymps criticize the system that was keeping the USA ahead in the Cold War. Middle class Americans sought the help of psychiatrists and psychologists. Many times they were given drugs that were supposed to help them, but only made them sicker

Hanging over all these people, one also must remember, was the bomb. May suggests that this had something to do with the extreme conformity too. Civil defense programs and bomb shelters kept people very aware of the constant danger they lived under. The bomb was a constant threat top these Americans. The government line was that traditional family values were the best way to keep the bombs in their silos. Everyone, each American, had his or her job to do in the Cold War.

Anti-communism also led to developments in birth control. The ruling class knew the newly liberated former colonies wanted to share in the wealth of capitalism. It was necessary to control the population in order to have enough capital to develop these underdeveloped countries, otherwise the communists could bring them into their sphere of interest. Much of the funding for research on oral contraceptives and intrauterine devices was a result of Cold War fears. But although contraception was accepted and promoted as a means of family planning it was not endorsed as a way for women to put off childbearing so they could pursue careers.

In *Homeward Bound* May uncovers many of the illusions of

bourgeois freedom. She shows how in the name of anti-communism the ruling class was able to sidetrack the forces of the class war. In the name of anti-communism the ruling class promoted sexism and racism. They forced women into playing their traditional role in the family and painted them red if they did not. The jack hammer of segregation enabled them to divide not only the white middle class from the black working class, but the white working class from the black working class as well. By allowing the white working class to become suburban homeowners, the ruling class intensified the white working class' identification with the power structure and institutionalized racism among most workers. May makes it obvious that under capitalism freedom is not for everyone but for the select, and that the ruling class takes and gives away freedom so it can hold on to power. In other words, the only people who are really free under capitalism are the capitalists.

By N. N.

ANTI-COMMUNISM BEHIND NAZIS' ANTI - JEWISH GENOCIDE

ARNO J. MAYER
Why Did The Heavens Not Darken? The "Final Solution" in History
New York, Pantheon, 1988

Contemporary accounts of the "Final Solution"—the Nazis' mass-murder of Jews during World War II—focus on its most shocking aspects: the mass deportations and the mass killings at the death camps themselves. We remember Auschwitz and the unpardonable crimes committed there.

But how many know of the events at the Soviet community Babi Yar, where the Nazis started the anti-Jewish holocaust? The likelihood that many (outside the USSR at least) know nothing at all about Babi Yar, and why the Nazis acted there as they did, suggests how removed the conventional image of the "holocaust" is from an understanding of its actual historical conditions and causes.

To provide such an historical understanding is the burden of Arno J. Mayer's *Why Did The Heavens Not Darken?* And the results of Mayer's inquiry go a long way towards explaining in turn why it is that the readiness to attribute a supreme evil to Auschwitz is flanked in our official culture by a basic ignorance of the reasons for its occurrence.

Mayer's thesis, in its gist, is that the "Judeocide," as he terms it, can only be grasped in the context of the principal ideological component of Nazism—*anti-communism*—and its basic military-political objective—*the destruction of the communist-led workers' state in the USSR.*

Mayer backs up this thesis, in part, on the basis of the following events and their particular sequence: At the time of the Nazi invasion of the USSR in 1941—**before** the systematic mass murder of Jews had begun—Hitler and his top generals issued a series of "Commissar Orders," instructing the invading forces, and the SS in particular, to exterminate all Soviets in any way connected with the Bolshevik regime. The "normal" rules of war, observed on the Western front, were to be disregarded. This was, according to Mayer, in close accord with Hitler's obsession with the anti-Soviet war as a *Vernichtungskrieg*, that is, a war of total annihilation, akin to a holy crusade.

But the *Vernichtungskrieg* was not to succeed. After their initial victories in areas only recently occupied by Soviet forces, the Nazi armies encountered stiff resistance, and began to bog down. The failure to take Moscow before the winter of 1941-42 was, in Mayer's estimation, already the definitive turning of the tide against Hitler. The likelihood of defeat at the hands of communists and Slavic *Untermenchsen*, unthinkable to Nazi ideology, led them, argues Mayer, to a frenzied search for vanquishable enemies and scapegoats. The latter were, inevitably, the Jews living in Nazi-occupied territories—it being kept in mind that Nazi ideology invariably imagined communists as Jews, with its mythical concept of *Judeobolshewismus*. Thus, "the decision to exterminate the Jews marked the incipient debacle of the Nazi Behemoth, not its imminent triumph."(page 234) The transformation of "Commissar Orders" into "Final Solution" begins not in the death camps, but in the Nazi occupied Soviet city of Kiev, where, in retaliation for the Red Army bombing of buildings housing the German high command, and frustrated by military failures, the Nazis

marched 33,771 Soviet Jews to the suburb of Babi Yar and shot them to death.

On the subject of the camps themselves, Mayer is again at pains to emphasize the decisive importance of the failure of *Vernichtungskried*. He notes, for example, that the notorious Wannsee conference of January, 1942, at which the "Final Solution" was proposed and adopted by leading Nazis, was roughly simultaneous with Hitler's "Armament 1942" directive, which, implicitly acknowledging the failure of a lightening war strategy against the Soviets, called for the switch to an all-out war economy in Germany, "At the same time that Nazi Germany's leaders decided to go to any lengths in pursuit of the war against the Soviets, they resolved to step up the war against the Jews...[T]he drive against the Jews was not uniformly exterminationist. It was an admixture of the hyper-exploitation of Jewish labor for the war effort and the fixed determination to remove the Jews from Europe, if need be by rank liquidation." (page 312). "The concentration camp system became the most outrageous and characteristic expression of the Nazi regime's resolve to hold Europe hostage for the victory it could not win and the strategic surrender it could neither consider nor survive." (page 331)

The larger picture of World War II which emerges from *Why Did The Heavens Not Darken?* is that of an epic clash between what were, simultaneously, two forms of production and two ideologies: on the one side a violently anti-communist and racist system, forced more and more to rely on the coerced "hyper-exploitation"of millions of slave laborers, whom it either worked to death or murdered outright if labor could not be squeezed out of them; and on the other, a huge, victorious effort of collective labor, led and organized mainly by communist ideas.

And in an exception to the current frenzy of Bolshevik-bashing, Mayer, a self-described "social democrat," carefully credits October, 1917 with having "emancipated Europe's largest and most oppressed Jewish community." (pages 4-5) "Having unlocked both the ghettos and the Pale of Settlement, the Soviets proceeded to provide access to higher education as well as to careers in industry, the professions, and public service.[...] Meanwhile, defeated in the Russian Civil War, prominent Whites emigrated, notably to Germany, with the bugbear of 'Judeobolshevism' and the spurious *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in their ideological baggage." (page 40)

In the preface to his work, Mayer cites the need for "discarding the residual Cold War blinders which continue to constrict our view of the Jewish disaster." (page xiii) *Why Did The Heavens Not Darken?* does in fact glimpse beyond the blinders, and this at a time when, with help from Gorbachev and Co., they are being strapped on tighter than ever.

By R.L.

READ ANY GOOD BOOKS LATELY?

A number of our readers have asked us to compile reading lists for self-study:

- **in Marxism-Leninism,**
- **in the history of the communist movement,**
- **in anything else we think might be useful to know about.**

It is a good idea. But we can't do the job alone. We haven't read enough. We need your help.

Send us names of articles or books you think will be useful to others. Indicate the topic and the general level of knowledge needed to make good use of the suggested reading. We will publish the lists periodically.

SITCOMS: THE LAUGH'S ON YOU!

Millions of workers in the U. S. cluster around their TV sets in the evening to watch situation comedies (sitcoms). Millions more in other countries do the same (the export of TV entertainment is one of few arenas in which the U. S. still reigns supreme). Most viewers get pleasure out of these shows. When Communists suggest that TV sitcoms contain politically bankrupt ideas and attitudes, our friends often defend the programs, saying that sitcoms are "just entertainment" and have nothing to do with politics. In fact, they may say that the shows occasionally treat serious social issues in a warm, humanistic manner. We're just being "killjoys," our friends may accuse.

In this article I shall discuss a couple of recent episodes from *Doogie Howser* and *Roseanne* that typify the ideas and approaches characteristic of the sitcom genre. My goal is to demonstrate that sitcoms **are** bathed in ruling-class ideology, and that the politics they contain **are** rotten. I shall argue my point by analyzing not only the more or less explicit political ideas embedded in the programs but also the ways in which the very **form** of the sitcom perpetuates bourgeois ways of thinking.

DOOGIE HOWSER, M. D.

The premise of Doogie Howser is, for starters, fairly elitist: it's about a 17-year-old whiz kid who graduated from medical school at the age of 14 and works as a doctor at a metropolitan hospital. He still lives at home with Mom and Dad (who are rich, sweet, and understanding) and has the usual problems of an adolescent; most of the show's comedy derives from the disparity between his boyish personality and adolescent needs on the one hand and his mature professional standing on the other.

In the episode I'm concerned with—apparently the first of the new season—Doogie gets a job as an orderly at the hospital for Ray, a young black man who, it seems, mugged Doogie in some previous episode. Ray has now done his time and Doogie, like the good liberal he is, has decided to help him out. Ray, who has never had a steady job before (he used to be a gang member), has trouble being bossed around by everyone else. (All the professionals call him by his first name and expect him to jump when given an order.) The crisis comes, however, when a racist patient accuses Ray of stealing his (the patient's) watch. Ray denies the charge but finds that no one—including Doogie—completely believes him.

Doogie goes through some minor changes wondering whether he's being racist, but everyone assures him that he's not, and that race has nothing to do with Ray's dilemma: the problem is simply that, because of his criminal past, Ray carries a "bad" reputation with him. Ray of course gets sullen and resentful and even less willing to take orders. When it's discovered that Ray didn't take the watch (the patient finds it in his own pocket), Doogie apologizes for having suspected him, but Ray's still mad and on the verge of losing his job for insubordination. A black doctor takes him aside and tells him that if he blows the job, it'll all be his fault.

Then (it's 22 minutes into the half hour, things have to get cleared up quickly) a young black man who has been badly wounded in a gangfight—a former friend of Ray's—is rushed into the emergency room. The medical team—heroically led by Doogie—tries to save him, but fails. When the young man dies, Doogie throws down his medical equipment in frustration. Ray, who has been looking on, expresses wonder that the team had worked so hard "just to save a gang member." His faith in Doogie has been restored, as has been his willingness to plug away at his job. After the last commercial break (now 26 minutes into the half hour), we have a wrap-up scene in which a smiling Ray announces to the shocked racist patient that it was he, Ray, who gave the patient the blood transfusion he badly needed. With

Doogie and the black doctor looking on—also smiling—Ray tosses on the patient's bed a Janet Jackson tape and tells him when "Soul Train" is coming on TV. That's it. All in 28 minutes, with time for 4 commercial breaks.

In a superficial sense, the show is anti-racist. After all, the bigoted patient is made to look like a fool; Ray is vindicated; Doogie and Ray end up friends. Plus, not all blacks are portrayed as gang members—don't forget the black doctor. But what kind of analysis of racism is the show giving? It tells us that racism is certainly in no way caused or perpetuated by the wealthy class to which Doogie belongs—in fact, oppressed blacks should look to rich liberals for help when they get in trouble. Moreover, it tells us that racism isn't systemic: Ray just *thinks* racism is the problem he's facing, whereas actually the problem is of his own making. (Forget that the racist patient has no way of knowing anything about Ray's past when he accuses Ray of having taken the watch. Forget also that Doogie's suspicions of Ray are never addressed. Forget above all that the reason Ray has a "bad" reputation is that he, like millions of other black and hispanic youth, is forced into petty crime by the racist system.) And how does the program tell us to go about solving a problem like Ray's? Keep pushing that broom, but now with a cheerful attitude. And turn the other cheek: give your enemy some of your own blood, and a lesson in black culture on the side. Above all, smile.

The ideas about racism presented in the show are incredibly shallow—to be more precise, they are racist. In addition, the way in which they are presented to the viewer promotes a completely superficial way of understanding issues and relationships. For the average TV sitcom operates according to a formula that I shall call the "pseudo-dialectic." By this term I mean that the show *pretends* to be presenting a conflict that resolves itself, through struggle, on a higher level of understanding—but that in fact the show does nothing of the kind.

The 28-minute time-frame of the TV sitcom has a lot to do with the way this pseudo-dialectic works itself out. Usually by about 22 minutes into the program some kind of conflict has been established: in this case, the conflict between the argument that Ray is a victim of racism and the position that he's the only one responsible for what happens to him. But matters need to be cleared up quickly if the audience is to get the good ol' TV sitcom feel-warm-and-fuzzy sensation by the end, as well as a few more laughs. So a dramatic incident of some kind is stuck in to sway the balance definitively in one direction.

In this case, the dramatic incident is the failed attempt to save the life of the young black man. This incident actually proves nothing except that Doogie has a strong professional interest in doing his job well. (Lots of doctors who have racist ideas about black people may still work hard to save their lives; it's a point of professional ethics.) If the incident had occurred earlier in the plot and had then been followed by further instances of Ray's being treated like a servant, or further evidences of Doogie's suspicions of Ray, it wouldn't have necessarily had the effect of "proving" to Ray that Doogie was a good guy after all, or that the professionals in the hospital were color-blind. But the incident occurs 22 minutes into the show, followed by a commercial break, followed by the bedside finale. In other words, even though the incident in no way moves the issues to a higher level or resolves the question of whether Doogie was racist in suspecting Ray of stealing the watch, its *positioning* creates the effect of synthesizing the contradiction. In effect, the death-of-the-gang-member incident *cancels out* what has preceded, producing the political amnesia that American TV is so good at fostering in all its broadcasting.

ROSEANNE

In a recent episode of Roseanne, sexism is the "serious" issue that gets the warm-and-fuzzy-humanistic treatment. As most inhabitants of the U. S. know, the show's central character, played by the comedienne Roseanne Barr, is an overweight, cynical, gum-chewing, wise-cracking tough-talking stereotype of a white working-class housewife. (She's also very funny.) This particular episode starts with a silly little sub-plot about a fight among Roseanne's kids: her little boy insists upon peeping in on his older sisters when they're in the shower. The main plot, however, revolves around a conflict that develops between Roseanne and her husband Dan, a pot-bellied, beer-swilling small-time construction contractor. Without asking Roseanne, Dan has gone ahead and lent $1500 to a good friend of his—$1500 that, it turns out, Roseanne and Dan can't do without. Roseanne urges Dan to accept a loan from her sister (a cop) who has offered to help out. But Dan is unwilling to accept help from a woman and goes out and gets a very high-

interest bank loan, which puts the family finances in a lot of jeopardy.

The tension between husband and wife is exacerbated when they discover that Dan's friend used the money not to get his fiancee an engagement ring, as Dan had supposed, but to help her get her breasts enlarged. Dan's friend brings out half a dozen snapshots of his fiancee with her new profile, and there's a lot of coarse joking about the operation. Dan's friend claims that his fiancee's breasts are now his because he invested in them; Dan joins in the fun. Roseanne doesn't say anything, just makes a sour face. (During all this the daughters keep running in with complaints about little brother. At one point Roseanne sits him down on the couch and tells him to respect his sisters' privacy—but not a word about his sexism, mind you.) Mainly she's pissed off that Dan won't take the loan from her sister.

Look at the clock: 21 minutes are up, climax and resolution have to be on the way. Dan goes into a bar, and who should be there but his sister-in-law the cop. Within 45 seconds they discover that they really are buddies, and all of a sudden he feels at ease about accepting the loan. She writes a cheque, and everything's A-OK. Dan goes home and tells Roseanne, who is delighted.

Final commercial break. The last scene shows Roseanne sitting on the couch, minutely examining a photo of Dan's friend's fiancee. Dan comes up; they make some wise cracks about the size of the woman's breasts. The audience roars. Then Roseanne and Dan realize that 5 of the 6 photos are missing. Who has them? They figure out it must be their young son, the peeping Tom. They run upstairs to retrieve the photos, in great jollity. End of program.

The episode has anti-sexist elements. Dan's friend is made to look sort of goofy for being so hung up on the size of his fiancee's breasts. Dan is shown to have been wrong for having been at first unwilling to take a loan from his sister-in-law. But that's about as deep as we go. The little boy is never chastised for his prurience: after all boys will be boys. The fiancee with the enlarged breasts is the occasion for much unrestrained joking; and even though Roseanne makes a face when she first sees the photos, she never says anything critical and in fact participates in the gazing in the final scene. The episode may have been intended to query the notion that women

are pieces of ass, but it doesn't take its critique very far. In fact, by drawing the viewer into the humor—it's hard not to laugh—the episode gets its main kicks from the sexism that it's supposed to be criticizing.

What is more, the central conflict of the episode—the struggle between Roseanne and Dan over the sexist high-handedness of his financial dealings—is never really confronted. Roseanne is clearly peeved, but once Dan takes the loan from Roseanne's sister no more is said. In fact, it's as if he'd never behaved in a domineering way at all. Again, the pseudo-dialectic is operating to nullify the contradiction between Roseanne and Dan. The little scene between him and his sister-in-law, which occurs at the crucial 22-minute resolution-point, serves to negate all the earlier manifestations of his sexism: he "really" is a decent guy after all. Once the conflict between Roseanne and Dan has been "resolved" through this maneuver, the show has made its "serious" statement about sexism. Then we can all get back to the good clean fun of laughing at big-breasted women and peeping Toms.

Superficially, sitcoms look "relevant." They address social issues of current concern. They rarely endorse outrightly reactionary ideas and attitudes; they're pretty sure to have a liberal veneer. But the sitcom's critique of problems such as racism and sexism is bound to be shallow at the very best. Issues that are social and systemic are reduced to personal conflicts, which are then "resolved" by a magical sleight of hand 22 minutes into a half-hour program. The viewer is flattered for having rooted for the right side, but there are no consequences to this partisanship, since everyone ends up loving everyone else anyway. Politically, sitcoms are slick celebrations of the status quo of the U. S. in the 1990s as the best of all possible worlds.

By N.N.

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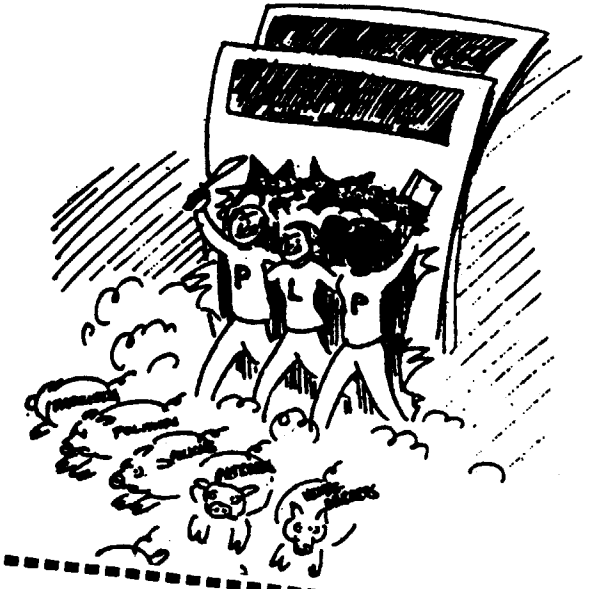

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